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To cite this article: Tom Steffensen & Merete Hull Havgaard (2018): Knowledge and behaviour management in the multi-ethnic classroom: an ethnographic study of teachers' classroom-management strategies and minority pupils' participation in different school subjects, *Ethnography and Education*, DOI: [10.1080/17457823.2018.1519401](https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2018.1519401)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/17457823.2018.1519401>



Published online: 12 Sep 2018.



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Knowledge and behaviour management in the multi-ethnic classroom: an ethnographic study of teachers' classroom-management strategies and minority pupils' participation in different school subjects

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ABSTRACT



Within the tradition of ethnographic classroom research, this paper studies how pupils with a minority background are disciplined and participate in different school subjects such as Danish, English, math and science in Danish primary and lower secondary school settings. Whereas most research on minority children in classroom contexts focuses either on classroom social norms or effectiveness of teaching methods, this paper aims to understand how classroom behavioural norms and the norms for legitimate participation in the knowledge practices of different subjects impact each other. On one hand, our principal findings indicate that the teacher's foregrounding of behavioural norms in the classroom seems to displace knowledge practices, producing power struggles between pupils and their teachers. On the other hand, the teacher's foregrounding of knowledge practices tends to make schooling more meaningful for pupils, thereby reducing power struggles.

KEYWORDS

Classroom ethnography;
multi-ethnic classroom;
classroom management;
school subjects

Introduction

This paper's purpose is to present and discuss findings from an ethnographic research project on the significance of how the teacher approaches balancing the relation between behaviour and knowledge management in a multi-ethnic classroom concerning minority pupils' participation in different school subjects. The project's point of departure is a growing concern among both politicians and educational researchers on schools' performances and later on the employment rate for graduates with a minority background (Danmarks Statistik 2016; Nusche, Wurzburg, and Naughton 2010). Thus, the Pisa 2009 results are interpreted as showing a gap of nearly two years between pupils speaking Danish as a second language and their native-speaking Danish peers in learning outcomes at the end of secondary school (Egelund 2015; Egelund, Nielsen, and Rangvid 2011). This pattern remains roughly the same at Pisa 2015 (Greve and Krassel 2017). Different explanations have been advanced in extant literature: pupils' socio-economic background, speaking Danish as a second language and cultural factors (Egelund 2015). When it

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comes to teaching strategies, a recent large-scale Danish quantitative study conducted in the slipstream of Hattie's international research on visible learning (Hattie 2008) finds a positive correlation between so-called traditional teaching and pupils' grades in Danish and math after lower secondary school, especially when the pupils have a weak socio-economic background (Winter and Nielsen 2013). The explanation given is that pupils with a weak socio-economic background might be alienated to school norms and, therefore, benefit from a high level of classroom discipline and explicit subject instruction (Winter and Nielsen 2013, 32). Particularly addressing the educational needs of ethnic minorities, an OECD review of Danish migrant education recommends a sharper policy focus on, among other things, efforts to 'standardise, structure and mainstream the language support' and 'the culture of evaluation' in Danish Schools (Nusche, Wurzburg, and Naughton 2010, 8).

As acknowledged in the OECD review (Nusche, Wurzburg, and Naughton 2010), a number of steps have already been taken to ensure uniform national standards for both teaching practice, learning goals and outcomes. Over the past decade, the Danish Ministry of Education has implemented national learning goals for all primary and lower secondary school subjects after the end of second, fourth, sixth and ninth grades (Danish Ministry of Education 2018a). However, as discussed in Krejsler and Moos (2014), the pressure on schools and teachers to measure up to uniform standards can blind them to very different local, cultural and socio-economic conditions that characterise classrooms.

As opposed to quantitative studies on learning outcomes, the tradition of classroom ethnography tries to understand classroom social norms in light of changing educational policies and major changes in the social and cultural landscape in a context-sensitive manner (Lindblad and Sahlström 2003, 244). Of particular interest for our study is ethnographic research that unravels how certain processes lead to social exclusion of different groups of pupils as unintended consequences from different teaching strategies (Gitz-Johansen and Thomsen 2014). Paul Willis' ethnography on working-class children (Willis 1977) provides a central reference study that has inspired more recent Danish ethnographic studies on ethnic minority children (Gilliam 2009, 2010, 2014; Gitz-Johansen 2006; Moldenhawer 2001). Regarding norms for classroom behaviour, one of the central findings concerning our study is a tendency toward excessive use of discipline in the multi-ethnic classroom (Gilliam 2009, 2010, 2014). Regarding norms for learning, studies show that pupils with a minority background can have difficulties navigating often-implicit participation and achievement norms in Danish classrooms (Moldenhawer 2001; Sigsgaard 2013; Øland 2011).

