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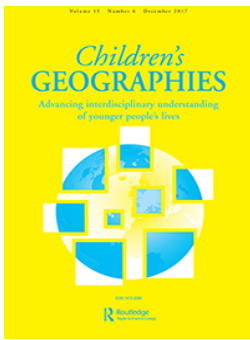
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Becoming (ethnic minority) teenagers: a practice study of emotional well-being at a Danish sports school

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how everyday school life interacts with students' practices of 'becoming teenagers' at a Danish school, analysing how age and ethnicity intersect with emotional well-being. The article builds on an ethnographic study at a public sports school following ethnic minority and majority students in two school classes from the fifth to seventh grades. Taking a practice approach, the article first analyses school as a social site before turning phenomenological attention to experiences and expectations of becoming teenagers, focusing on the experiences of ethnic minority students. The article addresses how school as social site constituted by discursive, material and social arrangements shapes a normative linear process of becoming at school, that is, becoming a responsible, healthy, Danish citizen. Consequently, dissonance between embodied being and expected normality affects the emotional well-being of ethnic minority students, whose transnational practices are constrained within a national practice architecture.

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Introduction

Boris: My personality is changing a lot now, you know, now I'm a teenager.

Interviewer: What does it mean to be a teenager?

Boris: To be more adult and not just goof around ... even though I still do that sometimes. I don't want to be a boy who just plays around and maybe makes fun of others. I try to pull myself together with school and all that. I can also feel myself growing, and I think: am I too fat, am I normal? (Boris, 13 years old, ethnic minority boy)

Approaching youth is filled with new experiences and expectations, for example, of a growing body, a changing 'personality' or responsibilities for one's behaviour by 'pulling oneself together' at school, as Boris expresses it above. Moreover, while all these changes are measured and evaluated on scales of normality – reflected by Boris wondering whether he is 'normal' – approaching youth is a transformative process that affects young people in various and numerous ways. The transition is complex, fluid and intersected by social differences such as race, gender, sexuality and class (Valentine 2003, 49). During early adolescence, emotional well-being tends to decrease, for example, identified by an increase in symptoms such as stress, depression, sleep deprivation or eating disorders (Huebner 2004; Žukauskienė 2014). Moreover, research has revealed the existence of social and ethnic disparities in emotional well-being (Hernandez 2014), including in well-being at school (Nordahl Jensen and Holstein 2010).

School is an important factor in understanding children's emotional well-being, not only because children in most Western countries spend a significant amount of time in school, but also because schooling includes as a fundamental purpose the promotion of children's long-term well-being (García Bacete et al. 2014). In many Western countries, including Denmark, interventions and efforts are increasingly initiated at the school environment (Danish Ministry of Education 2014). Therefore, school has a dual position in relation to children's health and well-being, being on the one hand a vehicle and arena of health promotion (e.g. curriculum, policy), and on the other hand an interacting agent in students' everyday practices (e.g. learning, playing, eating). While the promotion of health and well-being at school often focus on how activities, material facilities, health perceptions and social relations shape the development of healthy school lives, less attention is paid to emotional geographies of school and education (Kenway and Youdell 2011), that is, to how emotions emerge, flow and develop in the school site (Andrews, Chen, and Myers 2014; Bondi, Davidson, and Smith 2007) thereby interacting with the emotional life and well-being of students. Research shows how school spaces control, govern and shape youth identities and subjectivities (Gibson and Dempsey 2015; Pike 2008). Nonetheless, knowledge of how these governing processes interact with students' everyday lives and their emotional well-being is scarce. To address this knowledge gap, this article will explore how everyday school life interacts with students' practices of 'becoming teenagers' at a Danish school. Taking a practice approach, the article combines social analysis with phenomenological attention to everyday life to tease out the complexity of emotional well-being at school during early youth, in particular among ethnic minority students. In doing so, the article directs attention to how ethnic majority and minority students face different challenges and constraints to their emotional well-being at school.

The article builds on a qualitative study at a Danish public sports school following ethnic minority and majority students in two school classes from the fifth to seventh grades. During two periods of ethnographic fieldwork in the fifth and seventh grades, the students engaged in various participatory research activities (e.g. taking pictures and designing their own photo albums) through which they expressed, and reflected upon, their experiences of feeling and being well or unwell in their everyday school lives.

