

This article was downloaded by: [Statsbiblioteket Tidsskriftafdeling]

On: 26 June 2012, At: 06:47

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/swom20>

Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of intersectionality and subjectification

Dorthe Staunæs^a

^a Department of Educational Psychology, The Danish University of Education, Emdrupvej 101, Copenhagen NV, 2400, Denmark

Available online: 05 Nov 2010

To cite this article: Dorthe Staunæs (2003): Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of intersectionality and subjectification, NORA - Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research, 11:2, 101-110

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08038740310002950>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

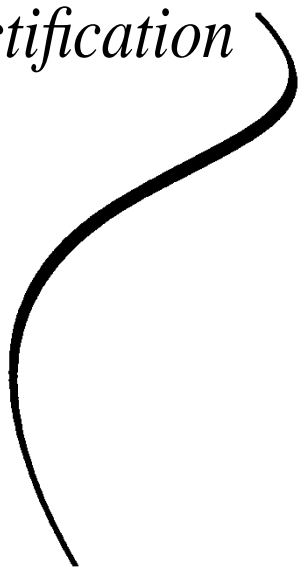
Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae, and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand, or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Where have all the subjects gone? Bringing together the concepts of intersectionality and subjectification

Dorthe Staunæs



Dorthe Staunæs MA. Psychol., is Assistant Professor at the Department of Educational Psychology at the Danish University of Education, Copenhagen, Denmark. Her area of research is subjectification, diversity and social categories such as gender and ethnicity.

The Danish University of Education, Department of Educational Psychology, Emdrupvej 10, DK-2400 Copenhagen NV, Denmark. E-mail: staunæs@dpu.dk



Taylor & Francis
Taylor & Francis Group

© 2003 Taylor & Francis
DOI 10.1080/08038740310002950

ABSTRACT. The concept of intersectionality is often used to grasp the interconnections between the traditional background categories of gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexuality and class. The concept can be a useful analytical tool in tracing how certain people seem to get positioned as not only different but also troublesome and, in some instances, marginalized. In research focused on subjectification and the variability of social life, a retooling and differentiating of the concept is needed. We do not know how the overall categories work and intersect with the lived experiences of subjects and we need to rethink the concept, which can be useful in specifying the troublesomeness of some subjectivities in a diverse and complex version of lived experience. By taking into account the above-mentioned shortcomings, the article lays the foundation for a theoretical reworking of the concept, grounded in empirical studies of subjectification processes on a subject level in a school context.

How is gender intertwined with processes of multiculturalism? How does the social category of gender intersect with other categories in lived contexts characterized by a growing multi-ethnic population? In the past few years questions like these seem to be among the most politicized issues in public debate and academic literature. They are often raised, asked and answered in a sociological paradigm focusing on general and overreaching discourses, themes and structures and with certain political aims in relation to identity politics and legal rights. Especially in an American context, the concept of intersectionality is often used to cover the interconnections between the classical background categories of gender, ethnicity, race, age, sexuality and class. The concept of intersectionality can be a useful analytical tool in tracing how certain people get positioned as not just different, but also troubled and in some instances, marginalized. However, the concept does not include a consideration of how these categories work and intersect in the lived experiences of concrete subjects. In my view, we need reconceptualization, which can be useful in specifying the un/troublesomeness of some subjectivities and some categories in a diverse and complex version of lived experience.

In this article, my aim is to specify how a reworked concept of intersectionality can be a useful analytical tool in analysing the processes of ethnic and gendered subjectification in a multi-ethnic setting in one Nordic site, namely Denmark. My reworking is built on certain post-structuralist and social constructionist premises, which will be illustrated throughout the text. Firstly, I will conceptualize social categories as important and difference-making parts of subjectivities. Secondly, I will build my reworking on a majority-inclusive approach towards the concepts of ethnicity and gender. By using the term, "majority-inclusive", I am attempting to conceptualize the notion that social categories and the intersectionality between social categories do not constitute a theme exclusively related to ethnic (racialized) minorities or women. Thirdly, I will build upon a non-additional approach, in which categories are not just added up, but analysed as interlocking components. These premises lead me to a definition of intersectionality at a subject level as a process of "doing" and an argument for analysing this "doing" *in situ*, where concrete intersections, hierarchies and elaboration are not predetermined.

