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The objectification and gaze of at-risk youths

An anthropological study of at-risk youths' reflexive filmmaking in three institutional contexts

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THE OBJECTIFICATION AND GAZE OF AT-RISK YOUTHS

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF AT-RISK YOUTHS' REFLEXIVE FILMMAKING IN THREE INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

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Abstract

This thesis concerns the ways in which a selection of at-risk youths constructed meaning and managed their identities within the frames of 'Youth Gaze' film courses. The Youth Gaze initiative was comprised of a series of participatory courses in reflexive filmmaking designed by visual anthropologists and carried out in collaboration with social and health institutions across Norway engaging with at-risk youths. These institutional collaborators hosted the courses and recruited participants; the visual anthropologists led the courses; and the youth participants made short films about their lives and experiences.

The present study explores the filmmaking processes and films generated by the Youth Gaze participants and provides three in-depth case studies to illustrate how the courses differed as a function of the institutional collaborator. Analytical attention is paid to the ways in which the youths constructed meaning and managed their identities in the context of the social dynamics that developed in their particular course and the social prerequisites bound to the institutional setting and state policies. Particular focus is given to the types of identities that the at-risk youths deemed relevant and feasible to adopt in their interactions with the social and health support network. The analyses are theoretically based on the symbolic interactionist perspectives of G.H. Mead and Erving Goffman, combined with Reidar Grønhaug's methodological-analytical procedure of field analysis. A central finding is that each of the courses generated a particular film form that closely paralleled the aims and practices of the respective institutional setting. This indicates that the support network surrounding at-risk youths not only supports and guides the youths, but also delineates their spaces of action and concepts of self.

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I would also like to thank the representatives from our collaborating institutions. In particular: Hanne, Maria and Marlene from the Youth Support team in Tromsø; Åse and Torsteinn from the Follow-Up Service; Per and Anne-Lise from NAV Tromsø; Janne, the community nurse; and Lena, the social teacher in Vika[1], all of whom feature in this thesis. Great thanks also go to Hilde and Geir from the Youth Support team in Stavanger and Gina, the sports and youths' consultant in Kautokeino. I admire all of you for the great devotion, care and support with which you approach the youths in your target groups. It was a pleasure to collaborate with you in the Youth Gaze film courses.

Had there been no youth participants, there would not have been a Youth Gaze (or this thesis). Accordingly, I warmly thank the participants for their willingness to participate in the film courses. To the participants: Thank you for letting me enter your lives via the stories you told me about your experiences and points of views. And thank you for the laughter, tears, courage, enthusiasm and despair that you shared with me along the way. I enjoyed sitting next to you discussing your film projects and life in general; thank you for lending me that seat. I hope that I have done justice to your filmmaking processes in my accounts in this thesis.

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Reni and Ragnhild are no longer here to receive my gratitude. I experienced a devastating loss in life when the two of them abruptly and unexpectedly passed away due to illnesses they were unaware of. Ragnhild passed away in April 2009, Reni in December 2017. In their passing, I lost not only their invaluable perspectives and sensitized gazes on the processes that we had lived and experienced together, but also the warmth of their friendship. My final process of preparing this thesis became an unexpectedly therapeutic process, similar to that which was encountered by some of the youths I write about. I can only hope that Reni and Ragnhild would appreciate my representation of the experiences

[1] The name of the village and persons are indicated via pseudonyms, in order to protect the identities of the youth participants given the small size and transparency of the village.

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August 2019,
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To Reni and Ragnhild
In loving memory

Table of contents

Introduction 1

Background: Persistent worry about the young 1

Point of departure 3

The Youth Gaze project 6

Making anthropological knowledge practically useful:

Youth Gaze and engaged anthropology 9

The focus of this thesis: Filmmaking as meaning making 13

Research questions 17

Methods and data 19

Theoretical framework 20

Implications of using participatory methods 22

Images and protection of personal privacy 23

The passing of time 24

Outline of the thesis 25

PART I: BACKGROUND 27

Chapter 1: Conceptualizing youths within the social sciences 27

Introduction: Ways of approaching and understanding youths 27

1.1 Adolescence as a developmental phase 29

1.2 Youths as subcultural producers 32

1.3 Invisible youths? Understanding youths through their own perspectives 34

1.4 Youth transitions in a globalized world 37

1.5 Selecting a perspective 40

1.6 Chapter summary and further proceedings 43

Chapter 2: At-risk youths in a Norwegian context 45
Introduction: Approaching the at-risk category 45
2.1 Meeting at the family center in Vika 45
2.2 Approaching risk narratives 48
2.3 The Norwegian state´s definition of at-risk youths 49
2.4 Key principles for acting upon risks 55
2.5 Products of the risk narrative 61
2.6 Actors mandated to act upon youth risks 62
2.7 Summary, Part I 65
PART II: THE YOUTH GAZE APPROACH 67
Chapter 3: Introducing the Youth Gaze project: Prospects and procedures 67
Introduction: Youth Gaze, an applied research project 67
3.1 The "kinder egg" vision 67
3.2 Our early assumptions about at-risk youths 69
3.3 Organization and development: From pilot to research 71
3.4 The collaborating institutions 75
3.5 Pedagogical method 77
3.6 Chapter summary 83
Chapter 4: Participation and involvement 85
Introduction: Reflections on the researcher's role 85
4.1 Participant observation in applied anthropological research 85
4.2 Participation, involvement and validity 87
4.3 Facilitator and researcher: A double bind? 89
4.4 Moving from field to text 93
Chapter 5: The film course as a method 97
Introduction: Reflections on the application of audiovisual methods 97

5.1 The visual in anthropology....97

5.2 Subject-generated filmmaking....106

5.3 Knowledge gained through photo/video elicitation techniques....109

5.4 Images and forms of knowledge....111

5.5 Dilemmas bound to subject-generated filmmaking....116

5.6 The camera as catalyst – Ethical reflections....119

5.7 Concluding remarks on methods....121

PART III: ANALYTICAL TOOLS AND ANALYSES....123

Chapter 6: The analytical tool kit....123

Introduction: Establishing a theoretical framework....123

6.1 Social phenomenology and ethnomethodology....123

6.2 Youth filmmaking through the lens of symbolic interactionism....126

6.3 Mead's reflexive self and the role of the other....128

6.4 Erving Goffman's theories on face-to-face interaction....134

6.5 The interface between micro and macro conditions:

Grønhaug´s field analysis....140

6.6 Chapter summary....143

Introduction to the empirical chapters....145

Chapter 7: Rap, biking, dancing and slapstick humor:

Negotiating presentations of self....147

Birk's new clothes – The analytical focus of this chapter....147

7.1 Finding at-risk youths....148

7.2 Formation of the group....150

7.3 The relationship between group dynamics and film expressions....162

7.4 Michael and Ida: Objectifying their rapper selves....169

7.5 Lasse and Birk enter the biking field....171

7.6 Amer's two films 175
7.7 Rachel on friendship: Making explicit the vulnerability bound to social relationships..177
7.8 World premiere: Presenting an objectification of self 180
7.9 Approaching the relationship between social fields and at-risk youths' films 181
Chapter 8: Processing and structuring memories from the past 187
Kristine turns the pages: The analytical focus of this chapter..............................187
8.1 Selecting suitable youths 188
8.2 Group dynamics 190
8.3 Social dynamics, ceremonial language and filmmaking 199
8.4 Camilla sticks to the past 200
8.5 Kristine investigates her past..206
8.6 Juxtaposing the group's filmmaking processes and film forms......................213
8.7 The premiere screening 216
8.8 Appropriating the proper dynamics of the community nursing field 218
Chapter 9: Justifying self on the outskirts of mainstream....................................221
"There's something about John": The analytical focus of this chapter................221
9.1 Selling Youth Gaze to welfare officers 222
9.2 Group dynamics 225
9.3 Social dynamics and filmmaking..234
9.4 Sofie takes control 235
9.5 John sets things straight 240
9.6 Envisioned and expected futures 245
9.7 The premiere screening 248
9.8 The significance of success criteria within social fields 249

Chapter 10: Concluding reflections on at-risk youths and their filmic presentations of self 255
Introduction: Lessons learned from the Youth Gaze project 255
10.1 Insights and developments in the research process 256
10.2 Three distinct filmmaking processes in three institutional settings 258
10.3 At-risk youths and social inclusion:
Juxtaposing State policies with the youths' identity claims 263
10.4 Methodological lessons 269
10.5 Ways forward 274
Epilogue 277
References 279
Appendix 1 : Information letter to participants 293
Appendix 2: Letter of informed consent 295
Appendix 3: Michael's rap 297
Appendix 4: Kristine's selected poem 299

Introduction

Background: Persistent worry about the young

Across history and societies, there has been a persistent worry about the young, directed towards their actions, behaviors, decisions and prospects. There is a continuity bound to this worry, not necessarily in regard to what we as adults worry about, but the fact that we *do* worry. This persistent worry could be seen as connected with our tendency to associate youths with the future – that is, *our common* future, the future of society (Madsen, 2018; Ziehe, 1993). Youth – perhaps more than any other group – figure significantly into our imaginings of social change (Cole & Durham, 2007). We want youths to be included, to function well, and to lead good lives in the society we have created. Nonetheless, we observe some youths at the margins of what we consider good, healthy, normal and expected. We refer to these youths as "at-risk."

Within contemporary Norway, much dedication and resources have been invested by parents, teachers, social and health workers and politicians to prevent youths from falling outside of the activities and arenas they are expected to engage with – namely school and organized leisure activities that are considered healthy and socially integrative (Rogstad & Reegård, 2016). Over the years, politicians have come up with new strategies; social, education and health workers have tested new initiatives and preventative measures; and researchers have worked to distinguish the central causal factors for youths quitting school, facing mental challenges and choosing drug or criminal lifestyles. However, these efforts and initiatives have had surprisingly little impact on the school drop-out rate, which has remained steady at 30 percent (with respect to high school) for the past twenty years.[2]

Currently, withdrawal from high school is considered one of the most critical "youth problems" in Norwegian society. Although the number of high school drop-outs in Norway

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[2] The drop-out percentage is even higher for vocational programs. See: https://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/var-politikk/utdanningsforbundet-mener/artikler/frafall/ (accessed June 18, 2019).

has been considerably stable over the past decades, we worry more about youths dropping out today than we did 10 or 20 years ago (Vogt, 2017). The public debate concerning school withdrawal is largely infused with arguments from register-based research, which draw statistical interconnections between school drop-outs and challenging outcomes in later life (ibid., 2017:105). Leaving school is thus highly associated with future exclusion in society and poor prospects on the job market.

Youths' mental health conditions over the last decade have given rise to another heated public debate. A national survey, UNGDATA, which asked youths to report their own experiences of health and social wellbeing, indicated positive developments in many regards. The findings painted a picture of the current generation of youths as well adapted, active, law abiding and home loving. However, the findings also revealed that an increased number of youths experience stress and worry in their everyday lives (particularly young girls) of which some demonstrate symptoms of depression and anxiety (Bakken, 2014, 2018). The media debate that followed the announcement of the UNGDATA findings treated the young girls' mental health complaints as symptomatic of a malfunctioning school system that placed too much pressure on the youths to achieve (Amundsen, 2014; Gjestad, 2014; Skartveit, 2014). This debate contributed to adding a new group to the at-risk category – overachievers who stood at risk of school burnout. These persons were placed next to school drop-outs and youths who struggled to follow the school scheme due to attention deficit, restlessness, truancy, and various other behavioral problems. The term "generation achievement" (*Generasjon prestasjon*) was introduced, and subsequently widely applied to "our youths" and the challenges they face.

This wider conception of at-risk persons, absorbing new groups of youths, could be seen to simultaneously contribute to a narrower conception of normality. In turn, youths may find themselves with even fewer chances of fitting into perceived normality. Reidun Follesø refers to the way in which "risk" may work as an exclusionary term: "Researchers describe youth; youth describe each other – and most refer to youth at risk as 'the others'" (Follesø, 2015:245). She argues that youths seldom identify themselves as at-risk; rather, they are placed in this category by others. But how do they experience this external identification, and how would these youths describe their lives – their past, present and future – if invited to do so?

In my PhD research, I explored how youths who had been categorized (by social and health professionals) as at-risk presented themselves and their everyday lives and situations. I was curious to determine whether their accounts would provide very different tales about youth or whether their risk discourses and lines of argumentation would parallel those of the social and health support system.

In order to approach these issues, Trond Waage, Reni Wright and I – all visual anthropologists affiliated with UiT – The Arctic University of Norway – designed a participatory video project called "Youth Gaze."[3] With this project, we sought to engage selected youths in a process of creative expression, dialogue and reflection around issues and topics they were concerned about. Youth participants were recruited in collaboration with social and health institutions that provided services to and worked closely with at-risk youth.

Methodically, we invited the recruited youths to attend film courses in which each recounted the central aspects of their life in the form of a short documentary film. As part of the course, we collectively (i.e. the youths, the researchers and the social and health workers) viewed the youths' film footage and discussed the topics and issues introduced in the recordings. In doing so, we aimed at exchanging knowledge and perspectives between the youths and the adult researchers/professionals. Each film course was held in an institutional setting with which the youths were affiliated, and the training and supervision were provided by myself and my colleague, Reni Wright. Trond Waage functioned as the project leader.

Point of departure

On an afternoon in late January with snow-lit streets, Reni Wright, Trond Waage and I entered the Youth Support team's offices in downtown Tromsø, northern Norway. As we stamped the snow off our boots and hung up our winter coats in the hall, we could hear a murmur of voices coming from the living room. I was excited about meeting the participants and getting started with the first Youth Gaze film course. We entered the living room, where six youths were seated on sofas around a coffee table. An aroma of pizza filled the room. The youths were absorbed in conversation and barely took notice of us. One of the girls

[3] Originally named *Ungdomsblikk* in Norwegian.

talked with an eager and loud voice, insisting "But she is a girl, just look!" The girl sitting next to her had lifted her loose sweater, pulled her T-shirt tight and squeezed her breasts forward, as if to prove that she was a girl. At first glance, I had already mistaken her for a boy.

Hanne and Marlene, our collaborators from the Youth Support team, entered the living room from the kitchen and introduced us to the group of girls. At the same time, another girl and two boys entered the room. Several of the girls shouted the name of one of the boys, exclaiming, "I want a hug!" The boy responded with a nonchalant, "I'll make a round later." We all sat by the coffee table, and Hanne and Marlene served pizza and soft drinks. The atmosphere was festive and the youths continued to talk with loud and eager voices.