Emotional well-being: empirical accounts

Emotional well-being is a domain of subjective well-being (Wallace et al. 2011) and refers to a positive sense of self that develops from feeling confident, secure, valued, respected and cared about (Coleman 1996). This study focuses on emotional well-being as socially contingent (Ben-Arieh et al. 2014; Crivello, Camfield, and Woodhead 2008), foregrounding how it is socially shaped in practice at a particular site (Fattore, Mason, and Watson 2009), in this case school. The article treats emotional well-being as an empirical concept based on students' expressed thoughts and experiences. In a practice perspective, emotions and feelings are considered neither purely psychological, individual matters, nor just social surroundings affecting our mood (Ahmed 2004). Rather, feelings and emotions are shaped in practice as situated flows. Emotional well-being here includes affects, feeling states and emotions (Pile 2010). While feeling states and emotions may be more or less conscious (e.g. being happy, angry or sad), affect is not directly accessible to experience, yet it is not exactly outside of experience either (Thrift 2004).

Students in the study emphasized emotional well-being as essential to their overall well-being and health, enabling a capacity to practice healthy behaviour in terms of eating healthily and being physically and socially active. They expressed emotional well-being as fundamentally constituted by a feeling of being included in (or hampered by a feeling of being left out of) their social environment. To 'feel included' means to feel a social connectedness in terms of having friends and family, and to feel a sense belonging by fitting in and being able to align with normality, to be able to engage the world habitually (Ahmed 2006; Merleau-Ponty 1962). Exploring these experiences, this article addresses how complex dynamics of identity, place and belonging (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton 1995; Massey 1997; Yuval-Davis 2011) are locally negotiated (Besten 2010) and interacting with emotional well-being in the transitional phase of early youth.

Research design and methods

The study took place at Hillside School, a Danish public primary school in Copenhagen. The school has 800 students from 0–9th grade, reflecting the wide socioeconomic and ethnic diversity of the local area. Hillside is a forerunner among schools in relation to sports and physical activity. In the mid-'00s, the school established a school sports profile based on an ethos of letting the joy of physical activity, play, good fellowship, health and well-being permeate school life.

Using an ethnographic design, the study focused on appreciating and understanding the meanings of being human in a particular social and cultural context (Madden 2010, 17), namely the everyday school life of early adolescents. The research design reflects the ambitions of social studies of childhood in giving voice to and acknowledging children's agency and adopting a critical perspective so as to expose the structural opportunities for and/or constraints on children (Corsaro 2005). This ambition is essential in efforts to comprehend children's perceptions and experiences of well-being in everyday life (Crivello, Camfield, and Woodhead 2008, 53).

The first author (female, ethnic majority) conducted fieldwork at Hillside following two school classes from the fifth to seventh grades (2012–2013) (56 students, an even gender distribution, 11–14 years old, 60% with non-Western ethnic minority backgrounds). She spent three consecutive months with the fifth-grade classes and revisited the same two classes for 10 weeks at the beginning of their seventh grade. In between fieldwork periods, contact was maintained between the first author and students through visits to the school and use of social media (primarily Facebook). The study was explorative and was introduced to the students by the first author as a study of everyday school life: 'How do you spend your time at school and after school? When and how do you feel good or bad at school? What do you consider important in your life?' were some of the questions by means of which the study was explained to the students.¹

While participant observation constituted primary data collection, it also helped build a trusting relationship with the students based on interested engagement in their everyday lives (Madden 2010). The first author actively pursued a position as 'least-adult' (Thorne 1993), seeking to be a part of the students' everyday school lives by participating in student activities: playing or 'hanging out' during breaks, joining in classes and participating in physical education, while keeping a distance from the teachers during the school day. Interviews and informal conversations with teachers took place after school or with no students present. Hence, while neither assuming adult superiority nor downplaying the generational issues, the study has pursued insights into children's experiences and perceptions without presumptions about taking an 'insider position' with the children (Mayall 2008).