I will start by presenting a short review of how the concept of intersectionality has been used in relation to social categories. Then I will introduce the theoretical framework that will make it possible for me to get closer to the processes on a subject level. Here I will raise the concept of intersectionality, together with the post-structuralist and social constructionist concepts of subjectification, social categories, subject positions and troubled subject positions. In the next part of the text, I will draw on empirical material from my Ph.D. project, "Ethnicity, gender and school lives" (Staubæs 2003) and I will show how different "doings" of intersectionality co-constitute un/troublesome subject positions. The article has a theoretical and analytical purpose but the reworking of the concept is grounded in empirical studies of subjectification processes on a subject level in multi-ethnic school contexts in Denmark (Staubæs 2003).

A concept of intersectionality

Recent decades have seen the academic feminist discussion on decentering and pluralizing the (white, western, heterosexual, middle-class) categories of gender and woman by examining how other intersecting categories such as race, ethnicity, nation, class, generation, sexuality and disability shape or constitute gender and women (see, for example Anthias and Davies 1992; Collins 1998; Crenshaw 1994; Lorde 1980; Oyewumi 2002; Young 1997). With its examination of social categories as mutually constructing social hierarchies, the concept of intersectionality is at the forefront of feminism (see, for example, Collins 1998; Crenshaw 1994). A search on the Internet and in bibliographies for the word "intersectionality" reveals that the concept is often connected to discourse on civil rights and is used in political and legal contexts, where the rights of women, ethnified and racialized minorities, disabled people and queer people are at stake. The concept has been used to integrate these people into the legal system and to draw attention to the fact that people with certain social categories (such as female, black, Turkish, Muslim and so on) are positioned without the privileges held by others.

In the academic literature, critical feminist race theory has widened the concept of intersectionality and used it in analyses of how race, gender and class interact in relation to the positioning of black women as "the outsider within", in a system built upon the mainstream, white, male patriarchy and racialized oppression (Collins 1998). It is a structural system that favours wealthy, heterosexual, white, male, Christian, young and slim people. In relation to them, everyone else becomes the Other, the illegitimate, the abnormal and the inappropriate. It is, as the prominent African-American feminist Patricia Hill Collins puts it, "the matrix of domination" (Collins 1998): a coherent system of different oppression systems, which victimizes the non-wealthy, non-heterosexual, non-white, non-male, non-Christian and those who are not slim and not young. Collins's

“catalogue” might be relevant in many cases, but not in all. What about exceptions? What about moves, ruptures, paradoxes? How can we grasp these? In this use of the concept of intersectionality, I trace a tendency to understand subjects as determined by social systems, which again makes it difficult to comprehend complexity and ambiguity at a subject level.

In Collins’s work there is a heritage of standpoint theory with a specific focus on racism and sexism, oppression and discrimination forced by structural systems. In the practical, political arena (for example, in non-governmental organizations,) as well as in the theoretical field dominated by standpoint feminism and critical race theory, there seems to be a tendency toward fixing categories and identities and using the concepts in certain ideologically informed ways.

The fixing of categories can be a useful strategy if you work in and against a system built upon the privileges and rights of certain fixed identities and categories and where “the natural” and “the given” can be converted into political actives, creating group solidarity internally and mobilization externally. When it comes to understanding meaning-making processes on a subject level and when it comes to grasping the complexity and changing nature of lived experience, however, the underlying assumptions of determination, clear demarcations and fixed substance must be supplemented with additional analytical tools.

From a social psychological point of view the questions are: Where, in the above-mentioned conceptualizations of intersectionality, have all the subjects gone? Are people at a subject level mere bearers of these master identities? Are they all in “category uniforms”? How do we account for exceptions and subversions? How can we take into account changes and ruptures and grasp the subversions of power, position and categories that sometimes actually do become possible? Shifting the focus from identity politics to the complexity of lived experience, it seems reasonable to reconsider the concept of intersectionality in relation to post-structuralist

and social constructionist concepts of “subjectivity”, “subjectification”, “subject position” and “troublesome subject position” respectively.