However, in Danish ethnographic research on the multi-ethnic classroom (Gitz-Johansen 2006; Gilliam 2009, 2010, 2014; Moldenhawer 2001), as well as in general classroom-management research (Emmer and Sabornie 2015; Krejsler and Moos 2014), the characteristic practices of different school subjects are not a central interest. As a result, the subject's impact on the social norms of the classroom might be underexposed. Therefore, we see a need for an approach combining classroom ethnography with a subject-oriented research interest. Thus, our research question is: What significance does the teacher's approach to balancing the relation between behaviour and knowledge management have for minority pupils' prospects to participate in different school subjects? Theoretically, we use a framework that combines central concepts from code sociologists Basil Bernstein (1975, 1996, 2003), Bayer and Chouliaraki (2001) and Maton (2014) as a tool

to explore the relation between classroom behavioural norms and norms for legitimate participation in the knowledge practices of different subjects, with a view toward investigating which norms dominate classroom practice.

Background and research context

A survey from the Danish Ministry of Education sets the number of pupils of so-called 'foreign origin' at 11 per cent of all pupils attending primary and lower secondary school (Danish Ministry of Education 2015, 5). These pupils are unevenly distributed across Danish schools (Nusche, Wurzburg, and Naughton 2010, 7). Moreover, the number covers a very diverse group – from newcomers to Denmark to descendants of immigrants or refugees, including children of immigrants from Western countries who are not the focus of this paper (Danmarks Statistik 2016). In policy documents, the term 'bilingual pupils' often is used as a common category for this large and diverse group, even though it is becoming increasingly difficult to discern its precise meaning (Laursen 2016). However, in the Danish media and in the educational field, the term often is used to describe pupils of non-Western origin as a particular problem, and it can be argued that most of the official pedagogy is based on compensatory thinking in which bilingual pupils are viewed as problematic or deprived (Gitz-Johansen 2006; Kristjánsdóttir and Pérez 2016). In this paper, we use the phrase 'pupils with a minority background' (Moldenhawer 2001) to stress that cultural – and especially social – factors might be at least as important as linguistic resources when it comes to understanding these pupils' plight in the classroom.

As a strategy for gaining access in the field, we wrote to several schools populated by a significant percentage of pupils with a minority background. In the end, we were granted access to two public schools, both located in the greater Copenhagen area. The first school, referred to in the paper as East City School, contains about 90 percent minority pupils, whereas the second school, West City School, contains about 30 percent. Thus, both schools can be viewed as representing extreme cases regarding pupils' backgrounds, especially East City School (Flyvbjerg 2006). However, an interesting difference is that they are located in very different social environments, a factor that elicited increasing interest as the project progressed.

East City School is located in a poor neighbourhood inhabited by many immigrants or descendants of immigrants from a wide range of countries, including Turkey, Pakistan, Palestine, Somalia, Afghanistan and Poland (Moldenhawer 2001) – an example of what is often referred to in the Danish media and political discourse as an 'immigrant ghetto'. West City School is situated in a socially diverse area with pupils from very different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, most with non-immigrant backgrounds.

Participatory observation in two different school settings

We followed a fifth-grade class (ages 11–12) at East City School and a seventh-grade class (ages 13–14) at West City School. We spent 24 days at the schools – 10 at West City School and 14 at East City School – over a period of four weeks in the late autumn of 2016, plus one additional week at East City School in the winter of 2017. We interviewed 15 pupils at

West City School (of which 6 had a minority background) and 9 pupils at East City School (all with minority backgrounds). A team of five researchers carried out the fieldwork, covering different days, but usually working in pairs in the field. Our observations cover most school subjects, but the paper focuses primarily on math, science, English and Danish. When present at the schools, our approach has been to write detailed fieldnotes, documenting what was said and done as events took place. This ‘participating-to-write approach’ (Emerson, Rachel, and Shaw 2011) was chosen because we are interested in micro-interactions in the classroom. Excerpts from our fieldnotes have been translated from Danish into English and slightly edited for this paper.

