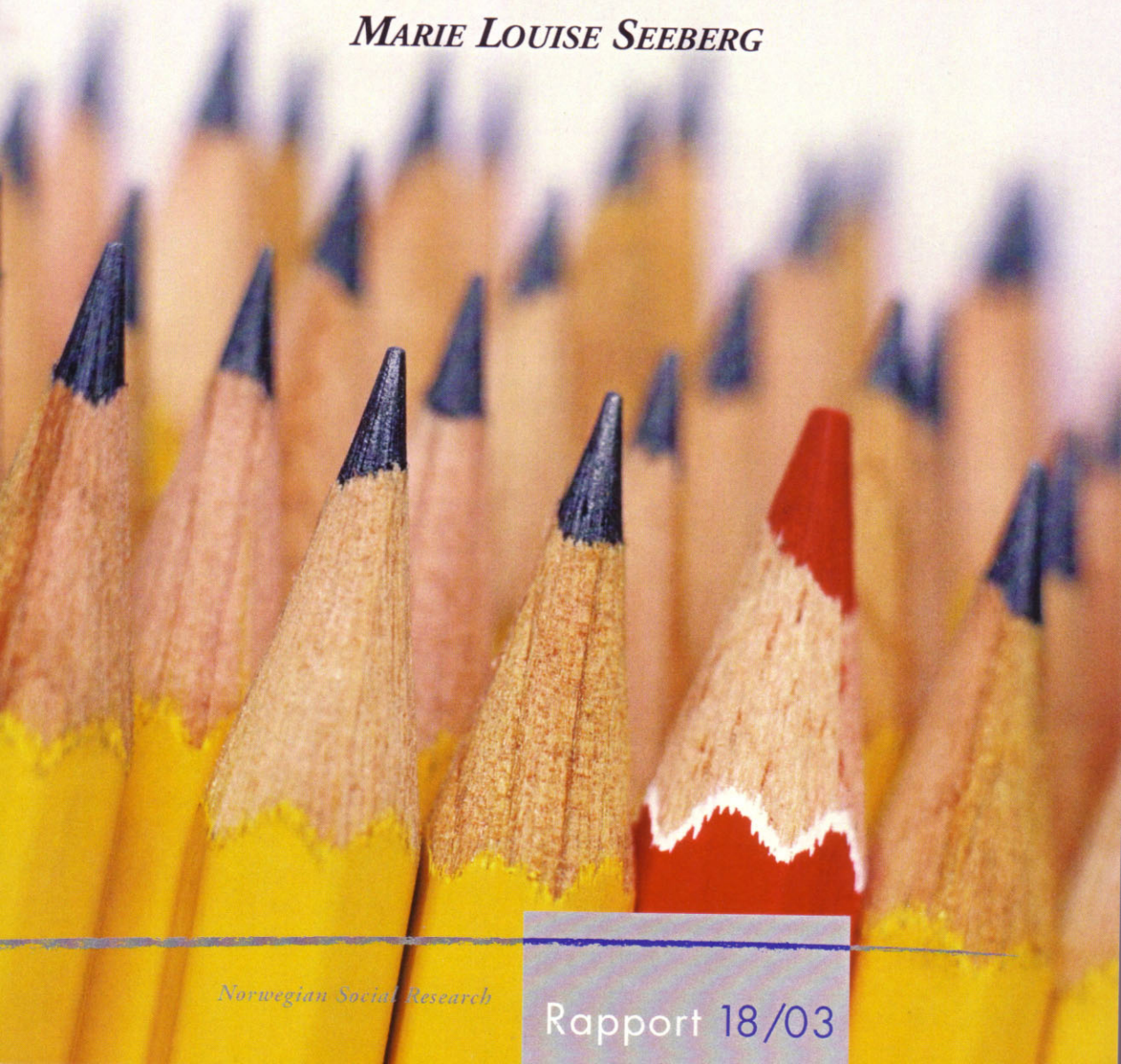
Dealing with Difference:

Two classrooms, two countries

A comparative study of Norwegian and Dutch processes of alterity and identity, drawn from three points of view

Marie Louise Seeberg



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A comparative study of Norwegian and Dutch processes of alterity and identity, drawn from three points of view

MARIE LOUISE SEEBERG

Doctoral dissertation 2003

Institute of Social Anthropology
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Bergen

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Applications to be made to:
NOVA – Norwegian Social Research
Munthesgt. 29, 0260 Oslo

Phone: (+47) 22 54 12 00
Fax: (+47) 22 54 12 01
E-mail: nova@nova.no
Internet adress: www.nova.no

'I need the Other in order to realize fully all the structures of my being'

(Sartre 1965:189-90, as quoted in Riggins 1997:5)

For Léa

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The mistakes and shortcomings are my own.

Oslo, October 2003

Marie Louise Seeberg

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Chapter 1

Day-to-day practicalities

Beginnings of an idea

To begin with, the idea was not even mine. Or was it? As I recall, it was certainly my supervisor, Dr. Anh Nga Longva, who suggested that, if I wanted to go for a doctorate within the general topics of equality and multiculturalism, I might 'do something in Norwegian and Dutch schools'. I had contacted her just after the Norwegian Research Council invited to an open round of presentations of research ideas in the autumn of 1997. After our conversation, I submitted a short outline, and was subsequently invited to write a more extensive project proposal, which I did in the spring of 1998. The Research Council granted me a scholarship, and I started working on the project in September 1998.

Therefore, the original idea for this project did not come from me, although Anh Nga would certainly have ended up with a completely different text, had she been the one to carry it out. One's own understanding of who one is, where one comes from and – not least – where one is going are perhaps even more important to the final product than is the initial idea. Let me relate some of my previous work experience that has informed the way I have carried out the present study.

I had worked on two other research projects before embarking on the doctoral project. The first one was based on fieldwork among Vietnamese refugees living in Norway. In my MA thesis (Seeberg 1996), I endeavoured to describe and analyse what concepts of 'home' and 'homeland' might mean to Vietnamese living in Norway. Among other topics, I discussed what many of them described to me as some of the greatest differences between Vietnam and Norway, which, as I argued, related to very different conceptions of equality and hierarchy. It was these men and women who first helped me see Norwegian ideas and practices of 'equality' as something quite bizarre, rather than as a natural or universal given.

A few months after I had completed my MA degree, I was employed by the University of Bergen to study relations in a Swedish town between refugees from Vietnam – incidentally, most of whom saw themselves as Chinese rather than Vietnamese – and the local social and health services.

Now, although this was not an explicit focus of that particular study, Sweden has had a policy of 'multiculturalism' since 1975. Interestingly, however, none of the Chinese I talked to seemed to find Sweden 'multicultural'. On the contrary, they described to me a society where Swedish values and norms ruled, and where they were expected to conform or assimilate to these norms and values. In this, they confirmed the more recent criticisms of Swedish multiculturalism such as those offered by Schierup (1995) and Westin (1996). Scholars like John Rex (e.g. 1995) had outlined an ideal multiculturalism as a balance between equal opportunity in the public sector and the tolerance of cultural diversity in the private sphere. In practice, though, as Rex himself admits (ibid.) it is not always easy to tell the public and the private apart. For instance, the Chinese in Sweden submitted their own private bodies to the treatment of Swedish public doctors; their children (they sometimes complained) came home from school with 'Swedish ideas in their heads', and so on (Seeberg 1999; Seeberg 2000). Through this study I thus gained an increasing awareness that 'multiculturalism' is, and can be, no simple matter, either.

I also acquired an understanding of Swedish 'equality' (*jämlikhet*) as surprisingly different from its Norwegian counterpart. The Swedish concept is closer to the French *égalité*, with emphasis on equal positions in a hierarchical system. To the extent that a distinction between 'the political' and 'the cultural' is valid, the Swedish concept of equality is a specifically political concept rather than a more general, cultural one, and it relates to an ideology that may be more firmly rooted in a political élite than in popular traditions. It is also closely related to self-conceptions of Sweden as, above all, a (or even *the*) modern nation, a modernity that is, paradoxically, founded on durable feudal structures (Seeberg 2000:16, 38). The Norwegian concept of 'equality' (*likhet*), on the other hand, appears to be primarily a general and cultural concept rather than mainly a political one. It is linked to a self-conception of the nation as traditional *and* modern. Norwegian modernity is built on ideas of the continuity of a traditional egalitarian society, and firmly rooted in popular ideas of 'equality'. This is not to say that political governance plays little or no role in the Norwegian case: indeed, as this dissertation will seek to demonstrate, the opposite is the case. Yet, the impact of governance is intensified through legitimating policies as somehow springing from the cultural, and from those governed, rather than from their leaders.

In addition to these research experiences, I also worked as a bureaucrat for five or six years, in different parts of what one might call the 'Norwegian

management of immigrants' – jobs that all, in one way or the other, had to do with ethnic relations in Norway. I did this locally, 'on the ground', as well as in the central government's Directorate of Immigration (UDI). From these jobs, I learned that majorities tend to be invisible to themselves. Because of their majority position, their ways of viewing and doing things become the unquestioned norm, from which minorities 'deviate'. To see themselves, majorities use minorities as contrasts, or perhaps as mirrors, and what you see in the mirror is of course not yourself but a reflected image, the exact opposite of yourself. Through such processes, majorities paradoxically end up making the minorities invisible too. (This hardly provides a solid basis for policy making, but it is unfortunately very common.) How a society defines 'deviance' and how it tries to solve the corresponding social problems, thus, reveals a good deal about the framework within which people – members of the minorities as well as majorities – live their lives. 'This is a question of whose definition of the situation *counts* (put crudely, power)' (Jenkins 1996:22).

Equality, multiculturalism, and social categorisation in ethnic relations: All these were brought together in my head when the Research Council announced that they wanted project proposals for their new programme called 'International Migration and Ethnic Relations'. It was at this point that I talked to my supervisor, who suggested that I do fieldwork in primary schools. As she pointed out, the school system is an important social institution that explicitly mediates – or, as I have later found that I would prefer to put it, blurs any preconceived distinction – between the private and the public. As I also indicated above, it was Anh Nga who suggested that I should go to the Netherlands in order to compare Dutch versions of equality and multiculturalism with Norwegian ones. From her readings on multiculturalism in political theory, she knew that the Netherlands was considered to present a special case, deriving from its history as a so-called 'pillarised' society. It was the first time I had heard about this phenomenon, so before writing my project proposal I sat down and read about it (Lijphart 1968), and about the recent history of immigration to, and ethnic relations in, the Netherlands (Amersfoort 1982; Penninx 1996).

Paraphrasing Eriksen (1991:14), this work is neither primarily a study of schools nor even a comparative study of schools. It is a comparative study of systems of ideological practices, and an analysis of some of the ways in which relevant social distinctions are produced and reproduced in social processes. In other words, it is anthropology. Yet it is located where several topics and disciplines meet – studies of bureaucracies, of schools and of

children; studies of ethnicity, nationalism, multiculturalism and racism; studies conducted in Norway, the Netherlands, and elsewhere; studies in pedagogics, political philosophy, sociology and anthropology. I have therefore been able to draw on many sources that are relevant to different degrees and in various ways. Thus, I have found inspiration in the works of social anthropologists Hilde Lidén (2000; 2001) and Marianne N. Larsen (1995), who – the former in Norway, the latter in Denmark – conducted thorough studies of schools as children's life worlds, as well as of children's processes of learning about social distinctions. Asle Høgmo's study (1990) of 'multicultural' schools in Oslo should also be mentioned here, although he tends to focus more on minorities than on the majority. I have not come across similar child-centred studies from the Netherlands. What I have found, however, are a number of studies that focus on school achievement and impediments to such achievement of particular categories of children with 'immigrant backgrounds' (e.g. Vermeulen and Perlmann 2000). There also seems to be a certain clustering around the topic of 'black schools', again, albeit to various degrees, policy-oriented (e.g. Teunissen 1988; Tazelaar et al. 1996), with Rath's neo-Marxist critique (1991) of such studies as an important counterweight. A third cluster of Dutch studies centres around Islam in the Netherlands (e.g. Rath et al. 1996, 1999; Shadid and van Koningsveld 1991, 1996 and many others).

So much for studies that are first and foremost empirically close to my own, and in which I have found inspiration and information especially related to the fieldwork situations. At the intersection between theory and practice, I have found the works of the anthropologists Ralph Grillo (1998, and Philomena Essed (1991, 2002) especially relevant, the former providing a solid foundation for comparative studies of plurality, the latter combining theoretical insights with empirical studies of racism. My project focuses on nationalisms, rather than on racisms, although these forms of distinction and discrimination hardly operate in isolation from one another. Not unlike my own theoretical ambitions, Essed aims to integrate what she refers to as the 'macro and micro dimensions' (2002:180) of 'everyday racism', drawing on, among others, work associated with a critical realist approach (Knorr-Cetina and Cicourel 1981). Although she focuses on racism directed against people who are categorised as, and categorise themselves as, 'black', I find that her analysis is relevant to my material, both because of its theoretical perspective and because of the interrelatedness between racisms and nationalisms. Teun A. van Dijk's discursive analyses of Dutch racism (e.g. 1993; 1997) should also be mentioned here, for theoretical as well as for

empirical insights that I have found useful. At the theoretical end, I am concerned with processes of identity and alterity – the constructions of selves and others. Here, I am indebted to Gerd Baumann and André Gingrich, who have brought together three anthropological classics in their ambitious attempt 'first, to go beyond the unproductive, and essentially moralist, truism that every selfing involves an othering, secondly, to distinguish different modalities of identity formation and dialogical inclusion or exclusion, and finally, to move beyond the false opposition between an assumed primacy of structures or cognition on the one hand, and on the other, the helpless reduction of all social processes to agency and contextual contingency' (Baumann and Gingrich, in press). The three classics they draw on are Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus*, and E. E. Evans-Pritchard's *The Nuer*. They view orientalism as outlined by Said, encompassment as explained by Dumont, and segmentary opposition or segmentation as described by Evans-Pritchard as processes of selfing/othering. Orientalism, as Baumann (Baumann, in press) sums it up, 'creates self and other as negative mirror images of each other; segmentation defines self and other according to a sliding scale of inclusions/exclusions; encompassment defines the other by an act of hierarchical subsumption.' These are thoughts I shall return to towards the end of this dissertation.

Why schools?

Equality, multiculturalism, and social categorisation in ethnic relations are topics that one may study in a host of different settings. I was especially interested in everyday situations that involved members of majorities and minorities together, within what is perceived as a majority setting. I was also interested in the role the workings of the state has in such interaction, which means that I could have decided to locate my fieldwork to different kinds of institution – such as the health system, social services, or law courts. All of these have particular roles in the regulation of the relations between individuals, and between individuals and the state, and all of them involve particular categorisations of selves and others, and of the public and the private. In this, they all reveal important aspects of the societies of which they are part, since they necessarily relate to the most basic values in their respective countries.

In Norway as well as in the Netherlands, primary schools have an impact on people's lives that other institutions do not, since they constitute

important parts of the life-worlds of almost every inhabitant throughout their 'formative years'. On top of that comes the important role of schools in parents' lives. Schools are also special in that they have as their chief function the transmission of knowledge to new generations. This means that the curricula of government-run schools – such as those with which we are here concerned – can reasonably be expected to include a transmission of what constitutes basic, national values. Defining and administering categories related to the public and the private, to male and female, to religious and secular issues, to locality and nationality, and so on, constitute a considerable part of the signifying practices involved in a more general transmission of values. Such practices also, on a deeper level, involve categorisations of national selves and others. I thus view schools, and educational systems in general, as the manifestations or enactments of social practices that generate national identity/alterity. These generative processes and their – always temporary – outcomes may take many forms, a point I shall discuss towards the end of this dissertation.

Getting started, twice over

I conducted two separate fieldwork studies for this project – in Oslo during the first half of 1999, and in Amsterdam in the second half of 1999. My preparations for fieldwork started in Oslo in September 1998, when I enrolled in the beginner's course in Dutch at the University of Oslo, which I followed for two semesters. During the autumn months of 1998 I also read as much as I could about the two project topics I felt I knew the least – namely the multiculturalism debate(s) and 'everything' about the Netherlands – as well as updating myself on Norwegian anthropology and policy documents. I also wrote a 'field guide' for myself during these months, trying to hammer out the specificities of what I wanted to do during fieldwork, and why. Finally, I worked on finding an Oslo primary school where I could do the fieldwork.

The 'school finding procedure' in Oslo was as follows: I went to the municipal library and read all I could find on primary schools, on population statistics, and so on from different parts of central Oslo. I already knew at this point that I wanted a school with a composition of pupils that reflected the Oslo average when it came to class and ethnicity – although not with any idea of the study being 'representative'. Given the extreme differences between East and West Oslo, I knew that an 'average' Oslo school would be anything but a 'typical' Oslo school. Since I wanted to see how majorities

handled diversity, *I wanted a context where the majority was still the majority, but where it had had enough experience with minorities to have developed institutionalised ways and routines for dealing with diversity.* I most definitely did not want a 'problem school' where I might be perceived to enter the scene as some sort of 'diversity expert'. In other words, a school with a majority of 'Norwegian' pupils, but with an established and relatively stable ratio of 'non-Norwegian'[1] pupils was what I was looking for. I then contacted the municipal school authorities, and sent them a one-page presentation of my project. Since, as they informed me, all questions of research permits were delegated to the principal at each individual school, they did not need to get further involved in the process. However, they helpfully faxed me their statistics on what they called 'minority language pupils' (*minoritetsspråklige elever*) at each school. Since there was no definition of this category attached to the statistics, I called them again, and had this quite remarkably wide definition read aloud to me over the telephone:

> 'A pupil from linguistic minorities comes from a home where one or both parents or guardians have a mother tongue other than Norwegian (except Swedish and Danish). Adopted children who come to Norway around the age of 5 should also be included if they are pupils in the first three years of primary school.' (Oslo School Department, personal communication, my translation)[2]

This was based on the Ministry's (KUF's) general definition but, my contact person said, 'if you want to know why this definition was chosen – it's not really very good and there has been some discussion about it – it was because the definition forms the basis for resource allocation. If Oslo had chosen, say, to include only children both of whose parents had other mother tongues, that would have meant less money' (Oslo School Department, personal communication). Going through the statistics, I found out that the average ratio of 'minority language pupils' was 28 %. There were, as I had expected, many schools with either very few 'minority language pupils' or something between the average and a 50–50 ratio. Very few schools were reported to have approximately the average of 28 % 'minority language

[1] 'Wholly non-Norwegian' is a literal translation of *helt ikke-norske*, which the teachers used along with other terms to distinguish the children who had no Norwegian parent, as well as their parents.

[2] 'En elev fra språklige minoriteter er fra et hjem der den ene eller begge foresatte har et annet morsmål enn norsk (svensk og dansk unntatt). Adoptivbarn som kommer til Norge i 5-års alderen skal også tas med dersom de er elever på barnetrinnet.'

pupils', and a number of schools in Eastern Oslo had a majority of 'minority language pupils'.[3] I thus ended up with only a handful of schools that satisfied my criteria, and proceeded to contact the principals, one by one, in the search of a school where I would be welcome. This, even more than any quantitative characteristics, had to be my main criterion for selection. Bakken's principal was notably more enthusiastic than any of the others, and I arranged to meet with him and the vice-principal in the beginning of January. The meeting went well, and we agreed that I was to start fieldwork in class 6 (of which there were two) immediately. I did fieldwork at Bakken from January to mid-June, 1999.

In Amsterdam, I found a school through university connections. My supervisor, Anh Nga Longva, had told me that the University of Bergen had a research co-operation agreement with the Vrije Universiteit (VU) in Amsterdam.[4] She advised me to contact Dr. Lenie Brouwer at the Anthropology Department there, which I did in the autumn months of 1998. In early January 1999, Lenie emailed to me that she had met the head of the Amsterdam Education Department (*hoofd Onderwijs Gemeente Amsterdam*) at a Christmas party and told him about my project. Through Lenie, I sent him a short description of the project and of the sort of school I was looking for, suggesting that he might provide me with a list of potential fieldwork schools that more or less matched my criteria.

In April, I got his brief and pertinent response: 'The name of the school is de Bijenkorf[5]. If it doesn't suit you, we will find another school.' A bit taken aback at this blunt, yet undeniably most helpful reply, I contacted the principal of de Bijenkorf, and got an appointment for a meeting in the school just before school started, at the end of August. After a short (and hectic!) period of summing up the first fieldwork and planning the next one, I went

[3] There were 125 public primary and lower secondary schools in Oslo, with a total of approximately 46400 pupils aged 6-16, which gives an average of 371 pupils per school (Skoleetaten 1998). (There are also 14 private schools, according to Skole-etaten, personal communication). 43 schools had 15 % or less, 15 schools had 16 %–30 %, 45 schools had 31 % to 60 %, and 7 had over 61 %. Only 4 out of 125 schools matched the average of 28 % exactly, and 13 schools had between 26 % and 30 % 'minority language pupils'.

[4] The University of Amsterdam is a government-owned and publicly run institution, whereas the Vrije Universiteit (VU) was founded by orthodox Protestant Christians and is now run by the Association for Christian Higher Education (*Vereniging voor christelijk wetenschappelijk onderwijs*).

[5] This is not the real name. For reasons of anonymity, the names of the two schools, their staff and children have all been changed.

to Amsterdam in August, and followed a four-week, intensive, intermediate Dutch course at the University of Amsterdam. I was very well received at de Bijenkorf, and saw no reason to 'find another school'. Yet, looking back, I realise that I would very likely have ended up with another school if I had been able to use the same approach I used in Oslo. If, as I am tempted to imagine, the head of the Education Department wanted to make sure I did not end up in a school that might give me a negative impression of Dutch schools, he made a good choice. The school he chose on my behalf had two characteristics that are relevant here: firstly, it scored high on the national 'CITO' tests (more about these tests in chapter 3) which meant it was a successful, 'good', school. Secondly, the principal himself was 'black', and originally came from the Dutch former colony of Suriname. In other words, it is not far-fetched to assume that the authorities made sure the image this international –though small – project was going to produce was that of a successful, 'multicultural', Dutch school. The 'Dutch part of the picture' would have looked different had I chosen to conduct fieldwork in almost any other school in Amsterdam (as would the Norwegian part, had I chosen any Oslo school other than Bakken). This is not necessarily a problem for the project, since I had not set out to find a 'typical' school in the first place. I assumed that, because of the pluralistic origins of the Dutch school system, a 'typical' school would be even more difficult to find in Amsterdam than in Oslo.[6] It is worth noting, however, that the authorities saw de Bijenkorf as a success story and – for that reason – would probably have liked me to represent it as somehow 'typical'.

When it comes to Amsterdam statistics, the de Bijenkorf principal told me that the ratio in his school was about 50 –50 Dutch children and 'black children or children from other countries', but the definition of 'black children or children from other countries' was, in turn, not readily available. According to the principal, the sorting and counting was all done by a governmental computer system, which combined parents' answers to several questions about their backgrounds, so that neither he nor anyone else could influence the classification. At the end of the day, the categorisation here, too, was closely linked to money, which may explain why the principal seemed more concerned with making it clear that he had no influence on it than with explaining the classificatory process. Shorthand for the categories was 'one-point-zero children' as opposed to 'children with a rucksack'. A

[6] In Amsterdam, there were 190 primary schools. 87 of these were publicly run and 103 privately run. There was a total of approximately 61000 pupils aged 4-12.

'rucksack' consisted of additional decimals, usually either 0.25 or 0.9 points extra. The 1.0 child which set the norm – and had no load to carry – was a child whose parents were both born in the Netherlands and both had higher education. A 1.25 child had Dutch parents with lower education, whereas a 1.9 child's parents fulfilled neither of these criteria, thus weighting their offspring down with the inherited burden of their own backwardness (*achterstand*). However, the Surinamese-born principal was confident that his own children would be classified as 1.0, since recent changes to the system – quite rightly, as he observed – emphasised education rather than country of origin. I shall return to this system in chapter 6. The point here is that the school was 'typical' in the sense that it reflected the average ratio of 'Dutch' and 'other' children in Amsterdam schools which was, in 1997/ 1998, 49,6 % to 50,4 %. In this sense, it was similar to Bakken's position as an 'average' Oslo school. On the other hand, de Bijenkorf's Surinamese leadership hardly corresponded to the model I had used when I selected Bakken: to say that de Bijenkorf was a school where 'the majority was still the majority, but where it had had enough experience with minorities to have developed ways and routines for dealing with diversity' would mean redefining 'majority' in a way that would somehow anticipate fieldwork findings.

In spite of the above reservations, I would hold that each of the two schools *was* in fact typical – certainly not of Dutch or Norwegian schools in general, but, rather, in their own particular ways, of the societies of which they were part. That is to say: *Bakken could only be a Norwegian school, in the same way that de Bijenkorf could be nothing but a Dutch school*. As I hope will become increasingly clear in the chapters to follow, *there is no way they could have changed places. Thus, far from being just two particular schools in their own right, they were very much part of their countries' historical and contemporary realities. It is an understanding of these realities, rather than of the schools and school systems as such, that I want to develop in this dissertation.*

Being there, doing it

By the time fieldwork was started, I had to consider not only equality, multiculturalism and social categorisation in ethnic relations, but also Norway, the Netherlands, and the realities of two primary schools in two cities. In each school, I selected one group of children who are 11–12 years old. I chose this age group because I wanted the children to be children, still

not too fixed in their world-views and not yet hormone-ridden teenagers, while at the same time I also wanted them to be old enough to express and explain their opinions. Suddenly I did not just have a handful of interesting theoretical topics to think about. I found myself having about twenty children in each school, their parents, and their teachers on my mind. The project was no longer just an interesting intellectual puzzle. It included everyday practical life in school, with intense activity, a myriad of issues that competed for attention, and a whole lot of noisy, and not so noisy, kids.

Schools are formal institutions, and fieldwork in such contexts is different from, say, working in a local community or village. Both space and time are explicitly and meticulously divided and organised. I had to adapt to the organisations quickly, in order to keep to a minimum the unavoidable disturbance of my work on the work of teachers and children. Adapting meant learning to recognise and respect the divisions of discipline in time and space. This learning process also provided me with valuable insights into the lives and life-worlds of the children and staff, which I shall return to in chapter 3.

There is also an informal aspect to schools – or, rather, there are several informal aspects. Teachers, administrative staff, parents, and children also establish their own, and what one might be tempted to call 'private', ways of organising space and time. The informal aspects are manifest in the answers to questions like: Who tends to interact with whom, how, where, and when? Who occupies this or that part of the playground, classroom, corridor, or staff room? Who talks to each other, and about what, in the brief moments between class and recess? These are also questions I shall attempt to address throughout the chapters to follow.

'The subjectivity of the anthropologist'

As an anthropologist, I see myself as part of the situations that I describe and, indeed, have no ambitions to retain an 'objective' distance to my 'data', knowing all too well that 'the total universe (…) is not subject to observation from any given observers' position' (Bateson 2000: xxvi). It is thus pertinent to ask: who was the person who carried out the research, who is writing this text? I was born in Oslo, and grew up on the Western outskirts of this small capital of a sparsely populated country. My father is Norwegian born and bred and my mother of British-German-Jewish origin. Looking back, I was always the odd one out in a school that emphasised equality in more ways than one. My mother tells me that I spent my first year at school, as a skinny and serious seven-year old, trying to conceal that I was a freak

who already knew how to read. Returning after a school year in the United States, at the age of nine, I quickly learned to conceal the fact that I had learned to speak English, to sing solo, and to do a confident 'show-and-tell' presentation. However, my pretence was inadequate. I could not hide the fact that I enjoyed learning 'school things', I did not try hard enough, and consequently I never succeeded in joining the homogeneous majority. It did not help that I once, when we were talking about the history of Israel in class, naïvely and proudly revealed my Jewish family connections. I can still recall my bewilderment at the reactions of some of my classmates, who suddenly and subtly changed. It was as if I had become a stranger to them, and they to me. – Returning to the present, my live-in partner is originally from Togo. Our daughter was born ten months after I returned from Amsterdam, so I have also become a mother, and I have written this dissertation knowing that my daughter will one day attend school in Norway.

In relation to the people I met at Bakken, I belonged to the teachers' age group. Yet my own feelings of having a 'mixed' background were perhaps more similar to those of the majority of pupils in Bakken than to the identities of the teachers, with their predominantly Norwegian backgrounds. At the beginning of fieldwork in Oslo, I found myself in a role close to that of a student teacher in class; a stranger observing what went on from a seat at the back. Gradually, however, I became more of an assistant to the teachers and an extra adult resource to the children, with the added bonus of not being part of the authorities to any of them. This, I believe, in addition to my interest in their concerns, made it easy for teachers and children alike to use me to try out their ideas and express their opinions. At the same time, I was aware of a certain eagerness from the teachers' side: they wanted to give me a positive image of their school. This provided me with information about what they thought I would find positive, but may have made information about what they thought I might find negative less accessible to me.

In relation to the two cities included in this study, I know Oslo and Norway well, but in contrast, I did not know Amsterdam, or indeed the Netherlands, at all before embarking on the project (any more than one thinks one knows one's European geography, and has passed through by train). In Amsterdam, I was much more obviously a stranger. To begin with, I did not even speak Dutch very well. Soon, among the teachers and some of the parents, I became known as 'Sandra's Norwegian' (Sandra was the form teacher in my group). Sandra and the children called me by my first name, thus referring to me in the in the same way that the whole school referred to all staff and children. This, as well as Sandra's pragmatic use of me as an

assistant, much in the way she set her pupils to work for each other, for school, and for herself, made me feel included as part of de Bijenkorf. In addition to these roles, which – my foreignness considered – were not very different from the ones I had had at Bakken, I was also Karin's boss.

Using an interpreter-assistant

Karin, a graduate student in social anthropology, was my assistant in Amsterdam. She was the one who, to begin with, had the closest contact with the children at de Bijenkorf – especially with the girls, who virtually idolised her. Young, cool and beautiful, she was an immediate hit with them. Her native knowledge of Dutch and of the Dutch school system was a great help for me. She had come from a rural part of the Netherlands to go to university in Amsterdam, and compared our field observations to her own experiences in her native village. As part of her MA studies in social anthropology, she had conducted fieldwork in Morocco and worked for a mosque in the Netherlands, and had developed a perspective and a sensitivity which were useful in assessing the positions of the Turkish and Moroccan children at de Bijenkorf.

Using a field assistant, however, can be a double-edged sword since it necessarily involves an added complication. Berreman (1972) is perhaps up to this day the anthropologist who has written the most pertinently on the implications of using an interpreter-assistant. Because his first assistant fell ill, he had to find another one. It was the differences between these two men that made it clear to Berreman how fieldworkers – anthropologist and assistants alike – form part of the context they are ostensibly there to 'record'. Paraphrasing Berreman (ibid. xxxiix), I would say of Karin that since, as a Dutch person, she considered herself a team-mate of the people in school, she felt obliged to convey to the ethnographer an impression of their affairs that was not too greatly at variance with the notion of Dutchness which she wished to convey. She evidently saw it as her task to explain Dutchness to me, and her implicit assumptions of me as a bearer of a contrasting Norwegianness became increasingly clear to me through our discussions. As an example, she recounted to me the experiences of an acquaintance of hers who had worked in Oslo and had been shocked by the openly racist attitudes of her colleagues there. For me, Karin's didactic approach to me was an impediment to communication: what I felt I needed was not her opinions of Norwegianness or Dutchness, but her knowledge of the Dutch language, of the school system, and of what it might be like to grow up and live in the Netherlands. In retrospect, however, I see that her

'impression management' was also informative and useful to me. As Berreman points out, 'The question of whether the performance, definition or impression fostered by one (…) is more real or true than that put forth by another, or whether planned impression is more or less true than the backstage behavior behind it, is not a fruitful one for argument. All are essential to an understanding of the social interaction being observed.' (ibid. lvii)

I got to know the Oslo children better than the ones in Amsterdam. Partly this was no doubt because it was more difficult for the de Bijenkorf children and for me to talk without making an effort, and because the spring term I spent at Bakken was two months longer than the autumn term at de Bijenkorf. It may also have been due to an apparently natural division of tasks between Karin and me: While I tended to linger inside and chat, one-to-one, to the staff and to those few children who might remain inside, she would go outside and play and gossip with the girls. Whatever information and impressions she got, she dutifully transmitted to me. She also made and gave me her notes of her observations in the classroom.

What I wish to point out here is that using a field assistant is not a simple case of mathematical addition. It would be wrong to assume that my perception of Karin's findings plus my own observations equal what I might have found out on my own, had I been fluent in Dutch, or had I had four eyes and ears instead of two. What Karin transmitted to me could not be identical with what I myself would have found out. This has little to do with her qualifications – and as she was a graduate student of anthropology these were indeed the best – but with the interdependence of the researcher and those researched upon. To some extent, it has to do with my guiding her work. We did not have much time to prepare for fieldwork together, but I did work out a field manual, which we went through together, and we had frequent talks about events and methods. Had we had more time to work on things together, we might eventually have formed a team. Unfortunately, I had only five months at my disposal in Amsterdam (including the month before school started, which I spent learning Dutch), and Karin's increasingly ill health did not permit her to work as intensively as we had foreseen. However, her presence in school especially at the beginning of term was of great help, as were those of the interviews she conducted and transcribed. We tried to interview some of the children together, but found that they were intimidated by having two adults present, which is why Karin volunteered to do the interviews on her own. Towards the end, when it became clear that Karin would not have the time or the strength to carry out

the remaining interviews, I conducted them myself – in a mixture of Dutch and English. By that time, I knew the children and the language well enough for this to work reasonably well – not just with those who mastered English better than their peers, but, as it turned out, with those whose Dutch was on a level with mine... It also gave me the obvious advantage of being able to steer the unstructured interview in a direction that I found useful.

Especially the first month, I could not have done much without Karin's help. With a whole school year in Amsterdam, I might have done better without her, but with just four months at my disposal, the main thing was that her work helped me to get started much more quickly than I could have managed on my own.

Norway: *likhet*; the Netherlands: *vrijheid* and *tolerantie*

In an imagined family of nations, Norway and the Netherlands would be first cousins – tall and blond seafarers both, with plenty of money in their pockets and few worries in their heads. In more technical terms, both countries are constitutional monarchies and modern, North European welfare states. Historically and culturally, then, the two countries have a good deal in common, but there are also areas of considerable difference. In terms of geography, Norway is a large (306 253 km²), mountainous, largely uncultivated, and sparsely populated (4.5 million, i.e. 15 persons per km²) country. In contrast, the Netherlands is small (41,526 km²), flat, largely man-made, and densely populated (nearly 16 million, i.e. 465 persons per km²).

Historically speaking, Norway is a relatively new nation-state, a former (first Danish, then Swedish) dependency on the outskirts of the European continent. The Netherlands, located at the heart of Europe, was a major colonial power. The population of Norway is usually represented, historically, as a homogeneous people made up of Lutheran peasants and fishermen. The reverse side of this dominant version of the nation is a history of exclusion, oppression and assimilation of those who, at different times, were deemed 'different': Jews, gypsies, travellers, Sámi, and others. In the largely urbanised Netherlands, social groups with various religious affinities – Catholic, Reformed, Dutch Reformed, Jewish[7] – as well as secularist movements have historically had separate roles in a pluralistic,

[7] The Jewish community, although one of the largest in Europe before WW II, was never big enough to form a complete 'pillar' of its own (Marlene de Vries, personal communication). However, secular or socialist Jews tended to join the pillars through secularist movements.

'pillarised' society. This is not to say that every kind of difference has always been accepted, but rather that the majority itself has been divided into different groups. *Structures and ideologies that have developed through the centuries inform and shape the ways in which today's majorities deal with differences in the two countries. In line with this argument, the two educational systems are based on diametrically opposed principles: the Norwegian system on equality as sameness; the Dutch system on freedom of choice and the right to be different.*

The Netherlands has been, and is, a country of considerable and institutionalised cultural and religious diversity. Its central location, its attraction for merchants from near and far, and its past as a colonial power, as well as more locally rooted differences, all contributed to the cultural diversity of the Low Countries. As Rath et al. (1999:5–6) sum it up,

> Before the Second World War and in the 1950s, the forces of 'pillarization' produced a society where religion and ideology were among the central social determinants, and where the people organized themselves accordingly (…). The social groupings based on religion or a philosophy of life served as "pillars" and constituted more or less closed communities, shaping every aspect of social life from the cradle to the grave. Each pillar had its own institutions, including hospitals, daily and weekly newspapers, broadcasting networks, schools, universities, housing associations, trade unions, small business associations, political parties, and even athletic clubs and choirs. There was virtually no interaction between the pillars except at the top, where inter-pillar accommodation was arranged and where the political leaders were in close consultation (…). It was not until the 1960s (…) that the pillarized organizations lost their dominant position and (…) the 1983 revision of the constitution was a provisional milestone. (…) Matters no longer revolved around religious or ideological collectives, but focused instead on the individual. (…) But the fact remains that the pillarized system is far from completely dismantled, if in fact that can ever entirely be the case.

The school system is one of the areas where the pillarised system is far from dismantled. Even today, when this system has ostensibly been abandoned in favour of a secular welfare state, only about one-third of primary school pupils attend a government-run school. 'Freedom' (*vrijheid*) and 'tolerance' (*tolerantie*) are key concepts in the Netherlands – in the school system as elsewhere. The former an organising, the latter a normative principle, both relate to an underlying understanding of diversity, or difference, as a given entity. Freedom in education is a constitutional right in the Netherlands. This principle organises and structures every part of the educational system:

everybody has the right to start and run a school, and everybody has the right to choose a school. Privately-run schools and government-run schools receive the same economic support, so that there are no school fees.

In the Amsterdam classroom as well as in the organisation of Dutch society, I found that difference was seen as a point of departure for interaction, rather than as an impediment. There was certainly no idyll, yet children as well as adults made it clear that they expected difference and had a pragmatic attitude to it, by which I mean that problems and conflicts were handled openly and matter-of-factly. The children certainly had ways of referring to differences in ways that the teachers did not approve of, but these were the same differences that teachers and children could talk about in other ways. Their different countries of origin, religious backgrounds, and skin colours were not tabooed but provided starting points for discussions and learning.

In Norway, equality understood as sameness is generally seen as a necessary point of departure for interaction (cf. e.g. Gullestad 2002:82pp, and Lien, Lidén and Vike 2001). *Likhet* or 'equality as sameness' is thus both a normative and an organising principle. Gullestad (1992:174) identifies *likhet* as 'the particular Norwegian definition of equality as sameness. This equality is sustained by (…) an interactional style emphasizing sameness and undercommunicating difference'. The concept of *enhetsskolen* (lit. 'unified school' or 'one school for all') is closely linked to *likhet*. *Enhetsskolen* is generally regarded as 'a main tool in the effort to reduce social and economic differences in the population. The government-run school [system] has also been of great importance in the establishment and maintenance of ideas about particular national values and a national community.' (Froestad 1999:77, my translation). Although increasingly contested, this model is basic to the Norwegian educational system, and is generally viewed as one of the building bricks of the egalitarian welfare state.

One might reasonably have expected a school system like the Norwegian one, where people with all kinds of background spend their days in close interaction, to provide an optimal basis for learning to deal with social and cultural differences. What I observed was that the children did indeed perceive and express differences that structure much of society and of everyday life at school, such as differences pertaining to language, class, nationality, skin colour, or religion. In my material there is, however, little indication of the teachers or the curriculum attempting to give pupils a basis for talking about, or dealing with, the differences that the pupils found to make a difference in school as well as in Norwegian society. Nor did school

provide tools for critical reflection on different ways of dealing with such differences. On the contrary, there was a systematic evasion of such differences.

In this setting, the children found their own ways of handling the differences that formed part of their experiences. Some of them became very adept at switching between evading differences, as school taught them to do, and dealing directly with the same differences in their own ways. One might say that the children were engaged in processes of exploring the meanings of living in different life-worlds, while school was busy making other plans. Rephrasing Werbner (1997:6): To use Bakhtin's metaphor: in a globalising world, the monological national school tries to escape the sense of being surrounded by an 'ocean of heteroglossia'. There is little reason to believe that this was peculiar to Bakken. On the contrary, I would assume that it is a general phenomenon in Norwegian schools. This is both because of the hegemonic position of the national curriculum, and because the curriculum itself reflects a general Norwegian ideology and practice of equality as sameness. The force of this veritable machinery of homogenisation and normalisation comes into view especially clearly through a concept of difference (*annerledeshet*) as a deficiency or as morally negative. In a discussion based on a history of those who have been excluded from this normalising system, Froestad (1999:95) argues that, on the one hand, *likhet* and normality promised happiness and liberation; on the other, *likhet* and normality led to the objectivation and categorisation of those who had special needs. These individuals were singled out as 'deviant', and their 'deviance' was cemented as the necessary opposite that was constitutive of 'normality'. As Lidén (2001:80) points out, 'Implicitly, equality as sameness becomes an instrument of power, through appearing to be the naturally "normal" that "the others" deviate from'. Thus, the very normalising aspect of the Norwegian school system makes for a particular conceptualisation of national selves and others.

The particular Norwegian brand of equality as sameness seems to be difficult to combine with ideas of multiculturalism. Both ideals relate closely to concepts and practices of difference: equality as sameness suppressing difference, multiculturalism presupposing it. In contrast, Dutch pluralistic and pragmatic traditions may seem to pave the way for multiculturalism as a contemporary version of pluralism.

The conditions for multiculturalism are thus quite different in the two countries. From a Norwegian point of view, both colonialism and the 'pillarised' society are rather exotic phenomena, very far from Norwegian

lives and ideas. From a Dutch point of view, the Norwegian tradition of the 'unified school system' or 'one school for all' (*enhetsskolen*), where, largely writ, all children are supposed to learn exactly the same things and parents do not decide which school their children will go to, is equally strange. The exotic is also attractive, and I find that the direction of reforms in both countries apparently brings them closer. On an individual level, people that I talked to in the Netherlands thought the Norwegian system must be ideal, and vice versa. On a level of policies and politics, there was, and is, a movement towards 'freedom' and privatisation in Norway and a movement towards 'equality' and standardisation in the Netherlands. Seen in a European perspective and a perspective of globalisation, other economic and political forces come into view. The educational systems respond to the real *and* imagined demands of an 'international community', and the buzz words are 'international communication and co-operation' and 'quality in education.' While the two countries are bound by regulations to adapt to the same European framework,[8] national differences become clear in new ways.

On representation: Reifying race and ethnicity?

'If the biological category of race is without meaning,
the social category of race is determining life chances.'
(Nader 2001:614)

'We are all implicated'
(Ifekwunigwe 1999:195*)*

How to describe people? This question, which I have to solve – not once and for all, but again and again – brings us to the dynamics between anthropological concepts and social categories. Every time anthropologists focus on ethnic identities, relations or boundaries between ethnic groups, or ethnicity – we simultaneously run the risk of consolidating the importance and reality of these social categories. Every time I single out ethnic identity as my object of study, through the descriptive use of ethnic labels, I also contribute to the idea that ethnic identity is important.

Although 'race' and 'ethnicity' both serve to define 'self' and 'other' – in addition to being closely related and to some extent overlapping concepts

[8] Although Norway is not a member of the European Union, 'through the EEA [European Economic Agreement], Norway participates fully in EU programmes in education, training and research.' (Eurybase 2001b)

that appear together in many different constellations[9] – they are not the same. Between the personal and the socio-political, describing people in racial terms is an even more difficult problem than describing them in ethnic terms. The 'body politic' takes on a new meaning: every racial description is at the same time deeply personal and involves individual bodies as well as all of racist and colonial history. 'Terminology in the area of "race" is constantly changing, and it is easy for both black and white people to use terms that some black people find offensive' (Phoenix and Tizard 2002:13). I would add that it is not just 'black' people who may be uncomfortable with racialising terminology. Place and time are both relevant factors here: terminology that at any point in time is largely acceptable in the Netherlands may be offensive in Norway, and vice versa. The social and historical embeddedness of 'racial' and 'ethnic' labels – what I call the particular 'sociochromatics' of any place in time – further complicate this: what is 'black' in one context may easily be 'white' in another. How do I get past these stumbling-blocks? How do I make visible differences that are relevant to people in their daily lives as well as to my analysis, without trespassing, without presupposing the validity of some categories at the expense of others, and without contributing to racist ideas?

During fieldwork, I tried above all to pay attention to how the children categorised people, which differences and similarities they found important. Indeed, I did find that in most situations, other criteria than those of 'ethnicity' or 'race' were important – sometimes more important, sometimes less so. When the children chose their friends and playmates, categories such as 'boys', 'girls', 'strong', 'fun to be with', 'quiet', 'bully' and so on were at least explicitly more important than categories like 'Turkish' or 'Norwegian'. Still, it would have been wrong to dismiss ethnicity and race as unimportant. I would be blind if I did not, for instance, see that 'Turkish' children had a low status in de Bijenkorf, that being 'Pakistani' meant having relatively few 'Norwegian' playmates at Bakken, or that 'immigrant' children in both schools tended to be less well-off, in terms of economy, than their 'native' classmates. In other words, ethnic and racial categories were a significant part of the lives of children and adults in the two schools, in many different ways. Furthermore, as Said very rightly argues,

[9] Cf. Grillo 1998; Baumann 1999; Wade 2002 and many others for discussions of the complex, fluid and politicised relations between 'ethnicity', 'race', 'religion', 'culture', and 'nation'.

> '[n]o one can escape dealing with, if not the East/West division, then the North/South one, the have/have-not one, the imperialist/anti-imperialist one, the white/colored one. We cannot get around them all by pretending they do not exist; on the contrary, contemporary Orientalism teaches us a great deal about the intellectual dishonesty of dissembling on that score, the result of which is to intensify the divisions and make them both vicious and permanent.' (Said 1995, p. 327).

Thus ignoring the divisions is certainly no solution. Indeed, I shall endeavour to demonstrate how this strategy, as part of the Norwegian preoccupation with equality as sameness, *likhet*, has precisely the unintentional side effect to which Said directs our attentions. However, as I hope will become clear, I see categories of race and ethnicity as emerging at particular points in time and place, rather than as parts of rigid and generally applicable classificatory systems. As Bauman (2001:129) argues more generally, 'instead of talking about identities, inherited or acquired, it would be more in keeping with the realities of the globalising world to speak of *identification,* a never-ending, always incomplete, unfinished and open-ended activity in which we all, by necessity or by choice, are engaged.' In this perspective, the intertwined sociochromatics of ethnicity and race are relational aspects rather than eternal essences, and can as such only occur together with other aspects of identification.

In the process of writing this dissertation, I have tried out different solutions. In some versions, I have described people extensively in terms of the ethnic and racial categories that were used in the two contexts. This gave the impression that I had decided that such categories were 'really' more important than any others, and did not trust the reader to make her own judgements. I have tried the opposite, omitting any reference to ethnic or racial categories, with the effect that readers could not follow the arguments because they were not given enough information. The final text is a compromise between these two extremes. I have tried to keep ethnic and racial references to a necessary minimum, and refer extensively to other identifications and ties of kinds that cut across ethnic boundaries. To aid the reader, I include lists of all the persons as an appendix, giving a brief description of them in terms of background.

Equality, tolerance, and multiculturalism

It has become increasingly clear to me that ideas – including political theories – of multiculturalism as well as of equality and tolerance are part of

the empirical reality I am trying to analyse. After all, multiculturalism is just as much a product of the nation-state as it is of globalisation. One may well argue that plural states, or 'polities where there coexist peoples who with varying degrees of consciousness, and with varying consequence, believe they are "different" from each other' (Grillo 1998:5) are, historically, the norm. In this perspective, the 'homogeneous' nation-state appears to be the exception; an ideological project that was never fully realised, in spite of attempts most often to assimilate, sometimes to annihilate, those who are singled out as being 'different' (cf. Bauman 1990). Thus rather than using theories of multiculturalism to throw light on my material, I shall attempt to analyse the many ways in which concepts and practices of equality, tolerance, and multiculturalism are intertwined in the processes of Selfing and Othering in contemporary Dutch and Norwegian realities.

The concepts are closely associated with liberal political theory of democracy, within which distinguished writers such as Charles Taylor, Michael Waltzer, John Rex, Michel Wieviorka, Will Kymlicka and others strive, in so many different ways, to combine them. The problem they all attempt to solve derives from the generally acknowledged fact that these concepts approach the relationship between individual and society from opposite directions. 'Equality' *within this tradition* refers to each individual's right to equal opportunities, whereas 'multiculturalism' advocates the collective rights of minorities. Thus the challenge is to find a model that manages to balance on the thin edge between extreme, *laissez-faire* individualism and a government-imposed collectivism that impinges on the rights of the individual – or between the 'Scylla of universalism and the Charybdis of differentialism' (Wieviorka 1997, as quoted in Grillo 1998:5).