Bringing back the subject

Subjectivity is the post-structural concept for the person’s sense of a self. Compared with the concept of identity, which is used in both post-modern and modern literature, the concept of subjectivity can grasp stability as well as change and rupture. Furthermore, the concept is built upon a certain understanding of the relation between this sense of self and the social context in which subjectivity is in an ongoing process of becoming. The Foucauldian notion of *subjectification* comprises a two-sided view of the human actor: as both a subject acting upon contextual conditions and as being subject to, in the sense of being determined by, contextual conditions (Foucault 1979, 1988). Post-structuralist and social constructionist researchers in gender in the fields of psychology and pedagogy, in particular, are refining their perspectives on the processes of subjectification, while remaining sensitive towards the processes in which people take up, ignore or resist accessible discourses, or make them their own and, in this struggle, constitute gendered subjectivity.¹

As the British social constructionist psychologists, Margaret Wetherell and Janet Maybin formulate it: People are not “‘cultural dopes’, blandly reproducing just one dominant notion of the ‘personne’ or acting out one homogeneous cultural personality” (Wetherell and Maybin 1996, 234). Rather, people are actively engaged in their lives – but there are discourses that constrain what can be thought, said and done. There are discourses that provide different possibilities of interacting and

¹See examples in the literature mentioned. The work of Davies (1999; 2000) in an Australian and Japanese context, Haavind (in this journal and 1994) in a Norwegian, Søndergaard (1996; 2002a; 2002b) in a Danish, Thorne (1993) in an American and Wetherell (1996; 1998) and Frosh et al. (2002) in a British context.

positioning and establish certain subject positions. The concept of *subject positions* (Davies and Harré 1990) covers the positions people take up and make their own. The act of positioning works in both verbal and non-verbal ways. It is an ongoing process and its elaboration depends on actual and comprehensible discourses, practices and distributions of power, as well as the composition of actors.

Wetherell (1998) develops the concept of troubled subject positions in the area of discursive psychology as a further sophistication of the rather abstract notion of subject position that post-structuralism explicates. Wetherell is interested in the psychology of interactions and she writes about the spaces in the dialogue, interactions and negotiations where subject positions and subjectivities/identities become inappropriate, destabilized, difficult; where they are challenged and must be repaired. The concept covers positions that challenge the normativities at stake in certain everyday contexts of lived experience. Wetherell uses the concept of troublesome subject positions mainly in relation to verbal practices, but I use the concept to refer to difficult positions in both social and discursive practices. Potentially all subject positions can be troublesome. But in lived experience there are positions that are more "troublesome" than others, depending on the specific distribution of power and hegemony.

Some of the discursive structures through which people find their bearings can be studied as social categories. In other words, social categories are parts of positions and subjectivities. *Social categories* are often understood as (statistic) variables, which people carry about unchanged. For example "Turkish" or "boy" is something you are (as a result of a certain socialization) or something you have as a certain kind of (biological) trait. In the 1980s this perspective was radically challenged in the American, Australian, European and Nordic academic contexts by theories claiming that social categories are not something you are or something you have; rather, social categories

are something you do. This perspective announced a displacement of focus from essential being to constructed becoming and moved beyond categoricism by arguing for a reconceptualization. Categories are made in daily interactions between actors *in situ* and in relation to normative conceptions of in/appropriateness. Social categories are not the *cause* of certain behaviour but rather the *effect* of certain behaviour. Social categories are done, undone and redone in relation to other doings (Butler 1990, 1993; Haavind 1994; Søndergaard 1996; Thorne 1993; West and Zimmerman 1987). Social categories are performed, quoted, reproduced and transgressed (Butler 1990). People can populate social categories and social categories can *acquire* people and make certain traits visible (McDermott 1994).