To enhance the engagement and empowerment of students during the research process (Lyon and Carabelli 2015), participatory research activities were central. Using creative, non-verbal means of expression with a focus on 'doing' rather than 'telling' (e.g. taking photos, drawing) provided a different way into the research questions by opening up a path for students so that they could reflect on the contextualized and bodily experiences of well-being in school life (Gauntlett and Holzwarth 2006; Guillemin and Drew 2010, 178). In fifth grade, all students participated in a photo project. Each student was given a disposable camera with instructions on its use and an assignment to photograph 'things, situations, places or persons that make you feel good' (12–14 photos) and 'things, situations, places or persons that make you feel bad' (12–14 photos). Afterwards each student organized his or her photos in a personal album that constituted the interview guide in the following photo-elicited interviews. Forty-one students made photo albums, and 21 photo-elicited interviews were conducted. In seventh grade the students were re-interviewed.

Analytical strategies and ambitions

Interviews and field notes were coded in NVivo10 to organize data into units and themes. We carried out analytical readings as both narratives of each student and cross-sectional thematic readings (Mason 2006) and treated all data material (notes, photos, drawings) as ethnographic data in the

form of interwoven snippets of stories about everyday school life. As a result, analyses were based on continuous readings, mappings and sense-making through empirical unfolding and theoretical junctures and linking (Clarke 2003; Coffey and Atkinson 1996).

A practice approach to study 'becoming teenagers'

Adopting a practice approach means that we foreground doings, sayings and relating (Kemmis et al. 2014; Schatzki 2002), that is, foreground *what goes on* in school everyday life (related to practices of becoming teenagers) *between* and *among* students and their environment. However, practices are not *just* something people do; rather, practices are meaning-making, identity-forming and order-producing activities (Nicolini 2012, 7). Thus, a practice-based approach makes it possible to examine how power and interest are constitutive of social reality.

In the following sections, we first introduce Hillside sports school as a social site, a location, where 'something' takes place (Schatzki 2002), in this case practices of becoming (teenagers, students, girls, boys, etc.). This location transcends physical location, as it is shaped by normative meanings, purposes and tasks that shape practices: 'practices are not merely set in, but always already shaped by, the particular historical and material conditions that exist in particular localities or sites at particular moments' (Kemmis et al. 2014, 33). The social site thus constitutes what Kemmis et al. conceptualize as 'practice architecture', constituted by an array of arrangements that enable and constrain practices (not deterministically but indeterminately): *cultural-discursive arrangements*, through language and discourses (i.e. what is legitimate to say is shaped by discourse); *material-economic arrangements*, through activity and materiality (i.e. what can be done is shaped by the physical structuring of the school); and *social-political arrangements*, through solidarity and power (i.e. how to relate is shaped by the school's organization, roles and rules, and social solidarities) (Kemmis et al. 2014, 32).

Secondly, we address students' experiences through a phenomenological involvement in their descriptions of becoming teenagers, analysing how their body-emotional being and becoming are mutually shaped by experiences and expectations reflected in their sayings, doings and relating at school. Focusing on ethnic minority students, we use 'experience' and 'expectation' as epistemological categories, that is, as an anthropological condition in the sense that the categories are intertwined, binding together past, present and future (Koselleck 2004).

School as social site: practice architectures of becoming

School plays an essential socializing role in students' everyday lives as both an educational and a civilizational institution (Elias 2000; Kampmann 2004). Schooling in contemporary Western societies has through time constituted the basis for the socialization of children's bodies (Fielding 2000), and the institution of school has had a central role in processes of modernization and industrialization, not only in teaching knowledge, but also in disciplining workers-to-be, or citizens-of-the-future (Thompson 1967). Over time, schools become spaces 'where children's bodies are acculturated into adult norms and expectations about what it means to be a "good" citizen' (Valentine 2010, 26). Hence, the practice arrangements of everyday school life historically foreground a specific 'becoming' as a fundamental part of the school course, not targeting particular 'un-civilized' groups, but as a generalized, routinized and institutionalized civilizing effort to support children in becoming competent, sound and healthy, independent and responsible, democratic citizens (Gilliam and Gulløv 2014).