My readings of the above mentioned scholars' works have made me increasingly impatient with evidently brilliant, white, male authors who belong to the upper social and academic strata, who yet – as is the case of several, if not all of them – write 'we' as if it were obvious to whom this 'we' referred, and as if I, the reader, could not but identify with the writer. It is doubly frustrating when such bright and guiding lights, in their calls for tolerance or recognition, end up with what Ghassan Hage (1998) calls 'White Multiculturalism'. This is a multiculturalism that not only leaves untouched and reproduces, but *presupposes* an unaltered White centre. Within White Multiculturalism, Hage argues, '[d]iversity simply does not affect the nature of the White "we". It remains extrinsic to it. (…) if we *are*

diversity, there would be nothing to "appreciate" and "value" other than ourselves' (Hage 1998:140).[10]

However, this is not the whole picture. After all, many of the academic as well as the political actors in the debates on multiculturalism are neither male nor white. Furthermore, some white men are in fact able and willing to look at the world from other perspectives. One of these is Ralph Grillo, whose account of pluralism (1998) focuses on the politics of difference. His criticism of some central multiculturalists focuses on two weaknesses: 'Kymlicka provides a convincing *philosophical* basis for a politics of difference from a liberal perspective. On the other hand, like Taylor (1994), he has a less sure grasp of questions of power, and (…) of the day-to-day practicalities of living in a multicultural society' (Grillo 1998:235–6). *It is precisely with these aspects – questions of power and day-to-day practicalities – and their interconnections that I am chiefly concerned.* This understanding underlies the whole text. I also need to make it clear upon which theoretical foundations I build the argument. That is my concern in chapter 2.

[10] A 'multicultural Norway', in accordance with Hage's observation, generally seems to be a euphemism for a Norwegian Norway with immigrants added.

Chapter 2

Questions of power

'[W]hat kind of science can deal with dynamic, unstable heterogeneous reality that is knowable with difficulty as versus a stable, homogeneous, and readily knowable reality for which the old sciences had tools[?] (...) The case for a more generalist anthropology is not difficult to imagine. (...) Anthropology cannot be carved off into different parts – legal, political, gender, historical, biological, cognitive.'
(Nader 2001:617)

As reasons can be causes and structures can be concept-dependent, causal, structural and interpretative analysis are interdependent.
(Sayer 1992:114)

'The patterns that connect'
(Gregory Bateson 1979)

During both periods of fieldwork, what I was looking for can be described as *different ways of dealing with different kinds of socially relevant differences*. Throughout fieldwork and analysis, it became increasingly clear to me that *there are systematic differences between the two countries when it comes to approaches to 'difference' on all the levels I have explored*. I shall make use of three distinguishable, if not distinct, levels of analysis in my argument – one phenomenological, the second discursive, and the third inspired by critical realism as well as – more implicitly – by the systemic understanding developed by Gregory Bateson. Together with the realities I attempt to describe, I hope that these three – unabashedly adapted – approaches may provide some fresh insights into the practicalities of dealing with difference, and into the power relations that structure these practicalities. They also to a large extent structure the dissertation. I shall dedicate the present chapter to these three modes of thinking, and in particular to their relevance for understanding what I found in the two empirical contexts. Let me first try to pinpoint a theoretical focus for the discussions that follow.

From 'difference' to national Selves and Others

Whatever the approach, 'difference' is evidently at the very core of my project, in more ways than one: On a general, cognitive level, a concept of difference is a precondition for the creation of meaning. It is also an essential prerogative if a comparison is to be informative. Still more specifically, and on a more empirical level, practices and ideas relating to difference form the dominant recurring theme in my research. But what is difference? Basically,

> 'It takes at least two somethings to create a difference. To produce news of difference, i.e., information, there must be two entities (real or imagined) such that the difference between them can be immanent in their mutual relationship, and the whole affair must be such that news of their difference can be represented as a difference inside some information-processing entity, such as a brain or, perhaps, a computer. (…) Clearly each alone is – for the mind and perception – a non-entity, a non-being. Not different from being, and not different from non-being. An unknowable, a Ding an sich, a sound of one hand clapping.' (Bateson 1979:78)

> 'Difference, being of the nature of relationship, is not located in time or in space.' (Bateson 1979:109)

> 'The number of *potential* differences (…) is infinite but (…) very few of them become *effective* differences (i.e., items of information) in the mental process of any larger entity. (…) We are discussing a world of meaning, a world some of whose details and differences, big and small, in some parts of that world, get *represented* in relations between other parts of that total world. (Bateson 1979: 110, emphases in the original)

Clearly, there are many kinds of difference, all of which are related to the – possibly, but by no means necessarily, universal – human effort to create order from chaos. Some differences make a difference, others seem not to matter. Without doubt, *the processes of selecting and defining the relevant differences from a host of potential differences are closely linked to processes and relations of power*. My understanding of power here and throughout this dissertation is close to that of Hannah Arendt (1970), as outlined by Essed (2002): 'Arendt argues that power is never the property of an individual. It belongs to a group (…) This implies that the consciously or unconsciously felt security of belonging to the group in power, plus the expectation that other group members will give (passive) consent, empowers members of the dominant group in their acts or beliefs.' (Essed 2002:181–2)

In narrowing the focus to socially relevant differences, Zygmunt Bauman bases his arguments on the phenomenology of Alfred Schütz and others, as well as on the structural analyses of Mary Douglas. He includes a consideration of the power dimension that he finds lacking in the works of Mary Douglas:

> 'Sweeping the floor and stigmatizing traitors or banishing strangers appear to stem from the same motive of the preservation of order (…). This may well be so, but the explanation in such universal, extra-temporal and species-wide terms does not go far towards evaluating various forms of purity-pursuits from the point of view of their social and political significance and the gravity of their consequences for human cohabitation. If we focus our attention on the latter, we will immediately note that (…) one case… is of a very special (…) importance: namely, the case of when it is *other human beings* who are conceived of as an obstacle to the proper 'organization of environment' – when (…) it is other people (…) who become dirt and are treated as such.' (Bauman 1997:8, emphasis in the original)

Difference is a necessary condition for identification. The Other is a necessary condition for the Self.[11] The identifications of Selves[12] and Others are mutually dependant, dialectic processes. '[The] distinction between internal and external identification is (…) primarily analytical. In the complexity of day-to-day social life, each is chronically implicated in the other in an ongoing dialectic of identification. The categorization of "them" is too useful a foil in the identification of "us" for this not to be the case, and the definition of "us" too much the product of a history of relationships with a range of significant others' (Jenkins 1997, p. 53).

Difference defines national Selves as it defines national Others. Selves and Others, and the dialectics that join them, are the very stuff not only of 'nationalism' as a general ideology, but of each nation as it manifests itself in the apparatus of government. It is, accordingly, this relation that underpins much of the argument below, as well as in the chapters to follow.

A process of bricolage

A major challenge in this work was the – perhaps overly ambitious – aspiration to include many empirical fields in the analysis, and to grasp the

[11] These postulates draw on the works of scholars from various disciplines and academic traditions, e.g. Saussure, Bakhtin, Derrida, Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, Douglas, Barthes, Lacan, Klein, and Fanon.

[12] For a discussion of the singular vs. plural of the terms, see Riggins (1997).

patterns and processes that connect them, rather than to highlight one and present everything else as a static background. The need for an overarching, more system-oriented theoretical framework than is usual in anthropology made itself felt, more or less acutely, throughout the writing process. It may be that this is simply the writer's selfish need to tie up the loose ends, to present a coherent argument, against the grain of the diversity of the material. Yet my very observations of systematic differences suggest that there is, indeed, an empirical basis strong enough to carry the weight of a more general theoretical edifice – or, to put it differently, there is a reality that supports the argument I intend to make. The challenge is to grasp this reality in the analysis. What is required is something more than a conviction that reality exists.[13] Rather, my view calls for a theoretical framework that reflects the ways in which what appear to be different 'parts' of reality relate to each other.

Different levels, parts, or fields of empirical reality may seem to call for different analytical and theoretical approaches. For instance, the details of everyday life, such as they are expressed and perceived by people interacting with one another, lend themselves fruitfully to some kind of phenomenological approach – reflecting as faithfully as possible people's own experiences of their life-worlds. On a slightly more aggregated level, discursive approaches may provide useful insights into the complex interactions between people and ideas, between the here and now and other times and places. On the national and institutional levels, a different and more system-oriented approach is required. Yet the national Self-Other relations pervade all fields or levels, and remain at the centre of my analytical attention.[14]

To illustrate how and why I believe this is a fruitful way of thinking, let me use an example: the Netherlands' 'black schools' (*zwarte scholen*, see chapter 6). On an analytical and empirical level of face-to-face inter-subjectivity and individual life-worlds, attending a 'black school' will give children an entirely different set of experiences and belongings than they would have had in a 'white school'. Using a more discursive approach, analysing the Dutch 'black schools discourse' gives us insights into how productions of meaning relate to political and historical processes on a

[13] Indeed, '[t]he world may be an illusion – I know of no means of proving it is not. But it is expedient to behave *as if* there be a substantial reality that can be encountered' (Firth 1989, as quoted in Grillo 1998:219).

[14] I hesitate to use the concepts of micro, meso and macro levels, which I feel over-simplify and, more importantly, imply a somewhat static closed systems perspective, although they undeniably do include some of the points I am trying to make here.

national level. Then again, I would argue that these two approaches, like the object they seek to illuminate, form part of a larger context. In that context, the above aspects merge with historical, geographical, political and economic issues, all of which contribute to form the reality of 'black schools'. The same type of case could be made for the 'immigrant schools' (*innvandrerskoler*) which are their Norwegian counterpart.

What I have referred to here as 'theoretical and analytical approaches' may operate in different ways. Whether they are to be understood as mere toolkits from which the analyst selects the most appropriate parts, as grand theories that explain just about everything, or as something in between, may depend as much on the analyst as on the approach. All the three approaches I outline in this chapter have epistemological and ontological implications. Whether one subscribes to one or the other set of such, sometimes contradictory, implications is, at the end of the day, largely a matter of belief. Making use of some of the tools does not necessarily mean subscribing to the entire underlying philosophy. In other words I am more concerned with exploring the potentials of the different approaches than with pinpointing their shortcomings. In this dissertation, I make extensive use of phenomenological and discursive approaches as toolkits, whereas critical realism has a double function: as a methodological approach, it provides me with useful tools for a system-oriented analysis. As a philosophy of science, it provides me with a more fundamental understanding of the dynamic interconnections of structure and agency, of object and subject, of the part and the whole. The critical realist approach thus provides a larger, an overarching, framework that includes, rather than rejects, the discursive and the phenomenological approaches, which all make their own unique contributions to the analysis.

A phenomenological approach

A phenomenological approach, with its emphasis on the description and analysis of everyday life, on intersubjective relations, experience, empathy, and common-sense typology has much in common with what I consider good anthropology. The single most important research tool for the anthropologist is his or her own self. The very awareness of this fact, and of its implications – benefits as well as limitations – is, I believe, one of the discipline's main contributions to the social sciences. One such implication is that the success of our methods depends on the anthropologist's relative identification with the people whose lives and life-worlds she studies. The ability to empathise, to strive to see the world from the 'informants' ' points

of view is widely held to be the ideal way to anthropological insight. This task, however, becomes a forbidding prospect without a considerable degree of sympathy for one's 'informants'. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that anthropologists tend to focus on people with whom it is relatively easy or painless to sympathise. Crudely put, we usually end up studying the oppressed, and trying to lend both an ear and a voice to those whose own voices, we feel, are not heard. 'Studying up' (Nader 1972), in contrast, implies selecting informants among a dominating group or the authorities, and having to empathise with them, in order to understand and to some extent accept the validity of their positions, values, and viewpoints.

My sympathy in the present case lies largely with those who are labelled 'immigrants', '*allochtonen*', or 'minorities'. I should emphasise that I am more interested in the assumptions and processes dialectically underlying and informing the labelling than in any essential characteristics of those labelled, or indeed of those who issue the labels. In terms of people, however, my academic interest is primarily focused on those who issue the labels: the 'non-immigrants', the '*autochtonen*', the Norwegian and the Dutch 'majority' populations. Yet if studying people requires that I identify with them, then studying 'majorities' means joining the enemy.

Now the 'enemy' in this particular case happens to be 'white' North Europeans, Norwegians and Dutch urban dwellers not unlike myself. Most of them are very nice people, to be sure, with no understanding of themselves as 'oppressors'. Identifying with them is all too easy, and being identified with them – by them, and by their 'others' – is to some extent unavoidable. However, my current and previous research has taught me that, *regardless of individual intentions in the majority population, assimilatory and discriminatory practices are widespread and have deeply-felt consequences for the lives of minority individuals*.

A phenomenological approach to majority/minority relations may lead me to overemphasise what one might call the sharedness of meaning. Both Alfred Schütz and Berger and Luckmann seem to assume that individuals of the same category (whoever defines and ascribes it) share a 'typical, intersubjective, cohesive and universal social order. This constrains what individuals experience in terms of what they can communicate (…)' (Rapport 1997, p. 181). When focusing on social categories, we see little of the many differences, disagreements, and misunderstandings within each category. This problem may be overcome at least partly if we define the object of study – in line with this approach as well as with the other two – not as a category of people but as processes, relations, and/or events that connect and (re)produce different categories of people.

In chapter 3, I shall use what I rather loosely define as a phenomenological approach to people's everyday experiences, and try to show how *differences as well as ways of dealing with differences emerge through these experiences*. I shall describe and discuss mainly some particular ways in which people and activities were organised in time and space in each of our two schools. In the analysis of this material I shall build on the premise that time and space are inextricable dimensions of place: 'space and time come together in place (…) we experience space and time *together* in place' (Casey 1996:36–7, emphasis in the original). This I see as a counterweight to '…our reified notions of objective and separate space and time [that] are peculiarly linked to the modern identification of a nation with a sharply bounded, continuously occupied space controlled by a single sovereign state, comprising a set of autonomous yet essentially identical individuals.' (Boyarin 1994: 2). A limitation when adopting a phenomenological approach is the risk of over-focusing on subjective experience and inter-subjective constructions of reality – such as experiences and constructions of Self and Other – at the expense of other important aspects, such as those related to power or structure: 'Questions about conditions outside the actors that may influence their understanding of reality remain, however, unanswered' (Pettersen 1997:15, my translation).

Important examples of such conditions in my research are the political histories of national and other identities, including the roles of governments and educational systems in the formation of such identities, and – to a lesser extent – vice versa. Other examples are the influence of 'Western', European, and various national debates on immigration, and material, demographic and economic issues. Such conditions are also (inter)subjectively practised, perceived and interpreted; yet we cannot simply 'wish them away'. Phenomenologists do acknowledge this: 'All typifications of common-sense thinking are themselves integral elements of the concrete historical socio-cultural Lebenswelt within which they prevail as taken for granted and as socially approved.' (Schütz 1962, as quoted in Berger and Luckmann 1991:28). Whether we choose to call these conditions 'concrete historical socio-cultural Lebenswelt', 'context', or 'reality', they are there to be dealt with, and a phenomenological approach does not help us very far along in this process.

A discursive approach

The problem is taken up and developed further methodologically in what is generally known as discourse analysis, or discursive approaches. Can these

approaches then help us link the intersubjective with its wider contexts? Keeping this question in mind, I shall in chapters 4 and 5 move on to a more discursive view of interaction in, and outside, the classroom. An outline of what I see as the relevant aspects of such approaches may therefore be useful. In studies of majorities and majority/minority relations, two discursive approaches stand out as particularly helpful and are often used in combination. One of them derives from linguistic structuralism and post-structuralism and builds to a large extent on the works of Saussure, Barthes and Derrida. Techniques from linguistic analysis, particularly deconstruction, reveal hidden hierarchies in the construction of identities. Analyses of binary oppositions such as **self**-other, **white**-black, ***autochtonen***-*allochtonen* (these words for native and alien, derived from the Greek, are standard in Dutch discourse), **Norwegian**-immigrant, etc., show not only how meaning is generated through contrast, but also how power relations inform this process. In these examples, all taken from majority discourse about 'ethnic relations', the categories **self**, **white**, ***autochtonen***, and **Norwegian** refer to the majority, those who dominate the discourse and have the power of definition.

An analysis along these lines also highlights an aspect of majority discourse that I pointed at earlier: Ostensibly about minority-majority relations, such discourse is usually explicit chiefly, often exclusively, on the characteristics of the minorities. Yet precisely through this it implicitly and simultaneously serves another purpose, namely to construct and consolidate the majority identity, as in the processes of Orientalism (Said 1978) and Africanism (Morrison 1992). Furthermore, as Coronil (as quoted in Turner 1994:418)[15] points out, 'Challenging Orientalism entails disrupting Occidentalism as an ensemble of representational strategies and practices whose effect is to produce "Selfhood" as well as "Otherness".' In other words, the 'self' that is revealed through majority discourses about 'the other' is just another part of 'the production of conceptions of the world that (...) separates its components into bounded units (...) and therefore (...) intervenes, however unwittingly, in the reproduction of existing asymmetrical power relations' (ibid.).

Applied in isolation, however, this approach limits us to the domain of language, so that we do not reach beyond the inter-subjective: the contexts and implications of the insights gained remain obscure. The other discursive approach I shall briefly discuss is genealogical analysis as outlined by

[15] Turner refers to Coronil (in press), a reference I have traced to Coronil (1996)

Foucault. This approach is of particular relevance here since it highlights the importance of the historical embeddedness of knowledge, and of the inseparableness of knowledge and power.

Can such an approach then help us link the inter-subjective with its wider contexts? First of all, where is the subject here, and where is the object? The way Foucault uses these concepts can be confusing to the social scientist who sees the production of knowledge as a process where the scientist, the subject, is the agent of power, in contrast to the passive role of the object of study. The confusion derives chiefly, I believe, from the fact that to Foucault, the independently acting subject is impossible: it is not the subject, but the discourse that produces meaning. The subject as such is produced within discourse. Paradoxically, through the processes of objectification, human beings become subjects, 'in both senses of the word, that is subject to "control and dependence" and tied to an "identity by a conscience of self-knowledge" ' (Foucault 1982: 212, as quoted in Smart 1985: 107). The exercise of power is inextricable not only from the production of knowledge, but also from resistance to the exercise of power, as in the case of labelling. In other words, both those who study and those who are studied are produced as subjects and as objects through the very production of meaning, to which they both contribute.

Central to the production of meaning in my research are the discourses of the 'national order of things' (Malkki 1995). Topics such as immigration, national identities, multiculturalism, and 'majority values' like equality (in Norway) or tolerance (in the Netherlands) are important in these discourses of national 'self' and non-national 'other'. In my project, the classroom is the main, though far from the only, site of these and other discourses, and what happens there would be the point of departure of a Foucaultian analysis. It might be tempting to analyse classroom practices as the intended effects of systematic measures, in accordance with specific ideologies, such as nationalism. It is, however, important to stress the 'complexity of the classroom' (Kendall and Wickham 1999:124), so that one does not over-simplify the application of discourse analysis along cause-effect or even conspiratory lines. Rather, how meaning is produced in the classroom should be seen as the result of, or part of, the confluence and interplay of a multiplicity of (most likely) conflicting intentions and strategies. 'What reason perceives as its necessity, or rather, what different forms of rationality offer as their necessary being, can perfectly well be shown to have a history; and the network of contingencies from which it emerges can be traced.' (Foucault 1983:206, as quoted in Smart 1985:141). An analysis

along these lines opens for an understanding of a good deal of the complexity and contexts of which all the people in the classroom are part, including myself.

Discursive approaches may thus allow us to see beyond the subjects and objects of research, to larger – though still intersubjective – contexts of meaning. Yet there might just be other contexts than the discursive. What about material reality? What about the 'really real', within which the realms of experience, discourse and meaning are intertwined and embedded?

A critical realism oriented approach

Whether I choose to limit the study to the two classrooms, to the two schools, to the two local communities, the two systems of education, or even to the two countries, there will necessarily be outside influences: the families, friends and personal histories of staff and pupils, mass media, related research, historical, political and economical conditions, international relations, and so on. How to keep all this in mind and still focus on one project is the challenge: the 'contexts' of social research comprise just about the whole world.

A methodological approach inspired by what is known as 'critical realism' may prove useful in that it provides a means of *explicitly* including contexts and complexity in the analysis, rather than seeing them as unavoidable disturbances. I chiefly take as my point of departure to this philosophy – associated with Roy Bhaskar and others – Sayer (1992), Smith (1998) and Lopéz and Potter (2001). Rather than adopting a total critical realist conviction, I should like to make use of some of the central concepts and modes of thinking of this philosophy of science. I especially find the closely related concepts of 'open systems', 'complexity', and 'necessary/ contingent relations' helpful. In the following, I shall try to disentangle them from a body of texts which I have to admit that I find, on the whole, unusually difficult to read.[16]

'Critical realism' presents itself as a philosophy of science that has developed from a 'critique of positivism in natural science' (López and Potter 2001:8), and a way out of the supposed impasse of 'postmodernism'

[16] The language and examples which realists (critical and others) use are largely technical, derived, as they are, from the natural sciences. I find this disturbing and alienating: can these people really be talking about something that concerns me?

and 'relativism'.[17] It thus aspires to offer a 'critique of positivism and empiricism' (ibid.:10) alternative to that of 'postmodernism'. Instead of setting up a methodological barrier between the natural and the social sciences, it posits that positivism is as misguided, and misguiding, in the natural as it is in the social sciences. The ontological basis for this argument is that 'nature is an open system exactly in the same manner in which the experimental system is not' (ibid:11). I shall not go further into the intricacies of this argument here, since it is of little direct relevance to my own material. I mention it chiefly because it brings up the concept of 'open systems', which is contrasted to the concept of the 'closed systems' of controlled experiments. In other words, any attempt to de-contextualise the objects of study is vehemently rejected. Furthermore, rather than using the word 'context', which indicates a view of a stable and simple object as part of a complex, larger whole, critical realists prefer to talk about 'external' and 'internal' complexity. What is conventionally and rather imprecisely (cf. Melhuus 2002:82) referred to as 'context' thus emerges as another, larger object, characterised by internal as well as by external complexity. 'In open systems objects have complex internal structures and properties but also (…) exist in complex multiple relations with other things with their own internal complexity' (Smith 1998:348). Structures 'can be defined as sets of internally related objects or practices (and) include not only big social objects such as the international division of labour but small ones at the interpersonal and personal levels (e.g. conceptual structures)…' (Sayer 1992:92). Such a view de-centres as well as loosens the somewhat static concept of 'context' and directs the attention to relations, dynamics and positions. True, 'context is doubly constructed, first by the people themselves and then by the anthropologist' (Melhuus 2002:87) but from this perspective, the anthropologist – with her own internal and external complexities – also comes into view, as one of many interconnected objects.

The relations between different levels of interaction may provide one example of such complexities. Take, for instance, the many policy docu-

[17] Although overly 'postmodern' writings have proliferated in anthropology as in other social sciences, it is surely unfair to proclaim that 'postmodernism' has been hegemonic. Most anthropologists have surely continued to take seriously the concerns of 'real people' throughout the past decades, rather than falling into the traps of excessive, narcissistic reflexivity, superficial celebration of difference, and extreme relativism. However, in terms of theory, reality-oriented anthropology may perhaps be said to have made fewer steps forward than one might have wished for. In this sense, I agree that there has been a dominance of 'postmodernism' in anthropology, too, a dominance which has led to a theoretical slow-down.

ments in the fields of multiculturalism and education: what are the contexts that form them and that they form, and what are the mechanisms that bind them together? A phenomenological approach will only tangent such issues, whereas a discursive methodology may, at first glance, seem adequate. One problem with discursive approaches, however, is that they tend to conflate levels of interaction and treat all data as if they were on one level, from micro to macro, from classroom interaction to government to mass media and back. Each of these levels of interaction, in critical realist terms, exists as part of a structure of necessary relations between interdependent objects.[18] Accordingly, what one needs to do is to 'identify the structured relations relevant to a given situation, the conditions which activate the structures and the mechanisms which produce events' (Smith 1998:319).

'Power' as a concept seems to be rarely used by critical realists, yet power is everywhere in their writings. Concepts like 'mechanisms' and 'causal powers' seem to be centre stage here, as are the close links between critical realism and Marxism. 'Mechanisms' are defined as 'the ways in which the structure of an object can, within definite conditions, generate an observable event' (Smith 1998:299). Closely related to this concept is the view of 'causal powers' or 'liabilities' as the capacity of a structured object 'to do certain things in certain conditions' (loc. cit.), as well as its susceptibility to 'effects from the same or different conditions' (loc. cit.). The conditions that thus form and inform the object are 'themselves made up of other structures and their mechanisms (loc. cit.). At the bottom of this is Bhaskar's understanding of causality as a property of 'structures' as well as of 'agents'[19]. As Sayer (1992:93) puts it: '[T]he structure of social relations, together with their associated resources, constraints or rules, may determine what happens, even though these structures only exist where people reproduce them. In such circumstances it is futile to expect problems to be resolved by the discovery of a guilty persons [sic] and their replacement by a different individual.' In other words, there is an underlying view of power as structural and relational – dialectical, dynamic, and complex – rather than as substantive or located in the individual human agent – as in the view of power as deliberate dominance.

Let me try to relate this way of thinking more directly to my own material. This, along with some definitions, may help me along in what is

[18] What links them, as I see it, is agency: events and practices are brought about by people who move between the levels.

[19] As opposed to Rom Harré's view of 'causal power [as] the sole property of human agents' (López and Potter 2001:16).

still relatively unfamiliar territory. Nationalism as a 'big social object' has its own internal and external complexities. Fundamentally, it depends on ideas about a national Self, as opposed to its Others, as well as to ideas about how these Selves and Others relate to a particular, 'national' territory. I would thus argue that, similar to 'the most basic relation of capitalism – the capital/wage labour relation' (Sayer 1992:91), *the most basic relation of nationalism is the Self/Other relation. Nationalism is also a structuring principle, an ideology that is ubiquitously manifest in the organisation of society. The Self/Other relation itself is a necessary relation, in that its parts are mutually dependant on each other for their definition: the Self is what it is depending on its relation to the Other, and vice versa*. If one may thus posit the relations between the national Self and its Others as a structure in the national order of things, then one should be able to analyse how these social categorisations are embedded in history and continually form a basis for interaction. This also paves the way for an approach to comparison that takes complexity into consideration.

On anthropological comparison beyond the closed system

'There's only one method in social anthropology,
the comparative method – and that's impossible.'
Evans-Pritchard (as quoted in Needham 1975:365)

One may well ask if I – what with the myriad of relationships and events of school everyday life,[20] with the view of school as a mediator in the expression and reproduction of social and cultural norms, as well as three theoretical approaches – would not have had enough complexity on my hands without making this a comparative project on top of it all. To the contrary, I believe that comparison may help me sort out the more relevant parts of the complexities. Comparison, I would contend, has brought out what otherwise would have been less visible to me – especially what comes across, implicitly, as the 'normal' and the 'processes of normalization' (Smith 1998:347). Comparing processes on corresponding levels of inter-action has the effect of creating a necessary distance to phenomena one may

[20] According to Wadel's (1991) formula for calculating the number of relationships at hand, with 19 people in the classroom there were 171 relationships for me to study in each of the two classrooms. Add to this the parents, as well as other teachers and other children who also related to the members of 'my' groups.

otherwise be too familiar with. A comparative view also makes it easier to see which parts of the larger contexts are of particular relevance to each case (Lidén 2002).

There are different ways of thinking about comparison. Much has been said about comparison in anthropology (e.g. Dumont 1986, Holy 1987, Barth 1990, Eriksen 1991, Nader 1994, Kaarhus 1996, Krogstad 2000, Gingrich and Fox 2002), and I will not attempt to give an overview of the discussions here. That has already been eminently done, perhaps especially by Nader (1994) and Kaarhus (1996). Rather, I shall build on these two latter contributions, as well as on Gingrich and Fox (2002), in trying to clarify my own position. Anthropological comparative methodology has moved from 'Galton's problem', a closed-systems problem indeed: 'the possibility of interconnections between the presumably "independent" units in a comparative study' (Kaarhus 1996:141–2) – via attempts, as in Holy (1987) to minimalize variation, 'that is, through restrictions on the scope of comparison in order to create some form of "controlled comparisons" ' (Kaarhus 1996:148) – to Nader's (1994) call for a 'comparative consciousness'. Krogstad (2000) as well as Kaarhus (1996) both attempt to make use of Nader's somewhat general concept. In other words, there is certainly a general movement in social anthropology away from a view of the comparison of closed systems as ideal –but towards what? The 'comparative consciousness' that Nader recommends and the way I, at least, understand the implications of critical realism for comparison may not be that far apart.

The die-hard legacy of empiricism thus encourages one to think of comparison as requiring the controlled conditions of closed systems. Comparison within – or between, if, indeed, this distinction is still valid (see also Barth 1999) – complex, open systems is a completely different task, which involves other kinds of methodological problems. Critical realism has not solved the methodological problems of comparison (see Wad 2001 for a discussion of this) but at least it makes clear the ontological reasons for these problems. This, to my mind, is an important step in the right direction. Indeed, this approach helps us understand why the problems can not be solved once and for all. One way to get round them, as I see it, is to be as explicit as possible about the complexities – internal and external – of the objects and structures one wants to compare.

As Melhuus (2002:82) points out in *Anthropology, by Comparison*, 'anthropology lacks an adequate theory of context'. She asks, '[i]s there a difference between the context the anthropologist construes in order to render phenomena meaningful and the context people themselves create?'

and argues that 'to develop a theory of context is at the same time to develop a comparative method'. I should like to follow the thread offered by Strathern in the preface to the same volume. This may help me establish a link between critical realism and anthropology. [21] She points out that 'anthropologists would be the first to acknowledge that epistemological objects at once contain relations within themselves and are intrinsically relatable to others' (xiv) which appears very similar to Smith's statement as quoted above: 'In open systems objects have complex internal structures and properties but also (…) exist in complex multiple relations with other things with their own internal complexity'.

The contexts at hand include two cities, two schools, two teachers, two groups of children, and two groups of parents. They also comprise two countries, with two histories, two political and administrative systems, and two educational systems. These are open systems, all, in turn, and necessarily, parts of overlapping and wider contexts. Keeping this in mind, I will venture to describe and compare them as corresponding phenomena, with description and comparison as parallel processes. The emphasis throughout will be on relations and boundaries between Selves and Others, in order to compare the Norwegian to the Dutch structures. This should also open for considering the implications of historically specific images of Self and Other for the organisation of society and for different ways of dealing with difference.

Comparing the Self to an Other

One of the two open systems that I compare is what one might – arguably – summarise as my 'home', or as my 'own culture'. Löfgren (1999) specifically stresses 'the need for an anthropology at home to be comparative. Any study of the national must be transnational in order to counteract different forms of shortsightedness. Such a comparative framework also calls for a transhistorical approach, a historical anthropology, in order to denaturalize and problematize the ways in which the nation-state works. It may illustrate the specificity of local paths of nation-building, but also the ways in which such projects constantly copy each other.' (Löfgren 1999:80–1).

My points of, and terms of, reference and those of my 'informants' are all parts of larger contexts – contexts which overlap to a significant extent. This makes it all the more necessary to create a distance – not between the

[21] In the work of Bruno Latour (e.g. 1999), this connection is already established, but his is the only explicit use of critical realism that I have found in anthropology.

subject-researcher and the object-'informant', but rather between the researcher on the one hand, and the contexts and concepts I share with many of my 'informants' on the other. For instance, in both countries I tried to see which social categories and which differences that appeared to be relevant (or not relevant), by whom, when, and so on, rather than assuming that some kinds of difference were necessarily more important than others. Ideals like 'equality' and 'multiculturalism' mean different things to different individuals and in different contexts. How they, and other ideals, are expressed and how they are perceived to manifest themselves will vary in corresponding ways. Comparing the two field experiences may thus turn out to be one way to uncover the underlying assumptions implicit in each of them.

Not surprisingly, I found that this was more difficult in the Norwegian context. There is always a risk of inadvertently reifying and essentialising the phenomena one sets out to study and analyse, and this is perhaps especially so in the case of 'anthropology at home'. My Dutch material is generally more explicit in this regard although there, too, I took some things for granted. On the other hand, relevant information and literature were less accessible to me in the Netherlands than in Norway, where I knew the language as well as the society much better.

Bruce Kapferer, too, rejects a 'comparative method as it is often represented in more positivist social science approaches' (Kapferer 1998:xiii). Elsewhere, he also writes: 'My awareness of an Australian ideological reality is sharpened through the exploration of a Sinhalese Buddhist nationalist world. A dialectical tackling […] between the respective ideologies reveals their critical dimensions' (Kapferer 1989:6). Similarly, as in the present study, my awareness of a Norwegian ideological reality has been sharpened through my exploration of its Dutch counterpart. I should like my presentation and analysis to have some of the dialectical tackling to which Kapferer refers, and which Barth, as far as I can see, also calls for: '[W]e should not think of comparative method as a procedure whereby we compare separately constituted descriptions of two or more cases: we should engage comparison as actively as possible in the analysis of each separate case' (Barth 1999:88).

Unlike Barth, who explicitly and extensively compares the 'Others' of his 'Western Self' to each other, and unlike Kapferer, who compares the nationalism of an 'Oriental Other' (Sinhalese) to that of his own 'Western Self' (Australian), both the national Selves I compare are 'Western'. Studies of nationalisms and ethnic relations necessarily form part of larger discourses about Others, and may, as Phoenix argues, be 'both recursive and

new; disruptive of, and collusive with, the status quo' (Phoenix 1998:871). A systematic comparison such as the one at hand may show how the dichotomy 'The West and the Rest' conceals more than it reveals. Comparing two Western' countries, rather than one 'Western' and one 'Other' country, or implicitly comparing one or two 'Other' countries to the anthropologist's 'Western' base, thus makes for breaking up the dichotomy. As we shall see, these two 'Western' countries are not identical, even when it comes to presumably 'fundamental Western values' like individualism, equality, tolerance and democracy, and to the ways in which one defines 'Self' and 'Other'. That said, the two countries I have selected for comparison may become schematised in the process. This would seem to be a risk that is inherent in every venture of comparison. However, precisely through the combination of approaches that I have discussed in this chapter, it should be possible to render a reasonably nuanced image of each of the two countries.

Chapter 3

Two schools – many places

In the above, I have outlined some methodological and theoretical concerns, especially as regards the comparison of the two groups of children and of their schools as parts of other contexts. The present chapter serves a twofold function. I shall present and compare the two schools, the two groups of children, and the two form teachers. In the process, I hope to highlight some relevant similarities and differences not only between and within the two empirical cases but also between and within their larger contexts. Taking as my point of departure central segments of my empirical material I shall also indicate how they relate to smaller and larger fields of complexity. Presentations and descriptions of children and staff as well as their physical surroundings take up the first half of this chapter. With a Foucaultian understanding of institutions and discipline as my point of departure, I proceed to describe the organisation of space and time in the two schools. In the light of phenomenological approaches to time and space, I then discuss how such organisations of 'place' were experienced differently by the people I introduced at the beginning of this chapter, and suggest how experiences of place may also entail a dynamics of experiences of national selves and others.

Approaching Bakken: surroundings

Oslo is the hilly capital of a hilly country, rising unevenly yet unmistakably from the sea front to the forested mountains surrounding it. The city centre is small and relatively flat, cut into two by the river, which is less remarkable in itself than it is through symbolically separating the more bourgeois west end from the traditionally working-class east end. As the New York Times boldly puts it 'Today, there are two Oslo worlds. In western Oslo, shoppers bustle, some clad in sleek furs, and restaurants fill with families paying for specialities like salted lamb ribs with turnip mash. In eastern Oslo, dingy streets fill with some of the 130,000 immigrants, asylum seekers and other foreigners who live here.' (NYT 2002).

In a residential area between east and west, just west of the river, lies Bakken primary and lower secondary school. Its nearest neighbours on all sides are rows of three and four storied apartment blocks from the 1930s.

Beyond those, behind the school, is a park with trees, lawns, and fountains. In the opposite direction is the local thoroughfare, which many of the children have to cross on their way to and from school. Some of them take the bus on this street, a few stops, from their homes on the east side. On the other side of the thoroughfare are more apartment blocks, a small, gravelled playing field, and beyond that again is the parish church. There is another playing field closer to the school, a few minutes' walk along one of the quiet residential streets, past a small shop that sells a limited range of groceries, newspapers, sweets, and tobacco. There is a larger grocery shop near the church, and more shops and a post office to the west of the park, where the apartment blocks are slightly older, the spaces between greener, and the apartments larger and more expensive. From Bakken to the city centre proper is about five minutes by bus, or a fifteen-minute walk.

Approaching de Bijenkorf: surroundings

Amsterdam is a flat city in a country as flat as the sea. It is surrounded by the sea, as well as by the great lake the IJ, and by *polders* – land ingeniously created, or 're-claimed', from the sea. Nowhere can the phrase 'a socially constructed landscape' be taken more literally. Criss-crossed with canals and crowded with tourists, the small city centre covers the half-circle around the original dam on the Amstel river, encircled by the Singel canal on all sides except to the north, where the Central Station lies on the shore of the IJ. The social map of Amsterdam and of each of its urban districts is more of a mosaic than the east-west Oslo map. Although Amsterdam north of the IJ is a more working-class district than the older and wealthier residential areas south of the centre, local variations are the rule rather than the exception. The publicly-run primary school de Bijenkorf lies in a quiet residential area north of the IJ, with everything from sad-looking council apartment blocks to villas with their own secluded gardens in the immediate vicinity. Across the street, just behind the school, lies a Turkish Islamic centre. There is a large shopping centre a few minutes further down the road. Just on the other side of the shopping centre, there are two other primary schools. My bus stops a block away from de Bijenkorf, just outside a small fast-food shop, with another primary school just across the road, and yet another one just beyond it. Going by bus to the Central Station takes just over ten minutes, although we are really on the outskirts of Amsterdam here, with villages and farmland on the other side of the Northern ring road a few hundred metres away.

People

The children

As I entered the classroom on my first day at Bakken, their teacher Kari welcomed me in front of the class, and asked me to tell them about the project. I told them that I was an anthropologist, which they did not understand, and that I did social research, which made them look less confused. I also said that I wanted to stay in class with them for the whole term, to see what they did all the time, and that I would probably want to ask them things and make notes and that I would finally write a book about them. They seemed to like that. Kari then asked the children to introduce themselves to me – to 'tell me their names, where they were from, who their best friends were, and other important things'. This they did, one by one. They were sitting in twos, girls with girls and boys with boys. Most of the girls sat on the side that was closest to the door, and most of the boys sat on the side that was closest to the windows. A small blond boy at the front of the room, over by the window, was asked to begin. He introduced himself:

> 'My name is Knud, and I am half Danish. My best friend is Fredrik in 7B. And I like swimming and PC games.'
>
> The brown-eyed boy next to him said: 'I'm Alex, and I'm half Greek. Marco is my best friend, and I like to play football and do *ju jitsu*.'

And so they continued, until the whole class had told me 'who they were', in terms of names, degree and nature of non-Norwegian-ness, their best friends, and what they liked to do. The emphasis on countries of origin, introduced by Kari – possibly, but not necessarily, because of me – lent an air of 'celebration of difference' to the introduction. Kari asked me where I wanted to sit, and I found myself an empty chair at the back of the spacious room, between the one computer, a bookshelf, and a large table.

Fieldwork had begun, and I could start to fill in the picture of 'who they were'. Their own subdivisions of 6B followed criss-crossing and negotiable lines, different layers of categorisation being relevant in different situations. These were evident for instance in their seating patterns, and in the innumerable ways in which they communicated with, or ignored, one another. Their categorisations were also manifest in their use of clothes, music and food, in their manners of working or not working, of succeeding or not succeeding in the eyes of each other and of the teachers. I also interviewed them, one by one, giving them the opportunity to verbalise their social categorisations in a different setting. The following were some of their

own main criteria for subdividing 6B: First of all, there was what the children appropriately referred to as the noisy half of the room and the quiet half of the room. The noisy half was peopled mostly by boys, plus two girls who were each others' 'bestest friend'. The quiet half was peopled exclusively by girls. Most of the time, the desks were placed in pairs. All the pairs were either girl-girl or boy-boy. This was true even when Kari from time to time intervened in their (normally self-arranged) seating patterns, usually to integrate children who were not chosen by anyone to sit together. Two of the girl pairs were each other's 'bestest friends'. The other children did not maintain dyadic relationships, but sat with one of those they had introduced to me as their friends on the first day. 'Friends', as it emerged through fieldwork, were mostly children who met out of school as well as working and playing together in school. In the noisy half of the room, there was a good deal of competitive creativity in coming up with new names and nicknames for individuals and subdivisions – they were each other's 'slaves' and 'masters', they referred to racial differences in 'edible' names such as 'yoghurt', 'chocolate', 'potato' and 'onion', they invented an 'in-group' whose members varied by the minute, and so on. Within the quiet, girls-only half of the room, there was concern with the seriousness of changing friendships, with being compatible, with school work, and with the often heartless comments from the other half of the room. There was also a 'liminal' zone between the two halves of the room. This was peopled by three children, two girls and a boy, who did not have their 'friends' in 6B. Kari was constantly trying to find combinations that would include these three even, on one occasion, to the extent of placing the boy together with one of the two girls. This in fact worked quite well for the two of them as seen in isolation, but was an anomaly in the class with its strict, though informal, gender segregation, and did not last.

My first day with the children in de Bijenkorf's group 8 was very different from that at Bakken. My assistant Karin and I arrived just before class begun and were briefly welcomed by their teacher Sandra, whom we had not met before:

> Sandra quickly said that Mark had told her about us, and if we'd just like to squeeze in at the back by the row of computers, she would get ready for class. The children were coming in and sat down, glancing curiously at us. Their chairs and desks were arranged in three rows, two and two desks in pairs. When all were seated, and class was about to begin, Sandra told the children: 'We have two ladies here today'. All turned around to look at us, and she continued: 'One of them speaks English so you can practise English with her. Her name is – what's your

> name again?' Me (in Dutch) : 'Marie Louise – and I do speak some Dutch as well'. Sandra: 'The other lady is Dutch. She is -?' Karin: 'Karin'. Sandra: 'These two ladies will be here for a while, in order to see how and what we are doing, for a study. They will be observing. Any questions?' There were no questions. We seemed to become invisible as they worked on their assignments, which were written on the blackboard. Yet some of the children turned surreptitiously a few times to look at us, surely wondering, as I wondered: 'Who are they?'

Throughout fieldwork, as in Bakken, I gradually found out some of the things that marked de Bijenkorf's group 8 out as individuals and sub-groups – their names, some of their preferences and interests, their backgrounds, the relations between them. Their seating arrangements were largely decided by Sandra, apart from the first day I was there. She later told me she had let them choose on the first day, and then moved them around to minimise disturbances. Throughout, their desks formed three rows of pairs, so that there were no two halves of the room. There was an overweight of boys in this group. On the first day, the five girls had all chosen to sit together, in a pair and a triplet in the middle row (there were only four girls after the first week – the fifth girl was moved down to group 7 after an evaluation of her level). Apart from the girls' preference to keep together and separate from the boys, it is difficult to generalise about their categorizations from the way they chose to sit, either at the beginning of term or at any other time when they were given a choice. I would suggest that this was because many different sets of criteria were applied at the same time: school achievements, race and ethnicity, physical strength and football performance, and so on. In the classroom, most of the activity was focused around Sandra and work – although, of course, there was often what she called 'noise'. The children tended to sit with their peers – those who were taught on the same level (of which there were three). The levels again tended to follow ethnic lines, with the white, Dutch children doing better than the black Surinamese or Antillese children, who again did better than the Turkish ones. There was also a tendency to polarise around the two physically biggest boys: one white, Dutch, and one black, Surinamese as well as around the two most assertive girls – again, one white Dutch and one black Surinamese. Most of the children spent their leisure time with their 'friends' rather than with their classmates. 'Friends' here meant children who went to other schools, neighbours and, above all, the children of their parents' friends.

Gatekeepers

The first person I met at Bakken was one of the school secretaries, who was sitting in the anteroom and let me into the principal's office. I had already made an appointment with the principal (*rektor*), Hans, on the telephone. A Norwegian man in his forties, he was relatively new in the job as the head of Bakken primary and lower secondary school as well as of the after school activities (*skolefritidsordning*). He had different kinds of responsibility for over 500 individuals – about 75 administrative and teaching staff as well as more than 450 pupils. He was also responsible for his school versus the municipal school authorities. In practice, this meant that one important part of his job had to be the delegation of tasks. I did not have much direct contact with Hans (nor with the secretaries) after the initial conversation where we discussed my project. My project and daily contact he delegated to the inspector, Pernille, and to the two sixth-grade form teachers Kari in 6B and Liv in 6A, of whom Kari became my closest contact in the school. I also interviewed Pernille and Kari, but not Hans, towards the end of fieldwork.

At de Bijenkorf, the first person I met was the caretaker (*concierge*), Femke, who asked Karin and me to wait for a few minutes in the principal's office while she told the principal (*directeur*), Mark, that we were there. While Karin and I were waiting to meet the principal of de Bijenkorf, we looked at the pictures on the wall. They were photographs of the groups of children, with their teachers, and we tried to guess which group and teacher would be 'ours'. We noticed that one person appeared in every photo. This was a tall, dark man, to my eyes not black but not white either. We whispered to each other that this was probably the home-language teacher. The door opened, and the man in the photographs introduced himself to us as Mark, the principal. In spite of our different backgrounds, Karin and I had fallen into the same trap of stereotypes, and were both equally surprised by the fact that the principal of de Bijenkorf was not white, not originally Dutch.

Mark, then, was a Surinamese man of 50 who had been in his present job for almost 20 years. He was in charge of about half as many people as Hans, just over 20 staff and 250 children, and was answerable to the school participation council as well as to the local district (*stadsdeel*) authorities. He would substitute as a teacher when necessary, and in general maintained a warm and informal, personal relationship to staff and children. After our initial conversation, he left the daily contact to the form teacher, Sandra, but when we met throughout fieldwork – in the corridors, or in class – he would

always ask me how my research was going. I interviewed him, as well as Sandra and some of the other staff, at the end of the fieldwork period.

Contrary to any stereotype of Norwegian society as totally egalitarian, Bakken was quite hierarchically organised. Compared to Mark, Hans had relatively little contact with the children. Although he was ultimately responsible for everybody and everything in the school, his 'rule' was largely indirect. Both principals were referred to and addressed by their first names by staff and children alike. At de Bijenkorf, this was mutual. At Bakken, only the most unruly of the pupils would be known to Hans by their first names, and then only because their form teachers had sent them, via Pernille, to his office for repeated serious talks. The children would rarely mention Hans at all, and if they did so, it would be in the context of such talks: 'Did you hear, xx had to go to Hans for what he did!' Mark, too, had that function in de Bijenkorf, but this was far from being his main means of contact with the pupils.

Form teachers

The form teachers were my main adult contacts in school. At de Bijenkorf, Sandra was the teacher in *groep 8*, the only eighth form class. A woman in her late thirties, she, like Mark, originally came from Suriname. She was educated as a teacher there and had taught in a primary school, a secondary school as well as at a teacher's training college in Suriname before she came to the Netherlands. She had worked in a senior secondary school and another primary school in the Netherlands before she came to de Bijenkorf, where she had now worked for five years. At de Bijenkorf, she taught only the oldest children, alternating from year to year between groups 7 and 8. This is what she told me about her job priorities in the early days of my fieldwork:

> This group was quite difficult last year, but I have worked very hard with them and they are doing quite well now. (…) We don't have many conflicts but when something happens, I deal with it immediately. (…) The children like me and I like them too. (…) We have a lot of work to get through this year. I teach them on three different levels. Some of the children are doing very well and will get a high score on the CITO-test. Most of them will be near the average, though, and some will probably get a low score.

Later, when I commented on her dedication to the school, she declared:

> 'I do everything to fix the school computers now, sometimes till midnight, and they tell me I am married to the school. The parents see me working like that and they tell me I'm crazy, but I tell them no, I'm not crazy. I want my whole school, every child, to be able to use a

> computer. That's why I'm so busy here. And most of the people here in school are not that rich – some are poor, and they don't have a computer in their house, and I find that if you look at the things that happen in the world, every child has to learn how to work on a computer.'