In the initial phase of the project, it became clear that we had to use different approaches to inform the pupils and their parents about our presence in the classroom and get their consent to participate in the interviews. At West City School, our ‘contact teacher’ told us that we could easily contact the parents using the school’s intranet and that she normally calls parents on the phone who have difficulties reading Danish. Therefore, we chose simply to use the school’s intranet to inform the parents about the project. The teacher helped us collect the signed forms from the parents of pupils who volunteered to be interviewed. At East City School, our ‘contact teacher’ helped us inform the pupils before our first visit, but she was sceptical about getting responses from the parents if we approached them through the school’s intranet. To ensure that every parent received the information, the secretary helped us mail letters to all homes. At East City School, we did not ask for the parents’ permission to interview the pupils, but instead recruited volunteers from day to day during the final week of our fieldwork, when the pupils had become better acquainted with us (Roth and Erstad 2016). The pupils helped us collect signed informed consent from their parents. Some of the pupils were interviewed individually, while others preferred to talk to the interviewer in pairs of two.

As our considerations on access and ethics show, the forms and degrees of participation in the life of a classroom are not solely a matter for fieldworkers to decide. They also depend on existing social dynamics in the field; thus, an ongoing, ethically engaged and context-sensitive presence is required of fieldworkers (Kristiansen and Krogstrup 1999). At East City School, the pupils were very eager to interact with us. They asked us many questions about the fieldwork from the very first day and showed interest in our fieldnotes. Sometimes they tried to read them, and sometimes they wanted to discuss what should be written or even wanted to write in the field diary themselves. The pupils approached us repeatedly during lessons in almost every possible manner, showing us their computer games, telling us their opinions very frankly and even inviting us to recess, to play soccer among other activities. Thus, our presence in the classroom may very likely have served as a distraction, reinforcing non-academic agendas among the pupils by giving them an opportunity to escape boredom (Christoffersen 2014).

However, at West City School, the pupils reacted to our presence differently. They generally were more reserved and formal, only asking us questions about our observations at the very beginning of the fieldwork, with most pupils only speaking to us when we spoke to them first. During recess, they seemed preoccupied with personal interests or activities in different social groups. The interviews reflected their approach to us. Generally, the East City School pupils came across as very open-hearted and talkative, giving the impression

that they wanted to share their personal views on topics regarding school. However, West City School pupils maintained their formal manner during their interviews. Girls with a majority background were particularly careful not to make any disparaging remarks about their teachers, classmates or school.

Theoretical framework: two systems of rules in classroom interactions

To capture and explore the complex relation between behavioural norms and norms for legitimate participation in knowledge practices of different school subjects, we use a theoretical framework combining central concepts from code sociologists Basil Bernstein and Karl Maton, with Bernstein's conceptual model used as the central analytical tool. A central starting point for both Bernstein and Maton is that knowledge and knowledge practices are not neutral elements in the transmission of power through the educational system. Knowledge practices are produced and embedded in social structures, reflecting cultural norms (codes) that are not equally distributed among different groups of pupils with respect to class, race and gender (Bernstein 1996, 11).

For our analytical purposes, we focus on Bernstein's concept of framing, which is 'about *who* controls *what*' (Bernstein 1996, 27). The concept of framing refers to two different systems of rules: (a) The rules of social order (regulative discourse), which regulate classroom behaviour and 'expectations about conduct, character and manner' (Bernstein 1996, 27) and (b) the rules of discursive order (instructional discourse), referring to the 'selection, sequence, pacing and criteria of the knowledge' (Bernstein 1996, 28). According to Bernstein, regulative discourse always is the dominant discourse. In our analysis, we will discuss how the balance between the two can be viewed as more complex than a simple embeddedness relation.

Whereas Bernstein's theoretical framework focuses on the teacher's use of power and control in the classroom, Maton is more interested in the implicit codes of achievement related to different school subjects (knowledge domains). According to Maton, every educational field, e.g. a school subject, can be analysed in terms of its so-called *knowledge-knower structure* (Maton 2014, 91). In his works, Maton uses this distinction to analyse the underlying code of achievement in a variety of areas in the educational system, from science to the humanities and school music (Maton 2014). In short, some subjects place a strong emphasis on specialised knowledge and require no special attributes of the knower, while other subjects have weak knowledge grammars and emphasise the knower's specific personal attributes, e.g. judgement, taste and creativity. This distinction resembles Bernstein's concepts of visible and invisible pedagogies (Bernstein 1975). As discussed by Bernstein, both visible and invisible pedagogies can exclude children with a minority background (Bayer and Chouliaraki 2001, 104). With visible pedagogy, children from the lower working classes and 'disadvantaged ethnic groups' struggle to keep up with the busy pace of knowledge acquisition (Bayer and Chouliaraki 2001, 109) because of their unfamiliarity with the language and classroom practices. With invisible pedagogies, in which pupils apparently are given more time and choices in their learning processes, disadvantaged groups struggle to 'decode' the implicit rules of achievement for similar reasons: 'An invisible pedagogy, as we shall see later, is likely to create a pedagogic code intrinsically more difficult, initially at least, for disadvantaged social groups' (Bernstein 2003, 79).