The Youth Support team's building at the time of the fieldwork [5]

Overview of Tromsø island[4]

I opened up the meeting with a general presentation of the film course and the filmmaking task. A petite girl with long brown hair and an attentive look threw in remarks throughout my presentation: "We're supposed to film ourselves and pretend that there is not a camera there"; "We're supposed to film everyday things." I regarded her comments as reflections of the preconceptions she had gained about the course from her conversations with Hanne and Marlene during recruitment. When hearing me confirm that the films were supposed to concern issues related to the youths' everyday lives and experiences, the bold girl who had pointed out her friend's breasts rolled her eyes and said, "I ain't telling shit."

[4] Photo collected from the web-site: https://www.itromso.no/meninger/2016/10/07/«Tromsø-må-bygge-høyt-tett-og-langs-sjøen»-13611580.ece
[5] Photo collected from the web-site: http://www.tlhl.no/leilighetene.shtml

She leaned back into the sofa with her arms crossed. A girl with blonde curly hair and glasses raised her hand and asked me how she could portray drinking and partying on video. “Drinking is a hot topic within my group of friends,” she explained. She continued, “Should we fill up the beer bottles with water and pretend that we’re drunk?” Reni answered that she should not film while she and her friends were drunk, and she assured the girl that we would return to these questions later, when we started brainstorming ideas for the films. The boy-looking girl commented that, on the island where she had previously lived, dope was more of a topic, or “problem” (she gestured with her fingers as if to signal a quotation mark in the air).

Trond moved on to give a brief account of his background in youth research, emphasizing the importance of listening to what youths have to say about their own issues and concerns. The youths listened silently, with some nodding their heads. He continued by pointing out that many researchers and politicians who engage with youth issues have failed to do this and have instead paid more attention to what adults have to say about the lives and situations of youths. He made a point of this being the background to our interest in having *them* give accounts of the relevant and important issues in their lives, and how we believed that filmmaking could be a fruitful means for them to communicate such issues. At this point, Reni distributed a time schedule and practical information about the course meetings. She also explained that filmmaking involves quite a bit of work, but at the same time ensured them that we would follow them closely in their work and help them make a film they could be proud of.

After the meeting was over, we asked Marlene from the Youth Support team how she thought the meeting went. She thought it went well, but she gently remarked that the Youth Support team tended to avoid asking questions concerning drinking and nightlife when minors were present. This remark referred to a moment at which, towards the end of the meeting, the boy-looking girl had revealed that she and her friends usually went downtown to party on the weekends, and Trond had followed up with questions regarding where they tended to go. The youths sitting nearby, aged 15 to 16, had listened attentively. In a proactive sense, Marlene also cautioned us against being too strict (she gestured what she meant by pointing her finger in an accusatory manner), in order to not scare the participants away.

At that time, I did not give Marlene's comments much reflection, but simply received her feedback as friendly advice. It was only much later, in the process of delivering the film courses, that I came to pay more attention to the prevalence of implicit values and codes of conduct within our collaborating institutions and the Youth Gaze scheme, and started to reflect on the ways in which these set the conditions for the youths' filmmaking processes. This contributed to the relational approach I took in my analysis, in an attempt to understand how the youths' filmmaking had been shaped by various contextual conditions on both micro and macro levels.

The Youth Gaze project

The above example depicts my first meeting with the participants of the first Youth Gaze film course. Youth Gaze was a participatory research project[6] that comprised ten courses in reflexive filmmaking held in cities and villages across Norway (with the majority in northern Norway). All of the courses were co-facilitated by social and health workers affiliated with institutions providing services for youths. Each course included three to nine youth participants and lasted five to six weeks. In total, 66 youths participated in the project. The courses were offered to youths in our collaborating institutions' respective target groups, which means that all participants were, for various reasons, considered at-risk youths. In each course, one or two social or health workers from the host institution oversaw recruitment and attended the course, in part or in full. Reni Wright and I served as course leaders in eight of the courses, whereas Trond Waage facilitated two courses[7].

A key ambition of the Youth Gaze project was to create a space for the co-creation and exchange of views. Within the film courses, the youths, social and health workers and researchers gathered and collectively supported the youths' filmmaking processes. The youth participants were given relatively free reign in determining how they wished to express themselves in their films. We, as facilitators, wanted the youths to feel ownership over their film projects and for them to play an essential role in gathering and interpreting data (audiovisual material). Besides, we hoped that the pedagogical approach of the film

[6] The participatory method invites informants to participate in the research project. Such participation can be practiced in multiple ways, but the intention broadly concerns including informants as "partners in the design and implementation of research involving issues that affect their lives" (Powers and Tiffany 2006: 879).
[7] The data-material discussed in this thesis comprise data from the eight courses in which I participated.

course could provide the social and health workers with a tool to dialogue with youths in the future, as part of their ordinary outreach work.

For the youths, we hoped that the filmmaking task would provide them the opportunity to not only express themselves in new and creative ways about issues they considered important, but also reflect on their situation and their points of view, and become acquainted with other peoples' perspectives. We believed that something good would come out of the personal expression, dialogue and reflection (for all parties involved, young and old), in terms of developing a better capacity to understand issues from different perspectives and angles and experiencing being listened to and taken seriously. Finally, we believed that the project would enable youths' voices and perspectives to be heard and attended to, within the arenas of both research and practical social and health work with at-risk youths.

Thus, the Youth Gaze project was situated at the intersection of societal and research challenges and concerns, and had both applied and research goals. The project grew out of and contributed to current debates and challenges within political, educational, social and health sectors, with respect to finding inclusive and engaging ways to approach at-risk youths.[8] The project also related to current debates and issues in interdisciplinary youth research on how best to approach youths in ways that capture their voices and perspectives and acknowledge the practices, variations and negotiations in their production of culture and identity.[9] The Youth Gaze project could thus be conceived as a strategy to respond to these societal and research challenges.

Background and project development

The Youth Gaze project was developed by Trond Waage, Reni Wright and myself – visual anthropologists in the Department of Social Sciences[10] at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway. Associate Professor Trond Waage functioned as the project leader. With a background in youth research, participatory and cross-cultural learning approaches and extensive experience applying audiovisual methods in the collection and communication of

[8] See Chapter 2 for a more comprehensive presentation and discussion of the Norwegian state's policies on how to approach at-risk youths and their issues.

[9] See Chapter 1 for an overview of dominant perspectives and debates within interdisciplinary youth research.

[10] See: https://en.uit.no/om/enhet/utdanning?p_dimension_id=88153 and https://en.uit.no/education/program/269222/visual_anthropology_-_master

knowledge (see e.g. Waage, 1994; 2002, 2007, 2013, 2016, 2018, Waage and Hope, 2012), Waage conceived of the idea to have youths film and tell stories of their lives as a strategy to identify the central issues and concerns pertaining to youths' identities and everyday lives.

Reni Wright and I joined the project not long after we had completed our Master's degrees in Visual Anthropology. In our Master's projects, we had gained experience conducting long-term ethnographic fieldwork in Taiwan (Wright, 2004, 2005) and India (Hope, 2003, 2004), and producing ethnographic films. Reni was also a trained photographer. Youth Gaze represented a new terrain for us both, as we were used to operating cameras, ourselves, rather than facilitating the filmmaking processes of others. However, we found this new approach exciting and, together with Trond, we started developing the initial concept of the Youth Gaze project, contacting social and health workers to build a network and writing applications for funding.

In 2005, we received funding for the Youth Gaze project pilot. The financial support came from the Directorate of Health and Social Affairs, the Regional Centre for Child and Youth Mental Health and Child Welfare (RKBU) and the Sami National Competency Center (SANKS). Through the pilot, we tested the Youth Gaze initiative through four Youth Gaze film courses. Within these test courses, the applied aspects and methodological value were given the most weight. We organized two courses in Tromsø, one in Stavanger and one in Kautokeino.[11] In our observations, we were attentive to the ways in which the youths and social and health workers received the project, what they made of it and whether the social and health workers considered reflexive filmmaking a useful tool that they would consider integrating into their ordinary practices. In these early courses we collaborated mostly with the Youth Support team; in Kautokeino, where no such service existed, we worked with the local youth and sports counselor.

In 2007, the Youth Gaze project entered a new phase with research more in the foreground. This coincided with UiT – The Arctic University of Norway granting the Youth Gaze project two PhD stipends, of which I was offered one and Ragnhild Magnus Lindekleiv,

[11] Tromsø is the largest city in northern Norway, with approximately 65,000 inhabitants at the time of the research. Stavanger is a larger city on the southwest coast, with approximately 120,000 inhabitants. Kautokeino is a Sami village in the northernmost county of Norway, with approximately 3,000 inhabitants (www.ssb.no).

a psychology candidate, the other. At this point, we gathered our experiences from the pilot phase and further expanded our institutional network through collaboration with the community health nursing service, the Follow-Up Service and the Norwegian Welfare and Labor Organization's (NAV) youth team. The community health nursing service is based in schools and provides health counselling for all pupils. However, it provides additional and individual attention to pupils facing particular social and health challenges. The Follow-Up Service targets youths who have dropped out of school, whereas the NAV youth team works with unemployed youths. Both the Follow-Up Service and the NAV counsel youths with the aim of engaging them in some kind of activity (e.g. school, work, work training or a traineeship). In addition to partnering with these institutions, we also continued our collaboration with the Youth Support team, who engage in youth outreach work and hold a looser mandate of identifying youths facing challenges and ensuring that they get help and support, either from the Youth Support team or from another service.[12]

The research associated with the Youth Gaze project aimed at exploring certain aspects of the film courses. In addition to delivering the courses[13], Ragnhild and I simultaneously researched the Youth Gaze initiative as: 1) a health preventative measure (Ragnhild) and 2) a social arena for identity work (Siren).

Making anthropological knowledge practically useful: Youth Gaze and engaged anthropology

The Youth Gaze project could be categorized as "engaged" and "applied" anthropology due to its configuration of roles, relationships, tasks and responsibilities, and due to its nature as a social intervention. Engaged anthropology seeks to advance the application of anthropological knowledge and practice in ways that contribute to solving human problems and promoting social change and a more just world (Pink, 2007). However, some argue that anthropology – more broadly – has been engaged from its inception, and that anthropological knowledge was developed to solve human problems in its attempts to raise and speak about crucial issues in contemporary society. Setha L. Low and Sally Engle Merry, for example, suggest a rather wide definition of engaged anthropology that embraces a

[12] I depict our collaborating partners and their mandates in more detail in Chapter 2.
[13] This double role mostly applied to me. Ragnhild took on an assistant role in two of the courses.

range of practices, from "basic commitment to our informants, to sharing and support with the communities with which we work, to teaching and public education, to social critique in academic and public forums, to more commonly understood forms of engagement such as collaboration, advocacy, and activism" (Low & Merry, 2010:214). Others associate engagement more narrowly, connecting it with a politically conscious critical perspective that flourished within the discipline from the 1930s through the 1970s that, in particular, focused on social inequality and political abuse (see, e.g., Roseberry 2002; Silverman, 2007). Still others treat public engagement as an aim that anthropologists should strive towards through closer collaboration with research subjects – be they people, communities or movements (Beck & Maida, 2013; Waage 2013, 2016, 2018) – or through making greater efforts at disseminating anthropological knowledge to the wider public (Hylland-Eriksen, 2006). From these various positions, anthropological engagement is alternately treated as something that "is," "was" or "ought to be." However, across these perspectives, there is a commonly expressed will that there should be greater engagement in anthropology, and that engagement should move closer to the center of the discipline.

This focus on engagement throughout much of anthropology is in step with the experience of academics across the globe, who are being urged by universities and research councils to engage in research with impact beyond academia (Pink, O'Dell & Fors 2017:12). This is largely the case in Scandinavia, where research councils currently require applicants to clearly explain and legitimate the social and cultural impact of their work. At the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU), where I am currently employed, the university's key strategy is captured in the slogan "Knowledge for a better world."[14] One may also find similar requests within anthropological institutions. Within the American Anthropological Association, for instance, a new code of ethics was introduced in 2012 in which the principle of "do no harm" was expanded to a commitment of "doing good" and advocating for people's wellbeing (AAA, 2012). Thus, today, anthropologists are met with expectations from various directions to engage in research with social impact that will contribute to solving human problems.

Jon Mitchell posits that "the notion of planned impact poses a particular problem for anthropological research since it is normally based on ethnographic fieldwork that is by

[14] See: https://www.ntnu.edu/vision-values-social-mission-key-challenges-and-main-objectives#values.

definition volatile, unpredictable and difficult to plan" (Mitchell, 2014:278). He argues that engaged working carries consequences for the conduct of anthropological research. Low and Merry similarly remark that "engagement is transforming the way anthropologists do fieldwork, the work they do with other scholars and with those they study, and the way they think about public as well as scholarly audiences" (Low & Merry, 2010:214).

Sarah Pink, Tom O'Dell and Vaike Fors (2017) have attempted to study the research premises of applied anthropologists. They point out that many applied research projects are interdisciplinary and therefore require an acceptance of the value of other approaches. Such projects require anthropologists to adapt their practices and perhaps compromise with other researchers and professionals when establishing suitable methodological approaches. Susan Hogan (2017) notes that working across disciplines is fraught with complexity, as it involves partnering with academics and professionals who adhere to contrasting epistemologies and thus different ideas of how to judge knowledge claims (Hogan, 2017:143). Pink, O'Dell and Fors stress the need for applied researchers to "acknowledge the multiplicity of approaches that are emerging across disciplines (as well as highly diverse occupational categories)" (2017:10), and further argue for a situated anthropology that accounts for and learns from the strategies and approaches of other disciplines and professions. Thus, there is a need for "some degree of reflexivity regarding how these new configurations of roles and responsibilities are generative of particular outcomes" (ibid. 2017:16).

Within the social and health institutions that hosted the Youth Gaze film courses, the social and health workers were guided by the goals of risk mitigation and risk prevention. Within these cultural settings, theories of behavioral change were consolidated to lesser or stronger degrees in the institutional ways of thinking and acting. When bringing our Youth Gaze intervention to these settings, we introduced a method for triggering dialogue and reflection with the youths that involved and engaged the youths in creative and artistic expression and knowledge production concerning their situation. This approach was warmly welcomed by our institutional collaborators, as it represented a means of engaging in user involvement, which constituted a policy request. Furthermore, our collaborators saw other potential benefits in the Youth Gaze project, tied to risk prevention and health promotion ideals: the project could contribute to youths' sense of mastery and experience of social

belonging; their processing of challenging life experiences; and their identification of personal goals and successful reflection around their life situation (and therefore greater self-efficacy). In our planning of the film courses, the social and health workers proposed suggestions for how the Youth Gaze scheme could be adapted to meet such valued outcomes; we practiced a certain methodological flexibility in order to accommodate their suggestions. Attention to risk mitigation further increased when the Psychology PhD scholar joined the project to research the extent to which the Youth Gaze project could be considered a preventative health measure. Different stakeholders with different agendas and epistemological foundations thus affected the pedagogical set-up of the courses.