Gender, ethnicity, sexuality and generation are classical categories around which meaning is clustered, but social categories can also imply "pupilness" (how to be a proper pupil), talent, leadership and so on. By this I mean collections of understandings regarding certain groups of people that are based on selected signs, such as bodily signs (such as genitalia, colour of skin and hair) and appurtenances (like clothes, shoes and cars).

In this sense, social categories are tools of selecting and ordering. They are tools of inclusion and exclusion and they are tools of positioning and making hierarchies. The African-American professor of law, Kimberlé Crenshaw, writes that the problem is not the existence of categories, but "rather the particular values attached to them, and the way those values foster and create social hierarchies". (Crenshaw 1994, 22). Crenshaw suggests a post-modern thinking about how power has clustered around certain categories (Crenshaw 1994, 21); to this I will add thinking about how power has not clustered around other categories. However, on a subject level, Crenshaw's point of "power clustering" must be related to the notion of power in the Foucauldian sense. It must include thinking in terms of power, but not just power as oppression: rather, it should allow space for reconfiguring power relations in processes of

subjectification and in relations between subject positions and intertwined social categories.

Beginning a reworking of the concept of intersectionality

Grounded in the theoretical framework summarized above and in the analysis of my empirical work, I will sketch out some demands which would make a concept of intersectionality analytically useful on a subject level.

The use of this concept of intersectionality on a subject level must be followed by a majority-inclusive approach, in which social categories such as ethnicity and gender are not perceived as special minority issues. By this, I mean a view of ethnicity, gender and age as categories that are not the prerogative of certain actors but rather as categories that are produced, sustained and subverted in relation to one another.

Categories are broader issues situated in the relations between actors and between different distributions of power. Social categories do not count only for the Others, the non-powerful and the non-privileged: they also count as conditions for the more privileged and powerful people. In that sense, the experiences of the social categories of ethnicity and gender are not only types of minority experiences (Afsar and Maynard 1994). The majority also live in situations framed by social categories (Frankenberg 1993). But the categorical differences are probably not the same. There are differences of power and of being marked and unmarked, privileged and non-privileged, powerful and non-powerful. The majority-inclusive approach is a Foucauldian approach focusing on *how* someone becomes un/marked, non/privileged, how these processes are produced, sustained and subverted and how power is part of this. In other words, paraphrasing the British-Caribbean cultural analyst Stuart Hall (1997), it is an analytical move away from the exotic spectacle of the Other and towards a way of pointing to the mutual constructions between the discursive constructions of "Firstness" and "Otherness", the constructions of the appropriate and the inappropriate.

The need for a non-additional approach is another point I would like to make clear. In line with a proposal about looking into how subjectivities/identities are constructed through intersections of multiple dimensions, Crenshaw suggests going beyond the additive models of oppression and not just adding categories to each other but instead looking into what *kind* of difference a difference makes for the individual and how a space consisting of different categories makes subjective experiences qualitatively different (Crenshaw 1994). Furthermore, in her cross-disciplinary analysis of racial categories in Canadian courts and classrooms, Sherene Razack (1998), discusses the quality of the intersections and discussions about how categories are mutually *interlocked* with one another. The way the categories intermingle, their concrete dominance and elaboration must be studied in concrete situations. It is important to notice that categories do not mingle equally. In principle, there is not a predetermined or pre-hierarchical pattern between the categories. It is not gender first, then ethnicity, or the reverse: first, ethnicity, then gender. In lived experiences there may be a hierarchy in which certain categories overrule, capture, differentiate and transgress others. It is very difficult to juggle with various categories at the same time. The theoretical demand is to read categories simultaneously. Analytically, you must choose your perspective.

I will suggest bringing to the foreground the *doing of intersectionality*. This means the *doing of the relation between categories, the outcome of this doing and how this doing results in either troubled or untroubled subject positions*. Before we draw on our knowledge of large-scale background variables we must "wait and see", as the American researchers of children, gender and ethnicity, Cindy Nakashima and Barrie Thorne (1995), write. "Wait!" I will echo this command and I will further suggest examining the details of how the concrete doings and intermingling of categories work in a specific context and where and how these doings result in troubled subject positions and where they do not.