Kari, the form teacher in 6B at Bakken was a woman in her fifties. She came from a rural community in south-east Norway and had spent the first few years of her teaching career in a Sámi area in the far north of Norway. She had then specialised in education for children with special needs, and worked at an institution for physically disabled children before she got her present job at Bakken. She had been at Bakken now for almost 20 years, and had followed the class that was now 6B since the first grade. She was also the primary school level's social teacher (*sosiallærer*) and had her own office for that part of her job. Her priorities she described to me as follows, in the interview towards the end of fieldwork:

> 'I worked hard the first few years to integrate the class. It is such a nice class, even if they are a little noisy sometimes. I do think that the most important part of my job is to teach them self-confidence, to help them believe that they are good at things. And, of course, the social skills, to understand other people's feelings, to be together, to be tolerant. I mean, they have to learn what's in the textbooks too. But these other things must come first.'

These teachers do have some fundamental things in common: both are women, both are particularly experienced and dedicated teachers, and both like and respect the children they teach. At the same time, these two brief introductions may serve to illustrate some striking differences not just between the two individual teachers, but also between the two schools and societies. Below I shall consider some of these differences, especially as regards the teachers' priorities in the job. First it should be emphasised that other teachers might not have lent themselves as easily to this task. For instance, from the first day at de Bijenkorf it was pointed out to me that Sandra was unusually strict, and indeed she herself told me so later. In parallel, Kari's colleague Liv had a completely different teaching style from Kari, laying much more stress on learning the curriculum and much less on social skills. Be it therefore far from me to lay down any general claim in the direction that teachers in the Netherlands are necessarily stricter and more achievement-oriented than their Norwegian colleagues are. Rather, I wish to use the occasion to point out some differences between the two educational institutions that the individual differences between Sandra and Kari helped me see. As I spent more time with them, and with writing about them, my understanding of the differences between the two women's teaching styles

also changed. My immediate impressions had been of Sandra as the one who exercised power over her pupils and Kari as the lax and even indulgent one. However, it became increasingly clear to me that one might just as well see Kari as the one who, subtly and indirectly exercised power over 'her' children as total persons, forming their personalities, whereas Sandra's grip on the children in group 8 was very much limited in time as well as in the part of them and their lives that she was concerned with.

Priorities in the job

The two form teachers seemed to have diametrically opposite approaches to their jobs. For Sandra, the focal point was work, work, work: the class had a lot of work to do, and she was there to make sure they did it as well as possible. For Kari, on the other hand, making the class function well socially was a primary task, and a condition for learning what was in the textbooks. It emerges from Sandra's reference to the 'CITO test' (above) that this was not simply a matter of personal preference. This test, formally 'the Final Test of Primary Education' was developed by the CITO group (an independent company, commissioned by the government). Each year, around 85 % of all primary schools in the Netherlands use this test to assess the academic level of their final-year pupils. Rather than simply testing the level of factual knowledge and quantifying the results, it tests the children's abilities to reason independently, and assesses his or her potential position within the different levels of secondary school.

The children in group 8 were in their last year of primary school, unlike the children in Norway's class 6, who were the same age. Although formally the CITO-test is not an exam and nobody actually fails, this made little difference to the children. All were acutely aware of the fact – or perceived fact – that the result of the test would decide their future. They already had clear ideas of their chances through Sandra's informal evaluation of their day-to-day work and through a system of grades applied to subject specific classroom tests throughout the school year. Everybody's grades (*cijfers*) were recorded in a special notebook, which always lay on a spare desk at the back of the room, for all the children to see.[22]

[22] The grades were as follows:
zg = *zeer goed* (very good) = 9
g = *goed* (good) = 8
rv = *ruimvoeldoende* (more than satisfactory) = 7
v = *voeldoende* (satisfactory) = 6
m = *matig* (moderately satisfactory) = 5.5
z = *zwak* (weak) = 5
o = *onvoeldoende* (not satisfactory) = 4.5

As a teacher for the oldest children, Sandra was in a key position in de Bijenkorf. Her teaching methods had proved to give better than average CITO test results. The growth in the number of pupils was, by the principal and by a public servant whom I interviewed at the urban district administration, interpreted as a consequence of de Bijenkorf's relatively high CITO ranking through several years.[23]

In the Norwegian educational system, there is no formalised evaluation in the form of marks or grades until their seventh year, when marks are introduced as part of the general day-to-day evaluation. Still, like group 8, 6B were tested in different subjects throughout the school year. When the teachers corrected the tests, they would usually give a written comment at the bottom, along with a specification of how many correct answers out of the total there were. A pupil's results were not automatically accessible to the others, nor to me. However, when the corrected tests were handed out, they would compare results. Some were more eager to do so than others, who would rarely take part in these comparisons, according to what turned out to be a predictable pattern: Those whose results were near the average were usually the most eager and would try to guess the results of those who tried to keep it to themselves, which were those with the best and the worst results. On one occasion, Kari actually did give them marks on a social science test – as she apologetically told me: 'They asked me to – anyway, it was just for fun'. Beyond the social embarrassment of being at the top or at the bottom of the class, and their parents possible concern, however, the results had no practical consequences in the foreseeable future. Only at the end of their tenth year, there would be external exams which would influence, if not determine, their choice of secondary school. In other words, 6B were not rushing, nor being driven, towards a fateful testing of their academic achievement and potential. Other things were, as Kari expressed above, more important.

The freedom of choice of school was not an ideal in the Norwegian context – on the contrary, children are expected to, and as a rule do, attend their local primary schools. Actively choosing a school is the exception to the rule. Correspondingly, a ranking of the pupils' academic achievements in primary school and a ranking of primary schools is anathema in the Norwegian system. There is no formal evaluation or comparison of primary schools. It should be mentioned, however, that every now and then the

[23] Interestingly, this 'official' interpretation stands out in contrast to Marieke's opinion below.

Conservative Party *Høyre* suggests some kind of academic ranking, sometimes of lower secondary schools, sometimes of children.[24] Such moves have routinely been met with overwhelming, though often silent, opposition – from the majority of elected politicians as well as from parents' and teachers' organisations. This reaction is, I would argue, to be understood as linked to the historically embedded ideology of the 'unified school' or *enhetsskolen*. Part of the premises for the current Norwegian version of the unified school[25] are ideas about childhood as the land of the innocent, of those who merit protection against harsh realities such as competition and failure.

Other staff

40 of Kari's 45 colleagues were white, born-and-bred Norwegians of different ages. The remaining five were Swedish, British, Spanish, Pakistani, and Italian, none of whom were form teachers at the time. Around 60 % of the staff were women. A few had worked at Bakken for many years, but there were also many young teachers who had not been there more than a year or two. According to Pernille, there had been a major change in the composition of the teaching staff the year before I was there, when many of the more experienced teachers had found better paid, non-teaching jobs in other sectors. Teachers' salaries increased markedly just after that, and this had led to a re-stabilisation of staff. Many young teachers wanted to work at Bakken because of its combination of central locality and a relatively low level of social problems. To them, this meant being able to combine an interesting job with enjoying an urban setting for their leisure activities.

6B had three main teachers. Kari, the form teacher, taught Norwegian, social studies, history and geography. In Maths, *KRL* (*Kristendom med religions- og livssynsorientering,* "Christianity with religious and ethical education"), and gym, Petter was their regular teacher. In his early twenties

[24] In January 2003, as part of a series of reforms under the Conservative (*Høyre*) Minister of Education Kristin Clemet, statistics on pupils' achievement on national, local and school levels were made accessible to the general public for the first time. The information was compiled from all pupils' results in their final, 10th, year of compulsory school (Læringssenteret 2003). The move met massive criticism from the Labour party opposition as well as from teachers' and pupils' organisations and researchers, according to *Dagsavisen* (formerly a Labour owned, now an independent newspaper) 08.01.03.

[25] The original idea of the unified school is attributed to the Czech Jan Comenius (1592-1670). Whether he would recognise as his the Norwegian *enhetsskole* is another question.

and fresh from teacher's training college, he was a conscientious and interested teacher. Pernille, the inspector, taught English and Music. She and Kari knew each other and the children very well, especially because Pernille too had taught what was now 6B since their first year. She was stricter than Kari, but at the same time maintained a close and personal relationship especially to those children who had been there since the 1st grade. Pernille was a full-time employee who shared her time between teaching and administration, with administrative tasks now taking up an increasing part of her time. Her job title, 'school inspector' may be a little misleading: in practice, she was the vice principal of Bakken primary school.

Osman, Luigi, Tone, Karsten, and Ingvill also taught some of the children in 6B as well as children from other classes. Their lessons were funded with government resources earmarked 'special tuition' of different kinds. Tone gave special tuition to children who had been diagnosed as dyslectic or otherwise had 'reading problems'. Osman gave extra tuition to those Pakistani children whose Norwegian was too poor to make full use of the regular lessons. That is, he gave them extra lessons in their regular subjects, but the language he used was Urdu. Previously, before 6B started school at all, he and Kari had taught a bilingual Norwegian-Urdu class together. This form of teaching had long been abandoned by the school, partly because classes were no longer made up of just Norwegian and Pakistani children, as they had been. Now, some children were instead taken out of regular class to 'go to Osman', who had his own classroom. Only Majid in 6B 'went to Osman' and 'went to Luigi' this year. Luigi taught Norwegian to foreign children in a classroom which was referred to as 'Luigi's room'. Himself a foreigner, as he explained it to me, he was, for this reason, particularly well qualified to do this because he knew exactly what the difficult things were, and how to explain them. In addition to his personal experience of being a foreigner, he was also formally more than qualified. He had completed training college in Italy, and had also studied political science there. In Norway he had studied pedagogics of migration (*migrasjonspedagogikk*) and Norwegian as a foreign language. He was known as a very strict teacher, and demanded that the children give him their full attention and respect. Because he was also the administrator of the school crossing patrol, where most of the 6th grade children took part, they knew him well.

Ingvill and Karsten together coached special groups for children who had 'Norwegian as a second language'. One of their groups included Cevat, Yasmin, Aman and about five children from 6A as well as the classes on

level 5 and 7. Once a week, they would all leave their regular classrooms and classmates and 'go to Ingvill and Karsten' in the gym. These were not lessons in the conventional sense of the term – there was no curriculum, and no particular subject was taught. Rather, this was an experimental form of drama and dance as therapy, designed to strengthen the participating children's self confidence and identities.

Anne was the school's, and accordingly also 6B's, Art teacher, and Rannveig was the Domestic Science teacher. These two worked in Bakken on an hourly basis, and had been there for some years. In 6A, Liv and Kristoffer shared the main subjects between them like Kari and Petter in 6B, and other teachers taught one subject each. One of the 6A boys 'went to Osman' and three or four children 'went to Luigi'. Once a week, the teachers worked together in teams in the staff room, planning tuition and excursions and discussing practical and social issues. In Kari's team were Petter, Liv and Kristoffer as well as Luigi and three form teachers from the 7th and the 5th grades.

At de Bijenkorf, being a form teacher meant teaching your group in all subjects. That is, there was a special gym teacher, but she was on sick leave most of the period I was there. Sandra and sometimes a young male supply teacher stepped in as gym teachers for group 8. Group 8 did have other teachers as well, however. If Sandra was sick, or needed to go to the dentist with her daughter (who was in group 7), Mark would usually substitute. At the end of the term, I volunteered to substitute on some such short occasions. Although Sandra was a full-time teacher, she was also the school's computer specialist and generally a person whose competence was wanted around the school. Most Tuesdays would therefore be 'non-Sandra' days in group 8. The first month or so, Else was their Tuesday teacher, as well as substituting for some days when Sandra had hurt her shoulder in a gym lesson. Mid-October, Jan appeared as their Tuesday teacher. Mark, the principal, filled in whatever open spaces there were, bringing his mobile phone and pile of papers with him.

Else was a blond and blue-eyed Dutch woman in her thirties, who had substituted at de Bijenkorf for a while but was now moving to a new district outside Amsterdam. She had a much 'softer' teaching style than Sandra, whose results she rather ambivalently admired but whose strictness she openly disapproved of. She told me at a break the first Tuesday that: 'this group seems to need everything just so, they have no discipline without the teacher. They have to learn responsibility.' She made the same point when she asked me, after the second Tuesday, if I minded not coming every

Tuesday because she found it distracting when she was trying to manage a class that was used to strictness and not self-discipline. Yet she also admitted that 'You know, this group was known to be really difficult before Sandra took over. But now I find them very nice.'

Jan had taught at another school before and had been made redundant. The local school authorities, who employed all teachers in the publicly-run schools, sent him to de Bijenkorf to replace Else as a supply teacher. He was a Dutch man in his fifties, with a teaching style somewhere in between Sandra's and Else's.

Other teachers were also part of group 8 children's lives. Several of the other form teachers had been their teachers when they were younger. When asked in interviews how long they had been at de Bijenkorf, the children tended to answer in terms of which teachers they had been with ('sat with' in literal translation from the Dutch) before Sandra. For instance, Karin asked Jennifer how long she had been at de Bijenkorf:

> I have always been here, ever since toddler's school when I 'sat' with Maria, and then I 'sat' with Tinie for two years. After that I 'sat' with Ansje, and then with Henk. From last year I 'sit' with Sandra. Ansje and Maria are not here anymore, only Tinie and Henk are.

Tinie, the vice principal, told me she had originally wanted to be a teacher of German and Dutch, but changed her mind when she was at university[26] and decided to teach in primary school instead. She had started as a supply teacher, in 33 different schools during her first year: 'I will never forget it, a very useful experience'. She had worked in many different schools until she came to de Bijenkorf, where she had been for four years. She did not teach now, but had two functions: *interne begeleiding*, which she herself translated as 'care co-ordinator' and vice principal. My translation of *interne begeleiding* would rather be something like 'internal counselling', especially after she described her functions to me. When I interviewed her, she told me:

> 'Mark is a warm human being but he is not really a manager type, and the school needs a manager too. That's where I come in.' 'I see to it that all the children are tested systematically, in reading and writing and arithmetic, the whole school. 3-4 times a year I discuss each child with each teacher, how they are doing, which kind of teaching they need. I also observe the children in the classroom when the teachers ask me to do so. I have done my talks with Sandra now but she has not asked me

[26] – because, as she put it, she had unknowingly enrolled in a religious university and 'it was the wrong university. I quit when they started praying…'

> to observe her group this year. Why not? Well, you are there, and the room is so crowded. I don't like to go to her room because it is overcrowded. The door is open, but I prefer to talk to her elsewhere. I know all the children very well, though.'

Tinie, Mark, Henk, Marieke, Bianca, Femke the caretaker – these were some of the staff that went in and out of Sandra's room when group 8, Karin, and I were there. Of these, Mark and Sandra were Surinamese, and of the rest of the 20 or so staff, there was one other Surinamese teacher and one Indian. In all, only five of the staff were male. Tinie, Femke and Mark I have already introduced. Marieke, a Dutch woman in her late forties, was the form teacher of group 4, and eager to talk to me about her views of the school. Henk, Bianca, Femke and the others remained more peripheral to my work, and I to theirs.

The number of 'special teachers' at Bakken, especially as compared to the absence of such specialisation at de Bijenkorf, again reminds us of the Norwegian *enhetsskole* as a normalising project. Along the same lines, Kari's additional position as a 'social teacher' contrasts with Tinie's 'internal counselling' job. Where the social teacher had a wide mandate, including trying to mobilise reluctant parents in the name of 'school-home co-operation' (cf. chapter 7), and very generally help solve pupils' social problems, the internal counselling focused much more narrowly on individual learning. A comparison of these two functions may indeed illustrate a main difference between the two school systems and aims of education: in Norway, a wide scope aspiring to form the individual as a social person, and the Dutch school's focus on skills and academic achievement.

Time/space

The people we have met in this chapter filled their schools with life and activity. Schools, like other institutions, organise parts of people's lives and activities into limited and defined temporal and spatial units. As Foucault argues, schools are institutions of discipline, of normalising practices, the aim of which is conformity (Foucault 1977). Both our schools had in common the meticulous and extensive organisation of people and activities in time and space. There were evident dissimilarities between the physical surroundings that these organising processes produced, and within which they took place. Less evident, but not less present, were the differences between the norms to which people were expected to conform. In the

following, I shall describe and discuss some particular ways in which people and activities were organised in time and space in each of our two schools.

Two buildings; many years and lives

On the fine winter morning of my first day of fieldwork in Bakken school, these were my initial impressions:

> I cross the snowy, paved playground and enter the majestic, high-lofted building, an early 20th century stone construction with a central part and two wings. 6B's classroom is on the 4th floor. I walk up the stairs to the top – it is so very school, the smells, the chilliness, the echo from the old stone walls, all remind me of my own childhood. I climb winding staircases where the smooth wooden banisters have knobs on to keep kids from sliding down them, and continue down long wide corridors with tall draughty windows. There are rows of closed doors shutting each classroom off from all outsiders. Each classroom has a sign on the door, evidently made by the children, saying which class the room belongs to.

This school was large, not only built in a period of monumental architecture, but in a country where space is not a luxury. The central part held the large staff room and administration offices on the ground floor. Each class had its own room. The school nurse and social teacher had their offices on the floor below 6B's classroom. Apart from these, the classrooms, and several special rooms for lessons in music, cookery, gym, art, and so on, all was high vaults and wide corridors, of little practical but certainly of esthetical value. All rooms and corridors were spacious. In the old days of poverty, meals had been served in school to ensure that the pupils got proper food at least once a day. What was then the dining hall now functioned as a student-run cafeteria for classes 7 to 10. There was a large kitchen that was only used for cookery classes. Teachers and staff had their own facilities: the staff room, which was used for breaks and meetings, an adjoining kitchenette, the teachers' working room (much like a library reading room, with its rows of desks), toilets, and the administrative personnel's several, separate offices.

The Amsterdam school was utterly overcrowded in comparison:

> It is a one-storey 1970s brick building, quite small. Each teacher has a room for herself and her group of children. Although the teachers have put up signs with the 'name' of each group, such as 'Groep 3' or 'Groep 8', the rooms are referred to by the teachers' names. The youngest children are in the largest rooms, because they need more space for their activities. Sandra's room is very crowded, and was created out of necessity as the number of pupils grew, through putting up two partition

> walls in a corner of the corridor. All group rooms have glass doors and most have glass walls, so that everybody who passes through the corridor can see what goes on in all the rooms. Most doors are left open, too. There is no staff room. Meetings are held in classrooms during lunch or after school hours. An appendix to the corridor serves as a computer and copying machine room. The corridor doubles as school library. There is a large play-room for the youngest children, which doubles as an auditorium for the whole school, and the older children have their own gym building across the small playground. There is a special room for Dutch training for 3–5 year-olds who do not speak Dutch. This room, Bianca's room, was used for storage and has only recently been cleared. Last year, Bianca told me, one of the entrance doors had been closed off and the small space there was used to teach this group. – Then there is a kitchenette, primarily used by the ladies who make tea for those few kids who have their lunches in school. Finally, there are three categories of toilets: for the staff, for the schoolchildren, and for the 'toddlers' (*kleuters*) – the small children in groups one and two. Apart from the principal's office, which is also used as a squeeze-in for teachers at breaks, the vice principal's (Tinie's) small office is the only room that is occupied by just one person.

There are small 1970s school buildings in Norway as well, as there must be old and grand school buildings in the Netherlands. However, these particular schools serve well to illustrate not only the difference in the availability of space in the two countries, but also some of the more general historical processes that had led to the particular differences between the two school buildings. The contrast was indeed striking. Where the children at Bakken talked about the more remote parts of their building as spooky and unexplored spaces, there was nothing daunting about the modern, low and compact building of de Bijenkorf, its every corner bustling with people and activity. However, at the time when Bakken was built, space was indeed a luxury: In the first decades of the 20th century with its rapid industrialisation, Oslo's working class population grew much too fast for the building of schools and dwellings to keep up. Families lived under extremely cramped conditions. The number of pupils at Bakken was around 1500 when it was new – as compared to less than 500 today. As I was to learn, the fact that the Amsterdam school was getting increasingly overcrowded was an indication, and a result, of its success as an educational institution.

Rank

Through these two buildings passed a succession of children. Year by year, 'new' children entered, 'old' children moved on to other schools. Year by

year, too, the children within the two schools ascended to higher ranks. Group or class number one became number two, then three, and so on until the top was reached. Corresponding to this movement upwards or forwards in time and achievement was their movement in space, within the buildings, from classroom to classroom. In Norway as well as in the Netherlands, primary education is compulsive, and parents are required to send their children to school[27] from a certain age. In the Netherlands, this age is usually four, maximum five, years; in Norway, it is six years. Upon enrolment, individual children are normally put together by the school administration so that they form age groups, in Norway called *klasser* (classes) in the Netherlands *groepen* (groups), usually under the supervision of one or two adults, called teachers (Norwegian: *lærere*; Dutch: *leraren*). Children in primary school are assigned the role of pupils (Norwegian: *elever*; Dutch: *leerlingen*). Pupils must continue in primary school in the Netherlands until they have completed group 8, when they are usually 12 years old. They must leave primary school by the age of 14. Secondary school is differentiated into several academic and practical levels. School in the Netherlands is compulsory for 12 years and until the age of 16. In Norway pupils stay in primary school for seven years and spend three more years in an undifferentiated secondary school, until they have completed the compulsory 10 years of school.

The children I met in Oslo were at the time approximately 11 years old. Accordingly, they were in class 6, which due to a recent school reform, was in fact their fifth, not their sixth, of ten compulsory school years. The case of Hassan (born in Somalia) complicates this simple picture, however: according to his papers, he had just turned 12, but he looked older. He was eventually sent to the doctor in order to decide his 'biological age' and so find out if he was supposed to skip one year of school and join his 'real' age-mates. I do not know the results of the check-up, but the case illustrates how age automatically decided rank or class in Bakken. There were two classes on this level at Bakken, 6A and 6B. Kari would often address her class as a whole: '6B, listen to me now!' and they formed a social group that was clearly defined not only as an administrative unit, but as part of their identities, contrasted just as much to 6A as well as to the levels 'above' and

[27] According to the law, Norwegian parents may tutor their own children. However, this is actively discouraged by the authorities in the few cases where parents actually wish to do so. According to the Norwegian press agency NTB, in 1996 there were about 20 cases of home tuition in the whole country (NTB 1996). In the Netherlands, this right does not exist.

'under' them. In sociological terms, and in contrast to their own usage, the 'group' aspect was more evident than the 'class' aspect. This was their next last year together in primary school (*barnetrinnet*). Later, they would continue in the same school building, but with different teachers and in different constellations of children, classes, in lower secondary school (*ungdomstrinnet*).

The children I got to know in Amsterdam's de Bijenkorf were the same age as 'my' Bakken children. However, they had reached their 8th and final year of compulsory school, primary school's (*basisonderwijs*) group 8 (*groep 8*). When Sandra addressed them as a whole, she would rarely call them *groep 8*. Rather, she tended to say '*jongens* (guys), listen carefully!' They would refer to themselves as 'Sandra's group', and use 'group 8' more as a reference to their current position in time and space. Here, the rank was more of an administrative instrument, part of the machinery of teaching, and to a lesser degree constituted as a matter of identity, so that the sociological 'class' aspect was here, in fact, more salient than the 'group' aspect. That the new girl was moved 'down' to group 7 after the first few days may serve to illustrate this. Her achievements, not her age, were decisive in the rank she was given.

School years, school holidays:

Although the number of years corresponds to an equal number of calendar years, the years in school do not go from January through December as most calendars in these two countries do. In Norway, a school year (*skoleår*) starts in the middle of August and ends in June; in the Netherlands, the school year (*schooljaar*) begins in August or September and ends in June or July, depending on the area. The Netherlands is too heavily populated for the whole country to go on holiday at the same time. In Norway, this is not a problem. The period that lies between two school years and is not organised by the educational system is called the school or summer holidays (Norway: *skoleferien, sommerferien*; the Netherlands: *de vakantie, de zomer vakantie*). Shorter holidays of different kinds further subdivide the annual cycle.

I spent the months from January to June, or the second half of the school year, at Bakken. In the first half, the school year had continued uninterrupted except for the one-week autumn holidays (*høstferie*). In January, school had just started again after the one and a half week's Christmas Holidays (*juleferien*). From then to the end of June, there were the week-long winter holidays (*vinterferien*) and the slightly longer Easter holidays (*påskeferien*). On top of these come the public holidays in May and

June: May 1st (*1. mai*), May 17th (*17. mai*), Ascension day (*Kristi Himmelfartsdag*), and Whit Monday (*2. pinsedag*).

At de Bijenkorf, where I spent the first third of the school year (September through December), I arrived on the 7th of September, which was the second day of school after the six-week summer holidays. The school year was interrupted by the one-week autumn holidays (*herfstvakantie*) before I left, when the two-week Christmas holidays (*kerst*, or *kerstmes*) were just beginning. When school started again, there would be the one-week spring (*voorjaar*) holidays in February and the equally long May (*mei*) holidays to look forward to. In addition to these came the public holidays of Good Friday (*Goede Vrijdag*), Easter Monday (*tweede Paasdag*), Queen's Day (*Koninginnedag*) on April 30th, Liberation Day on May 5th, Ascension day (*Hemelvaartsdag*), and Whit Monday (*Tweede Pinksterdag*).

The summer, autumn and winter/spring holidays seemed in both schools to be simply viewed as established and necessary breaks for the children. More complex meaning is attached to the originally Christian holidays which, in both schools and countries, commemorate the birth of Jesus, his death and resurrection, his ascension to heaven, and the descent of the Holy spirit to his disciples. The national holidays derive their meanings from different contexts, and in that sense constitute a third category of holidays: May 17th is Norway's Constitution Day or National Day, and is one of the big events of the year – especially for schoolchildren. The Queen's Day and Liberation Day are both national holidays in the Netherlands, the Queen's Day being the more thoroughly celebrated. However, for children, and especially in school, there can be little doubt that the 6th of December St. Nicholas celebration (*Sinterklaas*) is more important, although it is not a public holiday. I shall return to the celebration of Sinterklaas in chapter 5.[28]

From scarcities of time/space to the organisation of non-school time/space

For the children in de Bijenkorf's group 8, a feeling of urgency accompanied their everyday work. In their classroom, there was a scarcity not only of space, but also, and more acutely, of time. It was already their last year in primary school. The Dutch government student financing is limited to a

[28] I joined Bakken in their May 17th celebration. However, I have chosen to leave this part of my material out of the dissertation. A topic in itself, it is more marginally part of the every day life which is my main focus. For descriptions and analyses of this phenomenon, see e.g. Blehr 2000; Aagedal 1997.

maximum of six years' loans and grants combined with a maximum student age of 27. For those who wish to complete higher education, the pressure to do so 'on time' is therefore much higher than in Norway, where there is no age limit. In Norway, although one has to follow the standardised student progression to get grants and loans from the government, many students work part time for years, or return to higher education after having worked full-time. The pressure to 'grow up', to be not just economically independent individuals but also responsible, professional, contributing citizens, is much higher in the Netherlands. This was already felt in group 8: their futures were at stake, every day. School was a serious thing. For the children in Bakken's 6B, the future was not yet a serious issue. In Norway, however, rather than in the Netherlands, stressed children were an issue. The teachers in their staff room discussions generally perceived the problem to be the high degree to which non-school time and leisure activities are organised and compartmentalised. In other words, if anyone was to blame, it had to be the parents and not the school. That school, through homework, took up a considerable part of what was ostensibly 'non-school' time was not problematised in these discussions. If it was mentioned, it was rather in the form that children were so busy after school doing organised sports or other activities, that they hardly had time to do their homework. At de Bijenkorf, the teachers worried about the fact that many of the children were in such bad physical shape that on the school outing (*werkweek*) a bicycle ride literally made them sick. Their view was that the children spent too much time indoors after school, doing computer games and watching television. Through the interviews, however, I got the impression that this was not generally true. The children had a variety of things to do after school – some of them stayed indoors a good deal, others went visiting with their parents, or played football or went to the local shops with the neighbourhood children. At the weekends some would go to church or to the mosque, others tended to spend time with family and friends of the family in other parts of the city. What few of them ever did, it is true, was to go hiking or biking with their parents.

Classrooms and schedules: Week by week, day by day, period by period

Whereas the school year with its holidays and events is centrally planned by the ministries in both countries, each school plans the weeks of its pupils – group by group, class by class, day by day, period by period. Generally, it is true in both cases that '(…) schools normally design their curricula, using

the week as the foremost organizing framework for establishing certain desired proportions among the various courses (…). Thus, the week is used not only for establishing periodic variability among different types of activity, but also for systematizing certain desired proportions between them' (Zerubavel 1985: 105). In the process of defining these desired proportions, however, there are significant differences between the two schools. For instance, in Norway, the Ministry lays down the required number of 45-minute periods for each subject and class. In the Netherlands, it is up to each school to decide the organisation of the week – except for Wednesday afternoon, when school ends early in all primary schools.

At Bakken, the children went to school from Monday to Friday, with Saturday and Sunday off. The exact hours varied a little from day to day – some days they had to get up earlier, other days they had to stay in school later. The school's administration had laid out a timetable for each class at the beginning of the school year. This plan allocated subjects and teachers for each 45-minute period of the day. It also specified two 15-minute recesses for playing outside, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, and a 40-minute lunch break.[29]

Every Monday, Kari handed out a sheet of paper with the 'homework plan' for the week, specifying day by day what they were expected to do in each subject as well as any special things to remember. This plan, the most regular and frequent means of communication from Kari to the parents, mediated an important part of the 'follow-up' expectations that parents were expected to fulfil.

At de Bijenkorf, too, the children went to school from Monday to Friday. They had four full days, all starting at 8.45 and ending at 15.30. Like all other primary school children in the Netherlands, they had Wednesday afternoons off as well as Saturdays and Sundays, so that Wednesday meant school from 8.45 to 12. Their school administration had also planned their weeks at the beginning of the school year. The plan specified subjects down to 15-minute periods, with a mid-morning, 15-minute break and a lunch

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1. period : 0800 – 0845
2. period: 0845 – 0930
3. period: 0930 – 1000
4. period: 1015 – 1115 (1125)
5. period: 1155 – 1240
6. period: 1240 – 1325
7. period: 1340 – 1425
8. period: 1425 – 1510

break from 12 to 13.15 during which most of the children went home to eat. Each Monday, Sandra wrote the week's tasks on the blackboard for the children to copy down. All the work had to be done by Friday, in class – there was no homework.

Most of the time was spent in the classroom, in both schools. However, we recall that at Bakken, the class as a whole would leave their room for their lessons in music, gym, art, and cooking. Also, a few children would be told to leave the 6B room and their 6B classmates in order to 'go to' Luigi, Osman, Tone, Ingvill and Karsten. Where children with 'special needs' were taught separately at Bakken, there was no such arrangement at de Bijenkorf. In Sandra's room, children were taught on three academic levels at the same time. In practice, this meant that although the whole group attended the same lessons and used the same textbooks, she gave them different assignments, according to their levels of knowledge and understanding. She also instructed them in smaller groups, or individually, at her desk while the rest of the children were working. In other words, the two schools met individual needs, and organised differences in academic levels, quite differently.

Where each classroom in the Norwegian school was a separate world, at de Bijenkorf there was transparency and there was openness. The architecture as well as general practice accentuated this. I left the rows of closed doors in the Bakken corridors, each door concealing its own little world, and looked through the glass walls of de Bijenkorf's rooms, where the doors were normally left open. On my first day at de Bijenkorf, I commented to Femke, the caretaker, how I was struck by the way one could look inside all the rooms just by passing through the corridor. She responded promptly: 'yes, that's very important!' She, and later Mark, related this to the unity of the school in terms of teaching styles, educational principles, and solidarity between the teachers.

Although Bakken teachers exchanged many ideas and worked together in the staff room, their doors remained closed to each other, and they had no direct access to their colleagues' teaching. As soon as one teacher entered the room when and where another teacher was in charge, teaching was interrupted. The contrast between the Bakken teachers' autonomy and the de Bijenkorf teachers' participation in each other's work was striking. At de Bijenkorf, people seemed to go in and out of the room all the time, and teachers went in and out of each other's rooms for advice and exchange of ideas.

There is seemingly a paradox in the strong centralisation of the Norwegian unified school system, where all schools are meticulously co-

ordinated, while at the same time each teacher seems to reign supreme in the classroom. This paradox may relate to a more general tension between *likhet* and autonomy in Norwegian everyday life and national identity (Lien et. al. 2001:19). However, teaching itself is – in content, if not in form – as centrally co-ordinated as the rest of the educational system. And as much as seeing the Norwegian classroom as the supreme realm of the teacher, I think we may view it as the realm of the children.

Whilst the Oslo classrooms were always referred to as belonging to the class ('5B's room is upstairs', or, usually, just 'you'll find 7A down that corridor'), in Amsterdam it was taken for granted that the room belonged to the teacher. 'She is in Sandra's room' I would be told, or 'You can use Bianca's room for the interviews'. In Spindler and Spindler's terms (2000:220), the de Bijenkorf classroom was 'teacher centred' whereas the Bakken classroom was 'children centred'. This was highlighted when Luigi one day substituted for Kari:

> Luigi tried to enforce his usual discipline on the class, having all those who were late inside after lunch to go back out, knock, and apologise for being late. When new people continued to trickle in, all protesting and the others giggling, he had to give up. With an ironic gesture he asked no-one in particular: 'Is this a restaurant, or what?' Hassan answered, sotto voce at the back of the room: 'No, but it's *our* classroom – all of us.'

The children at de Bijenkorf were task oriented and primarily sought teacher approval (ibid.) whereas the children at Bakken were to a large degree oriented toward each other and they sought each other's approval rather than that of their teachers. The discipline in de Bijenkorf's group 8 was direct and meticulous, and Sandra held the reins tightly. Yet what appeared as disorder in Bakken's 6B was also orchestrated and approved by Kari. Her discipline was indirect, it was complex, and it had a different goal. Where Sandra's efforts were particular and directed at the academic achievements of 'her' children, Kari aimed at a more general influence, emphasising as she did 'her' children's social and emotional competence. Surprisingly, perhaps, in view of Sandra's strict and demanding teaching style, Kari had more, rather than less, comprehensive ambitions on behalf of 'her' children.

These differences correspond to differences in the legal framework. In Norway, as we shall also see in chapter 6, the aim of primary school is 'in agreement and cooperation with the home, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and

independent human beings at home and in society' (Education Act, 1–2). In other words, school is intended to form the individual for the good of the collective, involving the homes in the process. It is in this sense closer to the 'total institution' (Goffman 1961) than the Dutch primary school, which more modestly 'aims to promote the development of children's emotions, intellect and creativity and the acquisition of essential knowledge together with social, cultural and physical skills' (Eurybase 2001a).

Between the classroom and the world outside: liminal places

In both schools, there were times and spaces that were undeniably 'in' school yet not quite part of the classroom and the weekly schedule. The activities of playing and eating, central to the children but marginal to the purpose of the classroom, are key words here. Recesses and lunch breaks, corridors and schoolyards or playgrounds were, *qua* liminal phenomena, subject to specific rules, surveillance, and discipline. These times and spaces betwixt and between also provided occasions for talking and gossip, and brought into the open information that was otherwise less explicit and less accessible to me.

When the Bakken bell rang for recess, Kari would sometimes practically have to chase some of the children out of the classroom in order to lock it. She herself would usually go down one flight of stairs to her social teacher's office, where she had plenty of work to do. If she was 'on duty', she would go to the schoolyard, or playground. Every recess and lunch break there was supposed to be a responsible teacher outside, to prevent accidents, the breaking of rules and windows, and, not least, to give the children a feeling of security. All the teachers had 'playground duty' in turns, though most of them left the comfort of the staff room or the warmth of their classrooms with an air of martyrdom, and the pupils' council (*elevråd*) would sometimes complain that this duty was not taken seriously enough by the teachers. The teacher would walk around the playground, trying to keep up with what was going on, and generally be available.

For the children in 6B, recess (*friminutt*) meant going down three flights of stairs and outside to the schoolyard, where they would join about 400 other pupils aged 6–16. Hanging around in the stairways or corridors was not permitted. When it was very cold, however, some of the girls would plead with Kari to be allowed to spend the break just inside the entrance door downstairs. Any passing teachers would ask them if they had permission to stay there. Sometimes the girls would ask Kari if they could stay in the classroom with me. She would ask me if it was all right, which it usually

was: I was getting fed up with all those stairs myself, and I enjoyed talking to the girls and observing their inventiveness (there are a lot of things one can do in a classroom when the teacher is not there). Of course, it had the added benefit of making me popular with the girls, which was an asset for my work.

The asphalted, rectangular playground at Bakken was bounded on three sides by the school building. On the fourth side, a high wrought iron railing with a gate at either end completed the enclosure. Three features of the playground were regularly referred to: the Shed (*Skuret*), the basket ball area, and the sandpit (*sandkassen*). The basketball area simply consisted of a basketball goal and its immediate surroundings. The sandpit with its climbers and similar equipment was reserved for the youngest children, although some of the 'quiet' girls in 6B would often seek refuge from the surrounding playground there. The Shed was a small, open construction of just three concrete walls and a roof. For the football players, which includes all the boys except the loner we may remember from his seat between the boys' and the girls' sides, and the 'noisy' girls, the shed was something of a bone of contention. The inside of the shed was the only place in the playground where the kicking of footballs was permitted. Every recess, all the footballers of the 5th, 6th and 7th classes wanted to use it, and there were lists deciding which class had access to it at which times. The lists were a product of the *elevråd*, pupils' council, and their implementation was largely left to the children, with the teachers 'on duty' as a 'court of appeal'.

Another place that children and adults at Bakken often referred to was actually named *Plassen* (lit. 'the Place'). This was a small gravel playing field, a few hundred metres from the school. This bit of their world was in fact outside the actual school space, but inside of school time. School used it sometimes to play ball in gym, and the pupils from class 6 and upwards were allowed to go there, in turns and with certain restrictions, during recess and lunch.

At de Bijenkorf, group 8 had only one 15-minute recess, at mid-morning. Here, too, it was compulsory for the children to go outside, but they seldom needed be told to do so – they spent so much of the day sitting at their desks that they were all eager to leave the room. The only exceptions were if the weather was unusually bad, in the case of sickness or temporary disability, or if they were 'doing something' for Sandra. The corridor they had to traverse was short, just out the classroom door through the small part of the corridor that doubled as a library, around one corner, and out through the entrance door. Immediately outside, a handful of teachers would stand

together a short distance from the door, at a point from which they could see the whole playground.

The de Bijenkorf playground consisted of a main part set up as a small football field, with a climber in one corner and a large tree with seats built around it in the other corner. It was fenced in on two sides, with the school building and the gym building on the other two sides. At either end, there were wide openings with pathways, edged with low bushes, which served as entrances to the school grounds. The older children and the younger children had recess at different times, so that group 8 was outside with group 7 only. Most of the boys played football during recess, joined by a few girls. The girls tended to hang around the climber and talk, with some of the boys (who, we may assume, were keener on girls than on football) doing acrobatics for them or pestering them. If the girls needed privacy to talk away from the boys, and even away from the teachers, they would slink off along the path that was not quite part of the school grounds and talk behind the bushes. Recess was over when the teacher clapped his or her hands, each teacher having a specific signal. The following glimpse is from my notes the second day Karin and I were in school:

> Karin and I arrive during recess. The boys are playing ball. The girls see us and gather to talk to us. Karin chats with them – asks if it is OK to be so few girls ("yes") and if the boys are nice to them ("mostly"). They are on the alert for Sandra's clapping them inside, but Jennifer says she knows the clap and will hear it (demonstrates rhythmic clap). A few minutes later, Sandra claps, and the class gathers and enters. Sandra stays behind a little. The children sit down, chatting, nicking pens from each other, arguing – and as Sandra enters they suddenly fall quiet. Sandra then asks Karin and me if we would like a drink and leaves the room to fetch us some water. She tells the children to work, and as she is out of the room only two of the girls giggle, touch, and exchange things – all the others do as they are told.

The lunch break was the longest break of the day in both schools. Both Norwegians and Dutch usually have some quick sandwiches for lunch, and neither of the two schools provided food for the pupils. Feeding the children was a parental responsibility. However, at Bakken, children were expected to bring their home-made sandwiches to school, and to eat them between 11.10 or 11.15 and 11.25 at their desks. Of the 40 minutes' lunch break, formally just 10, in practice usually 15, minutes were for eating in the classroom. The rest of the time was for playing outside. At de Bijenkorf, the norm was for children to go home to their mothers and eat with them before returning to school. In principle, the school was closed for one hour in the

middle of the day. Some children, however, had working mothers, and therefore had to stay in school to eat their sandwiches there. For them, the 45 minutes from 12 to 12.45 were set aside for eating. The last half-hour of the lunch break, from 12.45 to 13.15, was for playing outside. Children who had eaten their lunches at home were not allowed back inside the school grounds before 13.00. This rule was strictly enforced, due to legal questions of responsibility and insurance in the case of accidents.

> The buzzer goes for lunch, and Sandra tells them 'tidy up, kids' ('*ruim op, jongens*') and then [when their desks are tidy] adds, 'enjoy your meal' ('*eet smakelijk*'). They all leave the room. Sandra takes me to see the room where those from groups 7 and 8 who stay for lunch eat under the supervision of Angela's mother. Angela, Kevin, and Mike are there from group 8. Martijn comes in a few minutes later after having bought bread. They are sitting quietly, eating their packed sandwiches.

This *overblijfen* – literally 'staying behind' or 'remaining' – and the dictionary obligingly adds 'at school for lunch' (King 1992) – was also chiefly a parental responsibility, run by mothers who came to school to serve tea and milk and sit with the children who ate in school. Parents who wanted to make use of this service for their child had to inform the school Monday morning each week, and pay two and a half guilders a day in advance. The *overblijfen* children from groups 7 and 8 gathered in one of the larger classrooms, to eat there with each other under the supervision of volunteering mothers (*overblijfenmoeders*). The younger children ate in other classrooms, children from two groups in each room. They all brought packed lunches in the form of closed sandwiches (*boterhams*) with any filling they liked – peanut butter being a winner. Some of the group 8 children ran out to buy fast food or ready-made sandwiches in the local shop. They would get permission from Sandra, who would often ask them to buy something for herself and Danielle, her daughter, who was in group 7, as well. Sandra would then eat in the classroom, and so would I if I was there. Her daughter would later join Sandra there, after having eaten with the other *overblijfen* children, or she would go outside to play in the schoolyard.

The system of *overblijfen* illustrates a significant difference not just between the two schools, but between the two countries. In Norway, all adults are expected to work during the daytime, and indeed most do, so that nothing involving parents can be organised then. In the Netherlands, it is common for women to stop working outside the home when they have children, to the extent that the educational system can rely on a majority of mothers being available for their own children in the daytime, and for a

sufficient number of mothers to volunteer to be there for children whose own mothers are working outside of the home. De Bijenkorf mothers volunteered to do many other things as well – one ran the library, another came in to help with art lessons, one helped with the school paper, another with reading practice, several came along when group 8 went on week-long field trip (*'werkweek'* – work week). At Bakken, one mother sometimes volunteered to assist Kari, but this was far from expected of anybody, and indeed Kari sometimes sighed that this mother overdid her 'follow-up'. I shall return to the position of women and girls at several points later.

The organisation of playing and eating was thus quite rigid in both schools. At Bakken, the detail of rules regulating these liminal activities stood out in contrast to the more diffuse discipline in the central activities of lessons. At de Bijenkorf, at least for group 8, these activities were hardly subject to stricter regulation than their central activities. However, for the younger children, the lunch and recess rules must have been much more noticeable.

Place and the Other

The formal structuring of time and space in school was striking in the two cases. So was the existence of individuals with their own particular experiences of these two closely intertwined dimensions. Theories on the 'objective' and 'subjective' perspectives on time as well as on space may be of interest here. Lidén (2000) discusses the relationship between an external, temporal framework and individual, subjective experiences of time, and, drawing on Elias (1993), argues that 'The individual may experience a tension between time expectations linked to the collectively defined structures and subjective experiences of time.' Understanding the close relationship between external and subjective time, she holds, 'is comprehending the inner, subjective experience of time in the light of the external, socially defined measurement of time, and vice versa.' (Lidén 2000:57–58, my translation).

Although this argument may to some extent apply to space as well as to time in the everyday rhythm of the classroom, in the light of my material I would suggest that the model set forth by Lidén is too simple. In neither of the schools was there any one external framework of time and of space which was linked to a series of individual ones. Rather, I would hold that there are partly overlapping, partly competing external frameworks (middle-class, Norwegian and Dutch ones and Islamic and translocal ones, to take the

most obvious examples) and there were individuals that related differently, in different contexts, to these external frameworks. Generally speaking, minority children were more likely to be in conflict with, or at least experience differently than majority children, what after all was an organisation of time and space that sprung from the dominant culture. In Norway, for instance, the school expected Majjid to be present during the lessons in Christianity and do his homework after school. On the other hand, his parents expected him to be present at Koran school five afternoons a week. In the Netherlands, Mehmet was expected to be present at the school's Christmas dinner during Ramadan, when his parents expected him to fast. These conflicting expectations were laid down in two external frameworks of time and space. The children accommodated themselves to the circumstances in various ways, none of which included open opposition to the majority framework. Explicitly refusing to accept that homework was more important than the Koran, or that Christmas was more important than Ramadan, was not an option.

The children I met had vastly different relations to places, and to place as such – to the extent that place 'as such' is a meaningful concept. As Lidén (in press) also points out, '*knowledge* and *frames of reference* [are] central terms in the analysis of how space is converted into place'. The diversity I found was, indeed, closely related to the diversity of the children's experiences – in school, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, outside the space and time that were organised as part of school. Let us take another look at the relations of the two schools to their local neighbourhoods before we turn to the children's experiences.

The location and symbolic position of Bakken in the neighbourhood was similar not just to the school of my own childhood, but also to most other schools in Norway: There was the school, and next to it was the church. Local Norwegian communities, both urban and rural, are normally clustered around *the* school and *the* church, a physical proximity that reflects a continuous social and political proximity. Historically there are close links between religious and educational public authorities in Norway, from the Ministry of Church, Education and Research down to local parish churches and primary schools. Both institutions are government owned and run, and were, until 2001, even placed under the same ministry (along with my own work). This relates to the history of education and to the ongoing state/church debate, as well as to the related debate about the teaching of

Christianity as a school subject.[30] Bakken as a social unit went to special school services in church twice a year, for Christmas and for Easter. I actually met the parish deacon in the staff room at Bakken a couple of times and talked to him once. He told me that he saw the link between the school and the church as a valuable one, especially when it came to the teaching of Christianity.

The Muslim children at Bakken generally did not turn up on the days when school was 'going to church'. While I was there, however, 6B paid a study visit to Oslo's only synagogue, and the teachers were discussing this in the staff room the day before:

> Petter asked if all the kids were going, and Kari was very determined they should: "Yes, they are all going". This triggered a discussion about Muslims, places of worship, and *KRL*. Petter found it strange that pupils could be let off visiting churches but the same kids had to visit the synagogue. Kari told him that when it came to churches the parents were so determined about it there was nothing to be done about that, but in her opinion it was all nonsense. One of class 7's teachers agreed: "It's as if they're afraid the children will be infected somehow, just by entering a church. After all it's just a building, it's architecture – you visit churches to look at the building or listen to a concert but they refuse to let their kids come along with the school." Petter: "Maybe they are afraid that the kids are impressionable, for all they know the priest will start to evangelise, and it's hard for the parents to know what is going on."

None of the teachers here seemed to view going to a church service, as an insider, as significantly different from going to a place of worship on a study visit, as an outsider. The strong, historical bond between the school and the church was also left uncommented here, in the way that the self-evident usually is.

The close, national as well as local relations between school and religion thus made critical the difference between children from Norwegian and 'half Norwegian' families and children from families with religions that, by majority Norwegians, are considered to be markers of non-Norwegian-ness. The strong local character of Bakken also made relevant another difference between children with almost exclusively local ties and children with other belongings. In practice, however, this also marked a difference

[30] Whether the compulsory teaching of 'Christianity with religious and ethical education' (*KRL*) is a form of proselytising was hotly debated in Norway at the time I conducted fieldwork.

between Norwegian children (to varying degrees including those with one Norwegian and one non-Norwegian parent) and non-Norwegian children. The locality was densely inscribed with personal and social history and meaning for the local, 'Norwegian' children, who had to explain the local self-evidences to their non-Norwegian classmates. The following situation illustrates this point:

> 6B were taking part in a campaign collecting 'money for Kosovo'. They were supposed to set up stands at various localities in the neighbourhood, and I helped Kari organise them. I met Cecilie, Aman and Yasmin outside on the pavement, struggling with desks they were using as stands. They were supposed to set them up at a particular spot in the local park, known as 'the Hill'. Cecilie knew where 'the Hill' was but the two others did not, and she tried to explain to them as well as to me: 'That's where we always go on the 17th of May [the Norwegian National Day], you know? After the parade, for the games and stuff?' Aman said: 'I never was in the 17th of May.' Yasmin added: '*jeg er ikke kjent her, jeg*' which one would have to translate either as 'I am not familiar around here' or 'I am a stranger here'.