The ways in which the various actors' input fed into the filmmaking processes and produced distinct outcomes could only be identified after the courses were complete. Although not anticipated, the contributions of differently situated actors, which laid the premises for the youths' filmmaking, became a central topic in my research. This was due to my gradual realization that the film course scheme, itself, and its involved actors and settings, provided central contexts for understanding the ways in which the youths engaged with other youths and adults and presented themselves through film media. In this way, my experience of carrying out the Youth Gaze film courses, as both a facilitator and a collaborator, enabled me to investigate at-risk youths as a socially and culturally constructed concept.

As applied researchers, we are situated between theory and practice; thus, our challenge is to find constructive ways to draw theoretical scholarship and applied practice together (Pink, O'Dell & Fors, 2017; Stoller, 2017). Within the Youth Gaze project, social phenomenology and symbolic interactionism constituted important theoretical frameworks for both our applied practice and my analysis of the youths' filmmaking processes. These philosophical-theoretical directions value emic understandings and attend to the ways in which meaning is negotiated and consolidated dialogically. Practically, we applied video elicitation techniques[15] to engage the youths in depicting their everyday lives and experiences on video, so that their footage could be explored and discussed within the

[15] Video elicitation is an analytical method that consists in looking at and discussing photos or video footage together with research subjects (Harper, 2012; Pauwels, 2015). Within Visual Anthropology such techniques give resonance to Jean Rouch's early experimentations with feed-back as method (Rouch, 1961; Rouch, 2003[1973]).

group (i.e. the youths, the social and health workers and the researchers). Analytically, the youth's footage was understood in relation to the social dynamics, roles and relations that developed within the separate film courses; the structural conditions of the film course scheme, itself; the institutional setting; and generalized concepts of risks and at-risk youths in government policies. This approach entailed a particular focus on practice, actors and process.

What an anthropological approach can perhaps best contribute within an interdisciplinary applied research setting is an exploratory approach, attending to "what is going on here" and exploring how differently situated actors interpret phenomena and social situations. Rather than primarily targeting whether predicted or desired outcomes are achieved (which is the key ambition of many applied research projects), anthropological approach tends to go broader and perhaps deeper with its attention to particularity and context. This makes it well equipped to capture also the unintended consequences of interventions and to distinguish the (internal and external) structures and power relations that may affect interventions and outcomes. These may be considered important contributions to the research output of other disciplines and professions within applied research projects. Anthropological attention to the ways in which knowledge is negotiated and produced between situated actors, in combination with other disciplines' focus on the impacts and effects of an intervention, may provide a richer understanding of how the intervention "works" in practice and may be useful when the intervention is later administered in the field of practice. Taken together, the shared and interdisciplinary efforts may, in this way, play an important role for succeeding in improving people's wellbeing and facilitating individual and social change.

The focus of this thesis: Filmmaking as meaning making

This thesis provides insight into the ways in which the youths managed their identities through their filmmaking in the Youth Gaze project. In particular, it highlights the meaning-making and social aspects bound to the youths' filmmaking processes.

The work of making a film about one's everyday life and experiences necessitates a meaning-making process that involves structuring and combining events, situations,

experiences and issues in a way that conveys a desired meaning or message. Dai Vaughan states that a film is *about* something, whereas reality is not (Vaughan, 1999). With this, he argues that documentary filmmaking implies making meaning from everyday life situations – situations to which we do not necessarily designate meaning, a higher purpose or an aim, as they unfold. However, when everyday situations and events (or tales of such) are recorded and included as scenes in a film, they are revisited, carefully examined and juxtaposed with other situations/experiences and, in this way, attributed a certain position and significance. Narrative practice is tied to identity work in the sense that the act of composing a story about oneself implies a simultaneous creation and articulation of identity (Sætermo, 2016).

Since the 1960s, Richard Chalfen has engaged in a great number of applied visual anthropology projects that have explored the identity and meaning making processes surrounding young people's audiovisual presentations of self. In *The Philadelphia Project*, he set out to demonstrate that, if filmmaking was introduced in a relatively "neutral," culture-free manner, subjects' recordings would reflect their culture-specific ways of "seeing their surroundings" (Chalfen & Rich, 2007). Through this project, he captured a plurality of youths' depictions of their life worlds and he researched the relationships between socio-cultural variables, image expression and patterns of communication (Chalfen, 1981). Chalfen introduced his "socio-documentary filmmaking" to diverse groups of adolescents, through a number of filmmaking workshops. The finished films were presented to social and health workers, who reacted with surprise when experiencing their clients in "new and significant ways" (Chalfen & Rich, 2007).

The social and health professionals later applied Chalfen's socio-documentary filmmaking method to serve their own needs of dialoging with and following up with children and youths at their child guidance clinic. This formed the background to Chalfen and Michal Rich's further development of the "video intervention assessment" (VIA) method (Chalfen, Sherman & Rich, 2010; Rich, Lamola, Gordon & Chalfen, 2000), whereby adolescents with a chronic medical condition created video diaries of their everyday lives. A central purpose of the VIA was to teach clinicians what it meant for the youths to live with their condition (Chalfen & Rich, 2007:55). Chalfen and Rich's works were a source of inspiration for the Youth Gaze project, in the sense that their projects demonstrated that

filmmaking methods are equipped to capture important aspects of how youths see their world and their position in it, and to promote dialogue and transmit knowledge between youths, service providers and researchers in health and social work contexts.

The experimental film works of Jean Rouch were another evident source of inspiration for the Youth Gaze project and my selected research approach. Separating from the predominant realist perspective found in observational cinema and in Richard Chalfen's early works, Rouch's approach instead valued how art may move people to think new thoughts and feel new feelings (Stoller, 1992). Throughout his career, Rouch was particularly concerned with the social processes and effects that appear to be triggered by the camera. He did not hand over cameras to his subjects, but he collaborated closely with them. Rouch's approach was interventionist: the camera was handled in such a way as to provoke or catalyze moments of self-revelation (Barbash & Taylor, 1997). He was of the opinion that the presence of the camera could "provoke the subjects into producing a performance that revealed their beliefs, sentiments, attitudes and dreams that lay beneath the everyday surface of things" (Henley, 2009:340). In the film *Chronique d'un été (Chronicle of a Summer, 1961)*, made by Rouch and Edgar Morin, six persons were asked the question: *Comment tu-vis?* ("How do you live?"). The subjects' responses determined the direction that the film followed (Henley, 2009:152). No script was applied; rather, the filmmakers set out to participate directly in the everyday lives of the filmed subjects. The film subjects became collaborators in the film project in terms of co-directing the film and devoting time to analyze – with the filmmakers – the footage they featured in. The film ended with a scene in which the filmmakers and film subjects gathered in a cinema hall to watch and discuss the edited draft of the film; thus, the film included the subjects' reactions to and interpretations of the scenes in which they featured, and this lent the subjects a voice and position in the film that had rarely been seen before. Such "feedback" sessions were essential to achieving Rouch's ideal of a "shared anthropology" based on continuous dialogue between the filmmaker and the film subjects (Rouch, 2003 [1973]).

When designing the Youth Gaze project, we took inspiration from Rouch's collaborative approach and his application and conception of the camera as a tool that not only documents lived life, but also catalyzes new experiences, relationships and meanings. Sarah Pink (2017) addresses the distinction between the camera as a documentation device

and the camera as a future-oriented tool: "If we depart from the idea that video and photography only bring a representation of the past into the present, we open up the possibility of considering how they might help us in future-oriented research (…) understand[ing] video not as 'taking us back' but as something that we move forward with when we view it, in order to think with it anew" (Pink, 2017:43). From this perspective, filmmaking represents a relevant tool for stepping (with the film subjects) from the present to the future, into what we do not and cannot yet know (ibid., 2017:36), hence, it is a tool that, in addition to documenting lived life, triggers meaning-making and improvisation.

In participatory and engaged research contexts researchers have historically not paid sufficient attention to the social processes that encompass the film product and filmmaking (Blum-Ross, 2013; Ruby, 2000; Turner, 1992). In this thesis, I focus on the ways in which the youths engaged in filmmaking and meaning making within particular social and institutional contexts, understanding their recorded scenes as what David MacDougall calls "sites of meaning potential" (MacDougall, 1998:77). MacDougall asserts that films (or film excerpts) involve different readings at different levels and in different contexts. Although the filmmaker has an idea about what she or he wants to convey with the film, it is not guaranteed that viewers will read the film in accordance with such intentions. Within the Youth Gaze film course, differently positioned actors gathered, supported and engaged with the youths' filmmaking processes. A central objective in this thesis is to explore how the youths, social and health workers and researchers contributed to the meaning making and filmmaking that occurred within the Youth Gaze setting. This perspective argues for "the centrality of the *interaction* of observer and observed" (Stoller, 1992:213, italics in original) and thus gives weight to the social and relational constitution of the youths' films and identities.

The Youth Gaze project may be understood as a contribution to engaged and applied visual anthropology in its transparency and reflexivity towards dialogical knowledge production in applied settings, as well as its consideration of the settings within and around the intervention in terms of their impact on meaning making processes. In terms of visual anthropology, the Youth Gaze project may propose more engaged work within the discipline and provide an example of some of the opportunities and challenges bound to participatory and collaborative schemes in which film-authorship is passed on to the research

participants, driven by their quests to portray their being-in-the-world. To anthropology, the Youth Gaze project may exemplify how anthropological knowledge can be gleaned through interventions that look nothing like conventional fieldwork; indeed, it may demonstrate that interventionist and collaborative approaches may uniquely enable anthropologists to gain emic knowledge on people' lives and experiences, as well as insight into the ways in which people negotiate meaning and make sense of their daily lives, in dialogue with their social and cultural surroundings. Hopefully, readers of this thesis will conclude that audiovisual and participatory methods and anthropological theory have much to contribute to collaborative work in applied settings, in an effort to find good solutions to societal problems and challenges.

Research questions

In this thesis, I draw on the examples of three Youth Gaze film courses carried out in different institutional contexts. The courses are treated as three discrete cases to demonstrate the variation in social and filmmaking processes generated between each institutional environment. I apply the same analytical procedure to study the filmmaking processes of each course.

The central research questions of my study comprise:

1. What characterizes the social processes surrounding the youths' filmmaking in the Youth Gaze film courses?
2. What identities do the youths perform in their films?
3. In what ways are social and filmmaking processes within the Youth Gaze film courses connected to institutional aims and practices?
4. What are the similarities and contrasts between the at-risk youths' understandings and depictions of their situation and State policies' descriptions of the situation of at-risk youths?

In answering the first question, I apply participant observation data on the youths' social interaction with other participants, facilitators and social and health workers, all within the frames of the particular film course. In each case-study, I present the social dynamics of the film course through a processual perspective, describing how the interaction developed from the first meeting to the end of the course. I pay special

attention to the ways in which the youths suggested, negotiated and established codes and rules of relevance that guided the interactions between them.

In answering the second question, I pursue the youths' work in presenting themselves in their film projects. In doing so, I draw upon participant observation data, conversation data (from both individual and group discussions) and audiovisual data. Across the three case-studies, I attend to the ways in which the youths managed their identities within their film projects and describe their constant modifications and final objectifications of self. I depict how the youths brought in recordings, screened and discussed these in the group, kept or discarded their recordings and stuck to or revised their filmmaking plans. Finally, I describe the ways in which they ultimately constructed their film narratives.

To answer the third question, I draw on my findings from the two former questions on social processes and filmmaking within the Youth Gaze project. I juxtapose these with my findings on institutional standards and practices, generated from my observational data of the institutional partners' ways of relating to youths and my meetings and conversations with the institutional collaborators. I give particular emphasis to the planning meetings with institutional collaborators, as it was in these meetings that the collaborators expressed their strategies for recruiting youths and the potential they saw in the Youth Gaze project. Their comments in these meetings comprised important indicators of their aims and considerations of suitable tasks with respect to youths in their target groups. In my analysis, I indicate the interconnections between the institutional aims and practices and the youths' social interaction and filmmaking to delineate the space of action granted to the at-risk youths in the film courses. In this way, I address who the at-risk youths were permitted to "be," how they were meant to relate to others and the types of identities they were encouraged to adopt, within the context of the distinct institutional environments.

As the social processes, filmmaking processes and institutional practices played out simultaneously during the film courses, I merge them in this thesis. Each case provides an account of what took place in a particular course, from the first to the final meeting. The empirical descriptions conclude with a discussion of the analytical findings. In this discussion, I give weight to the interconnection between social interaction, filmmaking, and institutional aims and practices. This discussion thus concerns at-risk youths' spaces of

action within distinct institutional settings, treating the social and structural constraints that influenced the youths' filmmaking.

Following these case analyses (Chapters 7–9), I summarize (in Chapter 10) the findings across cases and provide further reflections on the youths' filmic identity claims. I situate this discussion in the context of dominant and general concepts of "at-risk youth" on a policy level.

To answer the fourth question, I juxtapose my analytical findings from my study of the three cases with archival data from policy documents. In this last step, I explore the ways in which definitional frames surrounding youth risks on a macro policy level resemble or oppose the at-risk youths' understandings and presentations of themselves within the Youth Gaze film courses. In particular, I examine similarities and differences in their conceptualizations of social inclusion, which stood out as an overarching policy goal for at-risk youths.

Taken together, the answers to the four research questions presented in this thesis contribute to a better understanding of the social construction of at-risk youths.

Methods and data

In this study, I mainly relied on participatory video methods (reflexive filmmaking) to gain access to and acquire data on the youths' ways of understanding their worlds and their positions therein. Reflexive filmmaking, supplemented with other participatory techniques (e.g. sketching, brainstorming and discussing in groups), was applied as a strategy to interest and engage the youths in creative processes that encouraged them to share and discuss personal experiences and perspectives. The youth participants contributed to the data collection through filming from their everyday settings and bringing their filmed material to the film course setting. The youths, themselves, directed their own film projects and thus contributed to putting their selected topics on the agenda for discussion within the film course setting.