Analysis of four characteristic situations from our fieldwork

We use our fieldnotes and Bernstein and Maton's code theory to analyse four characteristic situations from our fieldwork that display different relations and variations in strength between regulative and instructional discourse. Our objective is to present the field through 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973). Thus, in our analyses of the four situations, we use our interviews with the pupils to deepen our understanding of what happens in classrooms and relate the situations to other events, descriptions and background details documented in our fieldnotes. Our focus is on how the teachers' approach to balancing behaviour and knowledge management elicits consequences for minority pupils' participation in and understanding of the classroom's composite norms.

When strict classroom management makes the subject disappear

We open our analysis by presenting and analysing two characteristic situations from East City School. Even though both social norms and the types of knowledge practices (Maton 2014, 76) varied significantly from subject to subject and lesson to lesson, the overall impression was one of a learning environment characterised by power struggles between the pupils and their teachers. As mentioned above, East City School is located in a poor neighbourhood, and in the interviews, some of the pupils – in particular girls – expressed themselves in ways that resemble masculine 'street gang norms' (Gilliam 2009, 2014), ruled by values such as respect, power, brotherhood, etc. Fadwa expresses a strong sense of love and belonging to her neighbourhood: 'You know, what I love about "the block" is that they support each other. For example, if a gang shows up, we will stand together, all of us, and totally break them down'. These norms also are reflected in how the pupils talk about solidarity among their classmates (Willis 1977), 'wars' with other classes and power struggles with their teachers. However, there is a clear division in the classroom between a group of very quiet pupils – mostly boys – who are characterised as *the angels* by a group of pupils who label themselves as *the devil's children* in the interviews (Gilliam 2009, 2010, 2014). Maybe as a result of this, some teachers in the fifth-grade class we followed at East City School practised what, in a Scandinavian context, may be viewed as a very authoritarian style of classroom management. Annie and Steve, who teach Danish, science and sports, in particular used several disciplinary approaches. For instance, the pupils had to remove their shoes, stand in line and greet their teacher with a handshake using greetings such as 'good morning' or 'good afternoon' before entering the classroom. The following is a characteristic example from our fieldnotes from a lesson in Danish.

The pupils are told to be quiet while Annie walks around from table to table and corrects their spelling tasks. In the meantime, the pupils are told to read in their books. Those who have finished reading their books are told to read them one more time. Everybody has to sit still and be quiet until Annie has spoken to all pupils. Fadwa turns around when Annie is behind her. There doesn't seem to be anyone paying attention right now, but she communicates something to Mahmoud using silent lip movements. Emre is sent out of the classroom for a run around the building. Ten rounds with his jacket on. Most pupils are reading. Ikram, Mahmoud and Mohammed are staring out of the window. Amina holds her book up to her face and tries to whisper something to Hannah. Fadwa also turns around and makes eye contact with Hannah. Fadwa is smiling. Annie cries out, 'Amina!' (...). (Fieldnotes, February 2017)

As the example above indicates, there is a strong framing of the regulative order in the classroom, but also an ongoing power struggle between Annie and the pupils. Even though Annie tries to control all communication in the classroom, the pupils constantly try to send each other messages behind her back, challenging her authority. Based on our interviews with the pupils, we interpret their constant attempts to communicate with each other as a result of boredom (Christoffersen 2014) produced by the teacher's authoritarian style of classroom management. Moreover, in the interviews, the pupils who were considered to be the most disruptive by the teachers express a longing for activity, communication and fun in their lessons, a finding supported by extant classroom-management literature (Montuoro and Lewis 2015, 357). Fadwa puts it this way: 'Our teachers ... they are making everything boring. I mean, all subjects, they are just making them boring. Like, we want it in a different way, you know, activities, energy and such. Not just sitting like that and staring ...'.