The civilizing project of the Danish school is reflected in school institutional discourses on different levels – in policies (state, municipal, local school), curriculums and public debates – as well as in the cultural-discursive, material and social arrangements of everyday school life. In relation to practices of becoming teenagers, the arrangements enable a chronological progression defined by biological age; students move step by step through the school course with increasing expectations of responsibility and freedom. Danish elementary and primary school is based on a progression of

grades through three levels: ‘in-schooling’ (zero through third grade), ‘middle school’ (fourth through sixth grade) and ‘out-schooling’ (seventh through ninth grade). During this study, the students begin seventh grade – they enter out-school – which, in their own view, is an important event that involves going into new school spaces. Students are now allowed to stay indoors during recess, they can use the assembly hall (including the ping-pong tables) without adult supervision, and they are given their own lockers in the hallway for books and personal belongings. Meanwhile, school days become longer, exams and performance marks are introduced, and students must take increased responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, such as active participation in class, keeping up with homework, and keeping order in assignments and school books. In class, students may be asked to leave if they behave disruptively, and teachers stress that they ought to know better now they are ‘out-school’ students. As Boris says in the introductory quotation, becoming a teenager is about ‘pulling yourself together’ and moving on to becoming more ‘adult’. In this sense the school constitutes ‘a “hot-bed” of moral geographies’ (Fielding 2000, 231) in (re)producing both explicit and implicit codes of behaviour and expected becoming.

Hillside school shares basic institutional practice architectures with other Danish schools, but as a sports school, its school practices are specifically shaped by arrangements related to the school sports profile, emphasizing physical activity in everyday school life. Thus the (physical) architecture is designed for sports and physical activities, taking part in sport is encouraged generally, with frequent participation in school sports competitions, all cemented by a high number of teachers with physical education as their main subjects and interests. Sports skills and interests are therefore emphasized as social and symbolic capital, meaning that socialization and education at Hillside include work on developing mental and bodily capacities and competencies in physical activity and sports.

Becoming Danish citizens at school

As in other Western industrialized countries, Danish public schooling has historically been part of a nation-building project establishing a national identity (Gitz-Johansen 2006). The national project has continually existed, although it is differently expressed today as a subtle (or banal) nationalism through curriculum (Gitz-Johansen 2006), specific markings of festive (Christian) seasons, and everyday practices of, for example, eating (Karrebæk 2012). ‘Danish culture’ thus constitutes the practice architecture and practice tradition that shapes, and is shaped by, school practices. A reluctance to include multicultural pedagogy in Danish public schools (Horst 2003) is shaped by historically strong values of equality and inclusion in the school system, emphasizing that all students must be treated as equal individuals and that none should be singled out (negatively or positively) from the community of the class (Gilliam 2014, 42). Thus, the school’s practice architecture builds on the wider discourses and social rules of interaction that are so pervasive in the Nordic welfare states, where similarity is perceived as a prerequisite to equality in social life (Gullestad 1992; Jöncke 2007). The expectations of school environments thus imply not only a civilizing process connected to the project of young people becoming adult citizens, but also a project of becoming (individual, equal and alike) Danish citizens: ‘Now I live in a free-speech country, so I really have to speak up for myself’ an ethnic minority boy said when discussing school life in the seventh grade, also reflecting the interplay of current dominant discourses of Danish values and identity, as emphasized through media and public debates, such as ‘freedom of speech’. Thus, cultural-discursive arrangements that enable work on a national project are inherent within the school’s institutional practice architecture. In other words, becoming a ‘good’, ‘healthy’ student and citizen is located in a national context, as the school is multi-ethnic, but not politically multicultural (Horst and Gitz-Johansen 2010). Integration (or assimilation) is thus an important objective of the school.

In these ways, the school’s aims and discourses, in interaction with the physical school environment and social positions (e.g. related to age and national identification), offer, structure and restrain practices of becoming in everyday school life. That is, the cultural-discursive, material and social-political arrangements of school life shape the experiences of growing, becoming and developing by

identifying legitimate sayings, doings and relatings in the sense that agents are body–minds that both ‘carry’ and ‘carry out’ social practices (Reckwitz 2002, 256). This also means that knowledge – as a way of understanding, a ‘know-how’, a certain way of wanting and feeling – is a constitutive element of practice (Reckwitz 2002). Engaging a practice of becoming at Hillside thus implies accepting certain norms of correctness and certain ways of wanting and feeling (Nicolini 2012, 5).

In the following section, we focus on the students’ experiences of everyday school life as we turn phenomenological attention to students’ temporal ‘being-in-the-world’ as constituting practices (Heidegger 1927/2010; Schatzki 2006). We consider how students’ experiences and expectations of becoming (teenagers) at school are shaped by the school’s practice architecture, which affects emotional well-being.