In the study, I supplemented the participatory approach with more classical anthropological methods: participant observation and informal interviews and conversations. In total, the data material I collected by means of these various methods included:

- participant observation data bound to the youths' filmmaking;
- participant observation data bound to the youths' social engagement with other participants, the social and health workers and the facilitators/researchers;
- conversation data from group discussions (surrounding, e.g., the screening of film sequences) and individual discussions with participants;
- audiovisual data comprised of film sequences, photographs, drawings and edited films produced by the participants;
- interview data from informal semi-structured individual interviews with a selection of youth participants three years after the film courses; and
- conversation data with social and health workers from our collaborating institutions, prior, during and after the film courses, as well as notes from the planning and evaluation meetings we had with these partners.

To support my preparation of one of the background chapters (Chapter 2) and the analyses presented in Chapter 10, I also collected secondary data comprised of policy documents on social and health issues (Official Norwegian Reports (NOU), white papers and bills) published in the timeframe of 2000 to 2010 (the decade in which the Youth Gaze film courses were delivered).

Theoretical framework

My selected theoretical framework complies with the social phenomenological theory of science and takes inspiration from symbolic interactionism, action theory and the agency–structure debate within the social sciences. To perform my analyses of the youths' filmmaking, I related to theoreticians and theories that take, as a starting point, the idea that our concept of self and our ways of performing self rely on our engagements with other people. Both George H. Mead (1962 [1934], 1998 [1913]) and Erving Goffman (1959, 1981, 1986, 2005 [1967]) propose perspectives and concepts that capture the social mechanisms involved in the social constitution of the self. In my study, these perspectives were useful for my targeting of the relational and situational aspects of the youths' filmmaking.

Across the chapters in which I present and analyze three distinct filmmaking processes (Chapters 7–9), I apply a consistent analytical structure, starting with a symbolic interactionist-inspired analysis based on the theories of Mead and Goffman. In this

approach, I place the interaction situation at the center of the analysis and I attend to the ways in which meaning, identity and social order were negotiated and socially constructed on a micro, face-to-face level in the Youth Gaze courses. In this first part of the analysis, I particularly examine how the youths' management of their films both shaped and were shaped by their social engagements with other people in the film course setting.

In order to then approach the structural conditions that impinged upon the youths' filmmaking, I took advantage of Goffman's concept of ceremonial rules/language. With these concepts, Goffman draws attention to the ritualized aspects of social interaction that frame an interaction situation (2005 [1967]). In this fraction of Goffman's work, the individual is viewed less as strategic and profit maximizing and more as a person who is humble and pays respect to other persons, roles, authorities and institutions. Ceremonial language is language that is applied (often subtly and implicitly) in a distinct context, within a particular group, in order to reveal and receive respect. Within the institutions I entered in my research, where social organization was defined by asymmetric relationships, recognition (i.e. "deference") was rendered to a recipient not only on the basis of an actor's personal views about the recipient, but also on the basis of the recipient being an instance of a category. Grønhaug's concept of field analysis (1978) developed my analysis of ceremonial rules even further.

Grønhaug argues that individuals act and interact within "social fields"; that is, within interaction systems that contain distinct and implicit emic codes, rules and categories that are known and applied by a distinct set of people. The analysis of social fields takes as its departure an exploration of central tasks and issues that pertain to concrete social fields. By distinguishing the ways in which tasks are solved and issues treated within a social field, a researcher may come to explore the field's distinct patterns of organization, values and symbols, fora, situations, networks, groups and rules for including and excluding personnel (Grønhaug, 1978). Grønhaug's field analysis not only orients around the systemic conditions within fields, but it also distinguishes the ways in which fields (i.e. interaction systems) interconnect and affect each other. In this way, Grønhaug ties micro conditions with macro conditions, placing that which takes place on a micro level in connection with systemic conditions on a much larger scale. Grønhaug's concept of dominant fields and his attention to steering in role allocation – both within and between fields – drew my attention to the

types and amounts of power infused in the youths' processes of constructing audiovisual presentations of self.

My analytical strategy was to explore the phenomenon of at-risk youths by studying the ways in which the youths in the three courses (situated in different institutional settings) negotiated and constructed audiovisual presentations of self. The analyses were largely driven by Grønhaug's methodological-analytical procedure of starting by looking at the micro conditions and gradually exploring how these interconnect with macro conditions. This approach enabled me to capture mechanisms on both micro and macro levels that contributed to the social and cultural construction of at-risk youths.

Implications of using participatory methods

As mentioned above, my selected research design and position in the field may be seen to part from mainstream ways of conducting anthropological research. Within anthropology, participant observation is a core method, with the locus of participant observation tending towards "natural occurring social situations." Rather than participating in the youths' daily life situations, I facilitated and participated in their processes of constructing filmic presentations of self. My locus of research was thereby an arranged social process. However, in the context of social and health work, the Youth Gaze initiative could still be seen as a "natural occurring social situation," as it aligned with the emphasis of social and health services on involving at-risk youths in their design and delivery of services for this population. From the perspective of our institutional partners, the Youth Gaze film course naturally complemented their ordinary practices. We thus entered the field with roles and methods that were comprehensible and legitimate within these institutional fields.

As one of the course leaders, I participated in facilitating and guiding the youths through their filmmaking tasks. This enabled me to follow the youths closely in their processes of storytelling and meaning making. At the same time, I intervened in their filmmaking processes through my supervision of their work. In my discussion, rather than treating my position as biased, I am transparent about my ways of relating to the youths and provide detailed descriptions of my roles and relationships, together with those of the other actors present. This approach supports my analytical intention to reveal the relational aspects of the youths' filmmaking processes.

The use of video in research adds its own complexity, particularly in relation to participatory ideals. As asserted by Hogan (2017), film media enable people to represent and think about themselves in new ways; in participatory settings, film also brings people together. The choice of filmmaking, rather than another expressive art form (e.g. drama or painting), for the Youth Gaze project was not random. On the one hand, filmmaking represented the trade or skill of the course leaders, and was, as such, an obvious choice. On the other hand, the filmmaking medium could achieve something that other expressive art forms could not: it could both reveal the youths' strategically selected and creatively composed images (their language) and provide an "imprint" or a "record" of information about a particular situation, place, person or activity that moved beyond the strategic intentions of the filmmaker (Vaughan, 1992). This, we considered, made filmmaking particularly well suited for a participatory scheme promoting dialogue and reflection, as interpretations and discussions could refer to and revolve around the youths' intentional and unintentional communicated knowledge.

Images and protection of personal privacy

The application of audiovisual methods in research touches on ethical dilemmas related to personal privacy. Many of the youths decided to film not only themselves, but also people in their close social surroundings, as these persons formed an integral part of their everyday lives. Some youths filmed in public arenas in which youths frequently met, such as school grounds, football courts, malls and downtown areas. We instructed the youths to solicit permission before filming others and we provided them with information letters to explain the project and the purpose of their filming. In relation to the participants, we collected their informed consent for participating and sharing film material in the Youth Gaze courses.[16] At an initial phase in the course, we also discussed with the youths how they should film in ways that ensured respect for their own and others' privacy. We also emphasized that they should treat the other participants and their filmed accounts with respect and sensitivity.

[16] Youths younger than 16 had to provide a parent's consent, in addition to their own. We handed out an information letter (see appendix 1) together with the informed consent form (see appendix 2), so that both participants and parents/guardians would be well informed that participation in the project implied sharing information about their everyday lives and experiences for research purposes. The documents and the procedure were approved by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

My data material contained data of a sensitive nature, associated with youth who were underage. Many of the participants described challenging life experiences, and some depicted difficult relationships with people in their close surroundings (e.g. parents, teachers, peers, etc.). On these grounds, I decided that it would be best not to make public and connect these youths' film imagery to this thesis, as doing so would break the guarantee of anonymity I had provided to all participants. I considered that even if they were to grant me permission to publish their film material in connection with this thesis, they might change their minds about this at a later stage, when it would be difficult for me to reverse the publication. Although my thesis could be seen to suffer from this lack of visual reference to the film material, I deemed the protection of the youth participants' identities most important. As a means of compensating for the lack of images in this thesis, I have made every effort in my empirical chapters to vividly describe the youths' film recordings in my writing.

The passing of time

From our first meeting with the youths in the pilot film course to the final submission of this dissertation, almost 14 years passed. Within this timespan, my partner and I had our two children. My first maternity leave initiated a lengthy period of on-and-off work with the dissertation. Once my 4-year PhD stipend ran out in 2012, I was forced to find a job, and writing and finishing this dissertation became one more task on top of my other work duties. Nevertheless, I never considered abandoning the project; it was too dear to me, and I found it important to ensure that everything the youths had shared with me would be shared with a wider public.

However, there were times that I had to abandon the thesis temporarily. Importantly, the passing away of Ragnhild Magnus Lindekleiv, the other PhD student engaged in the project, and later on Reni Wright, my close friend and co-facilitator, left me in deep sorrow, and I could not find the words to describe the different facets and experiences of the project that was ours, together.

However, now standing at the end of the path with my dissertation, I believe that the passing of time and the accumulation of these life experiences granted me valuable analytical distance from the Youth Gaze material. Over time, the experiences I gained from

motherhood, from working as an assistant at a women's refuge, from teaching anthropology to undergraduate students and from contributing to applied multidisciplinary research projects contributed to expanding my analytical gaze and enabling me to find new discoveries in my Youth Gaze material (e.g. seeing more clearly my own role and the influence of the film course settings in the youths' filmmaking). In addition, I am certain that the personal and academic experiences I gained from the Youth Gaze project contributed to carving my professional path; to this day, they comprise an important resource that I will carry with me always.

Although the data may have now reached the age of a teenager, and the youth that I met on the Youth Gaze courses have now reached adulthood, I am constantly reminded – via public debate, newspaper articles and research publications – that my research questions and concerns sadly remain topical: How can we succeed in reaching out to at-risk youths, and how can we understanding them better?

Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into three parts. Part I is entitled "Background," and it is comprised of two chapters. In **Chapter 1**, I present and discuss some central perspectives within social scientific youth research, emphasizing anthropological contributions. I then situate my theoretical and methodological approach in relation to the presented approaches. Furthermore, I discuss the relationship between selecting a theoretical perspective and assuming a distinct ontological understanding of youths.

In **Chapter 2**, I define the central concepts of at-risk youths that dominate understandings and categorizations of such youths in the Norwegian context. I take as a departure central concepts of risk and at-risk youths within Norwegian policy documents published within the timeframe of 2000 to 2010 (coinciding with the decade of my fieldwork). I also distinguish central propositions within these documents concerning the types of measures that should be applied to prevent or diminish risk.

Taken together, Chapters 1 and 2 provide a better understanding of the central traits, principles and general assumptions bound to the external identification of at-risk youths made by researchers, politicians and professionals. These chapters form a contextual backdrop for the analyses presented later in the thesis (Chapters 7–10).

Part II, entitled “Means and Methods,” consists of three chapters. **Chapter 3** provides a thorough overview of the visions, history, social organization and pedagogical/methodological scheme of the Youth Gaze project. In **Chapter 4**, I raise and discuss a set of methodological issues related to the researcher’s position within applied research projects. I base my discussion on some of the potentials, dilemmas, implications and consequences I experienced in regards to the roles I assumed in the Youth Gaze project. **Chapter 5** situates the Youth Gaze approach within theoretical, epistemological and methodological approaches and discussions within the field of visual anthropology.

The chapters in Part II orient around methodological issues. I dedicated a significant amount of space to methodological questions and discussions in this thesis because I wanted to clarify and discuss the opportunities and legitimacy of my combined methodology of participatory research, participant observation and audiovisual techniques.

Part III, entitled “Analytical Tools and Analyses,” contains five chapters. In **Chapter 6**, I introduce the theoretical framework for my analyses. **Chapter 7** opens a series of chapters that are empirically oriented around the filmmaking processes of three separate film courses. In the chapter, I depict and analyze the group dynamics and filmmaking processes of a course held in Tromsø, in collaboration with the Youth Support team. In **Chapter 8**, I turn to a course held in Vika, in collaboration with the community health nurse. **Chapter 9** orients around a course also held in Tromsø, but this time in collaboration with the Follow-Up Service and the NAV youth team. The analyses of these three chapters aim at conveying the participants’ filmmaking processes in relation to social and institutional conditions.

Finally, in **Chapter 10**, I summarize my findings from the analyses of the three courses’ filmmaking processes before moving on to treat the discrepancy between at-risk youths’ understandings and depictions of their situation and State policies’ descriptions of the situation of at-risk youths. In doing so, I provide some final reflections on the dominant conceptions of risk and normality in contemporary Norwegian society and discuss the ways in which these appear to affect at-risk youths’ spaces of action and concepts of self. I conclude the chapter by discussing the methodological lessons and highlighting potential ways forward for the Youth Gaze project and methods.

PART I: BACKGROUND

Chapter 1: Conceptualizing youths within the social sciences

Introduction: Ways of approaching and understanding youths

How can we approach youths, in general, and at-risk youths, in particular, in order to gain an understanding of how they see their world and their position within it? How do we tend to conceptualize youths – in society, politics and academia – and in what ways do general concepts and institutionalized practices affect youths' concepts of self? These were the overarching and recurring questions in my study of at-risk youths' self-presentations on film, and accordingly, all of the chapters in this thesis relate to these questions. In this first chapter, I begin with an overview and discussion of how youths have been approached and conceptualized over time within the social sciences, and within anthropology, in particular.

Within anthropological research, some claim that the study of young people has received insufficient attention (see e.g. Caputo, 1995; Hardman, 1973; Hirschfeld, 2002; Reynolds, 1995; Toren, 1999). In a critical review of the anthropological study of children and youths in South Africa, Pamela Reynolds (1995) states that, formerly, the life worlds of young people were largely "not known because not looked for." Lying behind this claim is the idea that anthropologists (and other social scientists) have historically been deaf to young people, even though many of them have investigated social fields and activities in which young people have played a central role. Rather, anthropologists have tended to consult adults when seeking information about youths' activities and rituals. Consequently, depictions of the life worlds of South African children and youths have, according to Reynolds, consisted of general remarks and depictions: "I found attitudes towards the young that distanced them, represented them in sketches of the average boy or girl, and

made them ciphers before the forces of socialization" (Reynolds, 1995:193). Lawrence Hirschfeld (2002:611) raises the paradox that few major works within anthropology focus specifically on children and young people, although virtually all contemporary anthropology is based on the premise that culture is learned and produced, not inherited. With this, he strongly suggests that we should show greater interest in young people's processes of learning and experimentation in order to better understand the ways in which cultural forms emerge and are sustained.