Despite being very controlling in the classroom, we also saw how Annie showed the pupils that she cared about their personal and social well-being in different ways (Montuoro and Lewis 2015, 344), talking in private to them, giving them shoulder massages and remaining in close contact with their parents. In the interviews, the pupils typically would refer to Annie as a teacher who is strict and nice at the same time. As Ikram states: 'In Annie's lessons (...) when it is our birthday, we have a really good time. She turns on music, and we (...) watch movies and everything'. Nevertheless, positive pupil perceptions of Annie are rare in the context of specific knowledge practices. Her style of classroom management establishes what Bernstein would describe as a strong classification between knowledge practices and social practices. We noted a similar style of classroom management in Steve's lessons on Danish, sports and science. During one interview, we learn how Ikram apparently experiences a connection between strong discipline and a lack of opportunities to express her own identity and opinions. As she very aptly puts it:

When you enter his classroom [Steve's], you must not say, you are not allowed to (...) if you say, e.g., I have been shopping in a Turkish shop ... : 'It is not a Turkish shop. You live in Denmark; it is a Danish shop (...)'. You are not even allowed to say that a chair is from Iran: 'It is from Denmark'.

With a few exceptions, the knowledge practices we observed being used in the Danish lessons also were strongly framed. In the curriculum, the subject Danish consists of a diverse range of literacy practices (Danish Ministry of Education 2016a), many of which could be characterised as having knower codes in Maton's sense (2014), in which pupils are expected to demonstrate personal feelings, opinions and creativity. On most occasions, we saw teachers who taught Danish focusing on the basic skills of reading and spelling, leaving very little room for collaborative work, communication and opportunities for pupils to express their own opinions. This reduction in knowledge practices seems to contribute to a negative perception of the subject among pupils. Fadwa puts it this way: 'I think Danish is boring because in four years, we have just had the same textbook and done exactly the same thing. I think it is really boring'.

When the subject disappears in chaos and disorder

As demonstrated in the previous paragraph, strong framing of classroom communication can make the distinct knowledge practices of subjects disappear for pupils. However, very

weak framing seems to elicit a similar outcome, even though first impressions may be misleading. The following scene is from a math lesson at East City School:

(...) Peter: 'The first thing we are to do is an activity in *Kontext* [the textbook], so you have to go and get it'. The pupils moan and continue talking; slowly they collect their books in their drawers. Peter: 'Now everyone should have gotten hold of their textbook'. Mahmoud cries out loud: 'Who thinks Emre looks like someone born at a farm?' Peter: 'NOW, we have to ...'. It becomes a bit quieter in the classroom. Peter tries to explain the exercise and reads aloud from the textbook: 'Chairman Petersen ...'. Mahmoud interrupts him: 'Peter, we didn't know you were chairman of something'. Peter reads aloud from the textbook: 'There are always four songs they are going to sing ... Ikram, you are doing something you aren't supposed to. You have to find out how many number cards Petersen needs. Do you understand?' (...) Several pupils: 'NO'. Peter: 'Aaaaah'. He shows them something on the blackboard. Peter tells the pupils that the assignment must be done in pairs of two, and that he decides who are going to work together. Ikram: 'NO, no, we already know who we want to work with ... otherwise, I won't do it'. Mahmoud plays with some coins: 'Wallah, I have 25 and a half. Emre is tumbling about on the sofa below one of the windows. Several pupils shout: 'Shut up'. Fadwa: 'Everyone who speaks, they're just faggots' (laughing). Peter: 'OK, now there must be silence again. I know this assignment is about getting ideas. I will come down to you and talk with you about your ideas'. The pupils talk again. Mahmoud falls off his chair. Zahra: 'Peter, we don't understand. We didn't understand what you were saying' (Fieldnotes, October 2016).

Whereas the power struggles during Annie's lessons often happen behind her back, Peter's authority is openly questioned and challenged in the math lessons, as when Ikram refuses to follow his instructions: 'NO, no, we already know who we want to work with ... otherwise, I won't do it'. Peter is much less direct in his use of regulative speech acts compared with the Danish and science teachers. He seldom picks out individual pupils, but addresses the class as a group using indirect orders, e.g. 'NOW, we have to ...'. Peter's less-authoritarian style of classroom management seems to be difficult for pupils to navigate, maybe because they are accustomed to a stronger framing of classroom communication in the other main subjects. The other math lesson we observed at East City School followed a pattern similar to the scene above in the fieldnotes, with a high level of noise, jokes, interruptions and conflicts. In the interviews, several of the pupils explain that Peter does not take pupils' misbehaviour seriously, an approach that clearly contrasts with the authoritarian style of classroom management we observed in other classes. Ahmed puts it this way: 'Annie and Steve (...) they take it seriously, but Peter (...) he doesn't take it seriously. He will be laughing again after five minutes'. Some of the pupils who label themselves as 'popular' tell us how they compete to make the teacher lose control (Gilliam 2014; Willis 1977). Peter is easy prey. Fadwa puts it this way:

We like it when he [Peter] gets angry. We laugh sometimes because when he gets really angry, I will turn my head and laugh (...) I can't hold it back. I don't know why, but when a teacher gets really angry, I think it is really funny.