Experiences and expectations of becoming teenagers

Most students express, through various accounts, how they feel increasingly ‘busy’ as they grow older. However, in the photo albums, interviews and everyday conversations carried out during this study, students with an ethnic minority background tend to experience the busyness of ‘becoming teenagers’ as more stressful than ethnic majority students, for example, by not being able to sleep and finding it hard to keep up in their social lives, with their sports and at school. Some have very tight schedules with extra school in terms of mother-tongue language/Koran school and/or sports in the afternoon, but most of the ethnic minority students explain that it is not so much about the things they have to do, but rather about having a lot ‘to think about’ and ‘keeping up’ in general.

During an interview in fifth grade, Noman (ethnic minority boy) elaborates on the feeling of being ‘busy becoming a teenager’. The interview is centred on Noman’s photo album, which shows pictures of smiling friends, sweets he is now free to buy for himself and music. The album also includes pictures of annoying tooth braces, a close-up of his eyes illustrating his ‘sadness’, and a picture of his backpack with ‘school stuff’ that has become very hard to keep track of. Noman says that he looks forward to turning 13 and becoming a ‘real’ teenager, but he is also a bit anxious about all the changes he is experiencing. He loves singing, but he is sad now his voice is breaking, and he cannot sing very well anymore. The first time that happened was at school, and it was awful because he was ‘the first’, and his teacher started explaining it to the class, saying that it was ‘normal’ and would happen to all the boys. But, Noman makes clear, it did not feel normal. Noman also loves dancing, but his brothers think he should stop dancing because it is time for him to become a ‘real man’.

In these ways, early adolescence is filled with bodily, emotional and social changes (Aitken 2001; Thorne 1993), and normativity surrounding bodies and bodily performances are strong – how to look and be like a ‘real man’, for example. To many students, school constitutes the central stage for all these changes, such as one’s voice breaking. Thus school involves public exposure to issues that are considered very private (Thorne 1993), while it also establishes normative lines of comparison and preoccupation with when, how and to what degree someone is ‘changing’: ‘We all just want to be normal (...) then you feel more included’, Selma says, explaining that *this* is most important in being well at school. However, to the students approaching youth, ‘normal’ is often constructed based on expectations as opposed to experience, based on *knowing* that one’s voice will break, rather than on a familiarity with what experiencing a voice breaking in front of the class feels like. The massive changes, or the ‘acceleration of time’, to borrow the words of Koselleck (2004),² imply that expansions of experience and expectation do not occur symmetrically but as ‘spaces of experience’ and ‘horizons of expectation’ (Koselleck 2004). This means that experience builds on ‘present past’ – something complete, or known (cognitively or/and embodied) – while expectation builds on ‘present future’, implying an open-endedness of anticipation that is not applicable to experience (Koselleck 2004, 260). In other words, expectation moves beyond experience, creating a space of precariousness. This precariousness is part of students’ everyday lives and practices. They talk about teen-life as exciting, they aspire to be part of the ‘teen-club’, they embrace the freedom to hang out with friends,

and many wish to be more diligent at school. Meanwhile, they express ambiguities in terms of bodily being and feelings. These ambiguities stand out when students relate to playing as a practice:

- Mark: Two years ago, we would play fantasy games and such things – now we mostly just walk around talking.
- Dave: Yeah, I think we are becoming more and more boring.
- Interviewer: How?
- Dave: For example, four years ago we played with LEGO. And now we are just boring. Now it's just walking around, eating, talking.
- Interviewer: Couldn't you just keep playing?
- Mark: Well, yeah, but ...
- Dave: It wouldn't be the same.
- Mark: And then we get some real stuff – like a mobile phone. I didn't have a mobile in first grade!
- Dave: It's also different ... if I hold a piece of LEGO, I can't ... I mean I don't have the imagination I used to have. I can't do it myself; now I need an instruction manual. I don't know why.
- Mark: Yes, it's like being a new person.
- (Interview Mark, ethnic majority boy, and Dave, ethnic minority boy, Seventh Grade)