Reynolds and Hirschfeld's critiques, pointing to the ways in which children and young people have largely been ignored, essentialized or misrepresented, may be juxtaposed with similar claims directed towards the discipline from feminists, post-colonial scholars and post-modernists. Whereas feminists and post-colonial scholars draw attention to the historical bias of traditional scientific discourse towards a Western male perspective (see e.g. Harding, 2006; Moore, 1988; Said, 1995), post-modernists express more general skepticism towards interpretation and representation within the social sciences (c.f. "the crisis of representation", Clifford & Marcus, 1986; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). From these camps come a request for reflection around the situatedness of the researcher and the research project, acknowledging that researchers impact the production of knowledge through their person/personality, theory building, methodology and research practice.

Bearing these critical perspectives in mind, I attempt to treat in this chapter how contrasting theoretical approaches affect the ways in which we as researchers understand and frame the lives of young people in our scientific work. In doing so, I will refer to the following four approaches that are central to the interdisciplinary field of youth research:

1. the development stage approach (Section 1.1);
2. the subcultural approach (Section 1.2);
3. the agency approach (Section 1.3); and
4. the transitional/relational approach (Section 1.4).

While these four approaches do not comprise an exhaustive overview of approaches within the youth research field, they represent central perspectives and important discussions. In Section 1.5, I examine how each of these approaches presents a unique

ontological understanding of youths; I conclude the section by positioning my own approach in relation to the mentioned theoretical directions.

1.1 Adolescence as a developmental phase

In the first half of the 20th century, common social scientific conceptualizations of adolescence were associated with assumptions from development psychology about universal stages of development.[17] The idea of universal stages often assumes a symmetry between biological and social processes, and thereby reflects a belief that all young people experience more or less the same social processes at similar ages. Through this perspective, adolescence is understood as a period of psychological growth. The American psychologist G. Stanley Hall was influential in promoting the developmental psychology perspective, drawing on the notion of recapitulation: "the idea that individual development mirrors the development of humankind throughout history – from primitive being to civilised adult" (in Kehily, 2007:13). Hall further characterized adolescence as a period of "storm and stress," characterized by mood swings, raging hormones and an inability to communicate with adults. Such ideas implied that successful development meant socialization, and failure meant unwanted deviance (A. James, 1998).

In this era, while sociologists and criminologists tended to conduct fieldwork amongst urban marginal or unassimilated young Americans, anthropologists often attempted to understand socialization processes in non-Western societies. The study of the practice and functions of rites of passage gained a central position within the field. Rites of passage were commonly framed as socialization mechanisms controlled by adult members in the community. Through these rites, youths were thought to be transformed from un-integrated young persons to competent adults. The developmental stages of childhood and adolescence were often regarded as steps along the journey towards the "complete, recognizable and … desirable state of adulthood" (Jenks, 1996:9). Youths were thus largely conceptualized in terms of their "becoming," rather than their "being."

[17] This perspective may be understood in relation to the socio-economic changes that were occurring in Europe and North America at that time. Industrialization, mass education and legislation regulating child labor created the conditions for children and young people to be separated, to some extent, from the adult world (Kehily, 2007). Adolescents were more systematically exposed to the same socialization measures through school, and this produced preconceptions and expectations concerning their life paths.

The classical ethnographies of Margaret Mead (2001 [1928]) and Bronislaw Malinowski (2002 [1932]) revealed an interest in the transitional aspects of adolescence. Through their studies of initiation ceremonies, sexual practices, courtship and marital customs, they described the ways in which young men and women were socialized into adulthood. However, in addition to describing particular types and processes of socialization, Mead, in particular, set out to prove that the universalistic ideas of developmental psychology were misleading. Using a comparative approach, she argued that adolescence is managed and understood in manifold ways in different societies, and she exemplified this through her work on young girls in Western Samoa and North America (M. Mead, 2001 [1928]). Mead observed that adolescence is more or less stormy and that sexual development is more or less problematic, across different cultures. She further identified a correlation between individual experiences of developmental stages and cultural demands and expectations (ibid.:161). Her findings suggested that the "problem" of youths was not necessarily akin to the problems of individuals and their families, but due to the unnecessary pressures and stresses placed upon young people by society.

Mead made a clear contribution to the study of adolescence by arguing for a comparative approach, emphasizing cultural differences in adolescence as lived and experienced. Consequently, the idea that "the meaning and the experience of age, and of the process of ageing, is subject to historical and cultural processes" (Wyn & White, 1997:9-10) has long been treated as an "unquestionable fact" within anthropology.

Today, the understanding of adolescence as a period of transition remains strong within the field of anthropology, with Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner's theories on rites of passage, which introduced the concepts of liminality, structure and anti-structure (Gennep, 1960; V. W. Turner, 1969, 1996 [1970]) as particularly central. These theories suggest that social and individual life can be understood as a process of crossing ritual thresholds, with each threshold consisting of the stages of separation, liminality and re-integration.

The idea of liminality – the state of being in-between or neither-nor – that is experienced when one moves from one state to another has been widely applied in anthropological youth research. In such research, adolescence is framed as a liminal condition; it is also considered such in modern society, where transitions to adulthood are

less ritualized and more “open-ended” and diverse. Allan Sande (1995) and Helena Wulff (1994) exemplify how the prolonged period of education in modern society has structurally separated young people from the adult world and how, because of this, their liminal state has expanded in time and space. In their studies on the ways in which young people in northern Norway and Manhattan, respectively, manage this expanded liminal condition, they reveal that liminality involves the potential for disorientation (e.g. dissociation with adult norms and values) and creativity (e.g. experimentation with identity). From a structural societal position, liminality may represent a threat, in that liminal personas may “elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (V. W. Turner, 1969:95), by nature of their in-between position. But besides representing a risk, liminality may also result in creativity and experimentation that can advance new cultural categories and new constructs of persons and their relations (Kapferer, 2005).

The anthropological contribution to the development stage approach maintains that any study of rites or transitions must understand these processes in light of their specific historical and socio-cultural circumstances. The initial interest of anthropologists in understanding how young people are socialized into adulthood through rituals and ceremonies has also been expanded to include the informal ways in which young people socialize themselves and one another as they enter adolescence: emphasizing peer interaction and agency (see e.g. Christiansen, Utas, & Vigh, 2006; Vigh, 2006A; Waage, 1994, 2002). In such an approach, attention is given to the ways in which individuals understand, cope with and see the potential for agency as they (try to) enter a new life phase. More recently, anthropological research has also given more attention to the ways in which modernity and economic restructuring affect young people’s lives and their transitions to adulthood. However, transitions are no longer taken for granted as things that only “happen” to a person; rather, it is held that an individual actively takes part in and experiences transitions in multiple ways. This represents a turn towards understanding youths (and not only adults) as cultural producers.

1.2 Youths as subcultural producers

A new interest in distinct youth subcultures emerged with the changing social and economic conditions after World War II. These changes had a particular impact on working class youth, in the sense that a demand for manpower resulted in more jobs for young people and a subsequent increase in their spending power (Wyn & White, 1997). With these changes came new modes of consumption and leisure and distinct styles of clothing and music associated with certain types of youths (e.g. "Teddy Boys," mods, rockers and, later on, skinheads, punks, etc.). In the media, the activities and styles associated with various subcultures were largely cast as deviant. Some researchers – particularly those affiliated with the "Birmingham School" at the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS)[18] – picked up on representations of youth subcultures within the media and sought to highlight a disjuncture between journalists' definitions of youth subcultural practices and youths' own understandings of these practices. Cohen documents what he calls "moral panic" in the journalistic representations of the styles and activities of mods and rockers in 1960s southeast England, noting that these representations were characterized by exaggeration, melodrama and distortion whereby young people were referred to as "folk devils." He further argues that such distinct representations "shape[d] societal reaction" (Cohen, 1972:33); media representations of mods and rockers at that time thus influenced how the general public perceived of and met with these groups. The rather rigid representations in the media of distinct youth subcultures as deviant became the very motivation for a number of researchers to more closely investigate how the youths, themselves, made sense of subcultural symbols and practices and how these were essential for their identity work.

Researchers associated with the Birmingham School initiated systematic research on a variety of urban British youth subcultures from the 1960s onwards. Their studies largely adhered to Marxist cultural theory. From this Marxist perspective, with a particular semiological interest, they depicted working class youth – mostly male – as demonstrating multiple resistances to class domination through spectacular forms of style. The subcultural practices of youth were thus understood as acts of resistance to the norms and values of the

[18] The establishment of the Centre of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) was decisive for the development of the research field of cultural studies. The centre was founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart, its first director.

majority (i.e. the adult world). The works of this school often contained a criticism of what they considered banal and thoughtless mainstream culture.

One of the most widely read studies emerging from the Birmingham school was Paul Willis' ethnographic study (1977) of a group of working class "lads" who were non-conformist to middle class values, demonstrating a counter-school culture in opposition to the "ear-oles" who accepted school authority. In the media, these lads were commonly represented as victims of the school's failing pedagogical strategy or measure of integration. Willis revealed how the lads did not fall prey to failing reforms, but actively engaged in producing a culture with an alternative hierarchy of values that distanced them from the school and its educational ambitions. A type of brotherhood was produced whereby masculine adult activities such as smoking, drinking and sex talk were made relevant. However, ultimately, it was the lads' subcultural practices that enabled the working class kids to secure working class jobs, as the lads abstained from pursuing the educational goals that could have provided socio-economic change. In most of the work generated by Birmingham School, youth subcultures were framed as counter-cultures that failed to effect social change.

The Birmingham School's research methods and political engagement with subjects represented a new line of research in which "mass" culture associated with the younger generation (including pop music, television programs and fashion) was taken seriously. Topics were selected on the basis of what was going on at the present moment (1950–1970). Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson point out that:

> contemporary post-industrial societies have certainly become much more individualistic, socially fragmented and pluralistic since the 1960s and 1970s with the result that class and culture are much more disarticulated than they were, and the whole subcultural field has become much more diffuse than it once was (…) Class can no longer be predicated as primary in the production or explanation of stylistic 'solutions.' (2006:xv-xvi)

We now see other forms of socialization and communication occurring in new arenas, such as the Internet and social media (see e.g. Burroughs, 2014; Farquhar, 2013; Gershon, 2014; Hodkinson & Deicke, 2007; Strano & Wattai Queen, 2012). The identities that are performed and negotiated on these platforms are different from – and often more hybrid in nature than – those of the apparently more uniform rockers, mods and hipsters.

Within cultural studies, researchers have followed up on these changes and their theoretical toolkit has expanded in pace with societal change.

Over the past decades, anthropologists have demonstrated a growing interest in cultural studies. In particular, they have opened their eyes to contemporary cultural phenomena associated with youths in a Western context, exploring their social and cultural significance. Although the two fields of research have mutually inspired one another, they also demonstrate incompatibilities (Howell, 1997; Nugent, 1997), largely relating to epistemological issues and contrasting practical approaches to the field. Anthropologists have largely held on to ethnographic fieldwork, engaging in inductive research processes whereby empirical data are used to inform or generate theory.[19] In contrast, researchers in cultural studies have preferred deductive approaches, leaning on multi-disciplinary theories and methods within, for example, literary criticism, social theory, ethnography and discourse analysis. These contrasting approaches imply different framings of cultural phenomena. The cultural studies perspective may be understood to emphasize placing and explaining phenomena within a selected (by the researcher) systemic frame. The anthropological perspective, in contrast, seeks to explore and define the processes and contexts that enable the cultural phenomena, on the basis of empirical data.

This brings us to a current approach within youth research that prioritizes youth agency and emic understandings of youth life worlds. Here, anthropologists have taken a more prominent role.

1.3 Invisible youths? Understanding youths through their own perspectives

In contemporary interdisciplinary youth research, youth informants are commonly referred to as alternately agents, participants, and subjects. A central premise for situating youths as agents consists in recognizing them as competent and entitled to give their opinions (Backe-Hansen & Frønes, 2012). The acknowledgement of children and youth as competent agents in society and research increased following the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, which was ratified in most countries within the following years. The convention led to

[19] These generalizations reflect tendencies, only. I do not mean to suggest that all anthropologists or cultural studies researchers operate in a uniform way.

increased attention to and a sense of responsibility towards including children's opinions and perspectives in matters that concern their lives. This idea also gained traction within child and youth research, influencing methodological approaches. The growing tendency towards treating children and youths as research participants, rather than research objects, coincided with increasing criticism of the sciences, questioning traditional research models presuming a stable and asymmetric power relation between the researcher and the researched (Engelstad, 2003). Earlier patterns of conducting research *on* children and youth came to be replaced with a new model of doing research *with* children and youths (Boyden & Ennew, 1997). Within applied child and youth research, this change was quite pronounced, with researchers questioning why they would ever not involve and include youths as active agents in their research. This stood in marked contrast to the situation even 10 years earlier, when the same researchers would have needed to strongly argue for actively involving youths in their research, as doing so was seen as breaking with "neutral" and "objective" ways of conducting research (Backe-Hansen & Frønes, 2012).

Within the field of "youth anthropology," the debates that began in the 1990s and have continued to the current day largely concern understanding youths in "their own right" (Amit-Talai & Wulff, 1995; Wulff, 1995). Helena Wulff suggests that "it is time for anthropologists to make a more substantial contribution to the study of youth culture, to view young people as cultural agents and to illuminate their perspectives" (Wulff, 1995:16).

The abovementioned outcry from a number of anthropologists stating that youths have long been "not known because not looked for" (Reynolds, 1995) may be associated with this approach. Deborah Durham (2004) connects the claim that children and youths are missing in anthropology with a conviction that previous approaches have failed to say anything interesting about modern theoretical developments. Anne Trine Kjørholt (2004) treats this claim of invisibility as part and parcel of a rhetorical practice that moves beyond the discipline of anthropology. She observes that contemporary (Norwegian) child and youth researchers widely adopt a rhetoric containing that some "truths" (i.e. misconceptions) about children and youths have too easily been taken for granted and that there is a need to question these "truths" from an emic approach.

Mary Bucholtz (2002) systematically reviews the ways in which young people have been studied and represented within anthropological research over the past generations.

She criticizes former approaches for being too categorical in their representations of youth, arguing:

> the lived experience of young people is not limited to the uneasy occupation of a developmental way station en route to full-fledged cultural standing. It also involves its own distinctive identities and practices, which are neither rehearsals for the adult "real thing" nor even necessarily oriented to adults at all. (Bucholtz, 2002:531/532)

Further, she finds it problematic that the emphasis on adolescence as a transitional stage "frames young people primarily as not-yet-finished human beings" ((ibid. 2002:529).