However, seen from a knowledge-management perspective, Peter is a brave teacher. He does not choose the easy solution, i.e. giving the pupils several routine assignments that they must complete individually, as the more controlling teachers would, but actually tries to orchestrate complex knowledge practices, in which pupils are supposed to collaborate, communicate and develop their own mathematical strategies. Indeed, one of the

girls in his class notices and appreciates his particular teaching approach. During her interview, Ikram tells us that she likes math because they sometimes do something ‘different’, e.g. experiments with artefacts and math activities in the schoolyard. In the fieldnote quoted above, Peter tries to make the code of achievement in this kind of math explicit when he says: ‘It is about getting ideas’. But there seems to be a gap between his intentions and the pupils’ abilities to read the code of achievement, as when one of the more hard-working girls, Zahra, in a fieldnote simply remarks: ‘We don’t understand’ (Moldenhawer 2001). During the interview, Zahra elaborates on her point: ‘That math, it’s just ... the numbers are just flying around; they are almost dancing around’. Zahra and one of the other girls also explain that they do not like the level of disorder in their math classes because it is difficult to get homework done.

The teacher and pupils during math lessons seem to be caught in a vicious cycle. Peter uses a common fifth-grade textbook and practises an interpretation of the knowledge domain of math that lives up to the requirements of the curriculum (Roth and Erstad 2016b:35). With regard to teaching math in the Danish school system, this means teaching with frequent use of inquiry-based activities, such as the ones described above. Simply put, inquiry-based math may be viewed as a form of invisible pedagogy (Bernstein 1975) or an elite knowledge-knower code in Maton’s sense (Maton 2014, 93) because it demands both skills, talent and the right attitude from pupils (Steffensen and Østerby 2018). In our fieldwork, we observed that many pupils at East City School had a very hard time measuring up to the expectations for fifth-grade math pupils.

When discipline is practiced randomly in an otherwise laissez-faire classroom setting

Whereas all the pupils in the fifth-grade class we followed at East City School have a minority background, the seventh-grade class we followed at West City School contains a mix of pupils with majority and minority backgrounds, with most having Turkish roots. Especially among the boys, the category of ‘ethnicity’ seemed to play a role in patterns of social interaction. On several occasions, we observed how the boys with a minority background sought out each other’s company in the classroom and during breaks (Moldenhawer 2001, 128). In our interview, one of the boys with a majority background tells us how ‘those Muslims ahem, Pakistanis and those from Turkey made a lot of noise’ in his old class and had developed ‘a close bond between each other’ (Gilliam 2014). Compared with his previous class, he considers ‘the bond’ between the minority boys in this class to be one of ‘normal friendship’ and ‘well-controlled’.

As we have tried to show in the previous paragraphs, the lessons at East City School are dominated by both overt and covert power struggles between pupils and teachers, foregrounding regulative discourse at the expense of instructional discourse. At West City School, we didn’t find the same pattern of anti-school attitudes and oppositional behaviour (Willis 1977). Even during the English lessons, in which some of the minority boys, in our opinion, received unfair punishment threats, they maintained a loyal attitude toward their teacher:

Jim enters the classroom. The pupils ask if this class is history or English. Jim says that they have to close their computers. That takes a while, so he threatens the pupils ... that he

will leave and come back when they are ready. He starts talking about what they are supposed to do in English today until he is interrupted by some of the girls who say that someone is missing:

Zara and Bushra. Jim says, 'Well'. A little later, Can and Yousef appear at the 'garden door' [a door opening straight from the outside courtyard into the classroom] and start knocking on the door, but they are told to enter the classroom from the other door. Ibrahim (who is inside the classroom) opens the door so that Can and Yousef can enter. Jim calls out to him: 'Ibrahim'. (...) Jim hands out some worksheets. Ibrahim is sitting quietly, but has wheeled his chair away from his table. Jim: 'Ibrahim, you know. In a few minutes, I will send you home to your father, then he must pick you up'. Jim continues handing out worksheets. It is an English text with some questions regarding reading comprehension. (...) Ibrahim has not said anything yet. Jim: 'And Ibrahim, Ibrahim, now you start doing something...' (The pupils leave the room in order to sit down outside the class, working on the task). Ibrahim stays in the class as the only one. Ibrahim asks Jim: 'Do I have to read those and insert that?' Jim explains the task to him very quickly on his way out of the class. Ibrahim: 'But does it say so with all of them?' Jim: 'But there is only one option at each question, right?' (...) Ibrahim is sitting quietly with his task (Fieldnotes, November 2016).