The feeling of being 'strangers, here', and of 'never having been in the 17th of May' here stands out in contrast to Cecilie's closeness to the local landscape, to her 'sense of its places' (Feld and Basso 1996) as 'gatherings of events' (Casey 1996). On the other hand, Cecilie's translocal knowledge, her knowledge of other parts of Oslo and of the world was quite limited. Aman's and Yasmin's experiences were of the opposite kind: they knew *other* places first. I did not get permission to interview Aman, so I do not know the details of her background, but she had not been long at Bakken, and had spent much of her life as a refugee in different places. Yasmin, on the other hand, had stronger ties to other places than she had to Bakken. Let us see how she expressed her relations to various places in the interview:

> *Yasmin:* My father was here when I was – yes, he was here, he was born here. Then he went to Turkey and there he got married. And then I was born, and then I came here when I was around three years old.
>
> *ML:* So you weren't born here.
>
> *Yasmin:* No, only my little brother was. And my father too. My mother was born in Turkey. She grew up in xx, near yy. A lot of people go there on holiday, Norwegians and English too. I've been there lots of times. My mum's mum lives there and her dad and the brother, all her family who lived there but then they got married and most of them live in Istanbul now. So we go there too.

ML: So if you go to Turkey, like, to visit, then you usually go to Istanbul?

Yasmin: Yes, and to xx and the other places too. I go there a lot. Loads of times. (…)

ML: So which school did your dad go to then? Did he go to Bakken too? (laughs)

Yasmin: (laughs) He did, actually. And to (Z) school too. Me, I went to (X) school first. Then to (Y). Then to (Z),[31] and now I'm in Bakken. And Daddy he went to (Z) and (X) and Bakken. So he says that I follow him around.

ML: So why did you change schools, have you moved house too?

Yasmin: Yes.

ML: How long have you lived where you live now?

Yasmin: How long I've lived here – one year. Just one year.

ML: Will you stay there for a long time, do you think?

Yasmin: No idea. I don't think we're going to move soon but I don't know.

ML: Would you like to move?

Yasmin: No. Now I finally have some friends here and all, so why should I move really? But it's not like – it's not up to me, I don't control that – do what I want.

ML: So it depends more on your parents, on where they work maybe?

Yasmin: It's all right for them. They don't change jobs, like. But I do. I change schools. But it's kind of fun too. To know some schools.

ML: Yes. Which one has been the best one, then?

Yasmin: The best one… (Z), because I went there for three years. Bakken is good too, but I've only been here for a year. The difference is, there I knew everybody and everything [*der var jeg skikkelig kjent:* this is the exact reverse of the expression she used when Cecilie tried to explain where 'the Hill' was – the expression that I translated: 'I am a stranger here'] and had fun and, like, and then I came here and I didn't know anybody.

Majid, when I interviewed him, told me that he was born in Norway but had lived for short periods in England and Pakistan. He had been at Bakken since 1st grade and had lived in the same flat, very near the school, all the time. In this sense, he knew the local area well, but he had little time to

[31] All these schools are located in Oslo's central East.

explore it. Since 3rd grade he had been attending a Pakistani afternoon school. He was also a keen football player but his club was not the local one, where many of the other boys in class were. Instead, he trained in the club where his friends from the Pakistani school trained.

Norwegian children tended to express a much stronger unilocal sense of place in the Bakken neighbourhood than non-Norwegian children, whose experiences were predominantly from *other* places – other parts of Oslo, as well as other parts of the world. These are the extreme ends of a continuum, however. Cecilie's primarily local knowledge was to a lesser extent shared by Maren, who had recently moved to Bakken, and by the third 'wholly Norwegian' pupil Eli. In 6B, all the children except Eli lived in Bakken's enrolment district. Eli's parents had recently divorced and she had moved with her mother to a neighbouring enrolment district, but was allowed to finish her last year in primary school at Bakken. And Hassan – a refugee living with his divorced mother – had refused to do the 'school-surfing' that immigrant children especially, and also divorcee children, are exposed to: his mother (Kari told me) had been offered a better and more permanent housing alternative in a different part of Oslo, but Hassan had pleaded with her and with everybody to let them stay on where they were so that he could stay at Bakken. The 'mixed' or 'half Norwegian' children also related to Bakken's district, and to other places in Oslo as well as to their other 'country of origin' in various ways.

An aspect of Norwegian housing policy strengthened this tendency: the norm even in the larger cities is to own one's own dwelling. The proportion of rented apartments is small, and contracts are often short-term. This means that people who are not in a position to raise a loan will have to move house frequently. Immigrants are especially vulnerable to this because of their disadvantaged situation in the labour market. In a country where the norm is to own your own dwelling, people with little money and no bank connections must expect to move house often. With the system of local school enrolment, when the family moves to a new district, the children change schools, too (cf. Andenæs 2002). After a number of such moves, one may start to talk about 'nomad' children, whose belongings are connected to people (friends and family, themselves also often moving) and their memories of places, rather than to a personal experience of places.

At Bakken, then, the contrast between what one might call 'local' and 'nomad' children was striking. There existed a local knowledge of the area in and around the school that was manifest in a density of place-names down to street-corners and parts of the local park. This knowledge corresponded to

the lived realities of 'local' children like Cecilie, to whom every named place was filled with the meaning of memories and expectations, connected to events and people. For them, the communities of people and place overlapped, sometimes to the extent that they become almost concentric. At the other end of the scale, a 'nomad' like Aman had virtually no such knowledge of, nor connections to, the local area nor to any other one place in the world. In between were children who were, or had been, 'local' in one or more 'other' places – a village in Morocco, a school district in eastern Oslo, or a Koran school or a mosque in the eastern part of the city centre.

For the teachers, who had been 'local' children themselves, the idea of 'concentric belongings' was the unquestioned norm, and they consequently tended to regard as deprived children without such undisturbed, un-branching root-stocks. At the same time, none of the teachers actually lived very near Bakken. However, even though they did not share the intimate knowledge of the specific locality, they nevertheless shared an understanding that *such intimate local knowledge was constitutive of childhood and of identity, an understanding that in itself carries excluding mechanisms.*

This was a kind of difference that made less of a difference between the Dutch and the not-Dutch children. The children I met in the Netherlands all had a variety of separate and overlapping belongings. The free choice of schools meant that for none of the children could there be a concentric life-world, undisturbed by 'other' people or 'other' places. The relatively high proportion of rented dwellings, too, combined with a higher degree of mobility in the population at large contributed to a shared experience of belonging or roots as something that was branching and flexible. The world outside school meant many different things to all of them. Their non-school time was linked to different places. Their friends outside school were only to a small extent their friends in school, since many of the children in their neighbourhoods would go to other schools, and since their parents would encourage friendships with their own friends' children. Their worlds were not concentric, but consisted of many, partly overlapping, social circles. 'We are not only *in* places but *of* them' (Casey 1996:19) rang as true in Amsterdam as it did in Oslo. However, *whereas the Norwegian children all tended to be of the same place, and the non-Norwegian ones to be of other places, the children in de Bijenkorf's group 8 were all of different places.* Several of the teachers, on the other hand, did live near de Bijenkorf, and some, like Sandra, had their own children at de Bijenkorf. This meant that

their lives – at least for the time being – were centred around de Bijenkorf in a manner that the children's lives were not.

At the same time, I was met with a sort of nostalgia when I talked to middle-class Dutch about the Norwegian model. For them, local belonging seemed to be something they valued and wanted for their children. They also related this nostalgia to being uncomfortable with 'the problem of black schools' – the fact that many schools tended to gather children with very similar backgrounds in terms of class and ethnicity, although they came from different localities (cf. chapter 6). They seemed to take for granted that local enrolment districts would bring together 'local' children with a whole range of different ethnic and class backgrounds. As I noted in chapter 1, however, in Oslo Bakken was far from typical in 'achieving' this to a large degree. The socio-economic geographies of Oslo and Amsterdam were so different that the two 'opposite' recruitment policies in fact result in very similar ethnic and class 'segregation' in schools.

The relation to local space and community is very different in the two different educational systems. The recruitment policies are themselves embedded in national orientations toward the question of difference, the main differences being manifest in their recruitment principles of local enrolment versus choice of enrolment, and in their relations to religious communities. de Bijenkorf had – as was laid down by law for publicly-run schools – no links to any religious communities, and there was – again as laid down by law – no religious education in school. Many of the children in group 8 did regularly go to various places of worship, none of which were in the immediate vicinity of the school. The relationship to neighbouring schools was one of competition rather than of co-operation. de Bijenkorf was linked to the outside world chiefly through two channels: the children, their parents, and the urban district administration. Of these, only the urban district was spatially defined and delineated. Although most of the children lived nearby, not all did, and there was no clear spatial definition of their belonging. Bakken was also connected to other schools in neighbouring school districts through formal co-operation schemes, and to the city administration as a whole. It had strong ties to the local community through pupils, parents, and parish, in agreement with a curriculum (cf. chapter 6) and a national culture where the local and the national are mutually constitutive.

As Gullestad (1997:29) points out, '[l]ocal attachment is in many ways a national symbol (…) to be Norwegian is to be *from* a particular local community. And (…) the place one is from is the place where one grew up.'

Kramer (1984:95) goes even further when he argues, '[t]his local belonging (…) that provides the basis for the definition of Norwegian identity (…) makes it impossible for foreigners (…) to be accepted as Norwegian.' In Norway, the individual child's experiences of continuity and stability – their senses of belonging to one local community, to one school, and so on – appears to be a necessary foundation for a healthy individual *and* national identity. As a framework for the constitution of national selves and others, this stands out in contrast to the Dutch case. Here, children's experiences with and attachments to multiple and only partly overlapping localities and communities reflect, and reproduce, a more complex understanding of national selves and others. I shall return to a further discussion of these observations in the final chapter.

Chapter 4

Bakken: Tactfully dealing with difference

In this and the following chapter, I shall present some cases where teachers and pupils identify, classify, and negotiate selves and others in school. I shall attempt to show how these cases relate to some central discursive repertoires, and to indicate how these repertoires relate to the schools as institutions and as places. I shall take as my points of departure field data covering everyday events and interviews in each of the two schools. The present chapter will draw on cases from Bakken, and will be followed by a corresponding chapter about de Bijenkorf. Each of the two chapters opens with an incident where the pupils deal with differences in quite dramatic ways. Below I present a case which illustrates the significance of context and, more specifically, of the presence or absence of teachers, to the pupils' discursive options. In the course of this example, we move from the pupils-only context of the stairway and corridor to the teacher-and-pupils context inside the classroom:

The incident

> As I went upstairs along with the children to their classroom, Maren came running after us, announcing that someone had just been knifed in the schoolyard! Breathlessly she said she didn't know the details but last Friday somebody had hit somebody else with a bat over the head and today the same guys had been using knives, and now it was a whole brown gang against a white gang! She proceeded to find a piece of black colour in her bag and started smearing it over her face, saying 'I'm white, I'm scared of the brown gang, I better be dark so they'll think I'm one of them'. Teresa objected: 'yeah right, very clever, and then the white gang will be after you, don't you think'. Maren ignored her. Marco said 'Well, Hassan's real lucky', then he added '- and Cevat too, Cevat and Hassan are so lucky'. We entered the classroom and found our seats. Bente, the pretty, young supply teacher, reminded us that this was her last day at Bakken. Maren quipped: 'Oh, what a shame Hassan isn't here, you gotta say goodbye to him before you leave, because he's in love with you!' Bente laughed and asked which one he was again. The whole class joined forces, trying to describe Hassan to Bente: 'You know, him the tall one with the round head, him the thin one who sits over there in the corner'. Bente said 'I don't know who you mean'. They didn't succeed in making her understand who Hassan was.

The name Hassan might have indicated to Bente that the children were talking about a boy of foreign origin, but neither she nor the class went further into this. It is likely that describing Hassan e.g. as either black, African or Somali would have helped Bente understand who they were talking about, since he was the only pupil in 6B who might fit into any of these three categories. Why did 6B not choose such a racialised description in the classroom, when they had just verbalised 'racial' differences in the corridor? In the present chapter, I shall endeavour to analyse and explain their reasons.

The contrast between the rumours of a 'brown-against-white' knifing incident and the inefficient description of Hassan illustrates how pupils openly used racialised language among themselves, while denying themselves the use of any such language in interaction with teachers. I saw many other examples of this at Bakken. In this first example, it is the short time span and the seemingly effortless oscillation between the discursive repertoires that makes the contrast so evident. It will serve as a point of departure for this chapter, and I shall refer to it in the analysis while making use of further empirical examples to build up my argument that this contrast was an important one to the pupils.

Frankenberg (1993:16) in her work about white women in the United States defines 'discursive repertoires' as 'clusterings of discursive elements upon which the women drew', and continues: ' "Repertoire" captures, for me, some of the way in which strategies for thinking through race were learned, drawn upon, and enacted, (…) chosen but by no means freely so' (loc. cit.). She identifies three discursive repertoires on 'race'. The first one, 'color and power evasion' was 'organized around the desire to assert essential *sameness*', the second, 'race cognizance', 'insisted on the importance of recognizing difference (…) understood in historical, political, social, or cultural terms'. The third, 'essentialist racism' expressed 'the notion that race makes a difference at the level of biology and being' (1993:157, 189).

As we shall see, all three discursive repertoires are reflected in my material. However, other types of classification than the 'ethnic' or 'racial' that Frankenberg describes may have been as important, or more so, to the people I met in the two schools. 'Ethnicity' is, like 'race, ' "real" in the sense that it has real, though changing, effects in the world and real, tangible, and complex impact on individuals' sense of self, experiences, and life chances.' (ibid:11). Different types of classification and difference are intertwined to the extent that, although my main focus is on 'ethnicity', I am aware that I cannot leave out other kinds of difference without seriously misrepresenting

the children's own experiences of identity. As Prieur (2002: 55) observes, 'Ethnicity is expressed in gender specific ways, in gendered practices, in deeply embodied behaviour, in ways of dressing, in adherence to certain values, and so on.' The same, no doubt, applies to class (cf. Bradley 1996). Indeed, there can be no 'ethnicity' as such – rather, in school I saw ethnicity enacted as a dimension of difference, intertwined with other such dimensions, being sometimes more, and sometimes less prominent, depending on the context of interaction and on the experiences of the children involved.

In 'the Incident', we may already recognise elements from these discursive repertoires. As Frankenberg also emphasises, it is important to understand that the three discursive repertoires rarely occur in their 'pure' forms and in any case refer to each other. In the corridor, for instance, the children seem partly to negotiate, partly to play ironically with, 'essentialist racism' and 'race cognizance' as outlined by Frankenberg. In the classroom, however, the children clearly made an effort to 'be polite', which evidently meant that they had to choose the discursive repertoire that she, very appropriately to my material, calls 'colour evasion'. I will argue that *they were in the process of learning this discursive repertoire from their teachers, as part of the explicit and implicit curricula of the Norwegian educational system*, as outlined in chapter 6.

Indifference?

In searching for clues to the children's oscillation between different discursive repertoires, I tried to talk to the teachers about it. When I interviewed the vice principal, Pernille, I asked her what she thought the differences represented to me as 'multiculturalism' meant to the children:

> *Pernille:* Well – there are all kinds of children here, from 37 different nations. The kids don't even notice it. It's so good, the way they just don't notice the differences. They couldn't care less about them. No. Not at all. And that isn't … to my mind, that must be wonderful. Because you are taken good care of in school. You know – the kids, they themselves wish to have some kind of a belonging here, at school.

We may note that Pernille strongly emphasised the children's indifference to 'racial' differences. However, at a later point in the same interview, she said that the children in 6B were much more 'tactful' and 'polite' about such differences than the children in 6A, thus implying that difference is something that requires tact rather than being something unnoticed. I also asked Pernille:

ML: So what does it mean to be Norwegian, then?

Pernille: Well – to be Norwegian is to be similar to Norwegians. I mean, they have a different appearance because they come from a different country. But clothes, you see how they use clothes to become similar – to be accepted. But you can still see it from their appearance. But at the same time you can't see that Teresa is from South – that she is half South African. I mean, white South African. So let's turn it around and ask, who do you see here? Well, you see Hassan. That's easy. And you see Majid. Because of his Pakistani appearance, right? Then you see Aman, but Cevat and Yasmin you don't see that easily because of the clothes, otherwise you could have seen it much more clearly.

ML: Do you see Fatima?

Pernille: Oh yes. Fatima with the headscarf.

Pernille finds it difficult to answer my question directly. The school system itself has no definition of 'Norwegian' children. As with other ostensibly 'natural' categories, no definition of Norwegians is considered necessary. In agreement with what I said in the Introduction about majorities using minorities as mirrors: '[D]efining the other implicitly characterises self. … Contrastive identification, of us against them, is … significant. The often implicit nature of this opposition means that self can be left unspecified, can go unnamed, even while basking in the reflection of a negatively constituted other… Those who distinguish have the distinction of not being explicitly distinguished. (…) Identification of the other upholds the boundaries without the need to make direct reference to boundaries or self.' (Valentine 1998, p. 2) In accordance with this, it is much easier to say who does *not* fulfil the criteria for Norwegian-ness. Pernille, in her indirect answer to my question about Norwegian-ness, presents a mixture of her own perceptions and what she feels are the children's main criteria for difference and non-Norwegian-ness. What she refers to as 'their appearance' evidently means physical difference such as hair and skin colour, but where these differences are minor, they can be further neutralised through the choice of 'Norwegian style clothes'. Dress codes are central in her observations of strategies to obtain similarity and through similarity, acceptance. Deliberate and marked differences in dress, such as the Islamic headscarf, makes for being noticed as different, as not Norwegian. Let us hear what Kari herself thought about this. The following is a passage from my interview with her:

ML: Do you think the children notice the differences much – like, some of them are black and some are white or brown – ?

> *Kari:* I don't think they even see it really, nowadays. It's become so common. So I don't think they think about it. At all. Though perhaps – there was one girl in class who used a shawl. Two, in fact. I think the others reacted to that. More that than … the skin colour. The shawls sort of stood out more. They didn't tease them but I think they were sorry for them in a way.

Kari here implicitly contrasts 6B's experiences 'nowadays' with those of schoolchildren of times and places of her own past, when 'racial' differences were less common. In this perspective, such differences seem to have become the norm and therefore not noticeable – to the children, that is. She moves on to talk about what she thinks they do notice, which is the use of Islamic headscarves. Again, dress codes matter. She does not explain here why she thinks the other children were sorry for the girls who wore headscarves, but I asked her how she felt about it:

> *ML:* Are you sorry for the [Muslim] girls?
>
> *Kari:* Yes, I am, actually. I do think – they are a bit oppressed.
>
> *ML:* Do you ever talk about things like that in class?
>
> *Kari:* Yes – we did Islam last year in KRL[32] and then we talked about it. But I didn't use the word oppression then. I said it more sort of gently – I explained that boys were allowed to do more things than girls. And that girls were protected better and… and that their parents were more strict with them. So they know that. And they were like: 'Oh wow, I'm glad I'm not a Muslim'.

We have seen here that the two teachers who had spent the most time with 6B wanted me to know that 'racial' differences did not make any difference to the children. Further, we have seen that they think differences in dress do make a difference, when it comes to following the current Norwegian trends in general and with regard to the Islamic headscarf for girls in particular. I shall return to the headscarf as a marker of ethnicity and gender at Bakken in chapter 6.

When I interviewed the children, one by one, I asked each of them to describe some of their classmates to me, as well as to tell me whom they liked or did not like, what was special about them, and so on. All of them were very clear about the fact that girls and boys were different, and that this difference was important to them. As was also evident in their chosen 'sex segregated' seating patterns, this was their most important criterion in

[32] *Kristendom med religions- og livssynsorientering,* ('Christianity with religious and ethical education')

choosing friends and playmates. The second most important criterion, which they also linked to sex, was what one liked to do, and whether one was 'quiet' or not. None of them explicitly described any of the others in terms of 'ethnic' or 'racial' differences. As in 'the incident', this phenomenon intrigued me, because I often heard them using racialising language around school. The last one I interviewed was Juni. I asked her what she thought it must be like to come to a school in Norway from a different country, and she immediately said:

> *Juni:* That must be just awful. (…) One has to learn a completely new language. And kind of learn to act like we do and… Usually one does that, sort of, and then… because the teachers say 'Now I want you to be nice and make friends with her'. And then one does and after a while it's like, 'now it doesn't matter anymore, now she's got used to the whole class.' And then she stands there alone, right?
>
> *ML:* Yes. Who does?
>
> *Juni:* Uhm?
>
> *ML:* Who? Who do you mean, *she*?
>
> *Juni:* But it's gone really well for Rubina after all.
>
> *ML:* She doesn't come from a different country, though.
>
> *Juni:* Uhm?
>
> *ML:* But she doesn't come from a different country, though.
>
> *Juni:* Hm.
>
> *ML:* She comes from Lakkegata[33], kind of. (Both laugh a little). Or? She did come from Lakkegata?
>
> *Juni:* Lakkegata?
>
> *ML:* Mm. That's not a different country, is it?
>
> *Juni:* (Pause). I don't quite get it. She does come from a different country.
>
> *ML:* Which country then?
>
> *Juni:* I don't know.
>
> *ML:* (laughs a little)
>
> *Juni:* She does come from some country or another.
>
> *ML:* How come?

[33] Lakkegata is the (real) name of another Oslo school, to the east of the city centre, where the majority of the children are of 'non-Norwegian' origins.

Juni: But one can see that.

ML: How does one see it?

Juni: Well, she looks exotic.

ML: Yeees…(hesitates) In what way?

Juni: She does have kind of a Southern name, sort of.

ML: Yes… She could still be born here, though.

Juni: Yes, but she… yes, she could but… Then she must be half from a different country or something.

I introduced the ambiguous phrase 'coming from a different country' here. This was a common euphemism for 'immigrant' in the school, as in polite society at large. I was curious to see how this girl, who was generally good at expressing her ideas, would respond to my using the phrase in a literal but unusual sense, equalling 'coming from' to 'being born in' a country. My insistence on a literal usage of 'coming from a different country' evidently confuses Juni and she hesitates in responding until she says that she doesn't understand what I mean. I had more than half expected Juni to think of her best friend, Rebecca, who had recently emigrated and had written letters telling Juni about her experiences of school in her new country of residence. Instead, Juni associates to the new girl in class, Rubina, who was born in Norway, but was categorised as 'Pakistani' because her parents originally came from Pakistan. Juni insists on Rubina's ethnic difference, yet manages to evade any direct description of 'it'.

Juni was an intelligent girl with a natural curiosity that made it easy for me to ask her to help me solve the mystery, so I continued:

ML: I thought it was a bit funny when I first entered your classroom, because I'd heard it was a class with pupils from a lot of different countries. And then I came there and then everybody looked completely Norwegian and talked completely Norwegian, sort of.

Juni: All of us don't look Norwegian.

ML: Everybody doesn't look Norwegian? Well, maybe not. How come?

Juni: Well, one is very … one *acts* Norwegian, one doesn't *look* Norwegian.[34]

[34] This observation echoes what one of the other teachers told me in the staff room: 'I think it's the language that makes a difference to the kids, more than the way they look, which doesn't really matter much, at least when they know each other. And of course how they behave – as long as they act Norwegian, it's generally fine. The important distinction is in how they function.'

ML: Why not?

Juni: Because (hesitates)… but how do I say it?

ML: You can just say it, Juni.

Juni: Well, they – some come from Somalia, don't they, and there they are much browner than us! Much browner.

ML: Is that a dangerous thing to say?

Juni: Well – no. But then I feel so odd. It's, like, hum, well (noises indicating awkwardness).

ML: Because nobody does say it.

Juni: No. No. Don't they?

ML: No.

Juni: Why is that?

ML: I don't know. That's one of the things I'm trying to find out.

Juni: Because they are scared that they – they kind of believe that –. Maybe they are afraid of getting a scolding from Pernille if they do say it.

ML: Have they been scolded (for that) before? What does she say then?

Juni: I don't really know, I haven't been scolded by her, ever. But she's awfully strict, you know.

ML: But Kari doesn't scold you for that?

Juni: Yes. But she's not, like (makes angry noises, to illustrate how mad Pernille gets)

ML: She doesn't get that mad. Or, she gets that mad but she's less strict.

Juni: Mm. (confirming). Then she sort of takes those two… the … the victim, and the one who teased, and she sits down and then they talk about it.

The use of 'racial' language was met with disciplinary actions, as described by Juni here.[35] Her final reply also indicates that Juni herself had adopted Kari's view that such usage was a form of 'teasing'. I never overheard her 'teasing' anybody in this manner, and indeed this usage was more common among the boys. Let us visit their classroom again:

[35] The Norwegian school system allows for a very limited range of such actions. 'Being talked to' (*å få tilsnakk*) is the main one. There is an elaborate continuum of such 'talks', defined by the degree of sternness of the 'talk', combined with the position of the staff member. Thus, being talked to by an angry headmaster is a far more serious thing than being talked to by a concerned, but soft-spoken Kari.

Interaction between pupils

> Today at lunch, Hassan and the other boys tried to get Majid to give them pieces of his food, since he always brings samosas. When Majid didn't want to give him any, Hassan said: 'But I am your nigger (*neger)*, aren't I?'

There is a marked breach here with the difference-evasive discourse employed in the presence of teachers. I never heard anyone in class use the word *neger* except Hassan, who used it to refer to himself. He was also the only one who said 'Paki' (*pakkis)* to Majid, in the same way. In appropriating white people's 'weapons' against their 'others', giving them an ironic twist, Hassan also gave them a new valour. *Neger* is usually translated as 'negro'; however, Hassan's usage here refers to African American slang rather than the white Norwegian discourse where *neger* belongs. I have therefore chosen to translate it as 'nigger'. Hassan's reference to African American slang was, I would argue, an example of trans-coding (Hall 1997:270). He used this technique in an attempt to establish himself as a 'cool black guy' rather than a 'poor immigrant', drawing attention to his colour as a 'masculine' trait rather than one of outsider-hood. The 'victim' thus turns into an active party without, however, escaping 'the contradictions of the binary structure of racial stereotyping' or unlocking 'the complex dialectics of power and subordination' (Hall 1997:272). Hassan also used 'racial' references to construct similarity to other boys:

> During Maths, the boys are talking at the back of the room. There is a lot of talking going on and Petter has his attention elsewhere. Hassan: 'Cevat, what's "brown" in Turkish?' Cevat tells him. Hassan: 'Majid, you're a browny (repeats Cevat's word), right? (Gleefully, to Cevat and the children around him in general: 'he's brown, right?' Majid just laughs and shakes his head.

Although he was the most active in this kind of word game, he was not the only one:

> André dared me to say xxx (a Turkish word) to Cevat. I asked him what it meant, and he grinned sheepishly: 'It's a dirty word. In Turkish and Pakistani and Somali I know just dirty words. Except 'potato' in Pakistani, but that's kind of racist too.' Me: ' "Potato", that's Norwegians?' André nods, embarrassed.

To sum up, it is quite clear that while the children employed a colour-evading discursive repertoire when teachers were listening, they often used racialised/-ing language among themselves. Such language included words like 'white'

and ‘brown’ as ‘racial’ categories, as well as a whole range of ‘ethnic’ food metaphors, e.g. ‘potato’ (Norwegian), ‘yoghurt’ (East European), ‘onion’ (Pakistani), and ‘chocolate’ (Somali). Of these, only the last one is ‘racial’, referring to skin colour rather than to preferred ‘national’ foods, thus suggesting that ‘there is a racialised core of identity beneath skin colour’ (Phoenix 1998:863). The discursive techniques they employed were, however, more ambiguous than Frankenberg found among white American women. This is not surprising, considering that my material derives chiefly from what may be described as an inter-racial and inter-ethnic, mixed gender interactional context rather than from one-to-one interviews by and with white women. The complexity of the children’s discourse thus reflects their many positions. Let us consider the added complication of the teachers’ presence:

Interaction between teachers and pupils

6B had been working in groups, preparing presentations on sports and hobbies of their own choice. Group by group, they were now presenting their work to the class as a whole. Kari’s role in the process had been to ‘supervise and advise’ the pupils, training their ability to work ‘independently and in groups’ and to ‘make use of their own experiences in school’, all in agreement with the national curriculum (L-97):

> Eli, Juni and Rebecca presented their work on riding and horses. Kari was sitting quietly at the back of the room, having left the floor to the three girls. When they had finished their presentation, their classmates were supposed to ask questions for the girls to answer. There were many questions, and the girls answered them as well as they could. Hassan asked: “In which ways are all those different races of horses different, exactly? Arabs, and all that? Is it the differences in colour, and which country they come from, and that kind of thing?” At this, Kari quickly got up, taking over even as she went to the front of the room, and proceeded to answer Hassan’s question very carefully. She talked about different ‘kinds’ of horses, thus avoiding the word ‘race’, which the girls had been using and which Hassan had picked up.

Hassan was, I would argue, trying to provoke out into the open what he knew was there: the view of him as different. The teacher took control. She made sure that the implicit reference to ‘human races’ was not picked up, as if the question could really only be about horses. The symbolic position of teacher, which she had temporarily left to the girls, was the only place she could do this from, so she had to take it back from them immediately.

Leaving any authority to the girls would have been too risky, the responsibility too great.

Note the contrast to a corresponding example from Amsterdam. The teaching situation was very similar, with – this time individual – pupil presentations of projects on sports and hobbies. Sandra, the teacher, was sitting at the back, and Angela had temporarily replaced her up front: Angela had just finished presenting her work on horses, and the others were supposed to ask questions. Sebastiaan asked her which kinds (*rasses*) of horses there are. Angela's answer was brief: 'Dapple-greys and Shetlanders, I don't know any more really'. ('*schimmelen en shetlanders, meer weet ik niet precies*'). Sandra displayed no fear of losing control, and evidently did not see the situation as threatening in the way Kari seemed to do. Indeed, had Sebastiaan wished to discuss human 'racial' differences, she would most likely have let him do so.

On another occasion, 6B were making newspaper collages around news items of their own choice, and chatting while they worked:

> Hassan declared he was putting the world boxing championship under 'World News'. Cevat: 'Hey Hassan, are there any Somali boxers?' Hassan: 'Yeah, now there are. I can't believe Tyson knocks out Holyfield. But anyway I like Tyson more.' Cevat: 'Mohammed Ali!' Hassan: 'I liked him even more.' André: 'Where's he from then?' Hassan: 'America.' Cevat: 'He's not Arabic, he became a Muslim but he's American. Kari, what do you call those people who eat people?' Several of the other children reply: 'Cannibals.' Hassan: 'But those others don't exist.' Then, to André: 'It's illegal in USA to make a *neger* president, and it's illegal in South Africa to have a white president.' Cevat: 'Kari, in Indonesia where they are fighting, are half of them Muslim and half Christian or what?' Kari goes to Cevat, leans over him and talks to him in a low voice. Hassan: 'There are cannibals in Somalia but they suck blood only.' Kari goes to Hassan, leans over him and talks to him in a low voice.

The entertaining dimension of the above field diary extract was also important to the children themselves – they were having fun. Still, the loosely directed comments and conversations in the classroom reflect the participants' concerns and views on racial and ethnic issues.

Hassan is concerned with Blacks, Cevat wants to talk about Muslims. For them, these are important issues. Hassan *is* Black. Cevat *is* Muslim. In everyday interaction as well as in interviews, they repeatedly stress these aspects of their identities. Hassan is also a Muslim, but he very rarely refers to it. For him, playing with images of 'the cool black guy' known to the

children mainly via American media is probably a better strategy for gaining popularity, which is evidently important to him. He tended to try too hard, however, to the extent that Biljana told me in her interview that Hassan was an impossible copycat.[36] Cevat is much less concerned with being popular among the other children in 6B. He seems to have decided to choose his own path, not letting school decide who he is supposed to be. His main social arenas were the mosque ('I have over twenty friends there', he told me during the interview) where he spent most week-ends, and his family, resident in Oslo as well as in Turkey.

Hassan finds it difficult to believe that Tyson knocks out Holyfield – which may be because he sees Holyfield as the stronger of the two, but equally likely is an underlying disappointment with Tyson for using his fist power against another Black boxer, a 'brother'. Cevat finds it interesting that Mohammed Ali is both American and a Muslim, a curious paradox of an American who chose Islam. He then brings up the subject of cannibalism, possibly because of Tyson's 'cannibalistic inclinations towards Evander Holyfield' (BBC 2002), that is, the infamous 1997 episode where he bit off part of Holyfield's ear. Hassan returns to the position of Blacks, and points to a paradox that he finds more interesting than Muslim Americans. This time he talks about Blacks in an international perspective, in contrast to Whites, and once again uses the word *neger* in his ironic way. Cevat is still preoccupied with Muslims, however, this time in contrast to, and in violent conflict with, Christians. While Kari is occupied with talking to Cevat, Hassan takes the opportunity to take old White myths about Black cannibalism out of the closet and ridiculing them.

Clearly, there were a host of potentially dangerous 'differences' being taken out of their various closets here. Kari's strategy was discretely to take away the discursive elements that she found to be the most unacceptable. The technique she used was the one Juni told us that Kari used when someone was teased: she sat down quietly and talked. What she said remained between her and the culprit. The effect was immediate.

As in the above example, apart from 'racial' differences, 'religious' differences caused the teachers some concern. The generally perceived, and therefore real, opposition between Islam and Christianity formed a backdrop for these concerns. In the previous chapter, we saw that very few Muslim

[36] He risked being called a 'wannabe': a wannabe black, much like young boys with Somali origins in Britain, who 'tried to be black' in the same ways as their African Caribbean schoolmates, who were considered to embody the epitome of masculinity (Ann Phoenix 2002, personal communication).

pupils came to school at all on the occasions when the whole school was going to church. The teachers lamented this. They also resented the fact that many parents refused to let their children take part in the KRL (*Kristendom med religions- og livssynsorientering,* 'Christianity with religious and ethical education') lessons. A coalition of organisations who opposed the new KRL subject had taken the government to court over the right to refuse these lessons. While waiting for a verdict (the government won the case later),[37] Bakken had informally agreed to let the children of protesting parents do their homework in the classroom during KRL. In the staffroom, the form teacher of 7B argued:

> *Anne:* 'It is different now from what it was when we went to school. We do a lot of other religions too nowadays, not just Christianity. It's so – I mean, the kids share the same room all the time, and then they are cut off from learning this about each other, when it's so important! I just think they should change the name of this KRL and leave out Christianity from the name altogether. After all, it is about all religions isn't it? I mean, we've been doing nothing but Islam now almost from Christmas to Easter![38]'

Petter was not so sure:

> 'They do Christianity for ten years, though. Still, only in 5th grade they learn about other Christian churches, really that is too late! I remember what a revelation it was to me when finally, way up in lower secondary school we learned about other religions. Until then there was nothing. It's better now, but not that great.'

A key word here is *other* – as Anne rightly said, they do a lot of other religions too. The State religion of Norway, Lutheran Christianity, is still the norm, and is taught every year for ten years. Petter was 6B's KRL teacher:

> During KRL, Petter asks the class why it is important to learn about different religions. André: 'Because it's boring if everybody believes the same.' Petter: 'Well – maybe – but can anyone think of a different answer?' Maren: 'Because it's important to understand those who are different (*annerledes*)'. Maren's answer was approved by Petter.

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[37] ' "No pupil may be excused from tuition in Christianity, religion and ethical education, regardless of the religion of their parents or their world view. The limited right to exception from Christian acts, which already exists, is sufficient." This was the Supreme Court's unanimous verdict in the case of appeal regarding full exception from Christianity, religion and ethical education lessons… the case is now on its way to the Human Rights Tribunal in Strasbourg'. (SMED 2002, my translation)

[38] The 'natural' or normalised framework here is, of course, the Christian calendar.

Again, the *we* constituted by the Norwegian State church is the norm, against which 'those who are different' are contrasted. The word *annerledes* (different) is often used in a condescending or patronising manner, marking the different as vaguely inferior to the norm, or targeting them as needing something from the normal majority – anything from tactfulness to some kind of welfare state measures aimed at amending their difference. This approach implies an understanding of 'difference' as an essence of the Other, rather than as an aspect of the relations between Self and Other.

Teachers, as we have seen, had an approach to 'racialised' and 'ethnicised' difference as something that required great tact, and what they accordingly transmitted to the children was an evasive discursive repertoire. Although I shall not go into the empirical details here, this was generally true of other social and cultural differences as well, such as differences related to parents' education, way of living, employment, housing, and income, as well as to people whose difference (*annerledeshet*) was related to physical or mental disabilities.

The children, as in the example with 'World News', made extensive use of a complexity that the teachers tried to 'discipline away'. The children possessed both knowledge and competence which the teachers, and not just Kari, to a large extent lacked. Could they have made use of this? Might this, perhaps, have been an occasion to make all the pretty words about the resources of a multicultural society and learning from each other, a reality? Why did this not happen? One answer I have already suggested: that difference, where it could not be 're-codified' into sameness, was intolerable. Another one I should like to make here, drawing on Bloom (1999), who is in turn inspired by Gregory Bateson and his 'pattern which connects' (Bateson 1979:16). In contrast to the fact that 'teachers tend to follow narrow and linear approaches to instruction' that seems to be typical both of the Norwegian and the Dutch school, as indeed to schooling in general, the children here let 'various experiences and ideas interconnect' 'The notion of "difference" (…) is at issue in all classrooms. Not only is each individual different, but racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural groups each bring sometimes radically differing contexts of beliefs, world views, and ways of conducting oneself.' 'Focusing on "patterns that connect" can allow children to develop skills in dealing effectively with complexity and diversity and to develop broader and more relevant conceptual understandings' (Bloom 1999). The same, I would add, goes for adults.

One kind of difference was, however, dealt with in a radically different way, by adults and children alike. This was the difference between boys and

girls. The way they wanted to, and were allowed to, share the classroom between them into a male and a female zone (as described in chapter 3) was only one aspect of this. Still, trying to think what would have happened if they had wanted to divide the room, say, into a Norwegian and a non-Norwegian part, with a half-Norwegian liminal zone, is quite informative (Kari would have been terribly unhappy and at a loss). So is the fact that there was no such tendency: whether any of the children might have preferred such an arrangement is less clear than the fact that it was not an option. The explicit divide between boys and girls was not just unproblematic to the teachers (as Lidén 2000 also finds), but positively encouraged by them. In the following example, the whole group had moved their chairs to form a ring in the period called 'School's Options' (*Skolens Valg*) – again, with the boys in one half circle and the girls in the other, with Kari between the two halves.

> A toy kangaroo, directed around by Kari, is the sign of the speaker. First there was a short discussion about topics for the pupils' council (*elevråd*). Teresa then asked: 'can we do like, we all say what our favourite food is and who our friends are and stuff'. Kari modified this to 'let's hear how we all feel in class'. (I noted: as if she were one of the children). Kari then passed the kangaroo to Alex first, which means the boys started, but they didn't want to talk about it and all tried to say they were fine, and passed the kangaroo on as quickly as possible. Kari wouldn't let them off so easily, and spent a lot of time trying to make the boys talk. When it finally was the girls' turn, most of them had a lot to say. Juni and Rebecca were concerned that they were being teased for being childish, and for being hobby detectives, they even claimed to have lists of names of teasers to prove it. Aman said in her small voice that 6B was a nice class and everybody was kind to her, which Kari praised her for saying. Biljana said she knew she'd be on Juni's list but would like to say that she and Teresa didn't tease, they just didn't like Juni's and Rebecca's squealing in the classroom. Maren said everything was OK except that there was too much 'gossip'.

Kari concluded that the girls needed to talk about things and the boys did not, so the girls would have a girls' group sometimes when the boys would have regular class. This was received as unfair by the boys, but Kari had made up her mind. On the way out, she suggested it might be interesting for me to be in on the 'girls' club' and hear what they had to say: 'The girls are so much more mature than the boys'. A week's time later, Kari found time for the 'girls' group' session. Kari left the boys with some work and led us all into the arts room next door, where she placed us around a long table,

with me at one end and herself at the other. The whole meeting turned out to be about Maren's feeling of being excluded. The girls form two main groups: 'the quiet girls' and 'the noisy girls' and Maren is an 'aspiring noisy girl'. She wants to be where the action is, but somehow confuses the other girls. I won't go into the details of the dynamics between the two groups and Maren. The main point here is simply that Kari actually took the girls out of the classroom and explicitly created bonds of female solidarity between herself and the girls. It was not the only time she did so, and she had clearly through the years built up a close relationship with the girls as a group. In chapter 6, I shall also refer what Kari told me about how she – a year or two earlier – had sent all the boys out to play in order to let a Somali girl who was in the class at the time take her shawl off and have some 'girl time' with 'us girls'. In this and many other ways, Kari took seriously her responsibility for helping the girls along, compensating for the power asymmetry implicit in the assertion that 'girls and boys often have different experiences' (KUF 1996:58).

In this chapter, I have attempted to describe and discuss how evasion was the only legitimate discursive option available to pupils in interaction with teachers, and how they made use of other options in the absence of authority. There was a tangible tension between the homogeneous, locally rooted national Self as understood and mediated by the school and many of the children's experiences of diverse belongings and identifications. The children had developed their own tools and competences in dealing with difference, as well as in concealing that they did not really subscribe to the 'indifference to difference' that the teachers wanted to believe in. In chapter 6, I shall attempt to show how these strategies related to the curriculum as understood and put into practice by the teachers. In the following chapter, we shall see how pupils and teachers at de Bijenkorf dealt with what they conceived as different kinds of differences.

Chapter 5
de Bijenkorf: Directly dealing with difference

In the example that opened the previous chapter, I identified two contrasting discursive options – in Frankenberg's terms, one 'difference evasive', the other a blend of 'difference essentialising' and 'difference cognizant'. Both options were applied to differences that were conceptualised as 'ethnic' in a wide sense, including 'religious' and 'racial' differences as well as differences of 'national origin'. In the present chapter, the opening example has a slightly different function. Here, as we shall see, the focus is primarily on explicitly racialised differences, and I shall include a good deal of my field notes to show how teachers and children deal with such differences. A section where 'religious' differences are at the centre of attention follows this, and I shall attempt to show how such differences were dealt with within a different discursive repertoire than that which informed the discourse of 'racial' differences. These first two sections draw on situations where teachers and pupils together deal with difference. This is followed by a closer look at how the children formed groups and categorised selves and others. In chapter 6, I shall then proceed to explore how the discursive repertoires employed by teachers and children in the two schools relate to the educational systems and the curricula.

Group 8 at de Bijenkorf consisted of four girls[39] and fourteen boys. Three main ethnic labels were applied, at least two of them with racialised connotations: (white) Dutch (*wit/blank Nederlands/Hollands*), (black) Surinamese and Antillese (*zwart/donker Surinaams/Antillaans*)[40], and

[39] A fifth girl, who was new at de Bijenkorf, was moved to group 7 after a few days because a test identified her lower achievement level.

[40] All the Surinamese children in group 8 were what in Suriname is called 'creoles'. This label applies to people who have Creole or Sranan Tongo as their first language and who are perceived to have African, Dutch, *and* indigenous ancestors. In the Netherlands, Surinamese 'creoles' are conceptualised as 'dark' (*donker*) regardless of their looks. For instance, Bart was much lighter-skinned than Sandra and looked (at least to me) more Amerindian than African with his light skin and straight hair. In other words, the 'one drop rule', where 'one drop of African blood' decides ethnic categorisation (cf. Ifekwunigwe 1999) seems to be applied to Surinamese living in the Netherlands. Other ethnic labels in Suriname include *Indianen* (Amerindians), *Hindostanen* (of Asian Indian origin), *Chinezen* (of Chinese origin), *Javanen* (of

Turkish. One of the girls, Angela, was white and of Dutch origin, as were three of the boys, Rick, Martijn, and Kevin. Likewise, there was one girl of Turkish origin, Aynur, as well as three boys of Turkish origin, Yunus, Mehmet, and Cevat. One of the girls, Chantal, had a white Dutch father and a black Surinamese mother. Like her, two of the boys, Sebastiaan and Mike, had one white Dutch and one black Surinamese parent. The fourth girl, Jennifer, was of black Surinamese origin, as were Tristan and Bart. Winston was of black Antillese origin, which in class put him in much the same category as those with black Surinamese origins. Two boys wore their ethnic labels alone: Jin-Song, who was of Chinese origin, and Carlos, who was of Latin American origin. I find it necessary to mention all this because in the initial example, racialised differences come to the forefront in a dramatic way. The example illustrates how teachers as well as children, with their various positions and experiences, openly treat the topics of racialised differences and racism. It also shows how this openness is reflected in, and supported by, the legal framework.

The incident

It is late September. The supply teacher, Else, goes in and out of the classroom, and the group is supposed to be working quietly. However, being used to Sandra's tight discipline, the kids run wild. Winston and Martijn are chasing one another between the desks:

> The chase ends with a sudden crash, as Martijn pretends to kick-box Winston, and Winston catches his foot mid-air and lifts it so high that Martijn falls and hurts himself. At that very moment, Else re-enters, and Winston scurries back to his desk. Martijn is lying still on the floor, having crashed into his desk as he fell. Sandra too arrives, alarmed by the noise, and the two teachers lean over Martijn and ask him what happened. In a small voice, he says: 'I fell'.

What was going on here for these two boys to chase each other until one of them got hurt, and then try to keep their conflict a secret to their teachers?

> The teachers take Martijn out of the classroom to look him over. In their absence, the other children excitedly put together their bits of knowledge about what had happened. It is established that the whole thing

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Javanese origin), *Saramaccaners,* also known as *marrons*, *boscreolen* or even *bosnegers* (descendants of African slaves who managed to escape and create villages of their own), and so on. These and other terms reflect the vast, post-colonial ethnic complexity of a country with less than half a million inhabitants.

happened because Martijn had called Winston 'chimpanzee' (*chimpansee*). Winston stares blindly at his book all the while. Martijn comes back in with Else. He seems to be in one piece, and carefully avoids looking at Winston. Angela tells Martijn accusingly, 'You said chimpanzee to him, that is discrimination!' Martijn does not reply, but concentrates on his work in a way that is hardly typical of him. After some minutes, he turns to Winston and whispers something to him, earnestly. Winston nods, then stares down at his workbook again.

Neither Winston nor Martijn denied that Martijn had called Winston a 'chimpanzee'. What Angela in effect pointed out was that Martijn had broken School Rule number one. He had also broken rules number two and three. Furthermore, although nobody said so, it was evident that Winston had broken School Rule numbers four, five, six and seven. Little wonder, then, that neither of them wanted the teachers to get involved.

The School Rules were displayed on the wall right next to the door, for all to see:

'**The School Rules.**
I find that everybody must be able to feel safe in school and outside of school. Therefore, I keep to the following rules:
1. I accept the other and do not discriminate.
2. I do not swear or take part in ridiculing or gossiping
3. I leave others and their things alone
4. If anybody annoys me, I ask him or her to stop it.
5. If that does not help, I ask a teacher for help.
6. In case of conflict, I do not take the law into my own hands/I do not take revenge
7. I use no violence within or outside school.
8. I also help others to keep these rules.'[41]

The first rule at de Bijenkorf is that discrimination is illegal. Interestingly, this way of making explicit at the very outset the principle of non-discrimination echoes the first article of the Dutch Constitution: **'**Discrimi-

[41] *De Schoolregels. Ik vind dat iedereen zich binnen en buiten school veilig moet kunnen voelen. Daarom houd ik me aan de volgende regels: 1. Ik accepteer de ander en discrimineer niet.. 2 Ik scheld niet en doe niet mee aan uitlachen of roddelen.*
3 Ik blijf van een ander en van de spullen van een ander af.
4 Als iemand mij hindert, vraag ik haar of hem ermee te stoppen.
5 Als dat niet helpt, vraag ik een mester om hulp.
6 Als er ruzie is, speel ik niet voor eigen rechter.
7 Ik gebruik binnen en buiten de school geen geweld.
8 Ik help anderen om zich ook aan deze afspraken te houden.

nation on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race, or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted.'