Dave explains how he no longer feels the imagination he used to feel, and Mark agrees: he feels like 'a new person'. The boys navigate a sense-making of feelings and experiences – a lack of imagination, feeling they have become boring, the excitement of getting 'new stuff' – while also reflecting the expectations of growing older and becoming teenagers in relation to playing as practice. In seventh grade the students repeatedly verbalize a shared identification as people who 'hang out' rather than 'play', as expressed by Mark and Dave above. Other students talk about how, even though they would like to, they 'don't just run around outside anymore' because 'talking and hanging out' is more 'normal' for a teenager. In these ways, students see a dissonance between how they experience themselves in everyday school life and their expectations of their own everyday school lives. While Mark and Dave share this type of dissonance, in another (individual) interview Dave expresses an extra feeling of stress related to feeling 'different': sometimes he is teased for his Asian look (positioning him into regrettable fights), and he also misses his mother, who lives in another country. No one really understands how this feels, Dave says, not even his best friend Mark, even though Mark can cheer him up.

Ethnic and transnational becoming

Ethnicity as marker of identification transforms and develops between the students in their school lives. They increasingly do and work ethnicity as part of their everyday lives in which they develop gender, sexual, racial, religious and other identities (Wakefield and Hudley 2007), and transnational becoming plays a significant role for many of the students. Interviews and observation during fieldwork in the seventh grade demonstrate shifting ethnic and transnational sayings, doings and relations. Students talk more about 'coming from' and 'having families in other countries', they use second languages more often, they engage with ethnically oriented social media (e.g. Arab music sites), and they are more explicit in gathering in common identifications as ethnic minorities in relation to ethnic majorities (called 'Danes'). For some, religion increasingly becomes a part of their lives, such as Sulafah, who explains that, when you grow older, you have to understand Islam better and pray more. Or, Nedal, who in seventh grade – just after Ramadan Eid – talks about how he participates more in Ramadan now he is older, which feels good.

Some students are explicitly reflexive about changes in their transnational and ethnic backgrounds. One such is Noman, who in the fifth grade talked about being 'busy' becoming a teenager, including all the bodily, social and emotional changes involved. In the seventh grade, he now emphasizes how his 'Arabic background' (his own definition) shapes his life as a teenager:

The most important difference in my life since fifth grade is that my family ties are growing stronger. I look at pictures and I think: so many good times, time is passing by so fast, and I wonder, will I see them again? You know about the war – I'm afraid I will not see them again. I think about that war all the time (...) family is about who I am. (Noman, ethnic minority boy, seventh grade)

Here Noman reflects on processes of identification based on background, which are prevalent among many of the ethnic minority students with transnational relatives: a sense of 'being' (who I am) includes emotionally being well too. It revolves around looking at pictures, looking back and looking forward, embracing not only joy but also fear of loss, because many family members live far away in social, economic and political instability, often in a war zone. This is a stress factor expressed by students: they worry. As a result, everyday concerns play a significant role in emotional well-being and differ between ethnic majorities and ethnic minorities with transnational ties, both as actual 'worries', and as referring to the issues that can potentially fill thoughts and feelings in one's daily life at school, thereby shaping this daily life (Grøn 2005). 'Everything just gets a little bit harder', Taamir says, 'but it is hard to explain'. He elaborates by describing how, a while ago, he was feeling really bad – he could not eat, his stomach was aching all the time: 'I really miss my family. But it's also difficult. They are really different.' Taamir misses his family, who live in the Middle East, but part of his concern is to navigate the transnational identification, as the family is 'really different'. Taamir does not engage with a transnational identity in the sense of considering 'somewhere else' his home country; rather, he expresses how his everyday life is shaped by connections (elsewhere) making a difference (here) (Clifford 1994, 322; Vertovec 2010, 6). Thus Taamir's 'horizon of expectation' extends his 'space of experience' (Koselleck 2004) to a higher degree than some of his ethnic majority friends, whose embodied pasts, despite their early youth transitioning, fit more smoothly into school practice arrangements and normativities.