A dialogue between concepts and empirical material

In the following I will attempt to illustrate my reworking of the concept of intersectionality through small pieces of analysis. I will turn to the lived social life between pupils in a multi-ethnic school in Denmark. As a part of my Ph.D. thesis I did fieldwork in two different 7th grades in two different schools in the year 1999/2000. I was interested in gender and ethnicity as experienced categories in the pupils' mutual social relations: How did 12 to 14 year-old pupils do gender and ethnicity in their daily social and discursive practices? The pupils took photos of their school life; activities, friends, enemies, teachers, materials, clothes and so on, and I arranged my interview and participation according to the themes highlighted. In the following, my aim is to look upon how two pupils use gender and ethnicity as tools of orientation and how these categories intersect and co-constitute un/troubled subject positions. Borrowing the concept of gendered body signs from the psychologist Dorte Marie Søndergaard's (1996) study of gender in the lives of students in Denmark, I can say that the two pupils both have bodies signified as male. In other words, their bodies play a significant role in their discursive constitutions as boys.

My analytical point of departure will be to relate the two approaches described above to the concept of intersectionality and I will see what this perspective can tell us about the distribution of power between the actual pupils and the shifting nature of troubled subject positions. The point is not that the overall categories of ethnicity and gender do not acquire pupils: they do. Rather, the point is that it is not only categories of Otherness that acquire pupils; so do categories related to the first, the normal, the legitimate and the powerful. My next step will be to get closer to the level of subjects by using the non-additional approach toward social categories and thereby show the quality of the "intersectionality doings" and how these processes result in un/troubled subject positions.

A parallel structure

At first sight, the schoolyard is an unorganized confusion of a plurality in bodies and activities. But a closer inspection of categories shows how a parallel structure characterizes the daily life and social relations in the 7th grade. In many breaks and lessons there seem to be two groups of pupils. Both groups talk about their friends and "the Others" as distinct groups and they often gather around activities and select teams in sports sessions in a way that reflects this parallel structure.

The parallel structure seems to consist of a notion of two different collectives of subjectivities. It could be conceptualized as a supra-individual actor, a collective we-subject, which is peopled by real boys. Let me turn to the discursive and social practices of two boys from the 7th grade, Anders and Ümit, and look into what categories are at stake when they "do" these groups. Anders and Ümit are not representative of the pupils in the study, but the subject positions to which they gain access and the way they handle these positions show important features of how the intersectionalities between gender and ethnicity work in the subjectification taking place in school.

In my interview and in the informal talks I have with Anders, he talks himself into existence as someone who belongs to the group of normal people, the ordinary pupils. In the interview he speaks of himself in an untroubled manner. He does not question his own position, his rationalities or his actions. According to his account, he acts like everyone else. In this sense, he seems to be "in sync" with the discursively constituted appropriate pupil. In other words, he is in conformity with the demands of how to be a good pupil. In contrast, he speaks about how certain other boys are "bad boys", boys doing wrong things and experiencing the difficult matters of school life "too personally" and becoming "too emotional".

According to Anders, Ümit belongs to the category of "Turks". In this sense, he is in agreement with Ümit. In my interview and the

informal talks I have with Ümit, he talks himself into existence as someone at the margin of appropriateness of both Danishness and pupilness. Unlike Anders, he talks about himself as not being “in sync” with the dominating discourse. Ümit questions his position, but not his rationalities or actions. He also questions the positions of others and speaks about pupils like Anders and his friends in othering terms by calling them “sissies”.

Neither Anders nor Ümit speaks of the social category of gender as an important component in the conflict between the two groups of boys, in spite of the rather gendered aspect of words such as “bad boys” and “sissies” and the fact that the school and the sports field are often important locations for the negotiation and sustaining of masculinity (Connell 2000; Frosh et al. 2002). In this practice of unmarking, they correspond to the theoretical texts of how actors bodily marked as male are seldom regarded as gendered but just as “normal” (Butler 1990; Søndergaard 1996). Despite a strong investment in a discourse of competition and hierarchy, in which everything revolves around becoming “higher than” and “better than”, the category of ethnicity seems to *overshadow* the category of gender in their respective tales. It is a category of racialized ethnicity that saturates their (discursive) interactions and subject positions.