In this example, we notice how Jim threatens to punish Ibrahim (i.e. call his father, send him home) for what seems like a minor incident to us, merely opening the door for his classmates. We also notice how Jim starts the lesson by handing out the task and telling the pupils to start working without giving them any instructions. Thus, both the social and instructional framing show very few signs of established classroom routines (Emmer and Sabornie 2015, 6). Like the Danish lessons at East City School, Jim teaches English at West City School using a reduced repertoire of knowledge practices typically associated with the subject domain of English (Danish Ministry of Education 2016b), focusing on reading comprehension, translation and spelling, leaving very little room for the pupils to develop their communicative skills in English. Taken together, we argue that Jim uses discipline randomly in an otherwise *laissez-faire* classroom setting without established routines and structures.

In the interviews, some of the girls told us how they used to like English, but not when Jim is teaching. Bushra says: *'I used to love English, but I don't think we learn very much in Jim's lessons. (...) He also teaches another class; they say he is a very bad teacher'*. But to our surprise, some of the minority boys defended Jim. Ibrahim tells us that he has a positive relationship with Jim and defends him: *'Why should I get angry, perhaps he is right (...) He does it for my sake. He spends his time for my sake. He isn't paid extra to talk to me'*. We argue that the unexpected defenses of Jim from Ibrahim and one of the other minority boys show that they have a loyal attitude toward their school and accept basic norms as pupils. This contrasts with East City School, where many pupils view themselves as being in opposition to their school, teachers and sometimes adults in general (Gilliam 2009, 2010, 2014).

When knowledge practices are foregrounded

In the science classes at West City School, the minority boys particularly appeared to be enthusiastic about participating. For instance, they chose to sit in the front row, near their teacher, Kathrine, and her fellow teacher, to get a close look at the experiments they

demonstrated. The pupils who seemed less interested in science sat in the back of the classroom, avoiding the teachers' gaze. In the following situation from our fieldnotes, Kathrine demonstrates a chemical experiment:

Kathrine: 'Well, go to your seats. Now (...) you are going to conduct a different experiment. I don't know if you all tried it before the summer holiday ... Yusuf, do you have a minute?' Yusuf: 'Well, yes'. He sits down. She talks about an experiment in which hydrochloric acid reacts with magnesium, so that hydrogen is released and can be burned. She explains the chemical compound hydrochloric acid. Kathrine: 'I am pouring out some hydrochloric acid ... You have to be careful with that'. Hamid is standing up and paying close attention, as are Ibrahim and Tarek, standing next to Hamid. Kathrine explains how you can cleave the hydrochloric molecule, then set the hydrogen on fire. Kathrine: 'Here it is getting hot. That is what Can called, 'It is boiling'. Can beats his chest when he hears the reference to his name. Yusuf asks: 'How come it gets hot?' Yusuf wants to know whether that kind of acid can melt through your hand. Kathrine sets fire to the hydrogen gas and a 'puff' sound is heard with the burning. The pupils laugh and cheer. Kathrine: 'You have to do it yourselves. When hydrogen burns, it makes that puff sound (...)'. She talks to the pupils about the difference between burning off hydrogen and oxygen. What happens when you burn it off? Hamid: 'It burns'. Can carries on, repeating the 'puff sound'. Kathrine: 'Stop it, Can, we are not getting anywhere'. She asks what happens when you burn something without oxygen. Can puts his hand in the air: 'Then it is extinguished'. Kathrine: 'Correct' (Fieldnotes, November 2016).

In contrast with many of the lessons we observed at East City School and Jim's English lessons at West City School, the disciplinary code used in Kathrine's science lessons is more integrated with the subject-related knowledge practices. As our fieldnote shows, Kathrine disciplines Can and Yusuf several times, but she follows the disciplinary remarks up with invitations to participate in the instructional discourse. Even though she regulates the pupils' participation through a traditional IRE style of communication – in which the teacher Initiates, the pupils Respond and the teacher Evaluates (Moldenhawer 2001; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) – the subject of chemistry always is foregrounded. She also elaborates the traditional IRE style by referring to earlier statements made during the class, as when she makes the following remark: 'That is what Can called, "it is boiling"', then he responds by beating his chest.