What happened next? And how much did the teachers already know? Sandra had left the room again. After the group had done their work, Else asked the whole group to move their desks and chairs and form a circle (*kring*). This converted the classroom into a forum for the mutual exchange of ideas and experiences, and was a regular formalised feature of their lives in the classroom. Every Monday morning began with a '*kring'*, giving each child the opportunity to tell the others what he or she had done at the week-end. One child would be appointed by Sandra to lead these question-and answer sessions, and the leadership would be taken in turns. Else herself headed it at this time of crisis, and the room suddenly became as much a courtroom as a classroom:

> The four girls sat two on either side of Else. Then came Martijn and Winston, next to each other, and then all the other boys in no particular order.[42] Else said: 'Something happened this afternoon, as you know, and I want to hear Winston tell us what happened and I want to hear Martijn tell us what happened. Sometimes the same story sounds different when it is told by different people because they experience what happens in different ways. I want Martijn to tell us first what happened.' Martijn: 'Around half past nine or ten or so me and Winston were playing and I called him something. Just as a joke (*grapje*), I called him a chimpanzee. And after that he kept chasing me around and just after lunch we were chasing each other in the room here, and he grabbed my foot, and so I fell.' Else: 'Now we have heard what Martijn could tell us. Winston, will you tell us the events as you saw them?' Winston: 'Martijn and I were kind of playing and he called me a chimpanzee and then I chased him and we were chasing each other afterwards and then I held his foot and he was kind of jumping on the desk and he fell backwards but I didn't think he would fall but he did.' He looks down and tries hard not to cry. Else: 'Martijn, was the fall intended?' Martijn: 'No.' Else: 'Winston, was the fall intended?' Winston: 'No.'

Winston's innocence was thus established, evidently much to his relief. Else continued the proceedings:

> 'Winston, did you find it a funny joke Martijn made?'
> *Winston* (in a very small voice): 'No, I got really angry because someone called me that before.'
> *Else:* 'Who was that?'
> *Winston:* 'My teacher.'

[42] As usual, I remained seated outside the *kring*.

The whole group gasped. This was clearly beyond their imagination.

> *Else:* 'Would you like to tell us about it?' Winston shakes his head silently, tears rolling down his cheeks. Rick giggles. Else first tells Winston that some kids don't know how to react and laughing is one way to react when you don't know how, and assures him it is not about him they are laughing. She then turns angrily on Rick who is still giggling.

Rick was white and of Dutch origin. He was the best football player and the next strongest boy in class, second only to Tristan, who was black, very tall, and of Surinamese origin. Rick was pointed out to me by all the other children in interviews as the most 'popular' boy in group 8, although few of them claimed to like him very much. In other words, he was something of a leader – or something of a bully. He was also the only child in group 8 who held explicit racist views.

Else turns back to Winston and asks him if she may tell the class his story, and as he nods, she states very briefly:

> 'Winston is with us now because he was discriminated by his teacher in his former school. Winston, I think some of the other children would like to ask you some questions,' (Angela has her hand up already) ' – is that all right?'

Winston nods, pulls himself together, and leads a question round as they are trained to do, like a proper chairman:

> It turns out that the teacher in his former school had called him 'chimpanzee', also 'black monkey' (*zwarte ape)*, he also did this to some other children. Was he a Dutch or a foreigner (*buitenlander)*, Angela wondered? He was Dutch. Where is the teacher now, Aynur asks? He is teaching in another school. What did his mother do? She went to talk to the teacher, with Winston. Then the teacher called Winston a *zwarte ape* and Winston called him a racist. That was when he had to leave that school. Martijn confirms: 'Yeah, Winston told me he was called a brown monkey (*bruine ape)* or something'. Else turns on him, angrily: 'Martijn, you knew that and still you thought this was a funny joke? You knew, how could you, when you knew?' Martijn has no good answer to this one, but does look a little bit ashamed. The questions continue. For how long did this go on? About a year, says Winston. Why did the teacher do this? Winston, his lower lip trembling: 'I don't know.' Bart volunteers the information that he has been called a black Frankenstein (*zwarte Frankenstein)* by somebody. Jennifer says that she and some others have been called 'Surinamese pest' (*Surinaamse pest)*. Tristan has something he wants to say or ask, but

> time is up and he says it to Winston between the two of them as the circle breaks up.

Winston seemed quite relieved after this session. The worried expression he has been wearing most of the time is gone, as if his terrible secret is shared and no longer a terrible secret. The concern and interest of most of the other children, Dutch and Surinamese as well as Turkish, clearly cheered him up. In addition, the Surinamese children's display of shared experiences emphasised a bond of solidarity between the black children. Most of the kids seemed to understand or at least were concerned and sympathetic. The most concerned were all the Surinamese boys, the four girls, the Chinese boy and one of the four Dutch boys, Kevin. On the other hand, there were those who giggled as well. These were one of the Turkish boys, as well as the class 'buffoon' (who was of mixed origin), and Rick.

A few weeks later I hear Winston talking to Martijn about his life:

> 'Then I went to the Kapella school and then those things happened and then I came here'. Martijn: '…then the thing happened with me over there [indicating the part of the classroom where he fell when Winston was chasing him for having called him a monkey] and so where do you go next?' (in a nice way, as if he regrets it). Winston: 'I stay here.'

Differences in black and white

A month later, group 8 were doing 'world orientation' (*wereldoriëntatie*). In the textbook, a girl called Suzie described how her grandpa, who came from China, had been harassed in Amsterdam:

> Sandra: 'When it says they teased her Grandpa when he sold peanut cookies in the streets, what do you think of that?' Several fingers up, and she chooses Mehmet, who says: 'I don't think it was good, because everybody has a right to sell things.' Sandra: 'Plus, very importantly, without people like him the Dutch economy would go down –' (she gestures) '– like this! Because without people from China, and Suriname, and the Antilles, this country could not survive. If all went to their countries, the Netherlands would suffer. Just think, at this moment almost half of the teachers in this country are foreigners (*buitenlanders*)!'

I have not been able to verify statistically Sandra's claim about the proportion of 'foreign' teachers. Yet her point remains clear: the Netherlands is completely dependent on the labour of resident 'foreigners'. I could not help but notice which groups she mentioned as examples, or rather which groups

she did not mention: whereas she included people originating in China, Suriname, and the Antilles – all of whom were represented in the classroom – she omitted to mention those of 'Western' (cf. Introduction), Turkish and Moroccan origins. That she did not mention 'Westerners' (except for the anthropologist, none of whom were represented) is less interesting than the omission of people with Moroccan (of whom there were many in school, if not in group 8) and Turkish origins. I would not blame the four 'Turkish' children if they felt left out at this point. The lesson continued:

> Kevin puts a finger up and Sandra nods permission: 'My mother told me that when she was small, all the kids in her class were white (*blank*)[43]!' Exclamations from several parts of the room: 'Really (*echt*)? ' 'Yes. And that when the first Surinamese child came there, they all found it strange (*vreemd*)!' Sandra: 'That is not really surprising. In Suriname, there are a lot of Dutch people now. When some of their children started going to school, to begin with everybody found it strange, with one or two Dutch children in a group of all Surinamese. When you are not used to that you find it strange, but now everybody is used to it. None of us finds it strange anymore. No. We are like one family. We don't say: he is Dutch and she is Surinamese and so on, we are all part of one family now.'

Sandra continued, now implicating herself:

> 'Look at me!' Sandra rubbed the skin on her arm, indicating its colour: 'Nobody says, wow! a dark teacher! It is normal. And we Surinamese have the benefit of knowing the language. (…) In school in Suriname we only speak Dutch. If I tried to speak Surinamese, they hit me on the mouth! So my Dutch is better than my Surinamese. My mother uses words [in Surinamese] that I don't know. That is not good either. But we write better Dutch than the Dutch, because we learn it correctly. The Dutch make a lot of mistakes when they write. But I can't write or read Surinamese, because I didn't learn that in school."

It is not clear whether Sandra locates the utopia she describes in Suriname, in the Netherlands, or in both countries. Perhaps, as an ideal state of things, it transcends location. The idyll evoked in this example stands out in contrast to the harshness of 'the Incident' that opened this chapter. Nevertheless, the two examples have aspects in common that make both of

[43] 'White' people may be described as *blank* or *wit*. *Blank,* which also means pure and unsullied, is the word preferred by racists and is therefore often (though far from always) avoided by those who do not wish to be associated with racism. *Wit* is the 'neutral' chromatic term which may be used to describe all white objects, human or not.

them very unlikely in a Norwegian setting. In each case, direct reference is made to skin colour. There was, as seen from Bakken, a striking absence of 'tact' when it came to racialised differences. This directness or absence of tact was as manifest in teacher-pupil interaction as it was in pupils-only contexts. It was also a controversial element in the important annual celebration of *Sinterklaas*.

Santa Claus and his little black helpers

Each year in early December, schools all over the Netherlands take part in this celebration, thus revitalising '(…) the Dutch Santa Claus tradition, in which the beloved *Sinterklaas* (short for St. Nicholas) is accompanied on his rounds by a black servant, the beloved but simultaneously feared *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete)' (Blakely 1993:xiii). The Sinterklaas tradition goes back many centuries and across many countries (St. Nicholas is thought to have been a 2nd century bishop in what is now Turkey), and has found its present-day Dutch expression as an amalgamate of traditions. At de Bijenkorf, I noted:

> All the kids in school are gathered in the school yard, forming a semi-circle in front of the building. With their teachers, group by group, they are waiting for the *Sint*. He arrives. A tall and dignified, long-bearded figure marches ceremoniously into the schoolyard with three *zwarte Pieten* (small white people, with their faces and hands painted black) and one jester (a white woman) dancing wildly around him. The contrastive effect – of the noble, white Saint in a holy Bishop's red cloak and tall bishop's hat, with his small, imp-like, blackface *Pieten* in brightly many-coloured 'Moorish' clothes – is very strong. I can see how the *Sint* without the *Zwarte Pieten* would be like one hand clapping.

A controversy about Sinterklaas and his helpers was triggered by the open refusal of some Surinamese immigrants to accept the Black Peters as anything but racist relics of colonial times. The debate was heated, and in the population at large two camps formed: one saw Black Peters as 'blackamoors' – 'negro' caricatures, evil and/or silly; the other defended their cherished childhood memories and argued that the Black Peters were black because they were chimney sweeps. When I arrived on the scene, the debate had largely petered[44] out, and the happy, Dutch childhood memories

[44] Please excuse the pun.

had won.[45] However, I did pick up some indications of the de Bijenkorf teachers' feelings for or against the Black Peters. Before the celebration, all the groups were decorating the classrooms. In Marieke's classroom, the *Zwarte Pieten* were made of jet black cardboard whereas in Sandra's room, they were all different colours but not black – nor white. Then, in mid-December, just after the celebration, I noted:

> Sandra takes me to the wider part of the corridor, where the teachers are eating their lunches together, for once. As we sit down, the gym teacher is saying that one of the Surinamese mothers has been complaining of her, and the teachers agree with each other that she is just a natural complainer. Another blond teacher says that this mother has been complaining about the *Sinterklaas* celebration too, because of the *Zwarte Pieten* – Sinterklaas' little helpers. Sandra says: 'I can understand the lady. You know, in some parts of Amsterdam, such as the Bijlmermeer,[46] they don't even celebrate *Sinterklaas* because the black parents find it offensive. As for myself, I think it is a part of this society, but I can understand her.' They start talking about the 'rainbow Peters' (*regenbogen Pieten*) – an attempt by some schools to solve the controversy by painting the Peters red, blue, green, and so on. 'But then, that was wrong too, because it highlights the racial aspect.' Another teacher says, dismissingly: 'I am still convinced he is just black from the chimney, so why all the fuss?' I protest, saying that to me this very small, very black person with his brightly coloured clothes doesn't look much like a Dutchman who has been through the chimney. She continues: 'Well, when I was a little girl that was what I believed! So if that is what children think, then I don't see that there is any problem. And as children, we all loved the celebration, so why take it from them?'

The widespread denial of any racist aspect to the *Sinterklaas* tradition is interesting in a country that, in regard to racism, is riding two historical horses: colonialism abroad and tolerance at home (cf. Blakely 1993), the economic success of the former to a large degree supporting the possibility of the latter. I shall return to this ambiguity in the final chapter.

All the children took part in the Sinterklaas celebration – none of the Surinamese children protested against the Black Petes; none of the Muslim

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[45] There seems to be some of the same syndrome here as with Constitution Day, *17. mai*, in Norway: little is written about this in the academic literature, and what is, is mostly historical or polemical. Is the problem the same: is there a conflict between the native anthropologist and the anthropologist's child within?

[46] This is the area of the Netherlands with the highest proportion of people with a Surinamese background.

children protested against celebrating a Christian Bishop, though one might have argued that he was originally Turkish. The celebration also involved the exchange of gifts or *surprises*, after a careful procedure orchestrated by Sandra, where exchange partners and items were decided through drawing lots. Let us turn to other kinds of socially constructed and significant differences that are not immediately related to the colonial past; namely those conceptualised as 'religious' differences. In group 8, there were children with many different religious backgrounds – some were from non-religious homes, others identified themselves with various versions of Christianity, with Buddhism, and with Islam. The latter was apparently the only one that teachers found problematic.

Difference is more than skin deep: Islam

Edible differences

Geography (*aardrijkskunde*) was one of the subjects that Else taught group 8 on 'her' Tuesdays, when Sandra was busy doing other work for the school.[47] From the beginning, she organised these lessons around maps and food. On the first Tuesday, I observed:

> Else asks if they know where Turkey is. All seem to know, and one of the Dutch boys, Kevin, is allowed to point it out on the big map of the world that she has put up in front of class. Else: 'What is the biggest religion (*godsdienst)* of Turkey?' Aynur: 'Islam.' Else: 'And who is the god of Islam?' Aynur: 'Allah.' Else: 'Who was his prophet?' Mehmet: 'Mohammed.' Else: 'Later we will get to the other religions too. And you'll see that they are not that different, all have the same origin.' Mehmet squirmed visibly at this, but said nothing.

My assistant, Karin, reacted strongly to Else's statement here, she told me afterwards. She felt it to be disrespectful – as if Else was saying 'you are all really Christians too, you just don't know it'. To me, the statement echoed Bakken teachers' emphasis on equality as sameness. It may be that Else, as a white Dutch teacher, had more in common with Norwegian teachers than Sandra, as a black Surinamese teacher, did. Yet Karin's and Mehmet's reactions also underline the importance of context: the statement was probably not understood in the same way as it might have been at Bakken.

[47] Else moved to another part of the Netherlands in the course of the term, and, as we shall see, Sandra had to take over some of the Tuesdays until the school found another supply teacher.

> Else pointed at a small map of Turkey that she had put up near the back of the room and continued: 'If you have got any Turkish things at home, newspaper cuttings, teabags or other packaging for instance, bring it here and stick it next to this map. Now next week I'd like the Turkish kids, if the parents permit it, to bring a little Turkish tea and small things to eat, for the whole group to taste. Turkey is the first country we'll do in this way, later we will get to Morocco, China, Suriname and so on.

The following week, I noted:

> Pictures have appeared around the map of Turkey, along with some Dutch newspaper cuttings about the recent earthquake in Turkey. There are four or five photos from Martijn, who was there on holiday last summer. One depicts some men 'murdering a sheep', according to Martijn. Cevat has brought some city pictures of modern buildings.

Martijn's pictures showed a rather exotic and even barbaric Turkey, as seen from the Netherlands. They stood out in contrast to Cevat's representations of a modern country, not at all unlike the Netherlands. In addition to the items surrounding and substantiating the abstraction that a map of Turkey is, the Turkish children did indeed bring 'a taste of Turkey' for the geography lesson.

> When Aynur arrived with her food, Mike and several others happily chorused: 'Oh, couscous, couscous! yummy!'

Aynur's food was wrapped inside a plastic bag and it wasn't possible to see what it was. It later turned out to be filled pastries (*börek*). In fact, it was hardly likely to be a North African dish like couscous, which a Moroccan child might well have brought. This was one of many indicators that, for those of Surinamese and Dutch backgrounds, the cognitive categories 'Turkish' and 'Moroccan' were largely overlapping, both being inter-changeable with 'Muslim'. Similarly, when Mehmet and Aynur were the only ones to stay at home when the group went for a week at an outdoor centre, Sandra explained to Karin and me that: 'The Moroccan kids, they aren't allowed to come, their parents are afraid they won't get proper food.' Karin corrected her: 'But they are Turkish'. Sandra: 'Yes'. It seemed to make no difference, as if that was just what she had said herself. But let us return to the geography lesson on Turkey:

> The goodies which the Turkish children had brought from home ('all *typical* Turkish dishes and snacks', Else told the class) were arranged in front, still wrapped up, under the blackboard. Else gave the group an

> informal test on the main geographical features of Turkey. Then it was time for the 'tea party'.

As a reward for internalising in their minds the rivers and mountains of Turkey, the children were allowed to take up in their bodies the tastes that this land produces. The party proceeded:

> Else had Aynur, Mehmet, Yunus and Cevat stand up in front first, to tell the group which foods they had brought. Mehmet had brought Turkish pizzas, Aynur her pastries, Cevat another kind of cheesy pastry, and Yunus Turkish Delights. Aynur and Mehmet were then put in charge, with Yunus and Cevat assisting them. They did not have time to take part themselves, being too busy serving food and making tea. Also they went on a round of the school, to offer tastes to the other teachers. Else was full of praise for the delicious foods. There was chatting and moving around during the 'tea party'. Sandra also joined us and sat in Yunus's place and tickled Kevin and laughed.

This was a time-out for non-Turkish children and teachers alike. Their minds at rest, their bodies absorbed the curriculum. Furthermore, there was a ritual reversal of roles, where the children who were usually the quietest and the most peripheral in class took the place of the teachers, and the teachers sat down at their desks.

The Turkish children's round of the school echoes another ritual, namely that of birthdays. The traditional Dutch way of celebrating birthdays is centred around the saying: 'The one whose birthday it is, treats (the others)' (*wie jarig is, trakteert)*. In school, this meant that everybody, on his or her birthday, would bring some sort of snack to share not only with their own group and teacher, but with all the members of staff as well. On your birthday, you would select two or three classmates to accompany you, usually with a basket filled with individual bags of crisps, or with cake, to do a tour of all the classrooms. There, the teacher would take a bag of crisps or a piece of cake, and in exchange give you a special card from his or her collection of such cards, purchased and kept in a pile in the teacher's desk for this particular purpose. These small groups almost daily touring the school were invariably all girls or all boys, and usually mixed when it came to 'ethnicity'. In contrast to the normal birthday procession which was unisex and multiethnic, the 'taste of Turkey' round was made by children of both sexes, but from only one ethnic group.

> Else said: 'Next week we will do Morocco, but there are no Moroccan children in group 8, so we will have to skip the food. But after that it's Suriname and then we'll really have a feast!' Sandra replied that she

> thought they should all arrange an evening together later, when all the children could bring some special food. She would make something Surinamese, Jin-Song could bring something Chinese. Rick volunteered to bring something South African. Martijn then said he could always bring something Moroccan.

The international idyll the two teachers construct here was rapidly attacked by Rick when he offered to bring something from South Africa. He often claimed that he was of South African origin, although everybody knew that he was just pretending. In fact, as he admitted to me when I interviewed him, he was 'all Dutch'. Martijn's offer to 'bring something Moroccan' may have been an indirect ridiculing of, or at any rate a comment to, Rick's pretence. In a Dutch post-colonial context, actually wanting to be a white South African was a statement in itself, an identification with or idolisation of, white supremacists. As Karin remarked: 'wow, that's even worse than *being* South African…' Martijn's ironically 'pretending to be Moroccan' counterbalanced Rick's move and brought into focus again the symbolically powerful imagery of sharing food across ethnic boundaries.

Inedible differences and Ramadan

Sandra also used practical problems that arose when sharing food to illustrate what she saw as guiding principles in inter-ethnic relations:

> In front of the class, Sandra gave a small lecture specifically directed to the Turkish/Muslim children. She told them that they should participate more, for instance accept food from others when they bring something from home, because by refusing the food they are hurting the feelings of the other children. 'We live in a society with other races (*rassen*) and other cultures and only if all take part can we speak of living together,' she told them. The Turkish/Muslim children looked uncomfortable and did not respond directly.

This was a very clear message, where Sandra made the Muslim children largely responsible for their own peripheral positions in the class. In extension, she made them into representatives of Muslims in the Netherlands and implied that 'they' were not doing their share of the integration work. The message was received not only by 'the Turkish children' but also by the other children in the group, as the interview with Angela indicated. She explained to Karin that she generally liked all the children in her group, but thought that some might adjust themselves (*zich aanpassen*) a bit:

> 'For instance', Angela said, 'they can't do everything, especially the Turks. When the Turkish kids brought food for the Geography lesson,

> all the children ate their food. But when Jin-Song came with something Chinese they didn't eat, they refused to eat it. Sandra was angry then. That was racist of them, and not nice for Jin-Song. Then when the Surinamese kids brought food the following week, they ate it, because they were afraid that Sandra would get mad at them again.'

We may note that Angela does not pick up Sandra's generalisation here – a topic I shall return to below – but stays on the more tangible level of her own experiences in class. For the five Muslim children, as Aynur confirmed when I interviewed her, the problem was also of a decidedly concrete nature: they were not sure if they were allowed to eat the food of the others. Was it *halal*? Might there be traces of pork fat, alcohol, or other forbidden ingredients? There might, indeed. A few Tuesdays later, I noted:

> They are doing Saudi Arabia today. Since there are no children from Saudi Arabia in the group, there can be no 'authentic' tastes of Saudi Arabia. Instead, Kevin's mother has made some cake – with a little whiskey inside, Sandra told me with a wink and a smile. Wim has brought a cake too, but Wim doesn't know what is in it. I ask Wim why he brought cake today, and he giggles: 'because of Geography'. Sandra asks me if the cake is good, and I confirm it and ask her if it is a typical example of Dutch cooking. She laughs and asks Wim, who also laughs: 'Sure.'

In the absence of access to 'authentic' tastes of Saudi Arabia, Dutch children brought home-made cakes. In this way, Dutch food becomes the universal and unmarked taste, in contrast to the 'other' tastes of 'other' places. It is not simply bound to one place, but transcends this one place while remaining undeniably Dutch. In this sense, Dutch food and, in extension, Dutchness, has the upper hand versus its 'others'. Rather than a simple case of complementary Orientalism between Dutchness and its others, we may note that Dutchness here appears to encompass its others. It is 'coextensive with the universe of discourse, and the other is set within the first' (Dumont 1980:242). I shall return to this discussion at the end of the dissertation.

One might perhaps have expected the Jewish presence in Amsterdam to be reflected in a model for dealing with differences in what one can, and does, eat. The Jewish communities in Amsterdam are, after all, among the oldest in this part of Europe, and, although they were hard hit by the Holocaust, there are still noticeable adjustments to their continued presence around the city. In many mainstream supermarkets, for instance, there were special sections for *kosher* foods. Jewish children have attended Amsterdam

schools along with other children, rather than having their own schools.[48] However, de Bijenkorf was not located in any of the traditionally Jewish districts of Amsterdam. There were no Jewish children in group 8, and I found little evidence that the teachers had any experience with Jewish children that they could draw on in their dealing with the differences between Muslim and non-Muslim children.

The lesson on Saudi Arabia above, when Dutch cakes constituted (or substituted) the 'taste of place', coincided with the first day of Ramadan. The most 'authentic' taste of Saudi Arabia on this day would surely have been the taste of nothing at all. Again, the Muslim children did not eat, but this time they were not scolded by Sandra, who instead made their fast a topic in her lesson that day:

> It is the beginning of December and the first day of Ramadan. Sandra says: 'I think that from today the Turkish and Moroccan families are fasting. Can you tell me why, those of you who do that?' Silence. Sandra: 'I'm sure I would have asked my parents why. Don't you do that? You don't know why? No, Kevin. No, Rick, put your fingers down again. Mehmet?' Mehmet: 'We should feel how it is to be hungry so that we can feel with the poor who can't eat.' Sandra: 'But it has to do with religion [*godsdienst*], too, doesn't it?' Mehmet confirms this, but can't, or won't, explain any further. Martijn and Wim ask Mehmet about the practical sides of fasting – when he can eat and what he may eat, and whether he can't eat a little when nobody's looking? Winston helpfully suggests that you can always eat in the bathroom or somewhere. Again, Mehmet tries to explain – he cannot eat anything all day and it doesn't matter if anybody is looking. Jennifer asks Cevat if he really doesn't eat all day. He confirms that. Sandra proceeds to tell the group about fasting on Good Friday in Suriname, when she was a child. She explains how she learnt about what the Bible said about it, and asks if those who follow the Koran don't know the Koran, in the way that she knows her Bible. She gets little response, and finally urges the Muslim children to ask their parents about their religion.

After lunch, I sit next to Aynur:

> I whisper to Aynur, asking her if she really didn't know the answers to Sandra's questions about Ramadan. She whispers back that she didn't, but she had asked her mother at home during lunch. Her mother had said that it is because Allah asks this of us, so that is the correct answer.

[48] There are only two Jewish primary schools in the Netherlands, according to the liberal newspaper NRC Handelsblad (1995)

I wondered at the time what Sandra would have said to that answer. It seems likely that she would have found it inadequate, since the example she wants them to follow presupposes a questioning approach rather than an unconditional obedience to one's God. This incidence echoes what Jacobsen (2002:47) observed among Muslim youth in Norway, where demands from fellow pupils and teachers 'contribute to the apparent inadequacy of the silent, bodily knowledge of Islam that one has acquired in childhood'.[49] As it happened, Sandra never got back to her question, and the answers the Muslim children were told to get from their parents were not presented in class. However, in spite of their – in Sandra's eyes – ignorance about the reasons for fasting during Ramadan, the fact of their fast was accepted:

> Sandra says: 'We are going to eat cake later, because of Geography. So if those four [who are 'doing Ramadan'] want to, they may leave the room then so that they don't have to watch all the others eating. And I don't want anyone to think that it is any kind of punishment. It is just an offer and they can do what they like.' When the time came for the 'tea party', they all chose to stay in the room. All the others were eating cake and drinking tea. Tristan offered Mehmet some tea – then checked himself. Bart asked Yunus the same, then Aynur, and they both said 'no, thanks' like it was no big deal. Even so, Angela told Bart off, whispering urgently: 'They may not, (because of) Ramadan!' ('*Ze mogen niet, de ramadan!*')

Representing Islam

As some of the above examples indicate, it was not only in matters related to food and eating – or not eating – that the Turkish children in group 8 were ascribed a role as representatives of 'Islam' (*de Islam*) and 'Muslims' (*Moslims*). Let us first return to the lesson 'about Saudi Arabia'. In the text-book that formed the explicit basis for Sandra's tuition, the lesson is not about Saudi Arabia per se. The texts on Saudi Arabia are part of a larger lesson about the Middle East, which again, through the institution of *hajj* – the pilgrimage to Mecca – is linked to the stories of Turkish and Moroccan children in Amsterdam (cf. chapter 6 for a more thorough discussion of the textbooks):

[49] Cf. also van der Veer 2001 (9): 'Work on arguments about Islam in high school discussions in Western Europe describe in detail how Muslim students acquire skills to defend their religion and culture, appropriate to the discursive styles characteristic for the discursive styles in the nation-states of immigration. (Project by Baumann, Vertovec, and Schiffauer)'

> The children are taking turns reading the textbook piece about Mecca. Sandra adds (from her teacher's book?) that 'in *de Islam*, it is also important to keep women and men apart. For instance, a woman may not attend her husband's funeral in the church.' Yunus objects: 'In Saudi-Arabia, maybe, but in Turkey it's not so.' Mehmet disagrees with him. Sandra tells Yunus off for not knowing better, and tells him to ask his parents how it is.

The textbook's attempt to avoid stereotyping Islam and Muslims seems to have failed. In the classroom, the many faces of Islam, of Saudi Arabia, and of Turkey are conflated into one entity which the Muslim/Turkish children are expected to know as their own.

> Sandra asks about the headscarf, what is the reason for that? Aynur replies quickly, as in a memorised phrase: 'Men may not see your head, your legs or arms. That is *haram*.' Sandra nods in approval. Jennifer asks Aynur why some women only show their eyes, with veils over their faces? Aynur does not know.

Aynur seems to be prepared for the question about the headscarf, and gives the 'right' answer. She is not, however, prepared to answer for the forms of the *hijab* that are not usual among Turkish women. Being her usual reticent classroom self, she does not try to explain this to Jennifer, who, much like Sandra, appears to expect Aynur to know about Islam in general. To Sandra, it was all the same – at least unless the fallacy of this assumption was pointed out to her:

> Sandra shows them how to use CD-rom, and uses Cevat's chosen special report subject, *de Islam*, as her example. There is music to go with it, and she asks: 'Cevat, do you know this music?' Cevat squirms, not knowing what to say, and she prompts him: 'But it's your people's music, Islam's music (*muziek van jullie, van de Islam*)!' Mehmet whispers to her, and Sandra repeats out loud: 'Oh, so this is Arabic music, not Turkish. OK, I get it.'

It was not easy for the pupils to correct Sandra. Much as the children liked her, she was a strict teacher, seldom open to negotiations. Her word was final, and her teaching style – which gave the good results they knew they needed for the CITO-test – depended on her unquestioned authority. Sandra's no-nonsense approach to the conflicts of food was in harmony with the overall, albeit implicit, school policy. This is part of the context of de Bijenkorf as one school among many, and I shall return to it in the next chapter.

Forming relationships

Forming groups for a 'week in the wilderness'

As part of the school year, groups 7 and 8 were going to spend a week at an outdoors centre a few hours' drive away from Amsterdam. This weeklong field trip was a big event, planned for weeks beforehand and made subject to reports and discussions afterwards. For the children, one of the main sources of nervous excitement was the prospect of sharing a room with others. Who would be in the same room? They were given the privilege of deciding this themselves:

> Time to find one's roommates. Groups 7 and 8 went outside, to the playground where 'rooms' had been chalked on the tarmac. Winston, Tristan, Jin-Song and Bart form a group first, leaping to the same compartment on the ground 'map'. Jennifer, Chantal, and Angela join two girls from group 7 in another 'room'. Carlos goes with Cevat, Yunus and three other Turkish-looking boys. There is one room left: Mike, Martijn, Kevin, Rick, Gregory from group 7, Wim, and Sebastiaan want to share it but they are one too many, and none of them wants to end up in any of the other rooms. Sandra decides they are to draw lots, and the loser will have to move to one of the other two groups of boys, or to a room with only group 7 boys. Kevin loses and starts to cry. Sandra then decides to have an extra bed put in, and if that doesn't work then Gregory must go, he'll be all right elsewhere.

There was no question of boys and girls sharing a room, neither from the children's nor from the teachers' points of view. The girls in group 8 were too few to split into smaller groups, unless they wanted to 'demean' themselves and join a group 7 girls' room. The boys were in a different situation. In theory, many constellations were possible. However, ethnicity along with the rank of age/group turns out to be the main organising principle. None of the rooms are ethnically 'pure', but all of them have one dominant ethnic group. All the white, Dutch boys are in one room. For Kevin to have to join the 'Surinamese' room, the 'Turkish' room, or a 'group 7' room would have been a real crisis. Gregory, however, was Surinamese *and* belonged to group 7, so he would be 'all right elsewhere'. Sandra understood this and solved the problem to everybody's satisfaction.

Practising for the 'Fun Night' (*Bonte Avond)*

During the week at the outdoors centre, the children themselves were going to organise a 'Bonte Avond' (lit. 'Colourful Evening') with performances

and entertainment. All this had to be rehearsed beforehand. As soon as the room groups had been established, the 'Colourful Evening' was next on the agenda:

> All then march wildly! (the prospects of a field trip are exciting) into the auditorium. Each 'room' also forms an entertainment group, and Sandra gives instructions to all of them together before the groups go off to work on their shows.

The predominantly white, Dutch group made a parody of the Jerry Springer show (an American talk show characterised by scandalous confessions, real stage fights, and dirty language that is censored and replaced by loud tones or 'beeps')

> Sebastiaan did a great Jerry Springer. Martijn was 'Monique' with a blonde wig, who had something to tell her man 'Jason' (Gerard) who proposed to her on stage, whereupon she tearfully confessed to him that she was a man and took her wig off. They shouted at each other 'you stupid beep beep', and then Mike the bodyguard had to hold them apart. The same scenario more or less was repeated for Wim who was also a woman who turned out to be a transvestite, and her boyfriend Kevin, or was it Rick. It was all very realistic… This group later decided to adopt the name 'The South Africans'. I asked Wim if this had been Rick's idea, and he replied: 'Yes – but then nobody else had any ideas.'

What I had, to myself, labelled the 'Surinamese' group chose an 'ethnic' topic, but – to my surprise – with Chineseness as their explicit ethnic category:

> Tristan, Jin-Song, Winston and Bart were playing Chinaman and cats, enacting a TV commercial. Jin-Song was the 'Chinaman', Tristan was the director, pushing the others around to their and his own delight, the two others were cats. This group later made itself known as the 'Dragonblowers', again bringing to the fore its 'Chinese' member.

The 'Turkish' group had trouble finding a topic:

> Carlos was talking with Yunus, Cevat and the other Turkish boys from group 7. They were standing around, and did not seem to be very concentrated on any common project.

The girls were already practising for their show, a dance performance along the lines of 'girl groups' like the Spice Girls:

> In the auditorium, Angela and Jennifer were both trying to be the boss. Angela, Chantal, Jennifer, and the two group 7 girls were composing a dance, to Jennifer's music –black 'girl group' soul music. When Karin

> suggested they throw their heads and long hair back, like in a shampoo commercial, Angela immediately said: 'yes, and we'll all have loose hair and throw it back, that'll look great!'. This made Chantal protest: 'I can't have my hair loose' and showed with a gesture of hopelessness how big her hair would be, it wouldn't be 'loose' at all like Angela's, or even Jennifer's. One of the group 7 girls didn't want to either, for the same reason. After some more bickering where Angela protested against Jennifer's choreography, Jennifer said: 'you aren't really dancing, you just dance with your legs, you don't dance with your body!'

Here, Karin unintentionally activated the black-white dichotomy. Until that moment, I had not given much thought to the fact that the women tossing their hair sexily in shampoo commercials are white women and neither, I am sure, had Angela or Karin. For Chantal, however, it was evidently not the first time she had unhappily compared her African-type hair to the ideal set by shampoo commercials. Her frustration and embarrassment were palpable. Jennifer did not comment directly on this issue. Yet her carefully targeted remark just a few minutes later refers to the same black-white dichotomy, this time drawing attention to an area where 'black' people are stereotypically superior to 'white' people – that of dancing.

Werkweek glimpse

Karin and I went on a one-day trip to visit 'our' group at the outdoors centre, which was situated in an idyllic spot in a relatively hilly and forested part of the Netherlands. When we arrived, the children were outside doing sports, and Karin went to say hello to the girls. Sandra saw us and waved me over, scolded me amicably for not having called first, and sent me inside for a drink. She appointed one of the boys from group 7, Sankara, to act as my guide for the day, 'because he speaks English really well'. Sankara turned out to be Ghanese and the only African in the school, and he told me some interesting things about his experiences:

> As the kids came in to eat their bread lunches, Sankara stayed next to me to make sure I was entertained and happy. Wim was sitting next to me, then Rick and a Hindustani boy from group 7. Sankara explained to me quite openly in front of them, with no apparent anger, that the boys called him 'Bako'[50] because he was African: 'they always pick on me because I come from Africa. I don't like it but they do it. This one (indicating Rick) is very strong and everybody has to do what he says. Let me show you who picks on people'. He walked over until he stood

[50] Since this is not a dictionary word, I have been unable to check my spelling.

> behind Rick and the Hindustani boy, and pointed at both their heads with a glance at me to make sure I got it. Then he got back and sat down.

I saw Sankara making friends with Tristan afterwards, possibly not just because he liked Tristan but also because he was the strongest boy in school. That made him a useful ally for those Rick chose to pick on. But let us return to the lunch table:

> The Hindustani boy talked a lot, saying ostensibly offensive things about people, like 'Martijn is gay', 'Gregory is stupid', and 'Gregory and Mohammad are from Morocco'

As Gregory had been moved down one grade the previous year, he could hardly deny that he was 'stupid' – he was officially 'stupid', so to speak. However, he protested vehemently against the unfounded 'accusation' of being Moroccan. In making it very clear that he was not from Morocco, he confirmed my impression that this was evidently not a nice origin to have for those who did have it: a Moroccan identity was a social stigma. The Hindustani boy continued his ridiculing of other people:

> 'Hi, look at me, I am Bako, I come from Bakoland'. This made Rick laugh. I asked Rick: 'Does Sandra come from Bakoland too?' He ducked, hiding a smile, got a bit flushed, and shook his head as in 'don't let Sandra know'. He looked as if he knew he should be ashamed, or as if I'd expect him to be. His Hindustani buddy giggled delightedly, though, and later repeated my 'joke' to another boy who came over.

When the week was over and we were back at school, I told Sandra about this incident and about the things Sankara had told me. She promptly took Rick out of class and talked to him. When he returned, the others wondered what it was all about, and Rick said 'something about Sankara'. Sandra informed me she had let the group 7 teachers know what happened, as well. Rick was listening to this. She told me later, when he was not listening, that his mother is 'a little bit racist' (*een beetje rasistisch*) and that she knows that he is, too. She would not allow the word *bako*, 'it is bad, and used in Suriname about Africans', as she said. I was rather surprised by the direct way that she handled this incident, and worried that Sankara would be in trouble because of what I had done. All this happened when I had been just over a month at de Bijenkorf, and I was still using my experiences at Bakken as a point of reference. There, I was sure, the teacher's reaction would have been much less direct, and I would have expected the teacher to be more in shock and denial, much more at a loss, and discreet. This was one of the first

steps in my learning the difference between the schools in their approaches to, and dealing with differences. The learning process consisted of a myriad small steps and a few bigger ones. One of the more diminutive steps was the following small conversation between Wim and Sandra the week after the *werkweek*:

> Wim is looking at an information leaflet about wood ticks, and asks Sandra something that I can't hear. Sandra indicates the skin of her arm and answers: 'Yes, with you, but with me brown and with Bart here also brown, I don't know how it would be.'

I looked at the leaflet afterwards and found that it showed pictures of white skin that had been bitten by a wood tick, and had gone pink and red around the infected area. Sandra's matter-of-fact-ness when it came to the darkness of her skin made it clear that the problem of racism was not located in her body.

Recognising difference

There are many differences between our two schools, differences more or less relevant to the concerns of this thesis. One aspect that should be kept in mind is the numerical and positional dominance of white, Norwegian adults in Bakken as compared to the significant positions of a few black, Surinamese adults in relation to my material from de Bijenkorf: the headmaster and the school leavers' form teacher. The ways in which adults talked about racialised differences can hardly be understood without considering their own position on what one might call the socially constructed chromatic scale. White teachers who are afraid of hurting black pupils' feelings, and/or afraid of jeopardising their own authority versus black pupils, may avoid the whole topic of racialised differences. Because they were themselves defined as black, Sandra and Mark had less reason to fear that they might be taken for racists when they talked about skin colour than did white teachers such as Kari or, at de Bijenkorf, Else. Belonging to any minority lends a certain legitimacy, and gives one a right to, talking directly about the criteria that define this particular minority. On the other hand, the '*neger* debates' in Norway (cf. Gullestad 2002) as well as in the Netherlands imply the more standard truism that the majority has the right of definition. Both of these debates were initiated by people who objected to being called a 'negro', and in both countries, the majorities argued that the word was part of their language and they were the ones who were qualified to say whether it was racist or not. I shall return briefly to these debates in the final chapter.

Whether one belongs to the majority or not, one cannot talk about oneself without implicating the other, and vice versa. The institutional context that produces and reproduces the normal Self and the other-than-normal Other constitutes the framework within which difference and equality are also produced and reproduced. These two processes, rather than being parallel, are inextricably and dialectically intertwined.

Chapter 6
Two contexts

In the preceding chapters, I have described and discussed various aspects of the immediate, everyday lives in the two schools. In the present chapter, I shall start by widening my focus to the larger contexts of the past and present. These contexts I see as sociopolitical, in accordance with Nieto's definition:

A sociopolitical context in education takes into account the larger social and political forces operating in a particular society and the impact they may have on student learning. Thus, the notion of power is at the very centre of the concept because it concerns issues such as structural inequality and stratification due to class, gender, ethnicity, and other differences, as well as the relative respect or disrespect accorded to particular cultures, languages, and dialects. (Nieto 1999:192).

The relationship between schools, curricula and society at large is indeed a close yet complex one. As Apple (1979) argues:

> '(…) the social world, with education as part of it, is not merely the result of the creative processes of interpretation that social actors engage in (…) It is partly this, of course. But, the everyday world that we all confront in our day to day lives as teachers, researchers, parents, children, and so forth "is structured not merely by language and meaning", by our face to face symbolic interactions and by our ongoing social constructions, "but by (…) material reality and its control".' (Apple 1979: 139–40)

In other words, the realm of 'language and meaning', as explored in the three preceding chapters, needs to be complemented with a study of 'material reality and its control'. In the following presentation of the two systems of education, the curricula, and the position of parents, I will not set the interpretative approach aside, but rather attempt to combine it with a more realist orientation. Such an approach emphasises that 'as the policy text moves between sites, different sets of values operate. (…) Understanding the relationship between intended outcomes and realisation therefore always involves making sense of competing sets of meanings situated within specific events in the life-time of institutions and systems.' (Scott 2000:78). However, I would argue that all the sets of values that

operate in different 'sites', or on different levels of interaction, are not *necessarily* in explicit or even implicit opposition to each other. As my Norwegian material indicates, *likhet* – equality as sameness – has a hegemonic position in school as well as in the system of education.[51]

Bureaucratic contexts: curriculum, curricula

The bureaucratic aspect of school informs social classifications and choices of words in everyday interaction. In turn, it also shapes the way teaching is organised around different categories of people:

> '[I]t is important to realise that the (…) categories administered by institutions (…) are not contingent facts or arbitrary frameworks imposed upon a pre-existing social basis. The social basis of society is as much constituted by these categories as the other way around. As shown among others by Handelman (1981), Bauman (1991), and Herzfeld (1992), the paradigmatic form of organisation in the modern nation state is that of bureaucracy, *a bureaucracy whose basic function is to generate taxonomies in order to act upon them*.' (Fuglerud, in press, my emphasis.)

The dialectic relationship between the categories of the educational bureaucracy and its 'social basis' is evident in everyday life in school. In Norway as well as in the Netherlands, the two primary social categories in school were those of 'teacher' and 'pupil', with 'parent' as the most important secondary category. I shall return to the meanings ascribed to the category 'parent', and to the expectations inherent in this role, in the following chapter, and here concentrate on 'teacher' and 'pupil'. In neither country could people choose whether to be teacher or pupil – the categories were ascribed upon entry into the institution. Schools are institutions of education, of learning and discipline. Teachers are adults who are employed as professionals by a school to educate its pupils – that is, to transmit to them the knowledge society deems necessary for its adult citizens to possess. Pupils are children who are enrolled in a school, and the reason why they are there is that they should absorb the knowledge the teachers are there to transmit.

Beautifully simple in theory, in practice – as we all know – it does not work like that. In practice, the beauty of school lies in the complexity of what goes on there. The purpose of school is not one-dimensional. Pupils are

[51] I use hegemony here in the sense that 'one view of the world is dominant' (Smith 1998:268) but also assuming 'that such dominance can and will be contested' (ibid.).

not passive receptacles of knowledge. Teachers are not smooth mediators of knowledge. What exactly the knowledge is that every citizen should possess is not evident. Knowledge takes many forms and is negotiated and transmitted in all directions. The schools and school systems are in turn parts of societies with historically embedded expectations of teacher and pupil. As 'social agents of knowledge (…) – that is, anyone with the institutional power to define the identity of anyone else) (…) [teachers] are also moral agents, for they judge behaviour against cultural values and, in turn, these values only make sense within the discourses concerned.' (Smith 1998:290p). Keeping all this in mind, the categories of teacher and pupil nevertheless form a relatively firm fundament from which to explore and compare other categorisations and classificatory processes. I will try to show how 'teacher' and 'pupil' serve as points of departure for finer classificatory distinctions.

Reflecting on the complexity of school, I have chosen to make use of Eisner's (1994:87) argument that '...schools provide not one curriculum to students but three', these three being the 'explicit curriculum', the 'implicit curriculum', and the 'null curriculum'.[52] By explicit curriculum, I shall here understand the aims, methods and content of teaching as written in official documents and in textbooks. By implicit curriculum, I understand the presuppositions underlying the explicit curriculum as well as the teachers' socially embedded views on what pupils should learn – in other words, what is between the lines of the explicit curriculum, seen from both the writers' and the readers' points of view. I would hold that these two elements of the implicit curriculum are linked to each other and to dominant views on social values in a mesh of dialectic relationships on many levels. The null curriculum is what schools teach by not teaching – subjects and phenomena that are not considered part of what children should learn in school. I would argue that the implicit and the null curricula together, to a large extent, constitute and reproduce the social basis and legitimacy of the educational system.

I shall begin my exploration of the two contexts by looking into the national histories and images of the nation as they are represented in official documents, as well as in some of the textbooks that were used in the two

[52] My definitions and use of the three curricula deviate from Eisner's own in several ways, his concerns being very different from mine.

schools.[53] My purpose here is twofold. Any view of the nation, such as the ones expressed in documents and in the textbooks, is linked to views of the Other. This aspect will be my explicit focus in this chapter. More specifically, I shall explore if, and how, the Norwegian and Dutch curricula construct national identities in relation to spatial and temporal Others through concepts of sameness and difference.

This approach will also serve to provide the reader with background information about the societies of which the two schools are part. To this latter purpose, I initially considered writing brief historical overviews for the two countries, or quoting some of the many such overviews that already exist. I decided, however, to use as my primary sources official documents relating to the educational systems and the textbooks that were used in the schools. This will underscore the point that any 'history' is a selection of events, adjusted to the purposes and the contexts in which it is composed. Rather than forming neutral and static 'backgrounds' for 'my material', this presentation will underline the mutuality between 'history' and 'society'. It will also bring to the forefront officially approved and hegemonic, national self-understandings; and 'in order to understand and explain social phenomena, we cannot avoid evaluating and criticizing societies' own self-understanding' (Sayer 1992:39). However, that the documents, the explicit curricula and textbooks alone cannot provide an adequate picture of these self-understandings becomes evident precisely through the use of Eisner's model of the three curricula. Therefore, I shall supplement these with information from other sources. I shall also make use of empirical examples that show how the curricula were put into practice and enacted in the classrooms.

Of particular relevance in my context are the images of national Selves and Others that emerge in the curricula and textbooks. As Werbner (1997:241) contends in the case of Britain, however, '[d]espite the common view that constructions of community by the state and local state reify cultural categories, the reality is more complex. Fictions of unity in the public sphere are generated within a bureaucratic moral economy based on attempts to fit the specificities of each case into a framework governed by notions of "equity" and redistributive "fairness".' Such notions, I would argue, are 'heavily influenced by prevailing patterns of political culture'

[53] It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go into the political and bureaucratic aspects of the production and selection of teaching materials. This topic in itself merits more research.

(Grillo 1998:199) – they do not mean the same in Britain as they do in Norway or in the Netherlands.

Two European school systems

On the European level, there is extensive co-operation between the national educational systems, particularly within what is called the Socrates programme (1995-). This programme includes all the member states of the European Union, such as the Netherlands, as well as a number of countries that are not full members, such as Norway. Part of this co-operation is Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe, which among other tasks operates a database 'providing detailed information on each Education System covered by the network' (Eurybase homepage). This database, accessible on the Internet, is called the Eurybase. The information is prepared and updated by the national Eurydice units – in practice, the ministries of education in each country. In other words, the documents in this database are public and official documents, giving each government's version of the education system, and providing the information deemed necessary by the Ministry to understand the system.

On this level, the two national contexts of our schools merge into one. Both countries give their selected information in English within a given framework; this facilitates comparison, and at first glance makes the systems seem very similar. A brief outline of the political and economic backgrounds is followed by an overview of the general organisation and administration. Both of these chapters include historical backgrounds. Next come more detailed descriptions of each level of education, and of teacher training, the organisation of evaluation, of special education (i.e. for categories which are not included in the mainstream system) – and, finally, a description of the European dimension of national education. A closer look into these documents, however, reveals some fundamental differences between our two countries as regards the principles of education.