Ethnic saturation

The explanations of conflicts and groups in Anders’s discursive practices are saturated with matters of ethnicity. Anders names his own group “the Danes” and he talks about the others as “the Turks”, “the immigrants” or “the foreigners”. In Anders’s view, the Danes are peaceful whereas the Turks are always provoking and fighting. Ümit, on the other hand, perceives himself as someone belonging to the Turks and he recounts experiences which makes him sure that he can never be Danish. From his point of view, he will repeatedly be placed as the lower-positioned ethnic Other in the hierarchy of school life. He does not want to leave his group or to move out of the category of Turks. What he formulates as inappropriate is the

inequality between the Danes and the Turks. It is an inequality that he points to in the curriculum, the teachers’ behaviour and the principal’s punishments. In his talk, the school is divided into two ethnically determined levels, which position the ethnic Danes as privileged and the “foreigners” as “inferior”.

When Anders and Ümit speak about the matters of differences, conflicts and hierarchy between the two groups, the category around which they speak is ethnicity. Ethnicity functions as the referent, albeit not in the same way. Ethnicity is an everlasting theme in Ümit’s understanding of himself and others. On the contrary, Anders’s discursive practices reflect mainly ethnicity in relation to the Others. In his discursive practices, it is the ethnicity related to the other group of boys that is marked and it is this difference that makes a difference. His own category of ethnicity is never mentioned or marked. In this way, Anders acts in accordance with the theoretical literature on how actors bodily marked as white and ethnic majorities understand themselves as unmarked (Dyer 1999; Frankenberg 1993).

Anders and Ümit share the categories of age, gender and being pupils: they are both on their way out of childhood and into youth. They are positioned and categorized as boys and they are pupils in the same context of school. What they do not share is the way the content of their experience has been filed into their categories of racialized ethnicities. Anders is categorized as white and ethnic Danish; Ümit as “dark haired” and Turkish-Kurdish. The differences between the categories of ethnicity seem to make a strong contribution to the doing of school life, and the differences co-constitute differences in the offers of subjectification and the troublesomeness of subject positions. However, the point here is not to isolate ethnicity and ethnic differences, but to examine how the shared category of masculinity develops in different ways. This happens because Anders and Ümit act differently, but also because their categories of ethnicity intertwine with masculinity in different ways. It is as if the category of ethnicity *takes over* and

powerfully co-constitutes other categories and subject positions.

To compensate – or the return of gender

Looking further into the processes of power and dominance, it seems as if here gender is hiding under immediate genderless activities. From his peripheral position, Ümit is occupied with subverting hierarchies and repairing troubled subject positions. Ümit wishes to deconstruct his troubled border position and make himself legitimate, not by letting go of his Otherness but by expanding the boundaries of what is discursively constituted as the normal, as ordinary. But the tricky thing is that the rest of the class and the teachers have to confirm that you are doing it right. You cannot just expand the boundaries: you have to be contextually recognizable in some sense. In relation to this confirmation he has to deal with signifying practices that show his rightness and preclude all doubts. You can point to yourself in different ways, emphasizing your rightness, superiority, popularity, smartness, toughness. You can, for example, wear the right clothes, play the right sports, have a lot of girlfriends, talk and act as if you are the judge of justice, the best, the hero and so on.

But when Ümit and his friends use some of the actions just mentioned, a by-product is the construction of hyper-masculinity. It is a construction that further intensifies elements traditionally thought of as masculine, such as toughness, aggressiveness and the internal comparison between other boys and not between boys and girls (Frosh et al. 2002). Furthermore, it is a hyper-masculinity intertwined with certain racialized ethnicities. In this perspective, hyper-masculinity is not just a product of family culture or Muslim tradition, in which “boys are expected to enlarge and capture the room”, as it is often said in public narratives. Rather, the construction of hyper-masculinity in the 7th grade is a question of establishing a component in the subject position that can *repair* a troubled subject position and *compensate* for a feeling of weak ethnicity. It is possible that the boys acquire these strategies in their homes, but the

point I want to make is that they are re-constructing the strategy as an answer to a certain local offers of subjectification. By taking up the offered subject position and refusing the position as the not-so-powerful ethnic Other, Ümit moves the balances of power.