Ethnic, religious and transnational identifications are thus essential parts of practices of becoming teenagers, in that ethnic minority students sustain multi-stranded social relations (familial, religious, economic, etc.) spanning borders and linking together the societies of their parents' origins and Denmark (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton 1994, 7). Their practices of identification, intensified through practices of becoming teenagers, are constituted both in and beyond nation states, and their practices, concerns, activities, performances and meaning-making extend their local and national everyday lives (Basch, Schiller, and Szanton 1995, 50). However, within *national* school practice architectures, these transnational identifications do not easily correlate with the more common, normative 'way of wanting and feeling' (Reckwitz 2002) when becoming a young Danish citizen. Within practice architectures of becoming, which are shaped by national social logics, the transnational position is difficult to find in everyday school life – it is not 'normal', not expected. In other words, the concerns and worries expressed by Noman and Taamir, and the reflections of religion as a part of everyday life expressed by Sulafah and Nedal, are not part of everyday school practices, not in curriculum, the school organization nor its activities; and not in the same way as other everyday concerns which, in similar ways, are constitutive parts of life in early youth (e.g. friendship negotiations, issues related to puberty, parents being divorced). While such concerns are a 'natural' part of growing up in Denmark, there is nothing 'normal' in Denmark about having family in a war zone or very far away, nor is it 'normal' to celebrate Ramadan. Rather, these practices and ways of feeling and wanting become markers of difference and non-belonging, that is, positions of identification that, according to the students, constrain emotional well-being. Moreover, the limited recognition of the everyday concerns of a transnational social reality imply that students must find their own ways and strategies to cope with, for example, worries over family well-being and safety. These copings are energy-consuming and fill the mind during one's everyday life.

(Re-)producing 'normal' and positions of difference

When students express feeling different, and when we discuss positions of difference, it is important to note that these positions do not refer to a low number of ethnic minority students at the school, nor to a direct refusal to allow various ethnic practices and religious convictions. Rather, the positions of difference are cemented in the way 'normality' is invisibly (re)produced based on historically and culturally specific common knowledge on how to do, think and perceive everyday life at school as a young teenager (Nicolini 2012). Hillside is a school with a high percentage of students

from non-Western ethnic minority backgrounds, and the school takes measures to accommodate this diversity. In the following, we take a look at constructions of difference through an empirical example from a home economics class in the seventh grade. Here, teachers never use pork in recipes and always buy halal-certified meat (i.e. produced according to Islamic prescriptions) to ensure Muslim students' participation in cooking and eating. However, although this is an important diversity-inclusive activity, ambiguities arise in practices of eating:

Sulafah and I [first author] do the dishes, while Noman sets the table for the group meal, collectively cooked, during the weekly home economics lesson. Rashid, Noman and Sulafah discuss the meat balls with Susanne (the teacher). They do not want to eat them because they are not sure that they are *halal*. Susanne assures them that she *always* buys halal meat for the class, but Rashid argues that they cannot trust the meat manufacturers selling meat in supermarkets. He refers to a recent public scandal exposing packages of supermarket beef as containing horse meat. 'If *this* is possible, how can we know it is *really* halal when it comes from the supermarket?' I notice that Aida keeps out of the discussion, while she whispers to me 'I *really* don't want to eat that meat.' Just the thought of it not being halal makes her feel sick, she says. The discussion is escalating, and Susanne cuts through: 'Fine, don't eat it, but everyone at least has to taste the food. If you don't like it – okay – but you *must* taste it. All of you'. I look at Aida in her efforts to comply with the teachers' rules – she looks nauseated but manages to take one bite of the meat ball before throwing the rest into the trash can. She walks away from the group. (first author's field notes, seventh grade)

These field notes show how religious diversity may be accepted as an act (buying halal meat), although this is not allowed as cultural normality, or orientation, to practices. In other words; elements of religious activities are accepted, but only to be carried out within a Danish cultural eating practice in the Danish school practice arrangement. The teacher insists that her efforts to accommodate Muslim eating prescriptions must be followed by compliance with local norms and cultures of eating as a community, where 'everyone at least tastes the food'. Hence, the teacher fails to recognize how essential the body-spiritual significance of eating is to Aida, and religion is not truly accepted as an embodied point of departure for the girl's being-in-the-world. It is not recognized as 'normal' to have a bodily, emotional reaction to meat based on a lack of trust. In this way, the example illustrates how changing an activity (buying halal meat) is not enough to create a basis for the inclusion of diversity. The social reality of national school practice arrangements remains (Kemmis et al. 2014) one of accentuating the 'project' of becoming Danish citizens.