Norway: 'one school for all' (*enhetsskolen)*

As it is neatly phrased in the Eurybase, 'Equality is a value that is strongly emphasised within Norwegian educational policies.' (Eurybase 2001b) Behind this simple statement is a whole history of education, and in extension a national history from the 19th century onwards. Of particular relevance here is the concept of *enhetsskolen* (lit. 'unified school'), the 'all-inclusive school', as it has been, and is, understood in the context of the

social democratic welfare state that Norway was to become in the course of the 20th century. Summing up, then:

> The new curriculum for the 10-year compulsory school (L97 and L97 Sámi) (…) is based on and consolidates the principle of the all-inclusive school, 'one school for all'. The school shall provide equitable and suitably adapted education for all children in a coordinated school system based on the same curriculum. (Eurybase 2001b)

As a logical consequence of the ideology of this unified, all-inclusive school, private schools are very much the exception in Norway. In the country as a whole, only 1.6 per cent of all pupils attend private schools (SSB 2000).

> Norway has a very small private school sector. Private schools at primary and secondary level are regarded primarily as a supplement to public schools rather than competitors. Most of the private schools are based on a particular religious denomination, philosophy of life or pedagogical theory that result in an alternative educational system. (Eurybase 2001b).

As a rule, parents do not choose primary and lower secondary schools for their children in Norway at all. The norm is simple: all schoolchildren attend their local, publicly run school.

In Oslo, one might expect a strong congruence between schools and urban districts, since children are automatically enrolled at their local schools. However, the urban district has no responsibility for schools, and there is no necessary congruence between the political and geographical division of the urban district and the school's local district for recruitment of pupils. The school administration is a central municipal body, *Skolesjefens kontor* ('the Office of the Director of Schools') (since 1998 renamed *Skoleetaten*, 'the School Department') which has a much longer history than the relatively recent urban districts. In practice, each school recruits its pupils from its own local district, the *skolekrets* ('school district'). However,

> Oslo does not have fixed school districts (*skolekretser*). Instead, there are recommended enrolment districts ('school boundaries', *skolegrenser*) for all regular primary and lower secondary schools. Among other things, this implies that: 1) 'parents and guardians' (*foresatte*) may apply for their children to enrol at a different school. 2) Parents and guardians may not claim that their children be admitted to one particular school. 3) The Director of Schools may change the recommended enrolment districts (school boundaries) (Skolesjefen i Oslo 1997).

In the Netherlands, as we shall see, the picture is radically different. In Amsterdam, publicly-run primary schools like de Bijenkorf are administered by the urban district, which also employs the staff.[54] The pupils may come from the urban district of the school, or from other districts, since parents are free to choose whichever school they want.

The Netherlands: 'freedom of education' *(vrijheid van onderwijs)*

At the very heart of the Dutch educational system is an ideological commitment to the right to be different. What schools have in common is, above all, the *constitutional* right to be different. This reflects the fact that the Dutch school system as a whole formed the backbone of the 'pillar' society of the 19th and 20th centuries (cf. Lijphart 1968). Although the 'pillars' – Catholic, Reformed, Liberal, etc. – are now generally considered obsolete, the educational system still reflects the division of society into distinct religious and ideological groups:

> One of the key features of the Dutch education system, guaranteed under article 23 of the Constitution, is freedom of education, i.e. the freedom to found schools (freedom of establishment), to organise the teaching in schools (freedom of organisation of teaching) and to determine the principles on which they are based (freedom of conviction). This means that different groups in society have the right to found schools on the basis of their own religious, ideological or educational beliefs. (Eurybase 2001a)

In the Netherlands, when a child is between 3 and 5 years of age, the parents make an active decision as to which school they want their child to attend. The motivations behind their choices are complex, involving locality, political and religious affinity, pedagogical preferences, reputation and presentation of the school, ethnic composition of the school, disposition of the child, and many other factors (cf. Tazelaar et. al. 1996). Since 'the Constitution places public and private schools on an equal financial footing' (Eurybase 2001a), family economy is not a consideration: only a very small minority of schools actually charge school fees. In primary school (*basisschool*), as many as two-thirds of all children in the Netherlands attend privately run schools (*bijzondere scholen*) as opposed to publicly run schools (*openbare scholen*). de Bijenkorf is a publicly run school. This does

[54] Both cities are geographically, politically and administratively divided into 'city parts' (Norwegian *bydeler*, Dutch *stadsdelen*) which I have chosen to translate as 'urban districts'. Amsterdam is divided into 15, Oslo into 25 urban districts.

not necessarily mean that its autonomy is limited in comparison with that of private schools:

> The freedom to organise teaching means that private schools are free to determine what is taught and how. This freedom is, however, limited by the qualitative standards set by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in educational legislation. These standards, which apply to both public and private education, prescribe the subjects to be studied, the attainment targets or examination syllabuses and the content of national examinations, the number of teaching periods per year, the qualifications which teachers are required to have, giving parents and pupils a say in school matters, planning and reporting obligations, and so on. (Eurybase 2001a)

Bakken and the Norwegian curricula

The explicit curriculum

Official documents and textbooks jointly form the explicit curriculum. In Norway, the national curriculum (*Læreplanen for den 10-årige grunnskolen*, generally known as the L97) to a considerable degree determines the content of the textbooks (cf. Kulbrandstad 2001). It is hard to overestimate the influence of the L97 on what goes on in the classroom, and a closer look at the national curriculum is therefore necessary. Before looking at the L97 itself, however, I should point out that it is in itself part of larger social processes that take place within the discursive field defined by the concepts of equality and difference (cf. chapter 8). As Lidén (2000:223; 2001:81p) points out, official Norwegian policy documents on immigration demonstrate a turn from a, relatively speaking, pluralist to a more unitary concept of equality.

> 'In the second half of the 1990s, the political ideology of integration changes (…) The emphasis is now on the idea that everybody, regardless of background, should have equal opportunities to take part in society and to express and develop oneself culturally. It is a right for everyone to be considered as an individual and not merely as a member of one particular group, culture, or faith. These principles also have their consequences for the school system. (…) In the new national curriculum, the L97, this emerges through the marked emphasis on a common, national frame of reference and foundation for knowledge.' (Lidén 2001:82, my translation)

As this quotation demonstrates, it is an individualism very much within the framework of a Norwegian, national collectivity that replaces the former, again relatively speaking, more pluralist orientation. The same trend is evident in the national curriculum. The L97's predecessor, *Mønsterplan for grunnskolen,* known as the M87 (KUD 1987), tended to emphasise the positive aspects of cultural pluralism and prescribed 'freedom of spirit and tolerance' (KUD 1987:15) rather than 'our common cultural heritage' (KUF 1996:57), which forms the basis of L97. In contrast to the L97, the M87 explicitly stated the aim that 'the pupils [with minority backgrounds] should develop functional bilingualism' (KUD 1987:38, my translation) and concluded that school must organise tuition in Norwegian and in the other mother tongues in ways that would 'give different groups of pupils a platform of common experiences and ensure that the linguistic and cultural differences provide an enriching contribution to the learning environment' (KUD 1987:39, my translation).

What did this mean in practice at Bakken? When I interviewed her, Kari explained to me how the system of *morsmålsopplæring*, 'mother tongue tuition', worked in the present, in 1999. What emerged from this description and from my own observations was an image of mother tongue tuition as a subject of secondary importance, where Osman and the other 'morsmålslærere' taught small groups outside of the 'real' classroom, and children who were in need of such training left the classroom as un-obtrusively as they could, because they did not want to be stigmatised. In contrast, when I probed deeper and asked Kari to try to remember if things had changed, she said:

> *Kari:* Actually, when you think of it, quite a lot of things have happened.
>
> *ML:* Has Bakken had any kind of multicultural policy?
>
> *Kari:* No. Not, well, I don't know. Why, yes! [surprised at her own memories]. Not my first six years here, but the next class I taught – we had (trying to remember) what was it called? Bicultural classes! We had one third of foreign-language children and two-thirds Norwegian children – I think we had five or six Pakistani children – and 13 or 14 Norwegian ones… That's how it was. And Osman and I were the teachers. (…) [Speaks eagerly now as it all comes back to her] I taught the foreign language ones Norwegian, and Osman told the Norwegian pupils about Pakistan and all that. They even learned some Urdu, just for fun. It was really well organised, and really good. A great success it was. And none of those children ever needed any extra tuition later on. They managed so well – both in their own language and in Norwegian.

> (…) It's one of the best things I've ever taken part in, and I and Osman we worked really well together. And then they stopped it. It was just for a while, for some years, sort of a test case. *Nyordnet barneskole* ('recently reorganised children's school') they called it. Not multicultural or anything. Bakken sort of had its own profile. There were some other schools who did it too, though. But then around 1983 or 1984 it just disappeared, there wasn't enough money.

The glimpse Kari gives us here is of a situation where Osman and the other 'mother tongue teachers' were the equal partners of the native teachers. Their 'difference', their subjects and lessons were there, for all the children, and not – as in 1999 – hidden away.[55]

The national curriculum

A Nordic comparative research project finds that the Norwegian National Curriculum (L97) has an unusually strong position in teachers' daily routines:

> A striking find in our Nordic project is the central role played by the L97, as compared to earlier curricula as well as to other countries. Take the M74 [the curriculum that preceded the M87] as an example: the teachers claimed that this was a book they read at college, then they put it at the back of the bookshelf. The L97 plays a much stronger role. The Norwegian teachers describe the national curriculum as their most important guiding instrument. Its place is at the front of the bookshelf, and it is used by the profession as well as by parents. This means that, as a teacher, one has to know what one is doing and legitimate one's practices in accordance with the national curriculum. (Skomedal and Klette 2002, my translation)

In agreement with this, the L97 as a whole played an important role for the Bakken teachers in their work, although their view of it varied, mainly along with their closeness to the bureaucratic aspect of school. Let us listen to what they have to say about it. When I interviewed Pernille, the vice principal, she told me:

> ' – to begin with, there was a lot of resistance to it, like what do we want a new curriculum for again, but… I think this curriculum is the one that has been accepted the most readily. I think it's – really, really good. I see a change already, in the way people go at it, finding inspiration for working in new ways, you know? Working with topics and projects and … but of course things don't change from one day to the next. Of course

[55] Unfortunately, I did not interview Osman, so I am not able to present his view of the changes.

> – well, it's been said that the content is a bit (laughs) that it's just Albania and China that have – this kind of rigid planning… that can be a bit provocative. But in one way it makes things so much easier, too. The old curriculum was so vague. This one tells you what to do, it's easier to plan, you don't have to make so many choices, you know what you're supposed to do. It's more efficient. It's quite detailed but why not. It makes for more of the old unified school, where you're supposed to be able to come from Varanger [North Norway] to Oslo and basically know the same things. It includes everybody [in Norway].

Here, Pernille presents and dismisses two main objections to the new curriculum. First, she says, there was reluctance to accept 'yet another' curriculum. This would primarily be a veteran teacher objection. Pernille herself had been a teacher for almost 20 years during which there had been only one major reform in the primary school curriculum (in 1987). For Pernille however, embracing the new curriculum was a necessity. After all, it was her responsibility as school inspector/vice principal to implement it. The second objection she mentions is potentially more serious: It is a very detailed document that leaves very little room for alternative views and practices – in a way usually associated with rigid undemocratic regimes. She shows us how she has managed to turn this into an asset: 'it makes things so much easier '… it tells you what to do… you don't have to make so many choices… it includes everybody.' I asked her how the school leadership had proceeded to implement the new curriculum.

> *Pernille:* Well, those teams that we have [once a week work groups], they're supposed to be a forum for that. And then we in the leadership have to make sure that we take L97 as the point of departure in our own planning, that we incorporate topics from L97 into the team topics. Right now we are planning all those things for next year. We need to set aside enough time to co-operate and plan things.
>
> *ML:* How much time do you need for that kind of work?
>
> *Pernille:* Well, there is what's called the 190 hours frame, and that means five hours earmarked every week. And then we break that down to – the principal's time [where he addresses the teachers] and team time.

We may note how the content of L97 is implemented in unmistakably bureaucratic ways. Pernille's point of view is that of an experienced teacher and above all of a leader. She has no choice but to implement L97, and underlines what she thinks of as a general feeling among the teachers: L97 makes teaching easier because it makes the decisions for you. For the

youngest and least experienced teachers, this was clearly so. To Petter, for instance, it formed the basis of his own education, and he felt that it provided continuity and was the guide he needed in planning his work:

> *Petter:* I'm quite happy with it. I was at training college when it came and we used it a lot there, so I know it very well. What I really like is that it is so specific. But of course the drawback is that it is incredibly comprehensive. It's really more of an ideal, you can't really do all it says. But it's good to know, like, one year they're supposed to do the Song of Solomon[56] and next year it's something else, you know. Really specific. You know what they are supposed to know then. I mean, it sort of determines your method and most of the content but not to the extent that your hands are all tied. The old curriculum they used before, the one from 1987, was much too vague, wasn't it?

In Kari's case, this rang only partly true. L97 did not really make a big difference to her.

> *Kari:* The part of being a teacher I don't like too much is meetings. All those staff room discussions. I mean, I've been here for so many years, there's so much planning, and that hasn't really changed. I've heard it all before. And to spend all that time on unimportant details, instead of discussing the content of the lessons, how and what to teach, the thinking is all about organising. How to organise the days and the weeks, that takes 90 % of our time in the staff meetings.

Karsten and Ingvill, who were on the periphery of Bakken – in bureaucratic and most other terms – did not share Pernille's and Petter's enthusiasm at all, but rather subscribed to Kari's view that the leadership focused too much on the aspect of organising everything. To them, the new curriculum had become a 'Bible' for teaching in a way that made it very difficult to teach in alternative ways or draw on other resources. When I interviewed the two of them together, Ingvill criticised the school for not focusing on learning but on getting through the curriculum:

> *Ingvill:* What have the pupils really learned? What do they understand? That should be the main thing. Maybe half of the kids sit there and don't get a thing, and yet the teacher can claim to have been through the whole curriculum!
>
> *ML:* Does L97 itself give any room for that, do you think?

[56] The Bible book of that name – not Toni Morrison's novel about the complexities of Black identity.

> *Ingvill:* Yes, I do think so. I know it does. It's just that they let themselves be governed (*de lar seg styre*) and in one way I guess it's nice and safe for them. It's like, let's get through the curriculum, – when they really do have a lot of opportunity to think differently. But I guess that's a long process, and more difficult. Precisely because it's so detailed L97 could be great, it's such a challenge, isn't it?

We see that these teachers all agree that the national curriculum dominates their work, whether or not they agree to the way in which this happens.

In the L97, the ideals of 'one school for all' as they are currently understood are expressed as follows:

> The compulsory school is based on the principle of one school for all. The compulsory school shall provide equitable and suitably adapted education for everyone in a coordinated system of schooling based on the same curriculum. Compulsory school follows the same basic structure throughout the country. In principle, all pupils shall follow the same course of schooling and work on the same subjects. (L97)

The ideal of 'one school for all' is, of course, to include everybody. In practice, however, this is not simple, and the policy documents (including the L97) do acknowledge this as an issue to be addressed:

> The compulsory school includes all groups of pupils. The school is a workplace and a meeting place for everyone. It is a place where pupils come together, learn from and live with differences, regardless of where they live, their social backgrounds, their genders, their religions, their ethnic origins, and their mental and physical abilities. The compulsory school shall help pupils to develop their abilities by being, learning and working together. The school thus helps to reduce social inequality and to develop a sense of community between groups. In a multicultural society, education must promote equality between pupils with different backgrounds and counteract discriminatory attitudes. (L97, English internet version)

However, the more practical guidelines for adaptation to 'differences' aim at local and individual, rather than group differences:

> The syllabuses in the various subjects specify the common content of the national curriculum, while at the same time leaving room for local and individual adaptation. (ibid.)

Let us look at some of the social categories as they are bureaucratically and explicitly produced in Norway. In the explicit curriculum, attention is centred around categories of pupils rather than those of teachers (or parents). The following is a quote from the national core curriculum chapter on

principles and guidelines, where the sub-categories 'girls and boys' as well as 'language minorities' are singled out as referring to groups that require special attention:

> *Gender equality*
>
> Education must take into account that girls and boys often experience things differently.[57] The compulsory school must contribute to ensuring that both genders have the same rights, obligations and conditions in family life, further education, working life and social life in general. Both in its contents and its organisation, learning material and working methods, the compulsory school must aim to provide girls and boys with equally good opportunities for learning, giving them the same attention, the same tasks and the same challenges. The education given must encourage both genders to assume responsibility at work and in social activities, and to prepare themselves for education and vocational choices according to their abilities and interests, regardless of traditional sex role expectations. The education given must stimulate and prepare girls and boys for their choices in further education; the basis of equal occupational opportunities. (ibid.)

We may note here that the differences in 'reality' between girls' and boys' perceptions, positions, and experiences form an explicit point of departure for the implementation of gender equality as an ideal. Let us compare this to the next paragraph in the same chapter:

> *Language minorities*
>
> The broad educational aims, which apply to the compulsory school in general, also apply to the education of pupils from language minorities. Education shall help them to participate as equally worthy and active members of society. It shall also help to stimulate the language development of the pupils in accordance with their own aptitudes and abilities. (ibid.)

Where the immediately preceding paragraph counterpoises the two 'gender' categories, there is no explicit contrast here between 'language minorities' and 'language majorities'. The 'minorities' seem to exist as such in isolation, in contrast to an unspecified 'general' or 'normal' category. There is no corresponding suggestion in this instance of taking into account any existing differences between two counterpoised categories. Even more striking is the

[57] In the Norwegian original, it says: '(*I opplæringa skal ein ta omsyn til at)røynslene hos jenter og gutar ofte er ulike*.' I would translate this 'Girls and boys often have different experiences', which is not at all the same as 'girls and boys often experience things differently'.

omission of their different experiences.[58] Let me, as an illustration of my point, replace 'language minorities' with 'girls':

> The broad educational aims, which apply to the compulsory school in general, also apply to the education of girls. Education shall help them to participate as equally worthy and active members of society. It shall also help to stimulate the language development of the girls in accordance with their own aptitudes and abilities.

This experiment serves to make clear some underlying premises when it comes to the position of 'language minorities' in school: While girls and boys at least verbally are acknowledged as two parts of a whole, the 'language majority' that forms a corresponding counterpart to 'language minorities' is rendered invisible. Further, since it is necessary to make it clear, it cannot be self-evident that the broad educational aims apply to 'language minorities'. The next entry is more confusing: on the one hand, it is easy to agree with the premise that it is unlikely that, without education, 'pupils from language minorities' be able to participate as equally worthy and active members of society. On the other hand, would one expect anyone to be able to participate in such a way without any education, regardless of language background? There appears to be something about education in Norway that transforms 'them' from being inherently incompetent and passive in relation to 'society' to being more like 'us' and thus being more competent and willing to participate. Finally, 'they' are evidently not expected to develop their linguistic skills to any generally competitive level – language here presumably being synonymous with Norwegian.

What is the relevance of these paragraphs to the reality at Bakken? I shall return to the topics of two paragraphs I quoted above, and some teachers' views of 'gender equality' and 'language minorities' as part of the implicit curriculum, below. Let me first take a look at the explicit content of some of the particular subjects that the L97 specifies, namely the social subjects, comprising history, social science, and geography.

In the history of every nation, some periods and events achieve a status as central, rallying national symbols. The topics I had initially blinked out as the most relevant Self/Other-constitutive moment in the Norwegian context were: the Viking Age (around 800–1050 A.D.), Independence from Denmark (1814) and Sweden (1905) and the German occupation during WW II (1940–45). Furthermore, the post-war development of Norway as a

[58] In the M87, in contrast, it was stated under the heading 'Cultural context' that different cultural backgrounds also implied different experiences (KUD 1987:22).

rich, oil-producing welfare state and as a 'multicultural' society is relevant to a study of nation building and of the construction of images and relations between Selves and Others.

According to *Læreplan for grunnskolen*, in the 6th year of primary school children are expected to learn about the following in History: 'The events that led to the unification of Norway as one realm, (…) the development of the Nordic and Norwegian societies from the Viking Age to the Black Death, (…) important men and women during the European Middle Ages, (…) ways of life and societies, conflicts and views on humanity from these periods and from, for instance, the Crusades, (…) important voyages of discovery and the growth of the Mongolian and Arabic empires (…) people like, for instance, Marco Polo, Genghis Khan, and Mohammad.' (What these three have in common remains unsaid) (L97:182). In other words, most of the historical events that I had selected were not on 6B's agenda when I was there, while topics I had not selected were there.

In Geography, they were required to focus on 'the Nordic countries and other regions of Europe' (L97). In social science, the children were expected to learn about 'the most important institutions of our democracy' and 'compare conditions in societies with and without freedom of speech and understand the value of freedom of speech for individuals and societies' as well as 'learn about different forms of international co-operation, such as the Nordic Council, the European Council, and the European Union, and how they influence our everyday lives.' (L97:182–3).

6B had not yet 'learnt about' most of the dominant symbols of Norwegian history. That is, these had not yet been on the curriculum. Yet – through older siblings, parents, and last but not least the annual National Day celebrations, they were vaguely familiar with the notion that '1814', 'Independence' and 'the War' were somehow important to everyone who lives in Norway. They also knew that Norway is 'a free country' and 'one of the richest countries in the world' – both because these aspects of Norway were on the curriculum and since they are referred to almost daily in media and in everyday conversations among adults.

Vikings!

Bakken had chosen to use the textbook series *Terrella* (Båsland et al. 1998). This social subjects book consists of three sections: geography, history, and social science – an organisation that accurately reflects the organisation of the subjects in the national curriculum. The Viking Age is centre stage in the history part of *Terrella 6*. This is the Golden Era of Norwegian nation

building, the mythical source of Norway as a nation, and it takes up about half of the pages in the history section. The rich and detailed account of the Vikings' Norway as an independent kingdom in *Terrella* ends as follows:

> In 1319[59] events occurred that led to major changes in the country. The king, Håkon 5. Magnusson, died. He had no sons who could become king after him, but he had a daughter who was married to a Swedish duke. When their son, Magnus Eriksson, was two years old, he became king of both Norway and Sweden. The intention was not that this bond between the two countries should last long, only until they could find suitable kings. It was not to be. This was the beginning of a long period when Norway became more and more dependent on the neighbouring countries. *Another catastrophe, too, hit our country*. In 1349, the Black Death, a dangerous pest, reached Norway. (p. 198, my translation and emphasis)

Here, dependence on Sweden and Denmark on the one hand, and the Black Death on the other, are dramatically constructed as simultaneous and equivalent 'catastrophes for our country'.

Among other methods, Kari chose to stage a whole Viking role play in 6B, with the children dressing up, building a 'Viking House' in the classroom and taking up different parts – slaves, farmers, traders, and even a Chief. Hassan was the Chief, and relished the power it gave him. Unfortunately, I was not there when the roles were given, and do not know how the decisions were made or how they were initially received. What I did observe, however, was that Hassan enjoyed continuing his role-play for a good while afterwards, ordering his 'slaves' around.

'A rich and democratic country'

In the Geography part of the textbook, the focus was, again in agreement with the L97, on Europe and the Nordic countries. Curiously, Norway is the only Nordic country that is not explicitly and separately described in a chapter of its own. Looking at the curriculum for the preceding years, it transpires that Norway as a geographical unit is not on the curriculum before the 8th grade. Until then, the emphasis is on the schools' local surroundings and on the learning of geographical concepts. Seen in the light of the prominence of the national history throughout primary school, there emerges

[59] Most historians would date the end of the Viking Age to the (forceful) Christening of Norway around A.D. 1100, and in fact Terrella does not postulate that Håkon 5. was a Viking. Rather, it represents the Viking Age as the beginning and core of Norwegian Independence and Golden Age, with 14th century dependence and decline as its (temporary) ending.

an image of Norway as a unique, organic reality, firmly rooted in the soil of history and locality, rather than as one of many contemporary nation-states. Within this framework two characteristics surface as constitutive of this unique reality: wealth and freedom. Especially the latter is given prominence in *Terrella 6*, where there is a whole chapter on the freedom of speech as an important aspect of Norwegian democracy.

The implicit curriculum

From language minorities to 'foreign-language' pupils

Rather than 'language minorities' (*språklige minoriteter*), which was the term used in L97, 'foreign-language' *(fremmedspråklige)* was the word teachers and staff used to refer to those pupils whom they sometimes also referred to as 'wholly non-Norwegian' (*helt ikke-norske*). They had this term from older policy documents, where 'foreign-language' had not yet been replaced by 'language minorities'. There was an open matter-of-fact attitude to the inevitability of the never-ending process of bureaucratic re-naming, as in this slightly frustrated quote from the staff room: 'What's the word now, you know, for what we used to call "immigrant pupils" (*innvandrerelever)*?' There was also a widely shared, implicit knowledge of the people thus named and re-named. As Kari told me on one occasion: 'Of course, the *fremmedspråklige* parents never come to collective voluntary work (*dugnader)*'. Everybody knew who 'they' were. However, when it came to definitions, things invariably turned confusing, as the following examples show:

> *ML:* What is *fremmedspråklig*, exactly?
>
> *Kari:* It must be when both – the definition is if one of the parents come from a different country. But there are many of these pupils who don't need extra tuition. But I suppose it must be those who have both their parents from a different country. And have a mother tongue other than Norwegian. So Norwegian is language number two. But for the resources that the school gets, one parent with a different mother tongue is enough.

Pernille tried to explain it to me:

> *ML:* I often hear the term 'fremmedspråklig', what does it mean exactly?
>
> *Pernille:* Who they are? Well. That's really a good question in this school. Because, if you look at 6B for instance, you'll find a good proportion of them defined as *fremmedspråklige*. Because one of their parents comes from a different country. But when it comes to who has a

> right to extra tuition – that's far from all of them. I mean, that's a matter of individual judgment.

The muddle may be seen as an example of the many uses of terms that refer to non-majority Others: the very ambiguity makes it possible to meet a whole range of mutually exclusive expectations. Politically and economically, ambiguity seems to work better than clarity. In terms of the school's access to resources, there was a large proportion of 'foreign-language pupils'. When it came to the need for extra tuition, the proportion was considerably smaller. As Pernille indicates, the main reason for this was the relatively high number of 'half Norwegian' children.

Luigi, who gave extra tuition to '*fremmedspråklige'* (a term he did not like), voiced his frustration over the school's approach to minorities:

> *Luigi:* Norwegian as a second language should be a subject for teachers, not for pupils. Of course, Norwegian pupils know some things that the other children don't know. Because school builds on their realities, not on the experiences of the immigrant children. So to my mind it is school, in fact most teachers, who could do with some extra tuition.

When Luigi points out that school builds on the realities of the Norwegian children, we may link this to Apple's argument that 'the ability of a group to make its knowledge into "knowledge for all" is related to that group's power in the larger political and economic arena' (Apple 1979: 139–40). What Luigi pointed to was, in effect, the null curriculum that I shall outline presently.

Let me first return to Karsten's and Ingvill's classes, or group sessions. These were referred to by the acronym NOA (*Norsk som andrespråk*), 'Norwegian as a Second Language', because they were financed over the budget intended for this relatively recently established subject. Their teaching was unconventional, based primarily on Ingvill's education as a dance therapist. Karsten was educated as a kindergarten teacher, and had also worked with mentally handicapped children.

> *Ingvill:* The most important thing about the way we work is that we don't impose anything on the kids, top down so to speak, we are really concerned with grasping whatever it is they bring along. Especially these *fremmedspråklige*. We're not there to teach them something but we believe in their taking part, we let them take their own concerns as the point of departure. That is the best kind of learning.
>
> *Karsten:* There is really a great need for that kind of thing – for being recognised (*anerkjent*). It's as simple as that.

> *Ingvill:* All these psychologists talk about that – how important it is to be seen. And how much that means for a feeling of self and – we see them, we praise them. They open up and – they get a whole new feeling of who they are. Instead of just repeating endlessly things they can't really deal with. And they discover that 'I can dance', 'I can sing', 'Wow – I can do something!' I heard one of the teachers saying, after the show we had, that she looked at one of the girls in a completely different way after that show. Just think what that does for the teacher-pupil relations.
>
> *Karsten:* And the kids have talked about things they never talk about anywhere else in school. I don't think any other lessons do anything like this for them. All of them sit there and listen to each other. We've had some magic moments. Very important moments, I think. Things have really happened. I mean, tell us about your country, about your family, what happened when you crossed the mountains to escape, big important things for those kids.

As in this interview fragment, in Karsten and Ingvill's group sessions, too, the emphasis was on the children's experiences, identities and their need to be recognised as well as on verbal and bodily expressions. I was present at many of their sessions and asked some of the children from 6B who took part what they thought of it. Independently of each other, they all cheerfully told me they had no idea what the purpose was. Yasmin found it all too noisy and disorganised, but both Cevat and Aman said they enjoyed it, and clearly looked forward to it every week. Interestingly, the recruitment to these sessions depended on each form teacher and their perception of the sessions and of the pupils. There was no parent involvement (see the following chapter for a further discussion of this point). Nor were there any clear recruitment criteria. What the participants had in common was that they were all 'wholly non-Norwegian', and most of them were conceived by the teachers as having some kind of 'problem' in adjusting to their classroom lives. What these sessions did provide the children with was, as Ingvill and Karsten point out, an opportunity and a social context for expressing what was important for them. Being 'different' was the norm in these sessions – it was what the children had in common. Also, teachers as well as other children were clearly impressed by their song and dance performances and this did add a touch of glamour and prestige to the essential difference of children who were otherwise seen as *annerledes*, as lacking in *likhet*, as being 'deprived'. In the interview with Ingvill and Karsten, their sessions emerged as the only arenas where their *fremmed-språklige* pupils could relax and develop their identities, unrestricted by

school and by parents alike. As liminal spaces and events, they both countered and confirmed the participants' essential difference.

The hijab: ethnicity and gender

As a final case here, let me turn to a phenomenon that symbolically brings together the topics of dress code, religion, gender, and being different: the *hijab*, or Islamic headscarf for women (and girls). Kari, in her quiet way, had strong opinions about this. When Rubina (the 'new' girl who, according to Juni, 'came from a different country') had just started at Bakken, Kari commented to me:

> 'It's so good to see a Pakistani girl with short hair! It really says it all about her family, really it does!'

On the day of the School Football Tournament, Kari had found herself a quiet spot in the grass and several of the girls from 6A and 6B had gathered around her. One of them was Fatima 'with the headscarf', as Pernille had described her to me. She had taken her scarf off.

> Kari stroked Fatima's shiny black hair, telling her: 'You do have such beautiful hair. It is so good to see you without the veil for once.' Fatima squirmed a little, she looked embarrassed, but said nothing.

One day, Aman, who usually wore her long hair loose, turned up in school with a headscarf. The next day Aman did not wear the scarf, and I never saw her with a headscarf again. Since she was one of the children who did not get her parents' permission to be interviewed for my project, I never found a good opportunity to ask her about this. I interviewed Yasmin, however, and asked her:

> *ML:* Is anyone teased for wearing a headscarf at Bakken?
>
> *Yasmin:* Mm.
>
> *ML:* Who would that be?
>
> *Yasmin:* I don't know. But… I used to wear a scarf.
>
> *ML:* Did you?
>
> *Yasmin:* Some months. I tried it. At Møllergata[60] I tried it for some months. And then I quit at Møllergata and then I came to Bakken school. And then I said, 'No, I can't be bothered to do this anymore' and then I took it off.

[60] Møllergata is the (real) name of yet another Oslo school, to the east of the city centre, where a large majority of the children are of 'non-Norwegian' origin.

ML: Did you wear it to begin with, here?

Yasmin: No

ML: Never? They haven't ever seen you with the scarf?

Yasmin: No-o.

ML: So why did you stop wearing it?

Yasmin: They don't know that I wore a scarf, right? They say: 'It's so good that you don't have a scarf', 'It's good you don't have a scarf'. You know. And if I tell them it'll be: 'Oooooo, my!' And, like: 'did you wear the scarf?'

ML: Well, I won't tell them.

Yasmin: No, please don't! (Both laugh)

I also had the opportunity to ask Kari what she thought about the headscarf when I interviewed her, and she gave me another example – a girl who had moved from Bakken before my arrival.

Kari: Zara from Somalia. She was kept very strictly. She was only allowed to take that shawl off when there were only girls in the classroom. So sometimes, we had to tell the boys to leave the room. Then we were all girls inside. Then she beamed with pleasure – it was incredible. And she got a lot of attention and sympathy.

ML: Do you find it problematic, when they wear it at school?

Kari: No, not problematic. But I do find it a little – I think it is – unfortunate, that such small girls have to cover their hair. And it hampers them. And it's warm. And it makes them so conspicuous. So I don't think pupils in primary school – I don't think it should be – I don't think it should be allowed, really. At least they could wait until lower secondary school. They should be old enough to decide – and not be, um, forced to wear it. But then it seems to make them proud too, in a way, it gives them a certain prestige – in the family – that now you're such a big girl that you should… so it has to do with identity and – it isn't really only negative.

ML: Well, I don't know. But maybe it does seem a bit unfair, when the boys don't have to.

Kari: Yes. Oh yes. They have much more freedom. Islamic boys are much more free than the girls. There's a vast difference there.

As these examples indicate, girls who wore the Islamic headscarf had reason to expect that teachers (especially women), as well as other pupils (especially girls) would feel sorry for them. Donning the headscarf was, it transpires, interpreted by Norwegian women and girls as an expression of a

femininity that implied accepting subordination to men and boys. Skilbrei (2002) shows that Norwegian women who work in the cleaning business have a corresponding experience versus middle-class Norwegian women. She holds that their expressions of female identity, cast in the mould of the old-fashioned housewife, elicit pity and condescension from educated women, who feel that their less fortunate sisters do not know what is best for them. The Norwegian feminist movement is largely a success story, and Norwegian middle-class women are generally proud of their achievements in this field. As has been pointed out (e.g. hooks 1981; Collins 1990; Mirza 1997) in the case of other feminisms, however, white middle-class women's experiences have been the implicit points of departure and have had a hegemonic status. Their particular expressions of femininity have also achieved a superior status as compared to those of 'others', be they working class Norwegians or Muslim schoolgirls. As yet, this superiority has not yielded to challenges from 'other' women (Berg and Lauritsen 1998).

The *hijab* may also be understood as such a challenge. To see the Islamic headscarf as a 'non-Norwegian' or even 'counter-Norwegian' expression of femininity only is, of course, inadequate. Yet highlighting this aspect of the *hijab* in a Norwegian school may help us see dominant Norwegian perceptions and expressions of femininity more clearly. I shall not go into this in further detail here, but rather point at it as an interesting possibility.

The null curriculum

What is omitted in the Norwegian curriculum? Any attempt to answer this question will necessarily be shaped by one's own interests and perspectives. In the present context, the general question must be further specified and reformulated: When it comes to social and cultural difference and equality, to national Selves and Others, what is missing in the present Norwegian curriculum? Even then, the answer will be shaped by the limits of preferences and imagination: it is not easy to describe that which is not there. My attempt should thus be read as ideas and suggestions rather than as an exhaustive list. The L97 is, as I already mentioned, extremely detailed and comprehensive. Over more than 300 dense pages, it apparently covers every conceivable aspect of tuition at all levels from 6 to 16 year-old pupils. Paradoxically, the very impression of totality makes the limitations of the document all the more salient. As in the quoted paragraphs from L97, the vagueness of the approach to 'language minorities' stands out in stark contrast to the approach to 'gender equality'. An agenda on how to define,

not to mention how to achieve, 'ethnic equality' is, in other words, missing in the general guidelines. What one might call the taxonomy of knowledge, the division of knowledge into disciplines or subjects, is another level of analysis. The subjects as they are prescribed in L97 emerge as self-evident, separate entities, and the division is conventional. I shall not enter the discussion of the underlying pedagogical conventions here (cf. for instance Hodson 1999 for a critical view of the premises underpinning 'Western' understandings of such conventions) but pass on to the disciplines as they are presented.

A narrow, Norway-centred worldview manifests itself in each particular subject. Thus, in history, we may note that the entire history of the ethnic composition of Norway – except for the Sámi – is missing. The many ways – economic, cultural, political etc. – in which colonial history has affected Norway, both domestically and internationally, are also absent. As Gullestad (2003) points out,

Norwegian debates on immigration, developmental aid and international relations are generally characterized by an image of Norway as being outside the history of colonialism and racism.

That this image is incomplete should not come as a surprise. Norwegian missionaries, traders, seafarers and aid workers have all been implicated in the global histories of colonialism and racism in what one might call a 'pseudocolonial' history. The histories of numerous Norwegian missionary activities all over the world are amply documented, almost exclusively in a celebratory form. Hernæs (1986, 1996, 1998) shows how, under the umbrella of Danish dependency, Norwegians[61] actively took part in imperialism, colonialism and slave trade in Africa, as they more than likely did elsewhere in the 'Danish' or 'Danish-Norwegian' colonies in India and the West Indies. It took a Dutch person (Zorgdrager 1997) to conceptualise Norwegian activities in the Sámi district of Kautokeino during the 19th century as 'colonialism'. Furthermore, the discourse of development aid has been shown to be an effective agent in the constitution of a Norwegian Self as 'normal' and 'good' (Tvedt 1999; Nustad 2003). Under the name 'The African Presence in Norway', Africans are in the process of documenting a continuous African presence in Norway since the 17th century (Afin 2003). These and other contributions tellingly stay at the margins of 'history' in Norway, and are absent from the curricula.

[61] Again, of course, it is pertinent to ask what a Norwegian 'is': did Norwegians exist as national Selves during the centuries of dependency?

Absent is also the topic of migration, as well as anything more than a rudimentary knowledge of the many different religions of people who live in Norway. Apart from the chapter on freedom of speech, where a boy called Ademir tells his story about how he had to flee to Norway from war in his (un-named) country of origin, no attempt is made to show the diversity of children's lives throughout the world, or indeed in Norway.

When it comes to expressions of people outside the 'imagined community' of Norwegians, three genres represent 'the rest of the world': legends and sayings from 'other' countries and cultures, including the Sámi, children's literature by British and US authors, and music from different parts of the world. Summing up, the general Norwegian 'undercommunication of difference' (Gullestad 1992) is blatantly manifest in the present national curriculum – again, with the exception of gender differences and, to some extent, the Sámi peoples, which are set aside as a special case.

de Bijenkorf and the Dutch curricula

Explicit curriculum: 'Core Objectives' (*Kerndoelen*)

The right to be different, as expressed in the Dutch constitution, is echoed in the Core Objectives for Primary Education (*Kerndoelen 1998*), issued by the Ministry of Education. In the introduction to this slim volume (14.468 words to be precise, as compared to the L97's 81.182 words), the very existence of any national educational 'core' is defended against expected critics. For instance, under the heading 'Why core objectives?' the Ministry finds it necessary to point out that a common core makes it easier for pupils who transfer from one primary school to another as well as for secondary schools in their need to know what to expect from the pupils. To one who came straight from fieldwork in Norway, the very need to legitimise the existence of a nation-wide educational basis of any kind was striking. This was especially so because the Dutch Core Objectives can hardly be said to form a rigid or overly detailed framework. On the contrary, it is emphasised that primary education is constantly changing according to the changes in society, and that every teacher and every school must always make their own choices and find their own methods to meet changing needs. The apologetic approach culminates in the following message to teachers: 'You must not let the core objectives govern your teaching in practice.' (OCenW 1998:10)[62]

[62] '*U moet kerndoelen niet gebruiken om uw onderwijs in de praktijk te sturen*.' (OCenW 1998:10)

The document then proceeds to sum up expected final year levels of knowledge in languages, mathematics, world and humanity orientation, physical education, and artistic orientation. Again in sharp contrast to the Norwegian case, schools are free to teach these subjects at any age level, to teach other subjects as well, to choose alternative pedagogical methods and to apply unconventional subject taxonomies.

Looking at the textbooks

From my own varied readings about the Netherlands, I had decided that three historical topics would be likely to be especially relevant in the construction of Dutch selves and non-Dutch others. Colonialism, World War II, and the 'pillar' society were topics I had hoped to follow in the classroom. Of these three, the latter was the one that interested me the most, since this pluralistic social structure, so different from the Norwegian brand of egalitarianism, was what had brought me to the Netherlands in the first place. Curiously, however, this issue was not on the curriculum at all. I shall therefore return to it under 'The null curriculum', below. Other relevant topics were, on the other hand, mentioned in the Core Objectives: European (rather than Dutch) expansion and colonialism, the Second World War, the development of the welfare state (which went hand in hand with the unmentioned de-pillarisation), and the development of multicultural societies after 1945.

The history book, '*Een zee van tijd*' (An ocean of time), opens with the chapter 'The French are coming' (*De Fransen komen*) that tells of French rule over the Netherlands during the Napoleon wars. Significantly, and in contrast to the Norwegian case, democratic values here come across as a French import rather than as an inextricable part of Dutch-ness. This applies to the French Revolution's liberty, equality and fraternity as well as to freedom of religion, which is, in other contexts, often presented as a Dutch traditional value. Rather than representing French rule as 'occupation' or a 'national catastrophe for our country', the book transmits an image of the Netherlands as relative and changeable, adrift on the waves of history, and of French rule as having both positive and negative consequences for the Netherlands.

When it comes to the Second World War, however, the tone changes. Over 16 pages (of a total of 90), a picture is drawn of a bitterly resented occupation and of a suffering Dutch population. In spite of attempts to nuance and discuss (e.g. 'was the bombardment of Rotterdam really a mistake?'), 'the Germans' come across as history's bad guys. The role of

Dutch people who helped 'the Germans' with the Jewish persecution and with the occupation is, if not excused, explained as rational: 'In order to resist the occupiers a lot of courage was necessary', 'some people viewed the Germans as liberators'. In general, the prominence and tone of the chapter reflect and reproduce a dichotomisation of a Dutch national Self as well meaning and tolerant, contrasted to a German Other, the cruel Nazi oppressor.

In between the chapter on the Second World War and its chronologically logical continuation called 'After 1945', comes a chapter called 'About the Indies and Suriname'. This chapter (also 16 pages) takes up the issue of European and Dutch expansion and colonialism. We may note that regardless of the thoughtful approach in this chapter as such, the topics of colonialisation and slavery are not integrated into the general history of Europe and of the Netherlands as they might have been. Also, the word 'negro' (*neger)* is used to refer to slaves on Suriname plantations. That the word is as controversial in Dutch as it is in Norwegian (cf. Gullestad 2002) is exemplified in a 2002 debate (e.g. de Volkskrant 31.12.01, 05.01.02, 19.07.02; het Parool 02.01.02, 09.01.02, 19.07.02) over the entry *neger* in the most important Dutch dictionary: '**´ne·ger** (de ~ (m.)) 1 persoon behorend tot één van de zwarte rassen uit Afrika' ('person belonging to one of the black races of Africa').[63]

In spite of such objections, the chapter nonetheless provides the reader with an understanding of the interdependence between the histories of Indonesia and Suriname and that of the Netherlands. It also paves the way for a presentation of what, as we may recall, the 'Core Objectives' called 'the development of multicultural societies after 1945' – or, more specifically, the immigration of relatively large numbers of Indonesian and Surinamese to the Netherlands after 1945. Yet, this topic is left untouched in the history book, which concentrates on the rapid development from post-war devastation to present-day prosperity. There is one possible, but implicit reference to the political field of immigration and nationalism on p. 81, where there is a 'topic box' about the history of the Dutch flag: 'Foreigners often say that the Dutch are a level-headed people. That they don't think it's so special to be Dutch. Many Dutch people know only the first few lines of the national anthem. Most don't even have a Dutch flag at home and don't

[63] Considering the historical differences between the two countries, their respective '*neger* debates' coincide to a surprising degree: in time, in content, and in outcome. Cf. the final chapter of the dissertation.

know when they are supposed to hoist it.' I take this to be an example of 'inverted nationalism', where – similar to the case of Sweden (Löfgren 1995; Seeberg 1999, 2000), explicit national pride is considered obsolete and incompatible with the view of one's nation as essentially modern. In the Dutch case, such pride also becomes incompatible with the view of the Dutch nation as essentially tolerant.

Land in Zicht (Land in Sight), the geography book, which is part of the same series as the history book, takes up the multicultural theme where *Een zee van tijd* leaves it. The ethnic diversity of Amsterdam's Albert Cuypstraat market is taken as the very point of departure for the whole book. 'This is the Albert Cuyp [market]: many small bits of "Abroad" [*buitenland*] in the Netherlands (…) The Netherlands has always had a lot to do with foreigners'. After a short introduction which sorts immigrants into, respectively, former inhabitants of Dutch colonies, labour migrants, and refugees, the word is given to four children who are sharing a meal in a café by the Albert Cuyp market. They tell us the stories of their backgrounds from Turkey, Morocco, China, and Suriname. The children thus represent the four largest 'non-Western' immigrant groups in the Netherlands. After these stories, however, the multicultural society of the Netherlands disappears from sight, and what follows is a series of chapters about 'the Middle East', 'Africa', 'Asia', 'The Americas', and 'The Pacific and the North and the South Pole', as separate, unrelated, and natural entities. The impression is that of an old-fashioned, Eurocentric geography book with a new introduction. This is strengthened by yet another encounter with the word *neger* on page 33: 'Most negroes have always lived to the south of the Sahara'.

The implicit curriculum

The implicit curriculum at de Bijenkorf was most evidently related to the message that school achievement was of the utmost importance. It was also related to an emphasis on the limits of tolerance, as illustrated in the cases of Muslim children's 'nonsense' in chapter 5. I shall return to another such example below, after a discussion of 'achievement'.

Achievement and the CITO-test

Within a pedagogical political discourse, the question of detailed curricula versus national achievement tests is an either-or question. These are two alternative means to the same end, namely 'school quality'. In this perspective, Norway and the Netherlands have taken opposite approaches to the same problem. The aim of the CITO-test is twofold: to give each child as

precise an indication as possible of the right choice of secondary school, and to show the results of the school as a whole, in comparison to other schools. The schools' test results are published each year.

A range of secondary schools are adapted to different levels of academic ability and achievement, from the vocational training of the VBO to the pre-university education of the VWO. The system is presented as hierarchical, with the VWO as the top level. Second comes the HAVO, or senior general secondary education. Third comes the MAVO, which is the junior general secondary education, and fourth and last is the VBO. The result of the CITO test is presented in a form that explicitly indicates which kind of secondary school is the right one for each individual. From there on, apart from the possibility to advance from MAVO to HAVO, there is little room for 'system hopping' between levels.

The test also has important implications for each school. In a country where parents take great care in choosing the right primary school for their children, the CITO score of each school is an important factor. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, it is far from the only one, however. There are many lines of differentiation between primary schools. One is between government-run (*openbare*) and privately-run (*bijzondere*) schools. Another way to differentiate between schools is to look at the educational principles they use – such as the Montessorri, Jena Plan, or Rudolf Steiner schools, which may be publicly or privately run. Yet another criterion is that of religion or ideology. All publicly run schools are non-denominational by law, whereas privately run schools need not be. There are non-denominational private schools, along with Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and ecumenical schools, and so on. In the part of Amsterdam where I did my fieldwork, about half of the schools were private, and half of these again were Catholic and Protestant, respectively. For parents who are not particularly interested in educational principles, but want to give their children a sound, classical education, the CITO test results are likely to be a major factor when they select a school for their children. According to many informants, private schools are chosen not primarily because of denomination, but again because of the school's reputation as a 'good school'. In addition to the CITO results, parents will rely on friends' and neighbours' opinions as well as on the impression of the schools they themselves gained at information meetings for the parents of three- and four-year-olds. Part of these 'impressions' is the understanding of the school as either 'black' or 'white', which again relates to the CITO tests. I shall return

to the topic of 'black' and 'white' schools, and to the position of de Bijenkorf in this 'colourscape' of schools, below.

School success as a main, if not *the* road into, and upwards in society is of general and immediate concern in the Netherlands. This is as apparent in research about 'second generation immigrants' (cf. Vermeulen and Perlmann 2000, Crul 2000) as it was in the classroom.[64] The imminence of the CITO-test and the 'future' for group 8 means that the focus on their achievements (*prestaties*) can hardly be overrated. Every day, Sandra told the children to work hard, constantly reminding them of the upcoming test – which was important not just to them but also to the school's and Sandra's reputations. She graded their work, and recorded all grades in a notebook which was accessible to everyone in the room. At the end of November, I noted:

> Jennifer and Chantal check out people's grades from the book on the empty desk at the back of the room, next to where I am sitting. There is an increasing concern with grades, in terms of who is best and who is worst.