This “doing of masculinity” positions other “doings of masculinity”, other performances as the Others. It may even disturb some boys’ ways of doing masculinity and thereby cause certain subject positions, such as Anders’s, for example, to become troubled. The move and its consequences upset Anders. He does not feel threatened, but he does feel uncomfortable. It makes him feel uneasy. How can he take up this offer? His body, his friends, his actions signal whiteness and Danishness. He is read as a white, Danish majority-member and that constrains his repertoire of possible actions. He does not share ethnic categories with Ümit and his friends and, at the same time, he is positioned as “the ethnic first”. He must take this ambiguity in his positions into account when he acts. From his ethnified position it is impossible to say he wants to get rid of the ethnic Others. Such a claim would be interpreted as racist in nature and the acquisition of Anders by a racist category seems obvious. It is not desirable. If Anders wishes to keep both his legitimacy and lead, he must behave calmly and reasonably. He must avoid direct confrontation. The categories of ethnic Danish and white saturate the possible positions he can take up and drown other categories, such as gender. And, in taking up the offer in exactly this way, he is doing a kind of masculinity which has been discursively constituted as “rational” and “civilized” in this school context. Thus Anders again gets positioned as the legitimate and again the others get positioned as troublesome.

The negotiations between Anders’s friends and Ümit’s friends establish structures of masculinity that imply different but hierarchically positioned ethnic racialized masculinities. The social and discursive practices of Ümit’s friends are attempts to get rid of their own troublesome subject position and instead trouble those in charge, whereas the

social and discursive practices of Anders's friends are to stick to the usual practices and positions. The conflict seems to bring to the foreground the classical situations of competition and the negotiation of winner and losers. But the tricky thing is how the category of ethnicity saturates the picture and makes clear-cut positions and power distributions impossible. The power balance moves, breaks and reconfigures in relation to ongoing negotiations of un/troublesomeness and of how intersectionality is done.

Conclusion

Let me, finally, turn to some closing remarks. In this article I have tried to provoke a discussion of the exclusiveness of certain concepts and I have tried to take a more pluralistic approach to the study of gender and ethnicity. My aim has been to work against the tendency towards homogenizations among categories of boys and ethnic minorities/majorities. Instead, the perspective focuses upon the interactions and processes in which (and in the same process) they *become* boys and members of a minority or a majority—sometimes troublesome, sometimes not. In the analysis above, the intersectionality of categories can be described as ways of compensating, overshadowing, saturating, hiding and drowning one another. In other contexts, with other doings of social categories and subject positions I could imagine processes in which categories reinforce, destabilize, oppose, or counteract one another. How, exactly, these processes are played out depends upon the network of components involved.

In the example presented, the reversing of power is momentary and so one could claim and one could further ask, why is this trifle interesting at all? Because, I would argue, even trifles can disturb the picture and show that the subversion and change of troubled subject positions actually are possible. The subjects have not disappeared but they can productively be destabilized analytically. And this destabilizing may even be interesting for people working with identity politics, where certain “naturals” and “givens” can be converted into

political activities and create group solidarity internally and mobilization externally. Incidentally, one must remember that these fixations are built upon a certain distribution of power and regulation of life and therefore they restrict the politics available to act upon the given agenda. To grasp the unexpected, the differences, the ruptures, the ambivalence in subject positions and the components that are part of these processes is to make discursive room for the becoming of new subjects, new subjectivities and new school lives.