This project of becoming Danish at school is continually shaped by *cultural-discursive arrangements* that build on Danish national history and a Danish school curriculum; by *material arrangements* foregrounding the celebration of Christmas over that of Hanukah or Eid; and by *social-political arrangements* emphasizing equality through sameness built against the background – or the common-sense normality – of a cultural, historically homogeneous 'Danishness'. Students who identify beyond these arrangements – beyond this common-sense background to social life – may experience these practice arrangements as constraining their habitual being-in-the-world, meaning that the way they experience daily life does not smoothly fit into the expectations of 'normal' everyday practices, but instead causes an emotional dissonance in the gap between experience and expectation (Koselleck 2004).

Conclusion

During early adolescence, students experience profound body-emotional/social changes while also navigating growing expectations towards a future that appears more present. At school the practice arrangements of everyday school life foreground a specific 'becoming' as a fundamental part of the school course in a progression towards becoming an educated, responsible, healthy Danish citizen. You have to 'pull yourself together' at school and 'stop goofing around', as Boris said, introducing the article. However, the linear becoming emphasized at school does not correlate with the turbulent experiences of early adolescence, and young students easily feel off-track and stressed for not being able to keep up.

At Hillside school, we see the important role of transnational practices in ethnic minority students' everyday emotional practices of becoming teenagers. However, we also see how the concerns, activities, orientations and meaning-making of transnational practices are constrained within arrangements of school practice architectures (Olwig 2003). Danish majority norms shape both the curriculum (Horst and Gitz-Johansen 2010; Moldenhawer 2001; Timm 2009) and everyday practices at school. Religious practice, for example, is not addressed as a potentially emotional part of everyday life, nor are celebrations such as Ramadan embraced. Moreover, mother-tongue education is not an entitlement for bilingual students from countries other than member states of the European Economic Area, the Faeroe Islands and Greenland, reflecting a widespread perception in the Danish school system of different mother-tongues being a problem rather than a resource in education (Timm 2009). Thus, dominant integration/assimilation discourses position ethnic minority students as socially, culturally and linguistically 'different' and in need of integration into school and society (Gilliam 2009). Accordingly, rather than experiencing an opportunity to positively engage multi-oriented identifications, many ethnic minority students find a dissonance between spaces of experience and horizons of expectation, between their emotional experiences of a transnational everyday life and a school life that is based on dominant notions of national becoming.

This is of concern because everyday school life potentially constrains the emotional well-being of ethnic minority students. Also, as a health promotion agent, the school is missing an opportunity to support positive self-worth and self-identification among students. Research on ethnic identity and young people's mental and emotional health shows that a strong, positive ethnic identity not only supports adolescent mental health and school achievement, it also constitutes a protective factor to health risk behaviour (Smith and Silva 2011; Wakefield and Hudley 2007). In-depth investigation into these correlations of social identities and health are needed, and children's geographies can add significantly by looking further into how school spaces, both material and discursive, interact with children's physical and emotional health and well-being. In particular, children's diverse experiences of school life should be addressed to understand how educational provision is shaped by socially and culturally specific perceptions of being and becoming children and young people in a specific spatial setting (Holloway et al. 2010, 585).

Local, national and transnational places of belonging are intertwined within the everyday of young people's lives (Olwig 2003, 232). To ensure emotionally healthy educational geographies it is necessary to look into the potential of changing national school practice arrangements on different institutional and everyday levels from policy to classroom practices to accommodate global social realities of Danish school children and young people. It requires an ambition to shift the practice arrangements of becoming at school: for example, shifting material arrangements by rethinking age-based school structures (some Danish school has successfully reorganized school life across traditional grades); and shifting cultural-discursive arrangements by increasingly including transnational practices in curriculums and school life; not as exotic 'ethnic meal days' but as 'normal' parts of everyday school life. Such efforts would cultivate an explicit awareness of the different paths along which young people navigate, including differences based on transnational everyday lives and concerns. Hence, these efforts could shift social-political arrangements and provide a legitimate space in which to be different from normative standards of being and becoming (related to youth, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, body shape). In any case, it remains crucial to include the multiple voices and lived experiences of children and young people to allow everyone to 'feel included' and to promote emotional well-being.

Notes

1. School leaders, teachers and parents gave written informed consent, while students were given the opportunity to opt in and out of the research throughout the study.

- Koselleck uses the term ‘acceleration of time’ to discuss a historical condition of time and modernity – how social and historical changes shape the relationship between experience and expectation. However, in the present analysis we use Koselleck’s epistemological categories on the level of the human life-course (2004).

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