Bucholtz disagrees with the Birmingham School's use of a problem-based perspective to approaching young people. She holds that their works overrepresent deviant groups of youths with exotic repertoires of signs and lack an understanding of individual variation in meaning making and social practice. She advises that, rather than automatically "reading resistance into these situations, analysts would do well to be attentive to local meanings of such practices" (2002:541). This latter argument is at the core of Bucholtz's criticism of both approaches: that they prioritize etic, rather than emic, understandings of youths.

Bucholtz suggests that an emphasis on the ordinary, everyday activities in which youths engage may serve as an important counter-balance to previous work. She sees "anthropology as particularly well situated to offer an account of how young people around the world produce and negotiate cultural forms". Further, she holds that an anthropology of youth should not concern itself with the restrictive notion of culture that dominated early work from the Birmingham School, but with "the practices through which culture is produced" (ibid. 2002:526). She suggests that anthropologists should take an interest in the ways in which identities emerge in new cultural formations that creatively combine elements of global capitalism and local culture.

A similar approach dominates the multi-disciplinary[20] field of "new childhood studies," which appears to be dictating the direction of contemporary child and youth research in Norway and other countries. Acknowledgment is given to the diversity of young people's childhood and youth experiences, and particular attention is drawn towards young

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[20] New childhood studies is an interdisciplinary research field, in that many of its affiliated researchers mix theories and methods across the disciplines of the social sciences, the arts, the humanities, medicine and law.

people's role as social agents involved in shaping their own experiences (A. L. James & James, 2004). This approach is combined with the social constructivist idea that childhood is a social construct – a phenomenon that is interconnected with its historical time period, society and culture, ideologies and politics, economic conditions and so forth (Højlund, 2000). In order to secure the theoretical aims of capturing and understanding the agency of children and youths in particular contexts, the methodological strategy tends to localize child agency using micro-studies and ethnographic methods. Alongside these approaches, participatory approaches are also used to capture children's voices and perspectives by actively engaging them in the research project.

1.4 Youth transitions in a globalized world

The transitional/relational approach shares many core components of the agency approach: it emphasizes emic perspectives on youths and their life worlds and assigns high significance to the various structuring conditions that render distinct identities and social practices possible.

Within this approach, special attention is paid to the ways in which young people experience transitions into adulthood, in the context of the globalized and rapidly changing world. Specifically, much research has been done into how young people create a life and identity under new and changing circumstances and conditions relating to education, technology and work (i.e. structural shifts in labor markets, changes in employment conditions and working environments, changes in the educational system etc.) (Helve & Holm, 2005). Lynne Chisholm (2006) points to the important interconnections between social, political and economic changes; national and supra-national policy making; and perspectives in youth research. She further argues that European policy has held particular importance in shaping the pace and direction of research priorities within European youth research. According to Chisholm, the severe polarization of the life chances of youths from different parts of Europe and different social and ethnic backgrounds has engendered significant concern within European youth research (2006:16). Such research has ranged from distinguishing the ways in which youths adjust and creatively adapt to social and economic change to depicting personal struggles and coping strategies that young people

apply when opportunities are scarce and resources are out of reach (du Bois-Reymond & Stauber, 2005 ; Helve & Holm, 2005; Vigh 2017; Waage, 2002).

In the Norwegian empirical context, youths' contemporary life conditions and challenges are also on the research agenda, particularly with respect to school adjustment, transitions from school to employment, mental health, substance abuse, delinquency and conduct problems, intergenerational relations and issues concerning ethnicity and multicultural society (Backe-Hansen & Frønes, 2012; Helve, Leccardi & Kovacheva, 2005; Holte, 2017; Vogt, 2017). Given the close ties between youth research and youth policies in Norway, Norwegian research clearly impacts policy making, and Norwegian state policies feed back into the research agenda (Hylland-Eriksen, 2006). Current trends in youth research – in both Nordic and other European countries – demonstrate growth in applied interdisciplinary approaches aimed at better understanding and finding solutions to pressing issues and problems faced by youth.

Changes in intergenerational relations as a consequence of demographic, technological, economic and cultural changes have also received growing attention within contemporary youth research. Jennifer Cole and Deborah Durham (Cole, 2010; Cole & Durham, 2007; Durham, 2000, 2004) are among those suggesting that age may be a useful analytic within research into the human experience of the broader social and economic changes associated with globalization. They point to the ways in which shifts in the global economy, the transnational dissemination of ideas and new forms of biopolitics contribute to a reconfiguration of the nature of childhood, youth and old age. In relation to this, they posit that children, youth and the elderly do not reconceptualize themselves or conform to new social patterns as isolated individuals or age groups: "Rather, it is in the relationships between age groups that changes take shape, as people negotiate pragmatically and emotionally to manage the present and to reproduce desirable and livable futures" (Cole & Durham, 2007:2–3). Adhering to such a view, it makes no sense to study "youth culture" as an isolated phenomenon or a subculture with its own logic. Instead, it should be considered a product of intergenerational contact and communication.

Over and above this intergenerational perspective, Cole also argues for an additional focus on temporality. She suggests that the most effective way to understand a generation and the process of generational change is to "focus on not only what young people do in the

present, but on how they imagine – and seek to attain – a desired future" (Cole, 2010:5). According to Cole, focus should be placed on the stories people (of different generations) tell about what an imagined "generation" is doing – and where it is heading. Furthermore, Cole argues that there is a need to "consider the social and subject-making work that those representations enable" (2010:15). She claims:

> Conceptions of generations and of the life course help constitute subjects, because people imagine their capacities in part through the gender- and age-relative representations made available to them. The choices faced by a twenty-year-old woman in Tamatave in 2003, for example, are very different from those open to a woman of sixty. Cultural representations of the life course tell a person what he or she is supposed to be doing at a given point in life. They are integrally tied to people's efforts to achieve valued forms of personhood. (Cole, 2010:15)

From this, she argues that representations of the life course, whether they emerge from scholarly theories or local theories (or a combination of the two), contribute to writing history by making certain paths and social trajectories easier to imagine than others (ibid., 2010:16). Against this background, she perceives of different social groups holding up a mirror to others, so that the life course of one group unfolds in relation to other possible patterns. Thus, alternatives exist in dialectical relation to one another and contribute to what Durham and Cole call "regeneration": "a mutually constitutive interplay between intergenerational relations and wider historical and social processes" (Durham & Cole, 2007:17).

Durham and Cole's proposed relational approach, which emphasizes intergenerational relationships and temporality, both hearkens back to earlier traditions of anthropological and sociological studies (e.g. Karl Mannheim's theories on the problem of generation (1993 [1927]) and speaks to current trends in anthropology, including the "anthropology of the future." The latter attends to how people's imaginations of the future play an essential role for the ways in which they live their lives (Bryant & Knight, 2019). Accordingly, a temporal and relational perspective on youth transitions in a globalized world may contribute to illuminating struggles over the meaning and effects of emerging social and economic conditions and patterns. It may also remind us that "how we think about and treat children, youths or the aged is central to how we create possible futures whatever they may be" (Durham & Cole, 2007:21).

1.5 Selecting a perspective

When selecting a perspective from which to study young people, their experiences and their practices, a researcher not only makes a choice concerning which aspects of youths' lives he or she wants to explore, but simultaneously endorses a particular ontological view of what youths and their lives are about. In the previous sections, I presented four approaches offering different perspectives on young people in society. The major ontological contrast in these approaches pertains to their contrasting views of youths as primarily agents (i.e. subjects largely capable of interpreting and acting upon their environment) or persons who are largely constrained by structural conditions. The different approaches also place contrasting emphasis on youths' individual or collective traits. A selection of one of these perspectives thus implies a decision to frame young persons as inhabiting either a large or a restricted space of action and expressing a large or a small degree of individuality.

Each of the approaches may be understood as interconnected with a dominant discourse regarding the situation of youth in a particular time and space. Analyses bound to the various approaches may thus be seen to reflect – implicitly or explicitly – the social structures and changes that (were perceived to) shape young people's lives. In this way, the perspectives chosen within the various approaches may provide insight into the changing ontological conception of youths – that is, the dominant ways of positioning youths at distinct periods of time.

At the pilot phase of the Youth Gaze project, my colleagues and I deemed the agency approach most resonant with our project, due to the attention it gives to youth agency and participatory efforts. We saw value in the way in which these theoretical and methodological approaches listen to and take seriously youths' reports about the issues and concerns that affect their lives. Having selected a participatory methodic approach, I experienced the benefits of involving youths in the research process, as a means of building trust and gaining access and proximity to their concerns and reflections. I agree with Vebjørg Tingstad (2015), who highlights the historical importance of these approaches in arguing for the rights of children and young people to be recognized as subjects in their own lives. On the other hand, I also share in her argument that researchers should take seriously the critiques of this approach, centered on its uniform treatment of children and young people as competent and autonomous persons (2015:113). Tingstad questions whether the

tendency in this approach to prioritize agency over structure could be seen to contribute to our implicit reproduction of the dichotomies and polarizations of competent/incompetent, resilient/vulnerable, active/passive and so forth (ibid.:113), within which we situate the youths we study (as competent agents).

Bluebond-Langner and Korbin also throw light on the possible consequences of adhering to a distinct agency approach: "When we move away from a view of children as passive recipients of action and ascribe them agency and competency, or even when we shift weight to agency and away from children as developing beings in need of protection, what happens to vulnerability?" (Bluebond-Langner & Korbin, 2007:243). Treating youths as agents implies positioning them as individuals capable of fending for themselves and interpreting and acting upon their life experiences. Rosen (2007) notes that this approach may entail a dilemma when the researcher studies youth behavior in extreme situations. He refers to his own research on child soldiers and comments that a pronounced agency approach would have put him in a dilemma if he had needed to enforce an agency perspective upon his research subjects, situating them as agents who were responsible for their actions rather than "developing beings" who were vulnerable and in need of protection. With this point, he questions whether we, as researchers, tend to attribute children and youths with agency in regards to actions we consider morally good, but, when faced with young people's misdeeds, withdraw from associating these acts with agency. In an attempt to answer his own question, Rosen refers to his finding, based on literature reviews, that children who have taken part in wars that have been evaluated as good and righteous have been granted more agency than children who have participated in wars condemned as evil. In the former case, the children have been painted as heroes; in the latter case, they have been portrayed as victims of the system (Rosen, 2007).[21]

Issues of power, linked to external identification/representation, were also relevant to my work, which addressed youths carrying the label of "at-risk." This is an ascribed label, meaning that the youths were described as such by adult professionals who were familiar

[21] Hall and Montgomery (T. Hall & Montgomery, 2000) and Vigh (2006A, 2006B) make similar observations when reviewing research conducted on/with children and youths in situations of distress. They describe that the concept of the "competent child" has geographical boundaries, and note that children and youths (either facing distress or not) in a Western context tend to be conceived of as competent agents, whereas children and youths in a third world context (with an overrepresentation of those suffering and facing social problems) are commonly treated as victims or ignorant.

with their persons, situations, life experiences and challenges. The category they were placed in (at-risk) thus adhered to specific stories that certain members of the adult generation (professionals) told about them and their situation (cf. Cole, 2010). Although I sought to capture the youths' "perspectives" and "voices" by means of engaging them in filmmaking, I did so in a contextual space that was largely defined by adults. Both the film course design and the institutional field in which the course was held can be seen to have conditioned and substantiated the roles, actions and interactions that took place. The structural frame may have thus affected the youths' ability to express themselves "freely" and the degree to which they did so. I believe that all participatory projects contain some assumptions of good ways for the participants to act and the types of stories that are eligible for telling. The same is true for the types of institutions that are involved in and/or host participatory projects. Accordingly, in my research, the youths' ways of completing the film task were understood in relation to the structural conditions and social climate surrounding the task. This is much in line with Cole and Durham's (Cole, 2010; Durham & Cole, 2007; Durham, 2000, 2004) proposed approach to understanding youth transitions, which attends to the significance of the stories people of different generations tell about what an imagined "generation" is doing – and where it is heading. Such stories contribute to writing history by making certain paths and social trajectories easier to imagine than others (Cole, 2010). Implicit in this approach is an assumption that attaining respected personhood and a respectable future depends on more than simply youths' agency and competency.

The youths' filmmaking task engaged the youths in a process of "balancing values" (Gullestad, 1996a), whereby the youths situated themselves and their stories in relation to various structures bound to the institutions they frequented and the persons they interacted with. Thereby, their film portraits cannot be seen to reflect their pure voices and perspectives; rather, they reflect the youths´ ways of positioning themselves in contexts in which they were also positioned by others. Nevertheless, the agency approach's quest to identify the local meaning (i.e. emic perspective) of youth practices provided a necessary first step in exploring the youths' degrees and instances of agency, individuality and vulnerability.

1.6 Chapter summary and further proceedings

In this chapter, I have presented four dominant approaches within the multi-disciplinary field of youth research: the development stage approach, the subcultural approach, the agency approach and the transitional/relational approach. Within each of these theoretical directions, I described the anthropological contribution to the field. In the final section of the chapter, I revealed that my research project most closely aligned with the agency approach, combined with the transitional/relational approach. However, I also noted some limitations related to adopting a rigid orientation to youth agency, and argued that youths´ social (inter)actions, expressions and ways of participation must be understood in relation to social relationships and structures bound to the concrete social and institutional contexts in which the youths find themselves.

Through the Youth Gaze project, I entered various social and health institutions that work closely with at-risk youths. These institutions had their own ways of recognizing and approaching risk and at-risk youths, very much in line with government policies. In the following chapter, I distinguish the central traits of the Norwegian welfare state's definition of at-risk youths. In doing so, I hope to provide a better understanding of the ways in which at-risk youths are externally defined in the Norwegian context. Additionally, the chapter provides a contextual backdrop for my later analysis of at-risk youths' presentations of self.

Chapter 2:
At-risk youths in a Norwegian context

Introduction: Approaching the at-risk category

The youths whom I met through the Youth Gaze project all belonged to the at-risk category. They had been recruited into the film course by social and health workers who, for various reasons, recognized the youths as at-risk. As such, the youths formed part of a category, rather than a group.[22] In this chapter, I explore the dominant conceptions and assumptions connected to the "at-risk" category.