Thus the children responded not only by working hard (though never hard enough, it seemed) but also by ranking themselves and each other according to Sandra's evaluation. Accordingly, there can be no doubt that differences in achievement made huge differences to each one of the pupils – not only as regards their 'futures', but also in their everyday lives. On the other hand, it did not seem to divide them – rather than competition, there was an atmosphere of solidarity, of wanting everybody else too to do their best. This did not imply pretending that everybody was doing equally well. To them, being taught on three different levels was simply a fact that shaped their days:

> Sandra summons Aynur to her side to get extra tuition. Apart from their low voices, the room is completely quiet. Nobody tries to attract anybody's attention, nobody seems to have side issues. Now Aynur (who is at the lowest level) is back in her seat, and Sandra is going through things with Rick, Wim, Sebastiaan, and Martijn (all at the top level). They finish, and Sandra says 'anyone who needs help, don't be ashamed, come and I'll help you. If you don't, I won't even know that you need help.' Angela goes.

Sandra often asked Wim, who was far ahead of the others in most subjects, to help explain difficult things to his classmates. Achievement was not a

[64] This relates to, and is part of, *achterstandsbeleid* or 'policy for groups that lag behind', which also includes working-class Dutch.

scarce resource. Lack of achievement, however, was dealt with mercilessly, tactlessly by Sandra and by classmates:

> Cevat read first and not well. Every time he made a mistake, the others rapped their knuckles on their desks and he had to repeat. Sandra told him she wants to see him getting books from the library.
>
> Aynur reads. She makes a mistake, and all rap their desks with their knuckles. Else is clearly shocked but tries not to show it: 'Do you always do that? OK, so with Sandra it's a rule. But I think we could all understand [what Aynur was reading]. You need not do that with me.'
>
> One by one, they read aloud. Chantal keeps making the same mistake, she tries about 10 times and each time the whole class rap their desks with their knuckles. She is stuck. Winston takes over.
>
> Mike and Bart tease Cevat for being so stupid that he has to opt for the lowest level in secondary school, and Yunus calls Mike a pig's cunt in defence of Cevat.

Cevat, Aynur, and Chantal were at the lowest academic level, and no secret was kept of the fact. There was little evidence of any special solidarity between the three of them, however. Other criteria for selecting friends were clearly more important. In the final extract above, for instance, Yunus, a fellow 'Turk', defends Cevat against Mike and Bart. Achievement as an organising principle was present, but secondary to ethnicity, as the following example also indicates:

> Sandra leaves the room and everybody is comparing results again: Aynur and Yunus and Cevat, and Rick and Wim, then Martijn and Wim, and then Mike and Bart and Jennifer.

Aynur, Yunus and Cevat were three of the four 'Turkish children', Rick, Wim and Martijn were three of the five 'Dutch' children, and Mike, Bart and Jennifer were three of the seven 'Surinamese' children (including one Antillese and three with Dutch *and* Surinamese parents). Together with other markers of difference, this and many other instances indicated that ethnicity was important to the children. In their everyday lives, many concerns and identities interplayed and formed a complex web. It would be misleading to claim that race or ethnicity were always relevant, or the most relevant, issues, for all the children. However, I would argue that, intertwined with other socially significant differences, race and ethnicity together formed a potential aspect of all their interactions. This under-

standing makes it possible to see that the same situation would be quite likely to mean different things to different children, in the light of their present positions and previous experiences. To each child, too, a whole range of issues could be part of, or aspects of, one situation.

A black school?

That different issues may be at stake within one apparently limited situation is, of course, also the case when adults are involved. This is illustrated in the following incident, which involves the principal, Mark, the group 6 teacher Marieke, and a Muslim girl from group 6.

> I passed the storeroom down the corridor from Sandra's room. The door was open, and Mark was in there, looking for something. Just ahead of me, Marieke had come to him with a girl from her group, and Mark was in the process of giving the girl a piece of his mind. Marieke was smiling contentedly. Mark told the girl angrily that she wasn't the first Muslim in this school and she would wear short trousers for gym like everyone else and he certainly wasn't having that sort of nonsense in this school.

The girl would have been about nine years old. She had evidently wanted to wear special clothes for the gym lesson, claiming that she was a Muslim and therefore could not wear shorts in the company of boys or men. Group 8's only Muslim girl, Aynur, who was eleven, wore shorts for gym like everybody else. Whether she had ever tried to get permission to wear long trousers, I do not know. What I find interesting in the above example is Mark's anger. Unfortunately, since I had been guilty of eavesdropping, I never felt I could ask him about this scene. He was generally a most affable person, however, so something was obviously at stake here. He must have been defending 'his' school against something more threatening than a nine-year-old girl wanting to wear a training suit. He evidently did not want de Bijenkorf to be a school where 'that sort of nonsense' was accepted. There are schools in the Netherlands where 'that sort of nonsense' is the order of the day. These schools are 'black' schools. Now what is a 'black' school, and what was it about this label that apparently made it so important to Mark – himself a 'black' Surinamese – to keep de Bijenkorf 'white'?

The dichotomy 'black and white schools' (*zwarte en witte scholen*) was used on all levels from Parliament to media to local bureaucracy to teachers and parents. It seemed to be the kind of concept everybody understands and nobody bothers to define. Perhaps it takes an ignorant outsider to pose the question: What were 'black' and 'white' schools, in the Netherlands of the

1990s? But first, let us hear what some of the staff had to say about the topic. First we meet Marieke, who was the teacher of the girl Mark scolded so severely. She was around 50, white, born in the Netherlands Antilles, and had lived in the Netherlands since the 1960s. She told me that she went back to Curacao every year on holiday, to snorkel and live on the beach. She seemed eager to present herself to me as a middle class person, educated, her husband having an important job, and so on. She would invariably speak English to me, in contrast to my conversations with Sandra, which were usually held in a mixture of Dutch and English.

> Marieke said: 'You can always ask me if there is something Sandra can't tell you'. She wanted me to know that 'de Bijenkorf is changing … it is turning from a white into a black school. I have numbers and statistics that show that in a few years, the majority of children will be from black families.' 'Why is that happening?' I wondered. Marieke explained: 'Because the population in the area is changing, for several reasons. One reason is the Islamic centre across the road, the Turks find that attractive. This neighbourhood used to be populated by decent, working class Dutch, but now there are a lot of new housing areas built just outside Amsterdam and they are moving there. The housing is better there and the neighbourhood is more Dutch, so they prefer it. And since de Bijenkorf has a Surinamese head-teacher, Surinamese parents tend to think that their children will get special treatment there. And white parents don't want their children to go to black schools, because they worry that their children won't learn proper Dutch and so on.'

What Marieke referred to here is what is known as the '*witte vlucht*', or 'white flight'. The idea is that 'white' parents will not send their child to a 'black' school. The parents' reasons for this, and whether it is really so, is debated (cf. de Wit 1990), but the persistence of the idea may nonetheless be a factor in policy making as well as the everyday decision making of individual headmasters. For instance, in an information booklet published with the support of the National Bureau Against Racial Discrimination (LBR), the ('white') headmaster of a 'black' school describes how she managed to discourage the parents of all but one of her pupils from having their little girls don the *hijab*. She managed this by referring, first, to the best interest of the child and, second, to the *witte vlucht* (Joachim-Ruis 1996:19). The *hijab* was never an open issue during my fieldwork at de Bijenkorf. I never saw any of the girls wearing it (although many of the mothers did). I have no evidence that this was the result of any active school policy – indeed, at a public school like de Bijenkorf, such a policy would probably have been illegal (Shadid and van Koningsfeld 1991). A fear of the *witte vlucht* and

thus of becoming a 'black' school may have been a factor. However, not all the staff feared this scenario. As Tinie said when I asked her what a 'black' school was:

> 'It's a phrase we use. Everybody knows it. Black schools are schools with only Turkish and Moroccan children. The minister has told us it's an ugly word, so now they are supposed to be called 'schools for chances'. All the other schools I have worked in were so-called black schools. In many ways, it was easier, because the parents did not interfere so much in the school. But de Bijenkorf is slowly becoming a black school, too. Only a few of the toddlers here now are Dutch. There are many children from Suriname, I think because of Mark.'

For Tinie, it was not a threatening unknown. She had been working in 'black' schools for many years and liked it. I shall return to the parent-school relations in the next chapter. However, another aspect of the above quotation merits a comment here: After having stated the obvious, namely that 'black schools' are 'schools with only Turkish and Moroccan children', Tinie proceeds to tell me that de Bijenkorf is becoming a 'black school' inasmuch as the number of children with Dutch backgrounds is decreasing and the number of children with *Surinamese* (rather than Turkish and Moroccan) backgrounds is increasing. She is hardly to blame for this self-contradiction. It is not obvious what a 'black' school is, any more than what a 'black' child (or adult) (or 'white' school, child, or adult') is.

When I asked another of the Dutch-born, white staff about the term 'black schools', he answered that Surinamese, Turkish, and Moroccan children are, in this context, equally 'black', and that 'white' schools are really completely 'white', with no 'black' children. Ergo, I concluded at the time, 'black' here is 'not-white' and there are no nuances between. In other words, an extended version of the 'one drop rule', where 'one drop of African blood' defines 'blackness' (cf. Ifekwunigwe 1999) is applied. A 'white' school should, by contrast, be equally easy to define as a school with exclusively 'white' children of Dutch origin. But this, too, turned out to be debatable: a school with a small minority of 'other' children may well be described as 'white'. de Bijenkorf itself was one of many examples of schools that were neither 'black' nor 'white', yet its staff did not question the accuracy of the dichotomy in describing reality.

It follows from this that the terms 'black' and 'white' in no simple way refer to, or correspond to, the socially constructed 'skin colours' of staff or children. As an informal usage the 'black and white schools' dichotomy is, it seems, not perceived to be problematic, in spite of its obvious inaccuracy

and its inherent racism. Following the ongoing lively debate about black and white schools in the media as well as in social research, policy documents, and in school, I find that a discussion of the terms is practically non-existent, although they have been in use for at least 15 years (cf. Teunissen 1988). Rath (1991) explains this as a consequence of Dutch social scientists seeing their primary task linked to social engineering rather than to social theory. He argues that the concept of 'black' schools is part of a larger process of 'minorisation' (1991:186pp) and sums up: 'As an ideology, minorisation is theoretically comparable to racialisation as defined by Miles (1989: 73–77). But in contrast to the experience in Britain, the signification of phenotypical features is not the predominant process in the Netherlands. Here racialisation is of secondary importance. Although the social construction of "problem categories" pivots around socio-cultural rather than phenotypical signifiers, the social effects can in last instance be similar to that of racialisation (Rath 2002).

An overwhelming number of media debates, books and policy documents stand to witness that to be a 'black' school means to be a 'problem' school, a low-status school, and a school where 'normal', educated, Dutch people will hesitate to send their children. My guess, based on the discourse on 'black and white schools' as outlined in the above, was that a fear of this was the main reason for Mark's anger. Representing Islam ultimately implicated representing a threat to the school's reputation and thus to its future.

The null curriculum

As in the Norwegian case, the position of the observer informs the conclusions about that which is not mentioned. In addition, it may be that I do not know the Netherlands well enough to give an adequate outline of what was missing. Some points spring to one's attention, however, and may even be easier to see from the outside. For instance, at de Bijenkorf, the children in group 8 were certainly not taught that there are other things in life other than working hard. This stands out in contrast to the Norwegian case with its emphasis on the development of the whole person, of individual confidence combined with social skills. Also, I observed that there was no trace in the *Kerndoelen*, textbooks or classroom teaching of the impact of cultural and religious differences on Dutch society of old, as manifest in the concept of 'pillars' (*zuilen*).

The school system itself, with its large proportion of privately-run schools, still to a large extent follows the old *zuilen.* I found it something of

a paradox, therefore, that the *zuilen* were not mentioned in the history book that was used in group 8, *Een zee van tijd,* despite the fact that it covered the period where this pluralistic system was at its height – the 20th century. Differences between rich and poor are made subject to discussion, as well as differences between slaves and masters, and people from different historical times. Confessional political parties, Protestants and Catholics as well as liberals and socialists are mentioned in passing under 'The right to vote and political parties' (p. 19) along with the observation that 'You still find liberals, confessionals and socialists in politics nowadays'. There is no indication that these political parties formed part of a pillared structure. I do not know if this is a general trend in Dutch primary school textbooks. In the *Core Objectives*, the pillarised society is not among the issues that pupils are supposed to know about at the end of group 8. Perhaps significantly, I noted that my assistant Karin, who was in her early twenties and came from a different part of the Netherlands, evidently found my interest in the pillarised society something of a bore – to her, this was an obsolete subject. It may be that the pillarisation of the Netherlands is generally understood or reinterpreted – as by Baumann (1999) and Roodenburg (2000) – as a rather embarrassing deviation from the road to liberal 'modernity' that most other European nation-states followed from the end of the 19th to the late 20th century. Seen in this light, pillarisation becomes a parenthesis, a mere digression and a waste of time, rather than an historical phenomenon, the analysis of which might facilitate an understanding of contemporary realities.

Another topic that, to me, seemed to be missing was that of gender inequality and the emancipation of women. In the Core Objectives, the position of women is only mentioned as an 'aspect of groups in our society' that final-year children are expected to be able to describe (p. 59). Here, a synchronic perspective on cultural diversity in the Netherlands is considered necessary. However, we do not under 'history' find the history of women's positions in the Netherlands as part of the development of a democratic society. It is briefly referred to in the textbook in the following quotation: 'From 1887 men with important jobs and good education were given the right to vote. One third of the men were then allowed to vote. Still, poor men, and all women, were not allowed to vote. (…) Thirty years were to pass before all men got the right to vote. And just five years after that, the women were given the right to vote.' (p.18) In other words, I found that – in the Core Objectives as well as in the textbook – there was a selective communication about difference. The class aspect of the Netherlands in

earlier times and the present-day multicultural situation were highlighted, and the historical cultural pluralism of the Netherlands as well as gender inequalities within the Dutch population were under-communicated.

The goals of primary education

Let us return to where this chapter started: to the two bureaucracies' painstaking attempts at pinpointing and shaping reality. At the heart of this chapter have been the hitherto unmentioned goals of primary education. The Dutch goal is formulated as follows:

> Primary education aims to promote the development of children's emotions, intellect and creativity and the acquisition of essential knowledge together with social, cultural and physical skills in an uninterrupted process of development. Teaching must reflect the fact that pupils are growing up in a multi-cultural society. (Eurybase 2001a)

The Norwegian goal is:

> (…) in agreement and cooperation with the home, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society. (the Education Act, as quoted in Eurydice 2001b)

How do these two compare? They are both linked to a specific view of the individual versus society. The Dutch goal is remarkably individualistic, emphasising the development of the child – as a social being, but with no reference to any particular collectivity except a 'multicultural society'. The Norwegian one, on the other hand, begins with the home (the family), proceeds to Christianity (the Church), and concludes that producing useful (contributing to a collectivity) and independent (not depending on the same collectivity) members of the home and of 'society' (the nation) – is the ultimate goal.

These official goals of primary education also provide the point of departure for the following chapter, where I shall explore the positions of parents as part of the contexts for the two schools.

Chapter 7

A place for parents

Every day, the children in Bakken and in de Bijenkorf oscillated between school and home, between teachers and parents, between the public and the private. Their home/parents/private zones as such were not my primary focus. Nevertheless, I was interested in the interconnections between what at a first glance appear to be two separate parts of their lives. This part of the context has formal, explicitly legal and bureaucratic, as well as informal and implicit aspects.

The formal aspect

In both countries, the nature of home-school relations is formally laid down by law. The Norwegian Education Act (*Opplæringslova 1998*) establishes the formal role of parents in the school administration. In parallel, in the Netherlands, the 'participation of parents' is established as a legal right through the Participation Act (*Wet medezeggenschap onderwijs 1992*). On a legal and general level, the directives on parents' roles in the administration of schools are quite similar in the two countries, with parents' representatives being part of the school boards. On the individual level, the 'co-operation between school and homes' is further specified under the Norwegian Education Act, in the section named 'The object of education':

> The object of primary and lower secondary education shall be, *in agreement and cooperation with the home*, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society. (…) Emphasis shall be placed on creating satisfactory forms of *cooperation* between teachers and pupils, between apprentices, trainees and training establishments, *between the school and the home*, and between the school and the workplace. (KUF 2000, my emphases)

The administrative as well as the individual levels are also discussed in a government report on parents' participation in school (KUF 1997). The Dutch Education Act does not mention parents' participation as part of the goals of education. It certainly does not aim for a Christian upbringing to be

the responsibility of publicly run schools, which would indeed be unconstitutional.

The difference between the two concepts 'participation' versus 'co-operation' may, of course, be chiefly due to the words chosen by the translators of these two Acts. 'Participation' is translated from the Dutch *medezeggenschap*, which literally means 'having a say'. The Norwegian word 'samarbeid' means 'working together'. A comparison of the acts, however, shows that whereas in the Norwegian case, 'co-operation' is a rather poorly defined, though highly valued ideal, in the Dutch case, the legal and practical content of 'participation' is meticulously described. Furthermore, I would suggest that the English terms 'co-operation' versus 'participation' in fact do correspond to differences in parents' roles and the expectations our two schools had of the parents. Though parents' roles in school may appear to be relatively similar on a legal level, in practice parents played completely different parts in Bakken as compared to de Bijenkorf.

From formal rules to everyday practice

At Bakken, all parents were expected to conform to the school's and the educational system's norms for parental involvement. They were expected to play the game according to informal, tacit rules that were not subject to discussion. Parents who were unwilling, or unable, to do so were considered problematic by the teachers. At de Bijenkorf, the situation was more complex. On the one hand, explicit and formal rules decreed many, though not all, forms of parental involvement. In addition, formal and largely tacit rules shaped much of the daily involvement of mothers in de Bijenkorf. Informal as well as formal rules for de Bijenkorf were partly laid down by parents. On the other hand, the inability or unwillingness of many parents to involve themselves, either according to informal or formal rules, was not conceptualised as problematic.

As I have already mentioned, in de Bijenkorf, mothers had important functions and some (Dutch) mothers were in school every day to help with the lunch arrangements. Many mothers also came to pick up their children after school, and would then wait, chatting with each other, in the corridor outside the glass classroom door. Sandra sighed that she sometimes wished some mothers would be a little less involved in school, so that she could get on with her job. Tinie, comparing de Bijenkorf's predominantly Dutch parents with parents in so-called 'black' schools' (cf. chapter 5) told me that:

> The parents here [at de Bijenkorf], they think the school is theirs, that it belongs to them. If Mark does not watch out, the parents will set all the rules. With Turkish parents, it is not like that. With them, the school is yours, and at home it is they who set the rules. And they are grateful that you teach their children.

Fathers were involved to a much lesser extent, and were in fact not expected to be part of the school's everyday lives. All the parents had been active in choosing de Bijenkorf as their children's school. A few parents – mothers and fathers – (as it happened, none of those from group 8) were also active in the school council.

At Bakken, teachers were verbally unanimous about the importance of school-parent co-operation. Indeed, parents were seen to have a crucial role in the education of their children. A key term here was 'follow-up' (*oppfølging*), which was seen as a parental duty. This term is closely related to what Ericsson and Larsen (2000:90 pp), drawing on Ennew (1994) call attention to as the increased 'curriculumization of the family' in Norwegian schools, with parents taking responsibility for a larger part of their children's intellectual development. They further point out that, in public discourse, it is often said that schools have to take over much of what used to be thought of as parental responsibilities, i.e. taking care of the child's social development, while little attention is given to schools 'invading private lives' through the curriculumization of the family. There is, they argue, an asymmetry of power between school and parents; an asymmetry that is, on the whole, accepted by both parties (2000:92). In accordance with this, at Bakken I observed many informal staff room discussions about how to deal with the problem of parents who did not live up to the school's expectations when it came to what teachers defined as children's needs for 'follow-up'. When I interviewed Kari, she summed up her follow-up expectations as follows:

> *Kari:* I feel that the parents follow up to different degrees. The school work. Not all parents follow up well, I don't think so. Most of them do. But some – well, they may leave too much to – to the school.
>
> *ML:* Such as – ?
>
> *Kari:* Yes – well, just a small thing – they know now that the children don't get pencils and rubbers in school anymore. Just … they could check if the child has got those without us needing to remind them by writing it on the homework plan. Just – pay some attention to things like that. And that they [the children] bring sandwiches for lunch (*matpakke*), that they bring their books. And that they do homework, and [that the parents] help them if they need help with homework. Some

do all these things in a very proper and orderly way (*greit og ordentlig*), others do it sort of half-way and some don't do it at all.

Three main categories of parents emerged through teachers' discourse in Bakken: those who followed up well, those who did not follow up at all, and the majority who fell somewhere in between these polarities.

The explicit ideals of parent-home co-operation are thus manifest on the political and bureaucratic levels as well as, often implicitly, among teachers. Karsten's and Ingvill's 'NOA sessions' present a disturbing and critical case in this context. These sessions were set apart and constituted an alternative, liminal space not only separated from mainstream school life but also from the children's home lives. Though I am not in a position to assess whether or not these pseudo-therapeutic sessions were beneficial for the children, I find the absence of parental access to knowledge about the sessions worrying. This is what Karsten and Ingvill told me:

ML: How are they singled out, the ones who take part in your group – do you select them, is it the form teachers, or –?

Karsten: It's really quite random, but it was the form teachers who suggested pupils (…) They were given this small information sheet about what this was and told that we wanted pupils from each class that might profit from taking part. That's how it happened.

Ingvill: We just wanted to get going and we were really quite humble, we just hoped we would get some children at all.

ML: So were they allowed to come?

Ingvill: Mm… But those gender roles. We let them play around a little with flirtation and – which I think is really important to them, because that's one thing anyway that they can't do out here at recess, with their big brothers out there and… they are in completely different settings then. (…) This openness they have got, towards us… and that Amina, for instance, won't want her parents there at the show, because then she can't dance. So you see, we see clearly the power, or how – well, how much we know they are not really allowed to do. So that's food for thought, should we let them do all those things? I mean, what if the parents suddenly turn up? Like, what is this, what are you doing? But it never happened. I guess they really do think that the children should be allowed to relax and express themselves (*utfolde seg*), somewhere.

Karsten: Yes. Yes. Yes. I have arguments in support of that view. After all, we must work in the way that we find important, and right. When they are at school. And then the home practises another – other rules in a lot of areas. So it's not that unique, I think, that we do something other

> in school than they do at home. I mean, that's the case if they're just going swimming, or something like that, then it's like that too.
>
> *Ingvill:* Yes – the parents tacitly just have to accept a number of things. So it's like, the kids know that as long as they don't tell them everything, they don't need to –
>
> *Karsten:* – Oh, all that, all these things, we have just got this small glimpse of something huge – all this, where cultures meet and all – all the misunderstandings and all the –confusion, that the kids are in the middle of.

Karsten, at the end of this quotation, links the power aspect of school-home co-operation to the often invoked, stereotyped image of children who are located betwixt and between two cultures; alone on the threshold between cultures that meet but do not mix. Implicitly, an image is drawn of the children's parents as somehow the opposite of what school represents. Again we see an example of the Other being a reflection of the idealised Self. What emerges here is also an image of the NOA sessions as a sanctuary for the children, as a place more private to them than anywhere else. In this sanctuary, they are still in a liminal zone, but they are together, and they are being taken care of by adults who empathise with them rather than identifying themselves with the cultures that, each in its way, imprison them.

Ingvill and Karsten clearly saw their role in terms of providing the – rather randomly selected – children with a freedom of which they were deprived both in class and at home. They were not unaware of the underlying tension between this aim and the ideal of parent participation. Indeed, Karsten points at the power aspect of parent-school relations when he observes that the parents of *fremmedspråklige* children have to accept 'a number of things' in general. Roald (1997:131) in her study of relations between school and immigrant parents also concludes that this is the case: '[F]rom a Norwegian teacher's point of view cooperation concerns the claim on all adults to appreciate and pay attention to the child's reflections, abilities and various talents and the way it sees context. Thereby exists a majority-defined claim on immigrant parents to see cooperation in similar individual terms. (…) an immigrant parent with deviating perceptions and values seems left with little choice but to accept.' It should be noted here that this is not unique to the case of 'immigrant parents'. In a more general report on school-home co-operation, Nordahl and Skilbrei (2002:105) point at the gap between ideals and reality in this field, and suggest that 'a successful co-operation between the school and the parents presupposes greater opportunities on the part of the parents to influence the education

system' (cf. also KUF 1997). I would add that it seems likely that the more diverging the opinions and world views of teachers and parents are, the less likely parents are to have any influence on the system which, to a large extent, forms the lives, identities and futures of their children.

Parents' evenings and parents' meetings

In both schools, parents' evenings (*ouderavonds*) or parents' meetings (*foreldremøter*) were institutionalised fora for parents' 'participation' and 'co-operation', respectively. At Bakken, Kari also had meetings with each parent or set of parents and their child once a year, in her office, during the day. These were confidential meetings, and I did not ask to attend any of them. I attended one parents' meeting in Bakken. It was a meeting for all the parents of 6B children and Kari, and it was held in their classroom one warm spring evening:

> About half of the parents turned up, and Cecilie came along with her mother. Kari introduced me and I said a few words about my project. I had already met some of the parents before, and all of them had heard about me from their children. Of the six 'wholly non-Norwegian' children's parents, only Hassan's mother came. She was a little late, and Kari got up to shake her hand warmly, saying she was happy she could make it. In contrast to the other parents, who were all wearing jeans or other 'Western' leisure wear, she wore the Islamic dress of Somali women, a soft long grey shawl covering all but her face and hands. We all placed our chairs so that they formed a circle. The two 'wholly Norwegian' mothers, and Cecilie, sat on either side of Kari. Then followed a segment on each side of the 'half Norwegian children's' parents and the anthropologist. Hassan's mother sat facing Kari. Coffee and biscuits were handed around, provided by Maren's mother as part of her duties as a class contact.

The form of a circle is probably the most egalitarian seating pattern there is. Yet the meeting undeniably had a leader, Kari, and the places next to her, we may assume, were symbolically closer to leadership than were the others. The parents of the 'wholly Norwegian' *(helt norske*) children, and Cecilie (who was 'wholly Norwegian') sat next to each other, on each side of Kari, in a Norwegian segment, with Knud's Norwegian mother and Synne's Norwegian mother forming the transitions to the non-Norwegian parents. Hassan's mother sat the furthest away from Kari, facing her directly. Thus in the ideally egalitarian context of this parents' meeting, differences did make a difference. In extension of this argument, parents who were not present at

the meeting at all may, arguably, be seen as taking the position of outsiders to the circle. Some of them had symbolically compensated for their absence through contacting Kari beforehand, thus to some degree fulfilling their 'follow-up' obligations. Others just did not turn up. They, rather than Hassan's mother, were perhaps the furthest away from Kari.

> The meeting was very informal. Kari began by saying there were outings to plan and a few other practical matters. From there on, the parents and Kari wandered from topic to topic. One mother complained of too much homework, which Kari countered by saying the class as a whole are well within the normal range of progression, which means they are all able to keep up. She asks them all to check out the weekly work plan and to follow up their children's work. Some work more slowly, others more quickly, she admits, but adds that they should all be able to get through it without too much effort, with their parents' help.

All the children were given the same homework, a written plan for the whole week being handed out by Kari every Monday. What was perceived to be 'too much' homework by one parent and one child was not commented by the other parents present. Kari indirectly countered the claim by reassuring the parents that all the children were 'within the normal range of progression', and would be able to 'keep up', provided that the parents would 'follow up'. Yet I knew from the classroom that there were vast differences between i.e. how much the children understood of Kari's directions and of how they completed their tasks, so that her definition of 'the normal range of progression' must be very wide, precisely in order to encompass everybody within a field of *likhet* – equality. 'Follow-up', this time in terms of helping with homework, again becomes crucial to ensure that the children continue to stay within the 'normal range'.

> Knud's father introduced the topic of adolescence and asked the other parents to join him in finding and adjusting common rules for the children in and out of school, now that they were growing up. How long are they supposed to be allowed to play outside in the evening, are they supposed to go down town on their own, when should they go to bed? There is a general agreement that such rules would be a good idea. They quickly agree that nine PM is a good time to go indoors, that going down town is not a good idea, since 10–11 year old kids are recruited there [to what, is left unsaid]. The neighbourhood is a different matter: they know it, they feel secure here even if things may happen. Teresa's father says he has been to the youth club, and reports that it seems a good sort of place. Alex's father says that he is teaching his son self-defence.

Here there was apparently agreement on the need for common rules, in time and space, as well as on what those rules should be. Yet such common rules presuppose a certain degree of agreement on moral issues as well as a common view of what constitutes 'normal' behaviour for children and parents. In the light of this, the absence of discussion here is interesting – was there real consensus, or a tacit knowledge that Norwegian rules were going to win anyway? There was also agreement that local space was safer 'even if things may happen', because 'they know it'. Whether all the children knew the local neighbourhood to the same extent, like this presupposes, is left unsaid – although, as I have shown (cf. chapter 3) this was not the case.

Kari evidently had a list of points she wanted to discuss, and when the common rules discussion petered out, she passed on to her next point, which was lunch follow-up:

> *Kari:* 'There is still a problem with lunches. Some children do not bring food from home; they bring money and want to go out to buy food. Is this what the parents really want?' Cecilie's mother suggested the children should bring a note from home in that case, and the others agreed.

This was the beginning of a lengthy discussion about suitable lunches. Nearly all the parents as well as Kari voiced their opinions here. Two sides emerge, partly along gendered, partly along ethnic lines:

> Synne's mother says the lunch break is too short.
>
> Alex's father adds to this that in Sweden, children get hot meals and time to eat, while here, all they get is ten minutes to grab a sandwich, 'it can't be good for them'.
>
> Kari agrees to the time problem, and assures them: 'We use part of the lesson too, so they usually get 20 minutes for lunch.'
>
> Teresa's father asks what kind of food they are supposed to bring – 'sometimes she tells me she gets food in school?'
>
> Kari replies that this rarely happens: 'The fruit and vegetables scheme last year got completely disorganised, so we had to give that up. I suggest they bring two pieces of bread, an apple or a carrot, plus something to drink if they don't want to drink water.'
>
> Maren's mother supports this: 'I mean, they should all just bring plain, healthy Norwegian food – slices of bread with fish, or cheese, and so on!'

Synne's mother does not agree – 'Synne does not have a good appetite, we're glad she'll eat at all, so we can't give her the standard "Olapakke".[65]'

Knud's mother asks if they can't bring a salad?

Maren's mother is adamant: 'Bread, no matter what!'

Synne's mother suggests that when they go on excursions, they might be allowed to bring a few sweets, or just a little money to buy sweets.

Teresa's father: 'When I was a little boy, we got a little money to buy sweets every day!'

Alex's father: 'I ate sweets every day too, we were all like that, weren't we?'

Maren's mother: 'That is not good.'

Synne's father: 'Chocolate is better for you than all those artificial gummy sweets, anyway.'

Knud's father: 'But they taste gooood…'

The question of food was evidently important, and related closely to the overarching framework of 'follow-up'. In terms of 'follow-up', there were three categories of parents, as we remember from the interview with Kari: those who followed up very well, those who did a medium follow-up, and those who failed to follow-up. That the *matpakke* is an important symbol of 'follow-up' is indicated here by the fact that, to Cecilie's mother (who was one of the best 'follow-uppers' according to Kari), if you were unable to provide your child with a *matpakke* one day, a note from home would be acceptable as a symbolic substitute. A child cannot eat notes from home, but the note, implicitly acknowledging the *matpakke* as the only right thing, would establish adequate 'follow-up' even in the absence of food itself. In this way, money plus a note from home became the adequate lunch that money alone could not provide. Parents of the first category would always provide their child with a *matpakke*, strictly defined as follows: paper wrapped stacks of open brown bread sandwiches, with thin layers of fish, cheese and meat (usually pork) and a little fruit or raw vegetables either on the side or as a garnish. The middle category would sometimes provide a *matpakke*, sometimes forget, or send a different kind of food with their child – or money and a note for the teacher. In Majid's case, for instance, he would often bring samosas, which Kari told me she recognised as a

[65] An *Olapakke* is a recent commercial version of the *matpakke*, which is the standard Norwegian lunch just described by Maren's mother.

Pakistani kind of *matpakke*. This may perhaps be interpreted as a 're-codification' (Eidheim 1974:75) of samosas, a translation of that which is different into something that is similar and equivalent, thus making it possible to establish equality. (Whether a Norwegian or other not-Pakistani child would have got away with bringing samosas I do not know, but I suspect it would have been evaluated as less appropriate.) The third category of parents, we remember, were those who did not follow up. They would not be in the habit of providing their children with a *matpakke*, and would sometimes give them money instead, sometimes not.

Kari, Cecilie's mother and Maren unanimously voice, and support, the dominant Norwegian view on children's school lunches: the strictly defined *matpakke* as the only acceptable lunch. Opposed to this view, at least in its practical consequences, are many of those parents who are not present – this I know because they are the ones who would give their children money instead of *matpakke*. We may also note Teresa's father rather naively asking which kind of food his daughter is supposed to bring, thus revealing his ignorance of one of the fundamentals of Norwegian parenthood and of Norwegian-ness in general. (cf. Døving 1999, 2002) Their outsiderhood is also revealed in his and the other half-Norwegian children's non-Norwegian fathers' openly relishing and sharing their memories of childhood sweets. According to Norwegian dominant ideology, as every kindergarten child knows, parents should indeed give their children sweets, but only on Saturdays. Maren's mother takes up the most extreme Norwegian position here, stating what to her is the obvious: sweets every day is 'not good'. Synne's mother takes up a middle position, mediating between the absolute, puritan Norwegian stance and what in contrast becomes the excessive indulgence of non-Norwegians. 'The battle against the decline and fall of the *matpakke* is (…) an eternal, noble battle against the degeneration of the nation' (Døving 1999:11, my translation).

In addition to being a Norwegian ethnic marker, the *matpakke* is also a symbol of good motherhood as well as being a link between national and local government, represented by the school, and the homes, represented by the parents and in particular by the mothers. It might have been forgivable for a Norwegian father, too, and not just for the non-Norwegian ones above, not to subscribe completely to every detail of the strictly defined *matpakke*. Teresa's, Alex's, Knud's and Synne's fathers' teasing, verbal opposition to the regime of mothers above may indeed be interpreted as an expression of masculine solidarity. This is also a gendered battle; it is an army of woman warriors – mothers – who carry the responsibility for the health of the child

and for the health of the nation. Fathers – Norwegian or not – may, and should, support mothers in this battle, but they are not in charge. In the ambivalence of gender relations at home, women do not just end up doing the work, they also to a large extent have the responsibility of defining what should be done. Men may to some extent find that their freedom from organising family life puts them in a paradoxical position of 'honorary child' – the father as a parent who laughs with his children and gives them chocolate on weekdays. This is confirmed by Døving (2002), who suggests that such 'joking relationships' between fathers and children are indicators of an overall social change, from patriarchy to matriarchy. In the complex field of gendered interactions in the family, fathers may perhaps make use of their ambivalent roles more ironically in a process of negotiating gender positions.

The role of the welfare state in the history of the *matpakke* is more important, and more closely related to gender issues, than one might expect. Although the *matpakke* is undeniably, as Døving (1999, 2002) points out, conceived of as a Norwegian 'tradition', as well as being an expression of 'familism', it is simultaneously a product of the modern welfare state. Key concepts here are 'nutrition', *ernæring*, and 'enlightenment of the people', *folkeopplysning*. 'Enlightenment of the people' was, from the 1920s, a crucial element in the transformation of Norway from a country of backwardness and poverty to becoming a modern welfare state. In order to improve the general health of the population, nutrition was one of many topics selected by the authorities for the enlightenment of the people. *Sunn kost*, 'healthy eating', was the road to a *sunt folk*, a healthy people, a healthy nation (Døving 1999). The battle against backwardness was led by men like Karl Evang, a medical doctor and prominent Labour politician and Carl Schiøtz, professor of hygiene and leader of the Oslo school health services (cf. Schiøtz 1926; Evang 1937). The needs of the Norwegian agricultural sector and the nation's interest in being as self-supported as possible, coupled with the very real problem of poverty, with nutritional science and protestant ideas of asceticism are all – arguably masculine – elements in the genealogy of the *matpakke*. School nurses and 'home knowledge' (*heim-kunnskap*, nicknamed *skolekjøkken* or cookery class) teachers – all women – were then given a central role in the dissemination of modern, scientific knowledge about food as nutrition. Their role was to educate children in nutritional issues as well as promoting the strictly defined *matpakke*, which, with its brown bread, a little cheese, fish, or meat on top, and raw fruit or vegetables on the side is the essence of *sunn kost*. My father, who was a

schoolchild in Oslo in the 1930s, had exactly the same *matpakke* with him as a colleague of mine who went to school in a village in mid-Norway in the 1940s, and as I did in Oslo in the 1970s. This was the identical phenomenon promoted by the 'Norwegian segment' at the parents' meeting at Bakken: some pieces of brown bread with a thin layer of cheese, fish, or pork, neatly wrapped up in paper, with a little fruit or raw vegetables on the side…

In the Netherlands, too, lunch is usually based on bread and eaten with one's hands. The bread may be brown or white, however, and the Dutch sandwich is closed so that the spread remains concealed inside, literally remaining a private matter. Furthermore, the norm is for children to eat their lunches with their mothers, at home. At de Bijenkorf, those who stayed in school for lunch – teachers and children alike – often bought fast food for lunch, such as potato chips with mayonnaise or peanut sauce… I shall take a closer look at the de Bijenkorf lunch arrangements below – but let us now return to the parents' meeting at Bakken:

> Towards the end of the meeting, Maren's mother collected money to cover her coffee and biscuit expenses, while Kari thanked them all for showing up. When Hassan's mother paid her share, Maren's mother gave her some change back and, without looking at her, said 'I give you this back then'. Hassan's mother had evidently followed the discussions, listening, nodding, but did not speak once, nor did anyone address her, or look at her directly. I stayed behind with Kari to help her tidy up and took the opportunity to ask her if she had noticed it too. She replied: 'they just don't know what to say to her. She's such a lively and nice woman, really'. I also asked if the turnout was what she had expected. Kari: 'Well, some of them don't follow up in general, so I wasn't surprised they didn't come. Some had let me know they wouldn't be coming, such as Yasmin's mother, she never comes if there is no interpreter.'

In Kari's terms, coming to parents' meetings is another criterion of 'follow-up', and not attending is yet another failure to 'follow up'. Letting Kari know that they would not come, was better than simply ignoring the meeting, which the other parents appeared to have done. It is important to question some of the underlying assumptions here. Did all the parents know about the meeting? Would their attending the meeting have helped their children? Kari herself mentions that Yasmin's mother only came if there was an interpreter – which there never was at class parents' meetings, only at the individual meetings. Several of the non-Norwegian parents were illiterate in Norwegian. Information about the meetings was always given as written messages for the children to give to their parents. There seem to be more

obstacles here than the will to, or even knowledge of the school's expectations of, 'follow-up' (cf. also Roald 1997). In sum, the whole ideological 'package' related to the Norwegian concept of *oppfølging*, 'follow-up', seems to reduce social and structural differences to a matter of morality.

I was present at two parents' evenings in Amsterdam. The first one was for parents from all groups of de Bijenkorf. A plenary meeting was held in the youngest children's playroom, before the parents of each group went to their respective teachers' rooms. Parents' evenings at de Bijenkorf were not an issue between the form teachers and the parents of their groups. Rather, they are planned and organised by the school as a whole:

> Sandra grumbles today because of the parents' evening (*ouderavond*). She says it was bad planning to have it this evening, when she is so tired after group 8's week at the outdoors centre (*werkweek)*. But she must be here, because she must show the new parents around. The parents must see all the teachers, the rooms and so on. And yes, Karin and I may come too. If the parents have any questions about our work, it is good if we are there to answer them. The whole school is bustling with preparations, and several times in the course of the afternoon, Sandra is needed outside the classroom. I also talk to Mark – he is concerned because parents often don't show up at parents' evenings. He explains that they will meet the parents from the whole school together at first. Then the parents go to 'their' rooms with 'their' teachers. They do it like this, the whole school in one evening 'because the teachers don't want to be alone in school with (the parents of) their group.'

We see again how the Bakken form teachers have a much more autonomous position versus the rest of the school than do their colleagues at de Bijenkorf. After the plenary session, there was a short coffee break, and Karin and I went with Sandra to the classroom to help her lay out textbooks for the parents to see. The buzzer went and a few parents trickled in:

> Martijn's and Angela's mothers arrived first. I had often seen them in school, so I knew them already. Then came a couple who turned out to be Wim's parents. After a few minutes another man entered -he turned out to be Bart's father *and* an old classmate of Sandra's, from Suriname. We were all chatting informally while waiting for more parents, and it emerged that Bart's father had not heard of me, since Bart routinely forgets to give his parents messages from school... Wim's mother asked to see a one-page or so version of my 'results' later, which I promised to send to the school.

Angela's mother was in school every day, helping out with the lunch arrangements. Martijn's mother, too, was quite active in school. Wim's

parents and Bart's father were all working, so this was the first time I met them. A total of five parents had turned up.

> No more parents seemed to be coming. Sandra gave a talk about what the children were learning this year, the school year programme in brief, and they were allowed to ask questions. Wim's mother wanted to know if they really had only 5 minutes' break at recess as Wim said – she was concerned about the lack of opportunity for physical movement. Sandra denied that it was as short as five minutes but emphasised that there was so much work to be done, they could hardly afford much longer breaks. There weren't any other questions.

There was no reason here to discuss common rules, since the group generally only met in school. There was no reason to discuss follow-up, since school work was confined to school space and time.

> Sandra asked if I wanted to present anything or had any questions, but as the parents by then knew and had no questions to me, I could only think of asking where the other parents were. Sandra said that, as usual, the ones who are always saying (when they pick up their children after school) that they want to talk to her hadn't turned up. Then the parents all started talking to each other about their children, Sandra got ready to leave, and the meeting was over.

Only four out of 18 sets of parents were represented at this meeting. Sandra expressed that she was simultaneously relieved and annoyed at this. Relieved, because this made it easier for her to end an already long day's work earlier than anticipated. Annoyed, because those parents who claim that they want to talk to her, are the ones who do not show up. This category of parents may seem similar to Kari's 'those who do not follow up'. However, I never heard Sandra, or any of the other staff at de Bijenkorf, using any equivalent expression, and I do not really believe that this was her annoyance. This was another kind of irritation – an irritation with people saying one thing and doing something else, rather than with parents who did not fulfil the school system's expectations. With Tinie's description of over-eager Dutch parents in mind, as well as Sandra's own sighs about meddle-some mothers, school expectations of parental involvement were evidently different from those at Bakken. First of all, there was no homework for parents to be responsible for. The arrangement of lunches also gave parents' involvement a different form, in that most mothers stayed at home for their children to eat with them. Children who stayed in school for lunch might bring food or slip out to buy something from the baker's or the fast food shop nearby. Other issues that Kari mentioned as 'follow-up' indicators,

such as helping one's child remember to bring the appropriate books or pencils were also irrelevant here: the books all stayed in the classroom, and pencils were handed out by Sandra when necessary. In other words, the individual children at de Bijenkorf got the necessary 'follow-up' in school. Here, parental involvement was required on a school level, rather than on the individual level.

The second parents' evening at de Bijenkorf was for the children and parents of group 8, on the topic of secondary education. This meeting was of more specific interest to them, and was also much better attended. It was held in one of the larger classrooms, a few days after *Sinterklaas*, when all the groups had made representations of *Sinterklaas* to decorate the class-rooms. This second meeting was held in Marieke's room, which was larger than Sandra's, and decorated with black cardboard *Pieten*. Most of the children and most of the parents were present at this meeting, which was designed to meet their particular needs for information at the transition from primary to secondary school. Those who were not there belonged to the academically weaker part of the group. That they did not attend this meeting was not said to be 'problematic' by any of the staff; however, it may have indicated a certain resignation versus a future that already appeared rather bleak.

> Yunus' mother and sister are sitting very close together. I sit down next to Carlos' parents, and overhear the father saying to his wife in Spanish: 'All sit down in groups, look – the Dutch there with their backs to the others, then all the blacks there and the foreigners we are here, at the back'.[66] I joined in, saying that I had noticed the same thing, and we started talking in Spanish. The father suggested that maybe this could be seen as a kind of integration too, and that perhaps this kind of thing happens automatically. What had immediately struck him, he explained, was how the Dutch parents sat close together in the middle with their backs to everybody else – and then he noticed how the others formed groups as well.

What Carlos' father points out here is interesting not primarily in that people sat down forming groups. Rather, the actual groups they formed may tell us something about the relevant social categorisations. First, there were those he called 'the Dutch'. They did, indeed, sit at the front to the middle of the room, with their backs to everybody else, thus forming a tightly knit centre that very much defined the peripheries. 'The Dutch' were to some extent

[66] '*Todos se sienten en grupos, mira – los holandeses asi con la espalda a todos los demas, pues todos los negros alli y los estranjeros estamos aqui, detras'*

balanced by an equally large and close-knit group to their right and slightly to the back of the room: 'the blacks', as Carlos' father said. Among 'the blacks' sat one 'Dutch' man, who turned out to be Chantal's father. The third category was 'us foreigners', in which Carlos' father included Yunus' mother and sister, Mehmet and his parents, Jin-Song and his mother and aunt, and himself and his wife. Rather than forming a group of their own, they were the leftovers, or the outsiders, each family forming its own small group, sitting apart not only from the two groups but also from the other 'foreigners'.

I would hold that, as was evident from the seating patterns, Carlos' fathers' categorisation was largely valid for the room as a whole, although the names he gave the groups may not have been common property. 'The Dutch' (*los holandeses*), or *de nederlanders* as they would refer to themselves, were all 'white' people. Some of them might refer to themselves as *blank* ('white'), others would denounce the term as racist; they would all be born in the Netherlands (or in the Dutch overseas colonies) of Dutch parents, and they were native speakers of the Dutch language. 'The blacks' (*los negros*) would probably refer to themselves as either Surinamese (*Surinaams*) or Antillese (*Antilliaans*), and – in contrast to 'white' people – as dark (*donker*) rather than black (*zwart*). They were born in the then Dutch colony of Suriname, or in the Dutch Antilles (still a colony). They were mostly of African, though partly also of indigenous Surinamese, Indian (*Hindustani*), or Chinese, descent. They were also bilingual, being native speakers of the Dutch language, with Srinan Tongo as their other native language. 'The foreigners' were not native speakers of Dutch, they were not born in the Netherlands, and they were not as white as the Dutch. In other words, they were defined by what they were not, rather than by what they were. Let us return to the meeting, where the formal proceedings began. Two men from the nearest secondary (*middelbare*) school explained the intricacies of the Dutch educational system and presented their school:

> A public secondary school that used to be two schools, they explained, it has about 1500 students, comprises two separate locations, and offers teaching at all levels: *VWO*, *HAVO*, *MAVO*, *VBO* – the abbreviations filled the screen and the air. It was a fancy computerised presentation, all models and graphic presentations accompanied by a lot of fast Dutch. I found it very hard to follow.

The parents were listening intently. Carlos' father and Mehmet's mother were both taking notes. I was not the only one who found the presentation difficult to understand:

> It is now 20.30 and time for a break. First I turn back to Carlos' parents: "*complicado*, eh?" and his mother confirms immediately, rolling her eyes: "*complicadísimo*!" I then stroll over to the Turkish lady, who is sitting alone (the girl is up front, picking up brochures and talking to the men from the secondary school) and ask her, hesitatingly, in Dutch: ' – Aynur's mother?' She, with a small smile, replies in Dutch: 'No, I'm Yunus's'. She continues that the girl is indeed her daughter, a big girl now, herself in the secondary school. Her Dutch exhausted, it seems, or maybe it is my Dutch – she seems to give up –smiles and puts her feet up, and I tell her I am going outside.

'The foreigners' stayed separate, perhaps hampered in any wish to mingle by their lack of fluency in a common language. I passed 'the blacks' on my way out. Sandra was talking to one of her compatriots, in a way that shows they knew each other well:

> Sandra and Tristan's mother, a tall elegant woman, are standing in the doorway, joking with each other. Sandra is eating a piece of the cake that Tristan's mother has brought, saying that it is too small and would Tristan please bring her a bigger one tomorrow. She hands me a taste of it too, and announces to me that 'Tristan's mother is completely Surinamese, you know, she is living here and yet continues to be all Surinamese, what a shame!' Tristan's mother objects vehemently, switching to English: 'No, inside my head I am just like a Dutch person!' I joke: 'Wow, so you mean your head is all colonised?' and she laughs: 'Yeah, sure!'

Being colonised 'in the head' and not just 'in the body' is otherwise a well-known and serious accusation of disloyalty to one's own people, so I was perhaps lucky that she found my joke funny – although we had met and talked in school several times before. Also, of course, I was simply joining in on the joking between her and Sandra. Their conversation underlined their closeness as Surinamese rather than as teacher and parent.