REFERENCES

- Afsar, Haleh and Mary, Maynard. 1994. Introduction to the dynamics of “race” and “gender”. In Afsar, H. and Maynard, M. (eds.): *The dynamics of “race” and gender – some feminist interventions*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Anthias, Floya and Nira, Yuval-Davies. 1992. *Racialized boundaries. race, nation, gender, colour and class and the antiracist struggle*. London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender trouble. Feminism and the subversion of identity*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies that matter. On the discursive limits of “sex”*. London: Routledge.
- Collins, P. H. 1998. “It’s all in the family”. *Intersections of gender, race, and nation. Hypatia* 13, (3)62–82.
- Connell, Robert W. 2000. “Teaching the boys”. In Connell, R. W. *The men and the boys*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 148–176.
- Crenshaw, K. 1994. Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In Fineman, Martha and Mykitiuk, Rixanne (eds.): *The public nature of private violence*. New York: Routledge.
- Davies, Bronwyn. 1999. *A body of writing. 1990–1999*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Davies, Bronwyn. 2000. *(In)scribing body/landscape relations*. Oxford: AltaMira Press.
- Davies, Bronwyn and Harré, Rom. 1990. Positioning. The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 20, (1).
- Dyer, Richard. 1999. “White” In Evans, Jessica and Hall, Stuart (eds.): *visual culture: the reader*. London: Sage and the Open University Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 1979. *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1988. *Madness and civilization. a history of insanity in the age of reason*. New York: Vintage Books.

- Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. *White women – race matters. The social construction of whiteness*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Frosh, Stephen, Phoenix, Ann and Pattman, Rob. 2002. *Young masculinities*. London: Palgrave.
- Haavind, Hanne. 1994. Kjønn i forandring – som fenomen og som forståelsesmåte. (Gender in change – as a phenomenon and as interpretative repertoire). *Journal of the Norwegian Union of Psychologists*. 31, 767–783.
- Hall, Stuart. 1997. The spectacle of the other. In Hall, Stuart (ed.): *Representations. Cultural representations and signifying practices*. London: Sage.
- Lorde, Audre. 1980. Age, race, class and sex. Paper delivered at the Copeland Colloquium. Amherst College, April.
- McDermott, Ray. 1993. The acquisition of a child by a learning disability. In Chaiklin, Seth and Lave, Jean (eds.): *Understanding practice. Perspectives on activity and context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nakashima, Cindy and Thorne, Barrie. 1995. Beyond Categorialism. A review of selected literature. Upubl. ms. MacArthur Research Network on Successful.
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 2002. Conceptualizing gender: the Eurocentric foundations of feminist concepts and the challenge of African epistemologies. *Jenda: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*.
- Razack, Sherene H. 1998. *Looking white people in the eye. Gender, race and culture in courtrooms and classrooms*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Søndergaard, Dorte Marie. 1996. *Tegnet på kroppen. Køn: Koder og Konstruktioner blandt Unge voksne i Akademia*. (The sign on the body: codes and constructions among young adults at the University). København: Museum Tusulanum.
- Søndergaard, Dorte Marie. 2002a. Poststructuralist approaches to empirical analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*. 15, (2)187–204.
- Søndergaard, Dorte Marie. 2002b. Subjektivitet og desire – begreber på empirisk arbejde. (Subjectification and desire – conceptualization in empirical work). *Psyke and Logos* 2, 38–64.
- Staunæs, Dorthe. 2003. *Etnicitet, køn og skoleliv* (Ethnicity, gender and school lives). Ph.D. thesis, Department of Communication Studies. Roskilde: University of Roskilde.
- Thorne, Barrie. 1993. *Gender play. Girls and boys in school*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- West, Candace and Zimmerman, Don H. 1987. Doing gender. *Gender and Society* 1, (2)125–151.
- Wetherell, Margaret and Maybin, Jane. 1996. The distributed self: A social constructionist perspective. In Stevens, R. (ed.): *Understanding the self*. London: Sage and Open University Press.
- Wetherell, Margaret. 1998. Positioning and interpretative repertoires: conversations analysis and poststructuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society* 9, (3)387–412.
- Young, Iris Marion. 1997. Gender as seriality: thinking about women as a social collective. In Young, I. M. *Dilemmas of gender, political philosophy and policy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 12–37.