As a means of uncovering the dominant understandings and definitions of youth risks in a contemporary Norwegian context, I consulted official Norwegian reports (NOU), white papers and bills. Such public documents may be seen to both reflect and shape the public opinion and general thinking about risks, and influence how we distinguish between mainstream and marginality. Moreover, such documents are "productive," in the sense that they also influence the way in which practitioners in the health, social work and education sectors identify and approach youths and risks (Shore, Wright, & Però, 2011); subsequently, they also contribute to inscribing the premises on which at-risk youths are met.

Before describing the definitional frames provided in the official documents, I depict our first meeting with the representatives of our collaborating institutions in Vika. This example serves to illustrate how the social and health workers we collaborated with defined risks and the situation of at-risk youths in their village.

2.1 Meeting at the family center in Vika

Ragnhild[23] and I were invited by the leader of the Vika Family Center to present the Youth Gaze initiative and our affiliated research projects to a group of local social and health

[22] The distinction between these terms relates to the fact that a category is externally defined by a person who describes its nature and composition; a group, in contrast, is internally defined by its members on the basis of the nature of the relations between them (Jenkins, 1996:82).
[23] Ragnhild Magnus Lindekleiv was the psychology PhD candidate connected with the Youth Gaze project.

workers, educators and welfare officers.[24] The agenda for the meeting was to consider whether a Youth Gaze film course could be offered in Vika; if so, we would plan the co-organization of the course. Eight people sat waiting for us when we arrived for the meeting: the leader of the family center; representatives from the Child Welfare authorities and Children's Outpatient Clinic (BUP); and representatives from the educational sector, including the Educational Psychological Service (PPT), the Follow-Up Service, the community nurse and teachers from the village high school and secondary school.

Our presentation of the Youth Gaze project was met with enthusiasm. The representatives expressed that they could already envision several candidates for recruitment. In particular, they deemed the course well suited for the village's 10th and 11th graders, since there had been more complaints about and initiated measures for pupils within these grades (relative to other grades) concerning behavioral issues and truancy.

"We've been searching for good initiatives for youths who face problems with staying in school," Inga said. Inga worked for the Follow-Up Service, serving youths who dropped out of school. She immediately connected the project to "her" group of youths – "those who do not manage to stay in school" – and was the first to reveal the potential she saw in the Youth Gaze project. "Youths want to have something to do. Many of the youths that I meet in my ordinary practice have started believing that they lack the ability to achieve, since they have experiences of negative feedback in school, and of gaining poor results," Inga asserted. I noticed people around her nodding their heads. "I believe that gaining an experience of mastery will do something with their concept of self and I believe that the experience with filmmaking within this project can provide them such an experience of mastery."

The representatives from the village schools argued for collaboration with the secondary and high schools in delivering the course. They suggested that the film course be held at the high school during school hours. In this way, the course could be offered to pupils who were tired of school or struggled with following the school scheme.

In regards to recruitment, the representatives began to discuss the selection criteria. They questioned whether the youths should be recruited on the basis of facing similar

[24] Vika is a pseudonym. The place was made anonymous in order to protect the identities of the participants who attended a course carried out in this village (presented in chapter 8). I considered that the village's small size combined with the participants' life-historical accounts, required this extra precaution.

challenges, and whether they should be balanced in terms of gender, age and/or level of functioning. It was also discussed whether it would be valuable to recruit a "youth of resource" – defined as a youth who had formerly met challenges but had, to a large extent, worked through them. Such a person, who had learned to function well in school and society, could serve as a good example and could contribute positively to the group. Ultimately, there was no decision made in regards to the selection criteria; it was only decided that Janne, the community health nurse who held an office in both schools, and Inga from the Follow-Up Service would lead the youth recruitment, and that they would select youths who were still attending school amidst challenges and youths who were about to drop out of school (or had already done so).

This depiction of our planning meeting with social, health and education workers in Vika illustrates how representatives from these sectors defined the situation for youths, understanding youth risks as closely aligned with whether the youths were well or poorly integrated and functioning in the school system. In light of this, Youth Gaze was conceived as a measure that could provide at-risk youths with a sense (or experience) of mastery, empower them and prevent them from going idle. The community nurse also envisioned that the Youth Gaze experience would improve youths' motivation for school and help them process difficult life experiences.

What intrigued me most at this meeting was the representatives' expressions that they could immediately envision youths who would be ideal candidates for the Youth Gaze initiative. Some of these youths were even named.[25] Each time we prepared for a new course and held meetings with the representatives of potential institutional partners, we encountered our partners' distinct ways of recognizing risks and the unique potentials they saw in the Youth Gaze project. There were both similarities and contrasts in their definitions of youth risks and understandings of the Youth Gaze initiative. When I began my analysis of the youths' filmmaking processes, the definitional frames of the different host institutions constituted a significant contextual backdrop for my identification of the dialectics between

[25] I was informed that the institutions and sectors that were represented in this meeting collaborated closely in regards to following up at-risk youths. This meant that many of the appointed youths were followed up across sectors and services. The village's small size contributed to the representatives' strong knowledge of the youths who were followed up by other services, even when they, themselves, were not involved in the follow-up.

the institutions' and the youths' understandings and depictions of their situation. This made it possible to consider the extent to which institutional aims, practices and understandings could be seen to have informed the youths' filmmaking.

In the remainder of this chapter, I present what I found to be the dominant thinking in all institutions and sectors working closely with at-risk youths, including those with which we collaborated in the Youth Gaze project. The analysis is based on my close reading of policy documents, bills and government proposals published during the decade in which the Youth Gaze film courses were delivered.

2.2 Approaching risk narratives

Catherine Panter-Brick and Augustin Fuentes (Panter-Brick & Fuentes, 2009) draw attention to the ways in which public narratives around risk are produced and reproduced by hegemonic structures and concrete social agents. They define risk narratives as "story lines or discourses that weave together cultural and scientific accounts regarding the conceptualization and communication of health risks, or relative vulnerability to poor health, in personal lives, media reports, political directives and expert accounts" (2009:4). They further assert that such narratives shape our ways of understanding and acting upon risks. While Panter-Brick and Fuentes have a particular interest in studying *health risks*, their argument extends beyond this subject and is useful, from my perspective, for a critical approach to any type of risk. They take a social constructivist approach, drawing attention to the webs of causation in risk narratives that are spun by concrete social actors. Their argument holds that researchers must look closely at the processes through which "risk narratives" are spun. This perspective is interesting, since it breaks with the rather rigid understanding of risks and risk factors as static and "given" – particularly those bound to statistical facts and measurable evidence – that dominates common understandings of at-risk populations.

I found Panter-Brick and Fuentes´ perspective particularly relevant to my research on at-risk youths´ filmmaking processes. The ways in which risk narratives were spun in policy discourse constituted an important contextual frame for my analysis of how the youths in the Youth Gaze project negotiated and defined themselves and their lives on video. Looking at the relationship between concepts of risk in policy discourse and the at-risk youths'

audiovisual self-presentations enabled me to bind the expressions and actions occurring on a micro level with macro level processes, drawing out a distinct way of understanding and acting upon risks. In particular, the micro–macro relationship is discussed in Chapter 10, in which I examine the ways in which policymaking may be seen to have influenced the youths' self-conceptions and reflections on their lives.

In the subsequent sections of this chapter, I present some central observations from my in-depth study of government policy documents published in the time period of 2000 to 2010 – the same period in which we delivered the Youth Gaze film courses. In my review of the literature, I particularly investigate the definitions and webs of causation that were prevalent in the policy documents. My intention is to throw light on the ways in which the State defined risks/at-risk youths and proposed measures for approaching youths and their risk, during the time of the film courses. I consider the identification of such principles and webs of causations important, as they contribute to a distinct perception of reality that is put into practice. The State relies on such principles and causal connections when mandating institutional actors to work closely with at-risk youths, allocating them distinct working areas, roles and tasks. Thus, youths who are in contact with these institutions are exposed to – and to various degrees affected by – the State's risk narrative in their meetings with actors in these institutions.

2.3 The Norwegian state´s definition of at-risk youths

In the policy documents concerning the education, social situation and health of young people, a certain variety in approach is discernable. Risks are defined through, alternately, an emphasis on the individual and the social implications of being at-risk (e.g. What does it mean to be at-risk?); the structural and individual factors that produce risk (e.g. What contributes to risk?); the traits of risk behavior (e.g. How can at-risk behavior be identified?); and finally, the measures designed to prevent or delimit risks (e.g. What can be done with risk?). Together, these approaches constitute a risk narrative with pronounced webs of causation. Although different policymaking documents emphasize different topics and aspects bound to the life conditions of youths, certain definitions and causal linkages tend to recur.

An official Norwegian report (NOU) from 2000 entitled *The childcare services of Norway – Condition evaluation, new perspectives and reform propositions*, gives the following depiction of the situation of "marginal children and youths" (NOU, 2000:12 :38-39, my translation):

> "Marginal children and youths" constitute a group that holds no clear definition, and tied to this, they are alternately referred to as challenged, at risk and disadvantaged. They are rarely totally included or excluded within important upbringing and social arenas, but may be seen to find themselves somewhere in between these. From early on, they occupy a position at the outskirts of kindergartens, schools, leisure and cultural arenas, and later on at the outskirts of the labor market and social life in general. Often, they are formally and informally exposed to rejection, exclusion and segregation, and they stand at risk of gaining a status as deviant.

This definition emphasizes the ambiguous position of at-risk youths as neither fully integrated nor fully excluded from social life. It argues that the diversity of risks and personal characteristics associated with at-risk youths makes it difficult to pin these individuals down as members of a homogeneous category. Despite this diversity, it is nevertheless claimed that they share in common an in-between position and an imminent danger of ending up on the outside of social life (as deviants). Furthermore, the definition implicitly states that standing firmly *within* schools, leisure and cultural arenas, the labor market, and social life in general contributes to protecting at-risk individuals from marginality, challenges and risks.

In the white paper entitled "– and nobody was left out. Early intervention for lifelong learning" (St.meld.nr.16, 2006-2007), the argument is similar. For children who master and pursue the learning scheme set up by the State (whereby from kindergarten onwards, the child succeeds in building adequate language and social competency), the prospects are much brighter for later success in elementary school, high school and work life. In this white paper, positive and risk-free development is bound to successfully climbing the ladder of education that leads to higher education, jobs that secure further learning and social participation (see Figure 1, below). The argument holds that a person who begins on unsteady ground or loses course along the way stands at risk of entering a negative spiral leading to a job with limited possibilities for further learning and development, or having to get by on social security.

In official Norwegian reports (NOU) and white papers that do not concern the educational system directly, but rather focus on risks bound to either family conditions, health conditions or drugs and criminality, references are nevertheless made to how the pursuit of an educational career can offer the best path out of marginality.[26] References are also made to the ways in which poor social and health conditions may impinge on an individual's opportunities to follow a normal educational pathway; such situations are understood to aggravate an individual's strains and degree of marginality. On this basis, one may conclude that conceptions of child and youth risks are broadly bound up with the educational system, whereby the major risk for later social exclusion consists in not graduating high school. The white paper "–and nobody was left out. Early intervention for lifelong learning" (St.meld.nr.16, 2006-2007) presents a model that clearly distinguishes between a successful and unsuccessful path.

[26] The examples are many. NOU 2000:12, which evaluates Norway's childcare services, emphasizes that learning, personal development and entry into work and social life are key values in the Norwegian welfare state that must be striven towards within social work with children and youths (NOU, 2000:12 :84). Emphasis is also given to the important role of schools in relation to integrating and socially including marginalized children and youths (ibid.:178). The government's strategy for risk prevention (Regjeringen, 2009) pronounces that the drop-out rate from high school is one of the core metrics linked to preventative measures. The white paper entitled "National strategy for levelling social health disparity" (St.meld.nr.20, 2006-2007) reveals a correlation between the death rate and degree of education, statistically establishing that those with higher education live longer (with the risk of early death 2.5 times higher for those with less education). The white paper also reveals a correlation between children and youths who receive childcare services and those with parents who have low education and poor health.

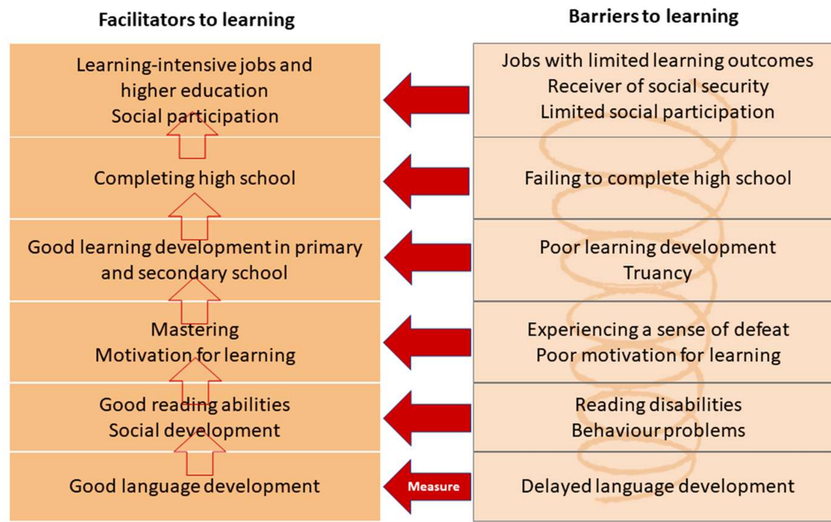

Figure 1. Collected from St.meld. 16, 2006–2007: 10, my translation.

Figure 1 presents a distinct web of causations in its juxtaposition of two development schemes; one leads to positive personal development, qualifications and social inclusion, while the other leads to limited personal development and qualifications and possible dependency on social security benefits. The white paper (St.meld.nr.16, 2006-2007) proposes measures aimed at ensuring that an individual is lifted out of the negative spiral and guided into a more positive scheme of development. Attempts are also made to explain the factors that contribute to some individuals entering a risk position, by means of distinguishing the factors that hinder positive learning processes. In this regard, the white paper indicates that family background plays a role in explaining individual differences in learning and participating. In brief, it claims that children and youths with parents who have completed higher education perform better in school. The following evidence is provided: when ending compulsory schooling (1st–10th grade), pupils whose parents have completed higher education graduate with, on average, one mark higher in every subject than pupils with parents who have only completed compulsory schooling (St.meld.nr.16, 2006-2007:13).