> On the way out, I also talk to Wim's dad. An educated Dutchman, he found the presentation simple – the whole system has changed since his time, but his daughter went through this just three years ago: 'She had all top grades, poor girl – how could she choose?' [In other words, she could choose anything she liked from the top shelf]. Proud father… and Wim is in the same situation now.

Soft-spoken and helpful, Wim, as everybody knew, was at the head of group 8. From his position, the future was all possibilities. The future belonged to Wim. At the other end of the scale were the children who had not even turned up to hear about the possibilities that were not theirs. They would

have to take whatever secondary education they would qualify for, which again would mean they would have to take whatever jobs they could get, if any, when school was over. For some of us now, the meeting was over:

> I left school at this point to catch the last bus. The same groups were forming outside too, Dutch here and Surinamese there, and what Carlos' father had called 'us foreigners' either staying inside or separately at the margins of the two groups. Chantal and her father left at the break too, and I walked behind them out of the dimly lit school grounds into the dark street.

Public or private places?

'as places gather bodies in their midst in deeply enculturated ways, so cultures conjoin bodies in concrete circumstances of emplacement' (Casey 1996:46).

I would hold that the two schools' different expectations of parental involvement relate closely to differences in the boundaries between the school and the children's homes. On a more general level, the widely divergent expectations are part of differences in the boundaries between the public and the private, or in the definition of the private and the public. 'Even so abstract a concept as "civil society", which relates to the state (…) is discussed in the spatial metaphors of "the public sphere" and "public space".' (Boyarin 1994: 20). These and related expressions such as 'the private and the public domains' may be metonyms rather than metaphors: 'The private' and 'the public' are experienced places – school and dwelling – as well as fields of responsibility linked to these places. Norwegian examples of transitional phenomena that require parental 'follow-up', such as *matpakke* and homework, in contrast to Dutch examples of 'parental intrusion' in school, illustrate this. Crudely put, we have seen that in Norway, school invades the homes through such transitional phenomena, whereas in the Netherlands, the homes invade school through the participation of parents in the running of the school. It should be noted here that most of the 'invaders' in de Bijenkorf were *Dutch* parents, and, more specifically still, mostly Dutch *mothers*. Correspondingly, in Bakken, 'follow-up' was successfully accomplished mostly by *Norwegian* parents, and of these, most were Norwegian *mothers*.

In Oslo, school was a public institution with the right and duty to enter the private domain. In Amsterdam, homes were private institutions with the right of access to their children's school. In Oslo, school was largely a place where people of that place and people of other places met. In Amsterdam, school was a place where people who all, each and every one of them, belonged to several different places, met. In the following and final chapter, I shall discuss some of the implications of these and related points to the constitutions of national Selves and Others in the two contexts.

Chapter 8

Dealing with difference: National Selves and Others

…the qualitative structure of contexts…
(Bateson 2000:155)

Some questions, and a summary

In the preceding chapters, I have attempted to sort out some of the complexities most relevant to my topic, without, I hope, reducing my material to simplicities. So what, then, is the purpose of this dissertation? What have I learned? What do I want the reader to remember? Summing up, I have attempted to compare the dynamics of national selves and others in Norway and in the Netherlands. I have done this through focusing on everyday life in two classrooms, and especially on how children and adults related to that which, and those whom, they perceived to be 'different'. I have ventured not merely to compare the two classrooms, but also to include their contexts in my comparison. In critical realist terms, as outlined in chapter 2, the internal and external complexities of the classrooms are manifest in the events of everyday practicalities. We have thus seen how the ways in which people relate to each other are formed by, and form, the structures within which all of us live and act. What is conventionally known as contexts, such as the relations between the public and the private, international, national and local bureaucracies and experienced realities – all of these are implicated in each other through internal and external complexities.

How, then, do Dutch and Norwegian national selves become apparent through my descriptions of experienced belongings, of discursive repertoires, of bureaucratic contexts, and of parent-school relations? How do these national selves appear to be similar, and how are they different? How would I venture to explain these similarities and differences? In the following, I shall try to suggest some possible and partial answers to these, admittedly, rather ambitious questions. As in the preceding chapters, my discussions here will also involve more general theoretical issues such as the

relations between the public and the private, gender and class, individual and society, and last, but not least, of agency and structure.

The first question is perhaps the easiest, since in the preceding chapters I have already attempted to answer it. Let me therefore briefly sum up here what I have tried to show. In the case of Norway, it is widely recognised that a hegemonic emphasis on equality as sameness is reflected in the unified school system and in social democracy as a national ideology. The principle of equality as sameness was also constitutive of, and constituted through, everyday life in school, as I show in chapters 4, 6, and 7. The definition of equality as sameness rested with the Norwegian majority, and the boundaries, the symbolic fences, of sameness were vigilantly guarded. In Norway, 'equality as sameness (...) is sustained by avoiding contact with people about whom one has insufficient information, by an interactional style emphasizing sameness and undercommunicating difference and by avoiding people who are considered "too different". This last strategy implies pronounced inaccessibility, what I have called symbolic fences' (Gullestad 1992:174). A strong, normative emphasis on equality as sameness also involved a corresponding evasion of difference. Within this discursive hegemony it was virtually impossible to deal openly with what was defined as 'difference'. Yet the hegemony was not total, and the children, in various ways and to various degrees, actively and creatively engaged in contesting it. The discrepancy between school's and children's understandings of belonging was conspicuous in the Norwegian case.

In contrast, in the Dutch case, there is no unified school system. In the Netherlands, the closely related concepts of 'freedom' and 'tolerance' combine and take the place that 'equality as sameness' has in Norway, as hegemonic, organising and normative principles. Similarly to Norway, the power of definition lay with the majority, but in the Netherlands, the question was rather of how to the define the limits of freedom and tolerance. As emerges through chapters 5, 6, and 7, in the school system as in society at large, the real existence of perceived 'differences' was taken for granted. This understanding provided the point of departure for practical and organisational solutions on all levels.

In chapter 3, I explored some aspects of intersubjectively constituted senses of belonging in the two contexts. I found that, at de Bijenkorf, the children's senses of belonging were multiply constituted, their life-worlds partly and to different degrees overlapping. The multiplicity of their belongings was, as I found in chapters 6 and 7, confirmed and reflected in the curricula as well as in everyday life in school and in the relations between parents and school. Thus, an understanding and experience of

multiple belonging was discursively constituted as normal. That is not to say that every one of these senses of belonging emerges as normal in the Dutch national context, only that multiplicity in itself constitutes normality.

At Bakken, the children's senses of belonging were also to some extent multiply constituted, although there was an uneven distribution of such multiplicity. There was a tendency for Norwegian children to have a more concentric form of belonging and for 'non-Norwegian' children to have more multiple forms of belonging. In the Norwegian case, a multiplicity of belonging emerged as deviant in contrast to an explicitly unilocal, concentric normality. I found that this unilocal, concentric sense of belonging was consolidated as normal and assigned a hegemonic status within the national discourse. This was blatantly manifest in everyday interaction, in the curriculum, and in the relations between parents and school, through the evasion of difference as well as through a strong emphasis on equality as sameness. Thus in both cases, forms of belonging predominant among the majority children were embedded in a nationally hegemonic politics of belonging.

Dutch-ness includes a certain multiplicity of belonging and identity, not unlike what Grillo (1998:17) describes as 'corporate' identities, whereas Norwegian-ness operates as a unitary, narrowly defined identity. Grillo links the concept of 'corporate identities' to a 'patrimonial' state, in which 'patriarchal rulers were less concerned with their subjects' ethnic identity and cultural values than with their ability to render tribute, taxes, and labour (…) the predominant way in which difference was handled, was incorporation through accommodation' (1998:17). In the Dutch context, this brings to mind the title of the influential work on the Dutch 'pillar society' by Arend Lijphart, *The politics of accommodation* (1968). Within an evolutionary paradigm, this might imply that the Netherlands be in the process of skipping the stage of modernity, in passing directly from patrimony to postmodernity.[67] Similarly, in the case of Norway, an evolutionary understanding might imply that this nation-state enter postmodernity backwards (if at all), its eyes on modernity's curriculum of homogeneity rather than on one of hybridity. Now the typology that Grillo outlines does not imply a necessary, universal evolution from a patrimonial via a modern to a postmodern state. What he describes, as I understand it, is the historical development in a number of countries, which

[67] This understanding is related to, but very different from, what may be the dominant, contemporary Dutch view of pillarisation which I briefly referred to in chapter 6. Here, pillarisation is seen as a historical parenthesis rather than as a development that continues to structure Dutch society.

happen to include neither Norway nor the Netherlands. Yet drawing on his typology, I would hold that, in the Netherlands, there was a strong tendency for difference to be handled through incorporation, as in Norway difference was handled through homogenisation and assimilation. Going even further, it seems that inclusion of the Other *as Other* was a more likely outcome in the Netherlands, whereas either assimilation or exclusion was more likely to happen in Norway, where similarity – identity, Selfhood – was a precondition for inclusion.

Comparing national Selves

This brings us to the second question I raised at the beginning of this chapter: How are the national selves similar, and how do they differ? In this study, I have focused on the processes of formation of national selves rather than on any fixed entities. The two national selves, as seen in this light, emerge through two different national models of childhood as belonging. I have tried to illustrate this graphically as follows:

Figure 1: The Norwegian model.

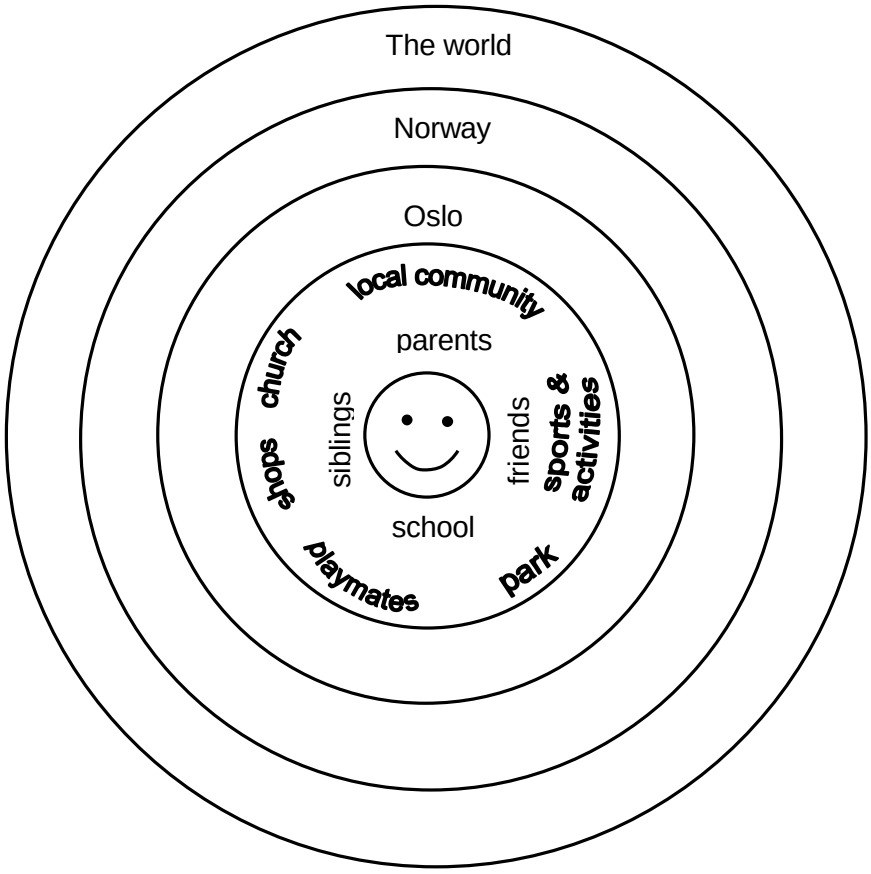
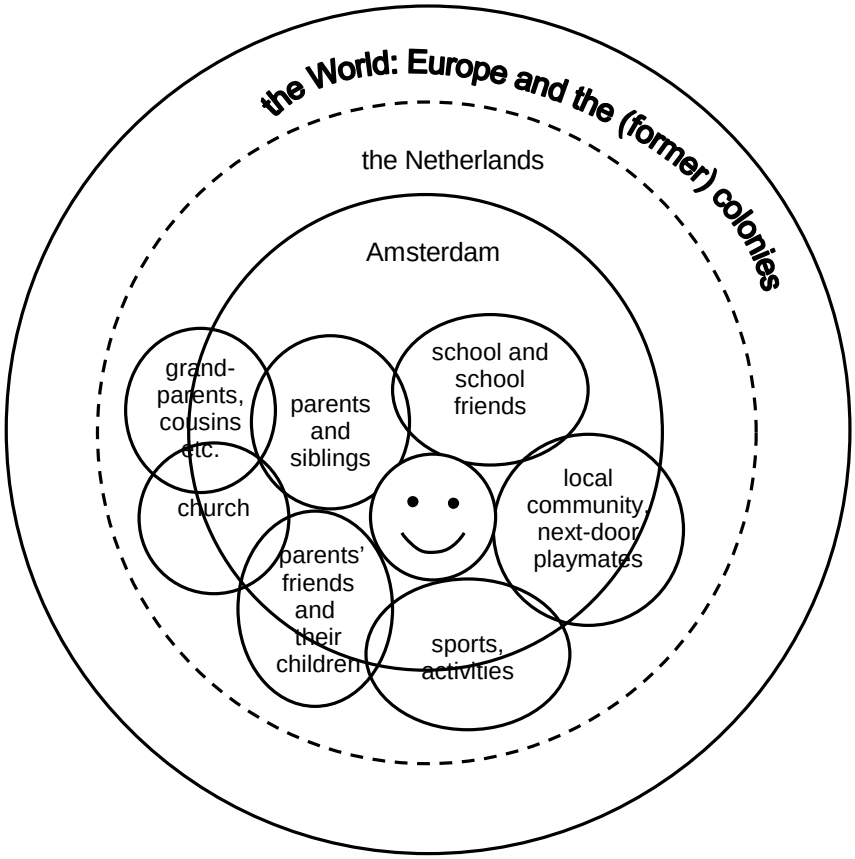


Figure 2: The Dutch model.



Like all graphic illustrations, this is of course a simplification of just one aspect of the reality it relates to – neither more nor less than an attempt to make one of my main points clear to the reader. Furthermore, I should point out that the two figures do not relate to their corresponding realities in identical ways. In the Norwegian case, the figure is an attempt to illustrate an ideal which school – and here I include teachers as well as curricula – takes for granted, and thus treats as if it were a reality. When it comes to the children at Bakken, however, this model is only to varying degrees an adequate description of their experiences and senses of belonging. For many of the children at Bakken – especially for those with 'non-Norwegian' backgrounds – the other figure might in fact be closer to such a description. This second figure is primarily intended as an illustration of the taken-for-granted reality in the Dutch case, where every child had several senses of belonging, some of which overlapped, while others were only loosely, or not at all, connected. As I briefly mentioned in chapter 1, however, something similar to the Norwegian model of unitary, localised identities was present

also in the Netherlands, but here as a kind of nostalgic utopia, rather than as a real or realisable model.

As Gullestad (1997:20) points out, 'children are indeed central to national symbolism in Norway'. This, coupled with Kramer's insight that 'local belonging (…) defines Norwegian identity' (1984:95) may serve to explain the importance of the concentric model in the Norwegian context.[68] It may also explain why this model has proved so resilient. A national self based on children's firm rooting in a local community cannot afford to recognise that children's experiences deviate significantly, and increasingly, from this model. Similarly, a national self built on equality as sameness cannot afford to recognise that people are different – unless the difference can be re-codified as a form of 'local differences' and thus encompassed within the national paradigm. The Dutch model, on the other hand, does not derive from a corresponding historical and ideological structure. Here, the historical circumstances of the pillar society have made possible a model which to a greater extent allows for contemporary complexities. Children's senses of belonging are multiple and diverse, even within the field of 'Dutchness'.

Let us turn to the question of national Others in relation to these two models. Where does the Other come into it – if at all? How is the Other conceptualised and engendered versus, respectively, a unitary and a multiple model of the Self?

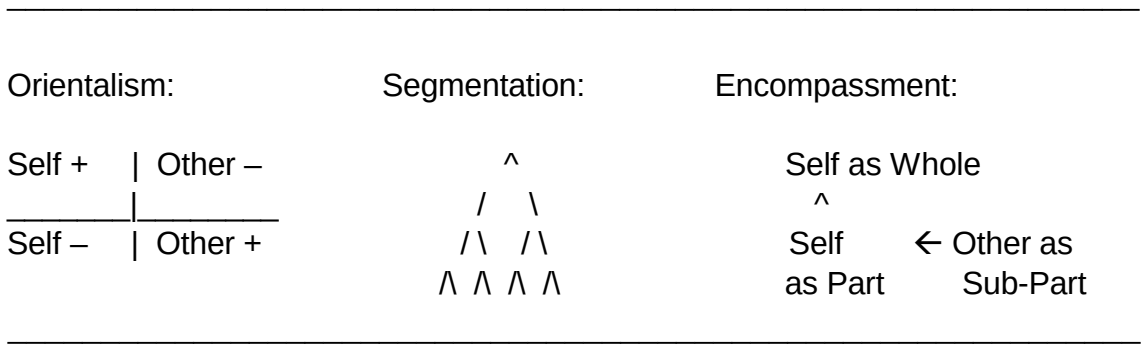
Self and Other: a grammatical approach

The issue of national Others opens up a vast and diverse field of literature on Self and Other. Should I venture to sum up my understanding of this field, I would say – paraphrasing Riggins (1997:6) – that Self and Other are intertwined to the extent that to stop talking about 'us', one must stop talking about 'them', and vice versa. Not surprisingly, a large segment of the literature on Self and Other draws on structural analysis and, in particular,

[68] Julian Kramer, a social anthropologist with a Norwegian passport and a Jewish Lithuanian South African background, was initially puzzled by the Norwegian paradox of openly celebrated local differences and a hegemonic myth of national homogeneity. He attempts to explain it in terms of different 'tribal' identities that form one national identity, which encompasses the local identities on a more general level. As soon as 'non-Norwegians' enter the picture, however, the case is rather one of segmentary opposition. In his view (and I agree), Norwegians are defined as such precisely on the basis of [local] differences, which subsume into versions of Norwegian sameness in relation to other and more significant differences between Norwegians and Others (1984:94).

on the formal logic of binary oppositions. Such an approach provides important and useful insights but it is also essentially reductionist, as Gregory Bateson observed in his essay 'Morale and National Character' first printed as early as in 1942 (Bateson 2000:95): 'When we invoked bipolarity as a means of handling differentiation within society (…) we considered only the possibility of simple bipolar differentiation. Certainly this pattern is very common in Western cultures (…). This clear tendency toward dual systems ought not, however, to blind us to the occurrence of other patterns.' But more about Bateson's approach to this field later. Baumann and Gingrich (in press) also point out the reductionism inherent in binary oppositions in their introduction to an edited volume on 'Grammars of Identity/Alterity'. Furthermore, as they argue, it is time to 'go beyond the unproductive, and essentially moralist, truism that every selfing involves an othering'. They, too, adopt a structural approach to the issues of Self and Other but suggest – as I mentioned in chapter 1 – that one way to get beyond simple bipolarity is to 'distinguish different modalities of identity formation and dialogical inclusion or exclusion' (Baumann and Gingrich, in press). They identify three such modalities, drawing on the works of, respectively, Edward Said on orientalism, E. E. Evans-Pritchard on segmentation, and Louis Dumont on encompassment.

To my mind, there seems to be an increasing complexity in these modalities of identity/alterity: from orientalism's relatively simple bipolarities via the more complex, stratifying principle of segmentation to Dumont's model of encompassment, which is quite difficult to understand, let alone to apply in analysis. Simple orientalism thus represents the theoretical impasse that Baumann and Gingrich are trying to 'get beyond'. Let me include a diagram from their book (diagram 5, Baumann, in press) in order to present the three 'modalities' or 'grammars':



All these modalities – and, quite possibly, others as well – are at work in both countries, each operating and relating to each other in ways shaped by

the historically embedded structures. Any attempt to give an exhaustive analysis of the workings of the grammars of identity/alterity in the two countries would be well beyond the scope of this dissertation. In the following, however, I shall explore some of the points where this mode of analysis is especially relevant to my project.

> 'If the three grammars can help to distinguish and systematize three different ways of performing selfings and otherings, then the next task must be, to see how far they can enable comparison. For this, the best starting point is comparison within the same ethnographic context. It will be useful, therefore, to trace the different grammars in constellations of selfing and othering where the crucial problem ('who are we? who are they?') is the same, but where there are different parties chosing different grammars to make their points. It is probably safe to say that there are very few constellations of selfing and othering in which different people would not make different choices as between one grammar or another. Let it be tried, therefore, to see the grammars in some situations of grammatical contestation, that is, situations in which different grammars offer different solutions to different people, or indeed, as may happen, to the same people in different contexts.' (Baumann, in press)

The question of comparison is, needless to say, relevant to my project. Do the 'grammars of identity/alterity' help us along here – and if they do, how do they achieve this? I shall leave the more general assumption that 'the best starting point is comparison within the same ethnographic context' aside here (but refer the reader to chapter 2 above) and turn to what Baumann proposes to do: to look at situations where 'different grammars offer different solutions to different people, or … to the same people in different contexts'. In his text, he outlines various examples, among them Dutch Selves/Others. I find his analysis of the Dutch case surprising:

> 'Most Dutch people, like so many natives of all European states, define the alterity of their 'immigrant' populations by a very predictable orientalizing grammar. (…) The more, however, that longer-settled immigrant groups are joined by more recent arrivals, the collective 'they' applied to 'the immigrants' in their entirety gives way to a staggered structure of the orientalizing grammar (…) Typically, the negative characteristics ascribed to the longer-settled immigrants are relativized by an idea that, ultimately, it will be possible to assimilate or integrate them, whereas the negative characteristics of the newly-arrived immigrants are emphasized all the more sharply as they are contrasted to the longer-settled ones. (…) In the Dutch case, the line of distinction concerns long-settled versus recently arrived migrants; in other cases the

> line of distinction concerns immigrants from the former colonies versus immigrants without historic bonds to the new country of residence; in yet other cases, the line of distinction concerns religion and then places "assimilable Christian" immigrants versus "unassimilable Muslim" immigrants.' (Baumann, in press)

Perhaps because I was myself an Other in this setting, I view Dutch Selfing/Othering differently from what Baumann does and, consequently, I would not have applied the grammars in this way here. I would rather have started out by emphasising that there were elements of all three grammars – orientalising, segmentary and encompassing – in Dutch Othering (as, indeed, in Norwegian Othering). Furthermore, I would say that my material, too, suggests two main categories of Others to the Dutch, but these are not conceptualised as differing mainly along the lines of what Baumann calls 'long-settled' and 'recently arrived' immigrants. The two main categories, I found, were 'Muslims' and 'People from the (former) colonies'. 'Muslims' in my material primarily refers to people with Turkish or Moroccan backgrounds, whereas 'People from the (former) colonies' refers to people who have Surinamese or Antillese backgrounds, and are, socio-chromatically, viewed as 'dark' (*donker*). I would further suggest that these two main categories of Others are chiefly construed by the Dutch majority not through 'staggering orientalisation' but through different grammars of alterity: 'Muslims' through orientalisation, and 'people from the (former) colonies' through encompassment. To complicate things further, these two categories, moreover, overlap and influence each other. As van der Veer very appropriately reminds us, 'if one takes a historically and geographically more extended perspective then the Dutch state, like some other European states, such as England and France, has dealt with Muslim subjects already for a long period. I am referring to the overseas colonies, Indonesia and Suriname (…) Not so long ago the Netherlands was a colonial society in which a majority of the population was Muslim' (van der Veer 2001:1–2). However, this reminder is necessary precisely because 'Muslims' as a cognitive category of Others, at de Bijenkorf as in contemporary Dutch society at large, chiefly refers to Muslims from countries that were not part of the Netherlands as a colonial society, namely Turkey and Morocco. It is primarily these Muslims who have attempted to form their own pillar in a de-pillarising society, whereas 'colonial Muslims' in the Netherlands have largely remained unorganised, in effect as an extension of colonial policies in the past (cf. Shadid and Koningsveld 1991; Rath et al. 1996).

Different teachers at de Bijenkorf construed difference from their own points of view, however. We may recall how Else, the white Dutch 'Tuesday teacher' in group 8, attempted to encompass Muslims in a Christian hierarchical model, through claiming that Islam and 'the other religions' were 'not that different, and all have the same origin'. Similarly, we may recall the example of Dutch food representing a universal category of food, encompassing the 'specific' foods of other nations. Other Others were Othered in other ways: I, for one, was ascribed a 'Norwegian' identity, according to a segmentary grammar that included me in a common North-West European identity but excluded me from a national imagined community that celebrated its language, its history, and, above all, its tolerance.[69]

The situation at de Bijenkorf was, of course, unusually complicated and interesting owing to the very fact that it was led by Others, members of the category 'people from the (former) colonies'. I would suggest that people inscribed into this category by the Dutch would themselves engage in processes of segmentary Othering. The complex and flexible Dutch model of national belonging (fig. 2) opens up for re-negotiations of this kind. This may in fact serve to illustrate Baumann's admission, which I feel he may not take sufficiently into account in his example, that 'the same social situations of selfing and othering can make use of several grammars at the same time. The grammars then appear as competing or rival versions of constructing identity and alterity' (Baumann, in press).

In 6B at Bakken, it was the presence of a considerable number of 'mixed' children that made the situation at once complicated and interesting. Since they were all white *and* 'acted Norwegian' (as Juni pointed out to me), here was a category of equal-as-similar Others who made it possible to claim that Others were, indeed, included. Here, too, the national Others may be divided into different categories, which were produced according to different grammars. On the one hand, Baumann's idea of 'staggering orientalisation' seems to make more sense here: Pakistanis and Vietnamese may have been less Other than the most recent arrivals, who tended to be Somalis – or perhaps not? Perhaps here, too, we have a main, orientalised category of 'Muslims', with other Others as differently constructed Others?

[69] The issue of my 'partial Jewishness' was not raised, since I did not reveal this aspect of my identity during fieldwork. A comparison of attitudes and reactions to Jewishness in the two contexts would, I have belatedly realised, have been informative. See Boyarin and Boyarin (1997) for a discussion about Jewishness as part of, and separate from, the anthropological experience.

Most likely, however, is a combination of grammars in each case, so that, for example, Somalis may be both orientalised as 'Muslims' and encompassed as 'blacks' (see below). Segmentation, in the Norwegian case, seems to apply primarily to the processes of identity/alterity in relation to Swedes, Danes, and other 'white' and 'closely related' – in cultural, historical, or racial terms – Others.

Let us try to see what the grammar of encompassment, deriving from Dumont's work, can do in the Norwegian case. Elsewhere, I have argued that '(…) the Norwegian all-encompassing framework [of equality as sameness] appears as a true, Dumontian hierarchy: in the guise of egalitarianism, it is a single-value hierarchy based on the value of *likhet*, or equality-cum-homogeneity.' (Seeberg 1996:135). At the same time, the unitary model (fig. 1) seems to leave no place for the Other. Orientalisation appears to be more compatible with this model, defining the Other as non-belonging, external to the model of a national Self and thus external to the nation. Dumont says:

> 'Make distinction illegitimate, and you get discrimination; suppress the former modes of distinction and you have a racist ideology (...) In the modern Western world not only are citizens free and equal before the law, but a transition develops, at least in popular mentality, *from the moral principle of equality to the belief in the basic identity of all men* (...) To sum up, the proclamation of equality has burst asunder a mode of distinction centered upon the social, but in which physical, cultural and social characteristics were indiscriminately mixed. (...) it is permissible to doubt whether, in the fight against racism in general, the mere recall of the egalitarian ideal, however solemn it may be, and even though accompanied by a scientific criticism of racist prejudices, will be really efficient. It would be better *to prevent the passage from the moral principle of equality to the notion that all men are identical*. One feels sure that equality can, in our day, be combined with the recognition of differences, so long as the differences are morally neutral. *People must be provided with the means of conceptualizing differences*. (Dumont 1980:262-265, emphases added.)

As I understand Dumont here, there is an inherent flaw in egalitarianism in that its view of society as a flat or horizontal structure leaves no room for the different Other, making exclusion the only logical outcome of processes of Othering. This as opposed to a view of society as vertically or hierarchically stratified, making room for Others within the structure, albeit in less

privileged positions than that of the Self.[70] Indeed, as I have also argued (Seeberg 1996:43–4, emphasis added) that '[d]ifference (*forskjell*), or absence of *likhet* (*ulikhet*), is incompatible with the homogeneous model, at least as long as people are not provided with the alternative "means of conceptualizing differences" that Dumont calls for. *Until then, the very difference of the different individual, or group of individuals, appears to be the problem*.' This may serve towards explaining how difference, in Norwegian settings, is expressed not primarily as relational (difference *between* Self and Other) but rather as an essence of the Other (e.g. *hun er annerledes* 'she is different') – an essence that, nevertheless, is a product of the relation between Self and Other. But it does not seem to harmonise with my contention of an encompassment of the Other, based on this same essential difference. The complexity of reality makes such 'grammatical' exercises very difficult, but let us not give up just yet, because I think the paradox may be informative of Norwegian selfhood.

Muslim girls are, I would argue, the clearest examples of 'encompassed' Others in my Norwegian material. The encompassing Selves are their female teachers. This is where gender and nationalism meet: as girls, they are Selves; as Muslims, they are Others. Had they been boys, or their form teacher a man, they would most likely have been orientalised and their difference had defined their unbelonging.Had they not been Muslim, female solidarity might have defined their gender sameness as more important than their national difference. This case remains untested in my material. I do not have a test case of a 'wholly non-Norwegian', non-Muslim girl. What if one of the girls had been Black, and Christian? Would she have been encompassed, or orientalised? As it was, Norwegian women found it in their power to define the best interests of the Muslim girls, regardless of the girls' own (presumably brainwashed) views. A Muslim girl was 'one of us', and thus to be evaluated according to 'our' criteria of equality. As Baumann (in press, emphases in the original) rather polemically puts it, within this grammar the powerful Self says: '*Your* low level of consciousness may need *my* otherness to define itself, but *my* heart is big enough for *both* of us.'

At de Bijenkorf, Muslim girls were not encompassed in this way. In Sandra's classroom, Aynur kept very quiet, and when she did get Sandra's attention it was either as a pupil with a low level of achievement, or as a

[70] I find Dumont's claim to universal validity of his model unconvincing, and its essentialising, reductionist and exoticising aspects dubious (cf. Appadurai 1988), but I nevertheless find the model useful 'to think with' in particular cases.

representative of Islam. The latter role was usually filled by the more active Turkish boys in the group, but in the one case where the question of women's Islamic dress came up during 'World Orientation' (*wereldorientatie*), Aynur was expected to represent and defend an undifferentiated (in terms of nationality, age etc.) category of Muslim women, as questioned by Christian Selves. We may also recall Mark's anger with the girl who tried to claim a right to cover her body with long trousers in gym. In the Netherlands, gender is much less of an issue in school, as in society at large. The female national self is not primarily an emancipated woman, but just as much a homemaker. The national Self is not construed as being at the forefront at feminism, as is the Norwegian one.

In both countries, differences that are conceived of as different *kinds* of difference are handled differently. In Norway, gender differences are not evaded, but handled openly and confidently. Teachers and children were trained in how to do that. More generally speaking – like the girls in 6B – women and girls in Norway in many ways profit from, and in other ways are restricted by, an elaborate framework for dealing with gender differences. This stands out in contrast to 'ethnic' differences. Here, one might suggest that children who were perceived to be 'non-Norwegian' were the victims of a nation-wide competence void, a void that in itself is a product of difference evasion. In the Netherlands, in society at large rather than at de Bijenkorf, 'tolerance' as a way of dealing directly with difference certainly means that, i.e. homosexuals, prostitutes and drug addicts 'profit' from a culturally and historically produced framework for dealing with 'different' behaviour. In this setting, difference emerges as an aspect of relational behaviour rather than as an individual essence.

Both of these established ways of dealing with, or avoiding, difference set their own specific boundaries. In the Norwegian case, the boundaries between Self and Other are upheld through a myriad of techniques that emphasise sameness and evade difference. The definition of sameness is quite narrow, and contesting the definition is profoundly more difficult than a re-codification of 'difference' in terms of the two forms of difference that are compatible with, and even constitutive of, the national Self: gender difference and local (or, as Kramer calls it, 'tribal'), difference. For instance, Majid's *samosas* became acceptable to Kari through her redefinition or re-codification of them as 'a kind of *matpakke*'. In the Netherlands, too, the national discourse of Self and Other implied its own specific limits. Here, 'tolerance' was extended to a certain point, a boundary beyond which was the place of a non-tolerant Other. Beyond this boundary were non-tolerant

people of every kind, from 'racists' to Muslim 'fundamentalists'. I will try to expand on these points by means of a more thorough scrutiny of the concepts of *likhet* (equality as sameness) and *tolerantie* (tolerance) and the historical conditions that formed these concepts in Norway and the Netherlands, respectively.

How come there are systematic differences?

Explanations of social phenomena tend to lean on the concepts of structure and agency, sometimes emphasising the importance of one, sometimes the primacy of the other. Throughout this dissertation, I have argued that there are systematic differences between Norway and the Netherlands when it comes to forms of dealing with differences. In this sense, I give structure the upper hand in my analysis. Yet I would object to any form of structural determinism, or 'downwards conflation' of structure and agency (Archer 1995). Likewise, I would disagree with any view of structures as less real than agents, in what Archer (ibid.) calls 'upwards conflation'. Kari, when she read my first draft of chapter 4, told me: 'That's exactly the way it is. We are caught within this *likhet*.'

This, surely, is where the time dimension, and history, come into it: 'The interplay between social structure and agency takes place over time' (Danermark et al. 2002:181). And as Bhaskar (rather depressingly) puts it: 'In the social world we are heavily burdened by the oppressive presence of the past' (in Lopez and Potter 2001:30). Social structures are historically specific. History does not determine agency, any more than structures do, but the structures that enable and constrain agency cannot be understood independently of their historical context. Any history can be presented in a number of ways, again, in dialectical interplay, depending on the structures of contemporary realities. In chapter 6, I presented the national histories of the two countries as they emerged through teaching, textbooks and other official sources. I also attempted to outline alternative versions under the headings 'null curricula', as seen from other perspectives than the conventionally national. By their very nature, such alternative versions are fragmentary and marginal, in contrast to the hegemonic history that they contest.

In the Norwegian contexts, national history presents a homogeneous *folk* (people), organically rooted in Norwegian soil, and free from the 'original sin' of imperialism. In this official version, Norwegians continue to emerge as a fundamentally good people – as former Prime Minister Brundtland famously summed it up, 'it is typically Norwegian to be

good'.[71]From the sidelines of 'alternative' versions of Norwegian pseudo-colonial history, it is easier to see how the Others of this 'normal' and 'good' Norwegian Self have emerged through the same hegemonic discourse that produced, and produces, the Self.

In the Netherlands, of course, there can be no escaping the heritage of colonialism. Or can there? The situation is profoundly ambiguous, as emerges from the following extract from my own Amsterdam field notes:

> 21.08.99. Spent the afternoon in the *Tropenmuseum*. A deeply disturbing place, it simultaneously rejected and consolidated colonialism. This was especially poignant because they had an exhibition on about the history of Dutch anthropology, 'Antropologica: 100 jaar studeren op culturen'. Is it possible to imagine a museum of this kind without the racist baggage? I mean, would the idea of such museums ever have been conceived without the idea of 'our' exotic Others? Tropenmuseum, Museum of Mankind in London, Pitt-Rivers' in Oxford, Etnografisk Museum in Oslo – what are they, but temples to the Superior Self –superior not just in terms of power, but also morally? Pitt-Rivers is of course the most blatant example, grotesque in its shamelessness, but at the same time a hypocrisy-free zone – no attempts are made to cover up what it is all about, which is an obsessive categorisation of the barbarian nature of the Other. Can a nation's Museum of the Other truly be said to reflect or reveal its own identity? If so, what did I see today? Honest admissions that Dutch anthropology had been part of colonialism, claims that nowadays, the discipline had changed its ways and tried to take 'the participants' point of view – side by side with the most exquisite antique works of art, many of them of the purest gold, all from the ex-colonies. On one level, it seems as if, by admitting the faults of one's forebears, one has put everything right. But the whole museum is proof that nothing is right! No, not all of it. I liked the way they had updated the exhibits of 'the other' by showing videos of interviewees who gave their opinions about politics, daily life and so on – although no interactive work with people from the ex-colonies visiting the museum had been done. That would have been interesting. I did not like the way they had updated the exhibits by building copies of 'real' villages and 'real homes' with stuffed black people in them. Why were there no stuffed white people – are there no white people in the tropics? Is their continued presence there of no significance? And the section where they showed 'contemporary art' or 'popular art' from 'the tropics' – well, why had they picked an artist who made infantile, naive, colourful papier-mâché sculpture? I know the white man finds that kind

[71] All 'peoples' are probably convinced of their national superiority, but Norwegians may be unusual in their explicit and uninhibited celebrations of the Self.

> of thing artistic, but he also finds it reassuringly childish, doesn't he? Why didn't they show something aggressively anti-post-colonialist, or more 'adult' expressions of some kind? Oh, the poor but smiling, happy, simple, childish black man (always a man)… I did like the Ethiopia exhibition, though. It gave me a feeling it was really made by Ethiopians, it showed the history, the various religions and their place, even Rastafarianism, very interesting I found that. Although this, too, was disturbingly full of treasures from European museums, rather than borrowed for the occasion from Ethiopia itself. I have been thinking lately that what is taught in Norway is not tolerance, but hypocrisy: the children are taught not to accept and respect differences, but to know that differences are unacceptable and the only way to cope with them is to pretend there are no differences. How is that in the Netherlands? Is it the same? I find that most Dutch – especially, of course, the Amsterdammers, are so full of how tolerant they are. What does that mean?

What, indeed, is the meaning of 'tolerance' in the Dutch context? What is the meaning of 'equality' in the Norwegian context? I shall attempt to sum up what my material suggests by way of answers to these questions.

'Equality' and 'tolerance' revisited

Equality-as-sameness in the Norwegian case, and tolerance-and-freedom in the Dutch, provide significant insights, not because they are necessarily 'true', but because they – as I have attempted to show throughout this dissertation – structure reality, through being hegemonic expressions of national selfhood. Yet equality-as-sameness does not only organise Norwegian realities: it is also a multi-faceted concept which organises ideas about society in a general analytical and theoretical sense. It is also associated with a social-democratic ideology. Tolerance-and-freedom, although used in the liberalist tradition, hardly has the same position as an analytical tool in the social sciences. Both concepts may be traced back to the French revolution's '*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*' – simplifying things, one might observe that each of the two national Selves has selected its favourite part of the French slogan and made it its own.[72] Tolerance-and-freedom presupposes difference, whereas to equality-as-sameness difference means inequality, and 'inequality is evil' (Dumont 1980:12).

An approach to the analyses of national selves through claims – set forth by Selves or by Others – to values, characteristics, or moralities that are somehow seen as 'typical' also has an historical background. As an

[72] One may note that neither of the two seems to have found fraternity appealing.

attempt to aid their countries during the Second World War, anthropologists were engaged in projects – academically of somewhat varying quality – of defining 'national characters' and the like. Margaret Mead, Ruth Benedict and Gregory Bateson were all active in this war-work which, in spite of its much criticised shortcomings, did have some interesting aspects; one of which I feel deserves to be reconsidered here. Bateson was, needless to say, aware of the intellectual pitfalls of reductionism and essentialism. He tried to overcome them by taking complexity into account: 'Instead of despairing in face of the fact that nations are highly differentiated, we shall take the dimensions of that differentiation as our clues to the national character. (…) No longer content to say that "Germans are submissive" (…) we shall (…) try to use for our descriptions some such continua as "degree of interest in", or orientation toward, dominance-submission' (Bateson 2000:95). What Bateson did here was introduce the binary opposite of explicitly and officially 'typical' national traits as a methodological step towards comparing 'national characters'.

Now, my project certainly does not aim at defining or comparing 'national characters'; it is intended to show and compare how two 'national selves' structure, and are structured by, the complexities of reality. In the following, I shall attempt to make use of Bateson's methodological step for my own purposes. The national orientations – in the Norwegian case: towards *likhet/ulikhet* (equality-as-sameness/difference-as-inequality), and in the Dutch case: towards *tolerantie/intolerantie* (freedom-and-tolerance/ intolerance) – define their own particular discursive fields. It is within these fields that one may locate Dutch and Norwegian debates on topics such as immigration, multiculturalism, ethnic relations, cultural, racialised and religious differences and so on. One example of this is what one might call 'racism and the national Selves': two heated, national debates on the use of the word 'negro' (*neger*, in both Dutch and Norwegian) which both seem to have left few traces in majority discourse. Interestingly, however, this seems to me to be for two fundamentally different reasons. In the Dutch case, it has been concluded, the use of the word *neger* is not in itself racist. (*Het Parool* 02.01.02, 09.01.02, 19.07.02). It is therefore possible to use it. People who think otherwise are mistaken. The word cannot be racist, since it is in common use in the Netherlands, and racism is alien to the Dutch national tolerant Self. This is parallel to the native insistence, contrary to all evidence, that Sinterklaas' little helpers are black because they came through

the chimney – they simply cannot be racist caricatures of black people.[73] – In the Norwegian case, however, it was generally agreed that the word *neger* may in fact be, *or not be,* a racist term. Still, that is not really a problem, since the widespread use of the word in Norwegian means that if this is racism, then racism is 'normal' and therefore 'natural'. It is not in conflict with a national Self that conceives of difference both as an essence of the Other and as an unacceptable reminder of real inequalities.

As with all concepts, the meaning of 'tolerance' varies with time and changing power relations. Ghassan Hage, whose work is based on the Australian 'multicultural' reality, writes: 'Multicultural tolerance, like all tolerance, is not, then, a good policy that happens to be limited in its scope. It is a strategy aimed at reproducing and disguising relationships of power in society, or being reproduced through that disguise (…) Why would anyone bother asking someone who has no power to be intolerant to be tolerant? And why would those who are not in a position of power feel that the call for tolerance is of any concern for them?' (Hage 1998:87p). Hage has an important point here, although his claims to universality may be based on shaky empirical grounds.

Judging from the literature, Dutch 'tolerance' between the pillars of old appears to have been more reciprocal, more of a mutual tolerance between groups, than today's 'multicultural tolerance'. Indeed, the latter seems to have much in common with the Australian case as it emerges through Hage's description. If, as I suggested at the beginning of chapter 6, in Norway the hegemony of equality-as-sameness saw a moment of open contestation in the 1970s, what is the case in the Netherlands, where, as we have seen, freedom-and-tolerance is hegemonic? Like Norway, the Netherlands has, since the 1970s, seen a gradual movement from a more pluralistic towards a, relatively speaking, more individualistic policy in the related fields of immigration, multiculturalism, and education. Here, this seems to be a development from a muted hegemony of group pluralism to a pluralism with increasingly individualistic orientations. In accordance with this change, the principles of freedom and tolerance in contemporary Dutch society apply less to groups than to individuals. However different the historical points of departure and the historically embedded manifestations of the changes in the two countries, it is tempting at least partly to attribute their simultaneous, albeit relative,

[73] The experiences of van Dijk (2002) and Essed (2002b), both eminent academics who have identified structures of racism in the Netherlands, may also confirm my argument here.

movements from pluralist to individualist orientations to forces that lie outside and above the particular nation state; that is, to globalisation and neo-liberalism. In the Dutch case, the shift from being a colonial power to a nation-state and a corresponding shift in Selfing and Othering processes doubtless also play a crucial role in this change.

In this final chapter, I have attempted to outline the structures of the two national selves, and to discuss them in the light of three grammars of identity/alterity: orientalisation, segmentation, and encompassment. The Norwegian self emerges through a concentric model of ideal childhood belongings, with the child safely tucked into the centre of a close-knit local community, which again forms part of a national community with such local communities as its building blocks. In this model, there seems to be no room for the Other, who is therefore either excluded or encompassed through a redefinition as a variety of the Self. I have contrasted this to a Dutch model where the child relates to many, partly overlapping 'circles'. In this model, there is room for those Others who can be 'tolerated' and thus either encompassed or defined as segmentary. At the same time, however, firm boundaries are set between such Others and Others who defy tolerance. Such Others, most clearly exemplified by 'fundamentalist Muslims', have no place within this model.

Another way to look at it is that the Norwegian Self, much like the Dutch Self, has a 'preference for white skins' (Michaels, as quoted in Itzkowitz 1997:181) – in other words, the 'national' and the 'racial' are closely intertwined in both cases, albeit in different ways. The structure here is that of a binary opposition white/black, where white, as the dominant party, appears as the 'normal' skin colour. There is a simultaneous tendency to encompass, or patronise, blackness in both countries. However, especially in the Norwegian case, there are socially constructed shades of brown (not grey, as Fredriksen (2001) dryly points out) between the black and the white. Furthermore, both national Selves emerge in contrast to 'Muslims' – yet another binary opposition, this time with 'Christians' as the powerful, and therefore 'normal' category. The two binaries – the 'racial' and the 'religious' – interplay dialectically and confirm each other mutually, so that 'white Christians' emerge as 'more Norwegian' or 'more Dutch' than 'black Christians' or 'white Muslims'. For instance, in the Netherlands, the term 'black schools' refers to schools with 'many' Muslim pupils, regardless of skin colours.

The world is certainly complicated. Also, as Yon (2002:123) says, '[t]here is a dilemma and a particular kind of irony in writing about elusive

culture and positing its characteristics.' One cannot step twice into the same river, but it is still possible to describe the river at any moment in time, and to compare the description to that of another river. That is what I have attempted to do. To what ends? 'The most productive contribution to social practice that social science can make (…) is the examination of social structures, their powers and liabilities, mechanisms and tendencies, so that people, groups and organizations may consider them in their interaction and so – if they wish – strive to change or eliminate existing social structures and to establish new ones' (Danermark et al. 2002:182).

'It is the *context* which evolves.'
(Bateson 2000:155)

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Appendix: Lists of pupils and staff

Bakken:

6B

Boys	***Parents:***
Alexandros (Alex)	Norwegian and Greek
Andre	Norwegian end Bulgarian
Cevat	Turkish
Hassan	Somali
Keith	Norwegian and English
Knud	Norwegian and Danish
Majid	Pakistani
Marco	Norwegian and Italian

Girls	
Aman	Iraqui
Biljana	Norwegian and Yugoslav
Cecilie	Norwegian
Eli	Norwegian
Juni	Norwegian and Greek
Maren	Norwegian
Rebecca	Norwegian and Danish
Rubina	Pakistani
Synne	Norwegian and English
Teresa	Norwegian and South African (white)
Yasmin	Turkish

Other Bakken children	
Fatima	Afghani
Amina	Turkish

Staff
Hans, the Principal
Pernille, the vice-principal, and English/Music teacher for 6B
Kari, 6B's form teacher
Liv, 6A's form teacher
Luigi, 'Norwegian as a second language' (NOA) teacher
Ingvill, NOA group teacher
Karsten, NOA group teacher
Petter, Maths, KRL and Gym teacher for 6B
Kristoffer, Maths, KRL, and Gym teacher for 6A
Bente, supply teacher
Anne, Arts teacher (mother of Juni)
Rannveig, Cookery teacher
Tone, teacher for group with reading problems (lesevansker)
Osman, mother tongue teacher for Urdu speaking children

de Bijenkorf:

Group 8 children	
Boys	***Parents***
Bart	Surinamese
Carlos	Chilean and Portuguese
Jin-Song	Chinese
Kevin	Dutch
Martijn	Dutch
Mehmet	Turkish
Melik	Turkish
Mike	Dutch and Surinamese
Rick	Dutch
Sebastiaan	Dutch and Surinamese
Tristan	Surinamese
Wim	Dutch
Winston	Antillese
Yunus	Turkish
Girls:	
Angela	Dutch
Aynur	Turkish
Chantal	Dutch and Surinamese
Jennifer	Surinamese

Other de Bijenkorf children	
Danielle, group 7	Surinamese (Sandra's daughter)
Sankara, group 7	Ghanese

Staff:
Mark, the Principal
Sandra, group 8 form teacher
Femke, caretaker (concierge)
Else, supply teacher
Tinie, vice principal
Marieke, group 6 form teacher
Jan, supply teacher
Bianca, assistant teacher for group 1 children with little knowledge of Dutch
Henk, group 5 form teacher
Ansje, group 3 form teacher