Our fieldwork shows that Kathrine succeeds in foregrounding the subject, but the subjects of science and math also may be easier to teach at West City School because many of the pupils, including the boys with minority backgrounds whom we have interviewed, regard science, and especially math, as important subjects (Steffensen and Østerby 2018). For instance, Ibrahim explains why he likes science: '*It is something new, right. Then, then I learn it. For instance, what we did before* [referring to the experiment in the fieldnote above], *I never knew that. I cannot do that at home*'. From the perspective of Maton's code theory, what Ibrahim finds attractive about science classes is the process of knowledge accumulation (Maton 2014, 80). Science is meaningful for Ibrahim because he is given access to knowledge that he, in his own understanding, cannot access on his own, i.e. 'I cannot do that at home'. One of the other minority boys, Hamid, explains his preference for math and science in this way: '(...) Science is a new subject and then it is exciting, and math, I just like, like solving and ... And then, math is somewhat of a challenge, you have to solve something'. When asked what it takes to become good at math, a common answer is: 'You just have to focus'. This might indicate that success, particularly in math, is perceived as a matter of individual

effort – in contrast with subjects that demand special knower attributes (i.e. social background) such as literature classes (Maton 2014, 79).

Conclusion

With regard to the pupils' prospect to participate in different school subjects, we identified different barriers and potentials at the two schools. As our analysis of East City School shows, the characteristic knowledge practices of the subjects tend to be backgrounded by an authoritarian style of classroom management. In the interviews, we found it hard for East City School pupils to discriminate between the knowledge practices of the different subjects and relate their own academic interests to future ambitions in a coherent manner. Instead, especially 'popular' East City School pupils express feelings of monotony and boredom caused by the practices of the classroom. As Fadwa puts it: *'they [the teachers] are making everything boring, they think we live in the past'*. When asked about what should be changed in the classroom practice, the pupils stress the importance of having more options, fun and exciting experiences across academic subjects. Such changes could, for instance, include doing more experiments like dissecting fish in science, working with a topic on Turkey instead of Denmark or Islam instead of Christianity. Thus, our analysis suggests that involving pupils in decisions on topics and activities will increase their motivation to participate in the knowledge practices of different school subjects.

The 'popular' East City School pupils also told us that it had become a sport for them to challenge teachers until they lose their temper. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why some teachers at East City School chose an authoritarian style of classroom management to prevent pupil misbehaviour in the classroom. As the analysis of Peter's math lesson shows, chaos lurks just below the surface. However, the results of a disciplinary approach indicate that central knowledge practices are excluded from the subjects, thereby reinforcing the pupils' experience of monotony and consequently power struggles in the classroom.

While 'popular' East City School pupils told us that it had become a sport for them to challenge teachers, the minority boys at West City School take up a loyal attitude toward their teachers – even when, in our opinion, they are treated unfairly – as the analysis of Jim's English lesson shows. In the interviews, the slightly older West City School pupils also seem more aware about the general value of schooling and the significance of their own work effort for their academic results and future prospects. However, both interviews and observations indicate that several of the pupils find it easier to understand the codes of achievement related to subjects such as science and – especially – math compared to the humanities. This general finding applies not least to the boys with a minority background. As discussed in the analysis above, we observed how the minority boys tend to be more eager to participate in science classes. A similar pattern is found in the interviews, where e.g. Can explains his preference for math in the following way: *'more exciting things are happening [in math lessons] and such. And you know, I just feel it is much easier to concentrate in math lessons ... when I find something interesting, I am able to concentrate as much as everyone else'*. As the example shows, the knowledge practices associated with subjects such as math have a disciplinary effect on pupils like Can. In his experience, the interesting and well-structured content of math helps him become a

better pupil. In this manner, the example shows how the content of teaching impacts the social practice of the classroom. Moreover, the pupils' statements point to a need for stronger framing of the instructional discourse when the subject is e.g. Danish or history. While the relevance of subjects such as math and science seem more or less self-explanatory to pupils like Can, our results indicate that the codes of achievement associated with subjects such as Danish and history need further explication.

Our main point is thus that the tendency in the everyday conception and practice of classroom management (Emmer and Sabornie 2015, 6) to address behavioural strategies as something detached from the content of teaching can lead to the exclusion of central knowledge practices for the pupils, as is the case especially at East City School. On the other hand, engaging knowledge practices can function as vehicles for positive social relations between teacher and pupils, as was the case in e.g. the science lessons at West City School. Despite their different social backgrounds, pupils at both schools demand knowledge practices characterised by a fair amount of activity, challenge and proximity to their everyday life.

Acknowledgement

The fieldwork was conducted by Merete Havgaard, Helle Lykke Østerby, Thomas Thomsen, Louise Flege and Tom Steffensen. Special thanks to teachers and pupils.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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