Furthermore, the white paper presents the fact that 78 percent of pupils with highly educated parents complete high school in the standard time, as opposed to 50 percent of pupils with parents who have only achieved lower education. The same pattern is found in higher education, with 40 percent participation amongst students with parents who have

achieved higher education, compared to 8 percent amongst those whose parents have achieved only lower education. The white paper also notes that adults with low education have jobs that are less learning intensive and participate less frequently in courses, training and further education (St.meld.nr.16, 2006-2007:13). These arguments and statistics suggest that a phenomenon of social reproduction occurs within families. In the white paper entitled “National strategy for levelling social health disparities” (St.meld.nr.20, 2006-2007:5), a similar link is made between children’s development of chronic disease (e.g. asthma, allergies or eczema) and parents with lower education. This link between socio-economic status and disease is also made in regards to mental disease. Such links emphasize the family’s role in producing or preventing risks.

The official Norwegian report entitled “The childcare services of Norway – Condition evaluation, new perspectives and reform propositions” (NOU, 2000:12 :39) takes a wider approach in teasing out some of the general social and individual risk factors that contribute to singling out certain children and youths. The report argues that the marginal position of these young persons is bound to a mixture of social, economic and cultural conditions. A long list of such conditions are cited, including: poverty, ethnic minority status, long-term family stress, language difficulties, poor quality of schooling and classroom conditions, poor housing conditions, breakdown in the collaboration between school and home, lack of social support and lack of offers for service and free time. The NOU argues that all of these scenarios may contribute to children and youths’ at-risk status and increase the likelihood that they will develop problems or deviant lifestyles later on (NOU, 2000:12 :39).

The report further argues that the mentioned risk factors combine with personal and behavioral traits. It is noted that children and youths suffering from the abovementioned conditions rarely fulfill general requirements in school and have poor social ties to their peers and teachers. Furthermore, a distinction is made between two categories of problem behavior: uncontrolled and acting-out behavior, with conflictual means of adaptation; and behavior characterized by personal strains such as social insecurity, loneliness and isolation. Although these two types of behavior may differ in their expressions, they are both considered “at-risk” due to their constituting norm- and/or rule-breaking behaviors (NOU, 2000:12 :170).

Overall, the prevailing risk narrative in the policy documents published between 2000 and 2010 has distinguishable features. A common conception of at-risk youths describes youths who, due to their norm-breaking behavior, stand on the verge between social inclusion and social exclusion. Thus, the major risk is that they will develop a deviant lifestyle and end up on the outside of social and work arenas. Across the policies, it is claimed that the school constitutes a central arena for leveling out social disparities and preventing future exclusion, mainly by building social and formal competences. The policies suggest that the major contributing factors for increased risk are circumstances relating to the individual, the family and the local community (or malfunctioning relationships between the three). In contrast, little attention is paid to the way in which structural conditions (i.e. the school system or job market) contain excluding mechanisms that could contribute to producing at-risk youths.[27]

In line with this conceptualization of risk and at-risk youths, the policies argue that measures should be directed towards the individual, the family and the local community. Holding onto the idea of school as a preparatory arena for a good and healthy life, they aim at assuring – either directly or indirectly – that youths succeed in managing in school so that they are best prepared for work and well equipped for a good social life with a high living standard. In this way, the conceptualization of risk and at-risk youths emphasizes the principles of growth, development and human capital.

[27] In 2014, a major public debate arose in conjunction with the release of a national survey, the UNGDATA 2014 (Bakken, 2014). The survey signaled broad positive developments in the current youth population: they were more law abiding; performed better in school; had better relations to family, teachers and peers; were more home loving; and started consuming alcohol at a later age. However, next to these positive findings, there was a clear indication of a rise in the number of youths (particularly girls in their early teens) suffering from mental illnesses such as anxiety and depression. Hanne Skartveit (2014) wrote a newspaper article that triggered a heated debate in the social and mass media around the school system's role in producing "losers and stressed-out achievers" (see e.g. Amundsen, 2014; Gjestad, 2014; Lindholm, 2014; Lohne, 2014; Melkeraaen, 2014). This debate criticized the former tendencies in policies and public debates to individualize youth problems with little consideration of the structures surrounding youths and the contribution of these structures to producing social inequity and "youth problems." The media debates that arose in the wake of the UNGDATA survey introduced a new risk narrative that framed the educational system as a risk factor, rather than a protective factor. The State's web of causations, postulating that as long as one managed to stay in school one would succeed in reaching social inclusion, was thereby challenged.

2.4 Key principles for acting upon risks

From my in-depth reading of NOUs, white papers and bills, I recognized that certain principles are repeatedly emphasized in discussions of successful or desirable ways of acting upon risks: institutional collaboration, youth inclusion and participation, and early intervention and risk prevention.

Coordinating measures and gaining a holistic perspective

In the official Norwegian report "Child welfare services in Norway" (NOU, 2000:12), a key argument poses that, to establish strong grounds for learning, personal development and social inclusion amongst at-risk youths, social, health, justice and education institutions should join forces in a binding way. The report "What you do, do it completely: Improved coordination of services for vulnerable children and youths" (NOU, 2009:22) paints a picture of a reality in which some children are pushed between services, without any of the services taking adequate responsibility; in other cases, children receive help from several services, but there is a lack of coordination between them (NOU, 2009:22 :9). In NOU 18 (2009), "The right to learn," it is similarly argued that a lack of communication and coordination between education, social and health services contributes to doubling up on work and a lack of coherency and relevance in the measures provided (NOU, 2009:18 :24). The collective line of argument in these NOUs points to the need for improvement in regards to communication and collaboration between services and sectors. A primary reason for this is that collaboration works against strict sectoral divisions: actors in one sector are preoccupied with the concerns of their own sector and thereby have a tendency to lose the larger picture. Through cross-sectoral collaboration, differently positioned actors may better grasp the complexity of the situation and gain a more holistic picture of the life situation of a young person. Gaining a more holistic picture via such collaboration also means re-orienting the general approach to the individual from one that is problem-based to one that is oriented around the individual's positive resources and capacities.

The policies argue that the practice of collaboration may be challenging, particularly in cases in which the judgments of various actors differ with respect to the best interest of the child/youth. Additionally, "What you do, do it completely: Improved coordination of services for vulnerable children and youths" (NOU 18, 2009) notes challenges relating to a

prevalent marking of boundaries connected to an explicit and implicit status hierarchy and competing professional interests between services and sectors (NOU, 2009:18 :24). The policy further asserts that knowledge of the ways in which the various services operate should be distributed to all services, as this would improve the likelihood for good collaboration (ibid.:24).[28] Improved dialogue and collaboration across institutions was sought realized through the Collaboration Reform (St.meld.nr.47, 2008-2009), which was passed in the Storting (Norwegian parliament) in March 2010. In this reform, municipalities were delegated more responsibility for prevention, early intervention, early diagnostication, treatment and follow-up of marginalized children and youths, with the aim of laying grounds for a "more coordinated clinical pathway" (NOU, 2009:22 :25).

With the collaboration reform, the State provided a massive social safety net. Great efforts and resources were invested in securing a system of close and coordinated individual follow-up. Within the examined policies, it is argued that such collaborative initiatives may improve the quality of the help provided and thus improve individuals' chances for wellbeing and social inclusion.

In "What you do, do it completely: Improved coordination of services for vulnerable children and youths" (NOU 22, 2009), it is argued that users – that is, recipients of the provided measures – should be involved and active participants. Such users include both at-risk youths and their family members, if the child or youth in question allows (NOU, 2009:22 :57). This leads me to discuss the concepts of inclusion and participation, and the weight they are given in the policy measures for this target group.

Inclusion and participation

The Official Norwegian Report on the Child Welfare services notes that the welfare state provides a combination of care and security arrangements, on the one hand, and

[28] The insertion of an "individual plan" by the Department of Health and Human Services, and later on decreed by the Patient and User's Rights Law, constitutes one such effort at facilitating coordination and improving the communication and knowledge exchange between sectors. The individual plan is comprised of several smaller plans developed within distinct services (e.g. the action plan of the Child Welfare authorities, the individual learning plan of the Special Education Services and the individual treatment plan of the Specialist Health Services) (NOU, 2009:22 :56). The individual plan is made available to actors involved in providing social and health services within a particular municipality. The establishment of "the family's house" in several municipalities aligns with the thinking that surrounds the individual plan, in that it gathers several municipal services that work closely with marginal children/youths and their families under one roof, making collaboration and coordination easier.

qualification and personal growth measures, on the other hand. The former secures a safety net when adversity and crises emerge, while the latter secures opportunities for learning, culture and recreation (NOU, 2000:12 :82). Furthermore, the report states that social workers (within the Child Welfare authorities, in particular) mainly concentrate on establishing effective and preventative measures to ensure protection and safety, and claims that, within the child and adolescent political context, less attention is paid to securing personal integrity (i.e. promoting each person's belief in his/her own skills and possibilities). This statement can be seen to connect with a larger discourse that was prevalent at that time, which suggests a change in the ways of approaching at-risk youths from one that is focused on problems and challenges (through which young persons are framed as "problems" or "victims") to one that is focused on distinguishing and strengthening individuals' social resources and opportunities. In line with this, the NOU argues that attending solely to negative and non-functioning aspects could trigger further negative development, irrespective of the measures that are put into effect (NOU, 2000:12 :175).

The white paper entitled "–and nobody was left out. Early intervention for lifelong learning" (St.meld.nr.16, 2006-2007) emphasizes matters of social inclusion and social levelling, and draws attention to the importance of all individuals having the opportunity to develop themselves and their skills and to be included in the social community (2006-2007:7). It argues that education and the building of knowledge and competencies contributes to inclusion in work life, a stronger economy, better health, greater social participation and less criminality (ibid.:8). Social inclusion is a recurring theme in most of the NOUs and white papers (as demonstrated in Section 2.3), and it closely aligns with the concepts of user involvement and participation.

In the child and adolescent political context, participation means that the child or youth has a say in matters concerning him or herself. In general, the policies demonstrate a gradual increase in attention to the "user's" perspective within the social, health and education sectors. This supports the idea that what is best for the child can be most effectively secured through close dialogue with the child, him or herself. In particular, this idea was formalized through the Child Welfare Act (Lovvedtak.92, 2012-2013), in which §4.1 states that, when making decisions on behalf of a child, the "child shall be given a possibility

to participate, and conversations with the child should be facilitated" (my translation). In this way, the law holds that young people have the right to receive information, to have a voice and to be heard. This is strongly aligned with the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989, ratified in Norway in 1991), which equally emphasizes that children are human beings with a distinct set of rights, rather than passive objects of care and charity.

In the Official Norwegian Report NOU 20 (2011), entitled "Youth, power and involvement,"[29] concern with youths' participation in society is treated explicitly. The report establishes that the right to participate is valid for everyone, but, for various reasons, the voices of some persons are more widely listened to than others. Power is defined according to two distinct categories: a) the power to influence and participate in politics and social life and b) power over one's own life (ibid. :8). The NOU report questions whether participation and consultation arrangements in society even out or enhance social differences between young people. It points to the growing number of youth participants in community-based organizations and youth political parties, but simultaneously states that youth participants tend to come from the most resourceful families, and, through participation, they gain a stronger hold of network and knowledge resources. Thus, the right to participate is present, but this right is not equally realistic for everyone.

The report also points to the way in which structural conditions affect the extent to which young persons are empowered as participating citizens (NOU, 2011:20 :11). It notes that the development of the knowledge society and the free floating supply of labor has resulted in those with less mastery of school being more severely affected. There are few to no jobs awaiting youths who are tired of school, as such positions tend to be occupied by cheap and qualified foreign labor. The school seems to have taken over as the major arena for democratic preparation, and it is claimed that those who are less successful in school appear to fall more starkly outside contemporary society. The report concludes that "it is necessary to consider what are the barriers that prevent participation, and what can be done to work against the fact that some youths experience marginalization and exclusion" (NOU, 2011:20 :21). Across the policy documents, there are repeated requests for more

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[29] Although the report surpasses the designated time period of 2000 to 2010, it is nevertheless included in the discussion due to its empirical foundations in the social conditions that occurred at the end of the decade under scrutiny.

participatory work with at-risk youths, but few suggestions for realizing this ambition, in practice.

What I observed from reading the various policy documents is how the notions of inclusion and participation are alternately referred to as both *means* for application and *aims* to be achieved. Accordingly, inclusion and participation are referred to in the context of two different claims. The former frames inclusion and participation as ideal approaches or methods of practical application (cf. user involvement) to ensure that each youth is properly understood, adequately listened to and given a say in the process of finding and deciding measures. The latter application of these notions is connected to the general aims of social and health work to ensure that at-risk youths participate in society. In many cases, the two approaches are fused in the argument that user involvement is necessary to help at-risk youths become participating citizens.

Early intervention in risk prevention

In the various NOU reports, white papers and bills, the concepts of early intervention and risk prevention frequently recur. The principle bound to both early intervention and risk prevention is that breaking in will prevent damage or other negative developments from taking place. Examples of risk prevention include lowering the risks of health damage, lowering the occurrence of crime and supporting children at risk of going awry. The government's strategy for prevention points to the responsibility of kindergartens, schools, public health centers and school health services to detect risk factors at an early stage and to implement practical measures that are adapted to individual needs (Regjeringen, 2009:39). Next to such early detection and earmarked measures is an argument that efforts should focus on prevention, rather than repair (ibid.:6). In this regard, early intervention is thought to have the aim of distinguishing and realizing measures that *strengthen* young persons' ability to fend for themselves later in life. This involves providing "help for helping oneself."

The "Child Welfare services in Norway" report (NOU 12, 2000) argues that investing in building stronger relations between the individual child or youth, his or her family members and the local community could contribute to building individual competencies; such an approach is considered an important preventative measure. The report stresses that all persons depend on relations with and recognition from others (NOU, 2000:12 :171).

The government's strategy for prevention (2009) delineates efforts to secure healthy conditions for growing-up as foundational and a prerequisite for all other risk prevention measures. It argues that only when the conditions for growing-up are good and the child lives in a home with loving and caring parents/guardians can one initiate measures to prevent the child from dropping out of school, taking on criminal behavior, abusing drugs and developing mental challenges or somatic disease (Regjeringen, 2009:17). Furthermore, it suggests that, on a structural level, preventative measures should aim at leveling out social, economic and health disparities and promoting more equal terms for individual development (ibid.:13-14).

Some preventative measures are untargeted, in the sense that they are intended for the general population; others solely target individuals considered at-risk. The government's strategy for prevention furthers population-oriented measures that seek to contribute to positive development on a society level and prevent problems that would require resource-intensive efforts (Regjeringen, 2009:32). Examples are provided of such population-oriented preventative measures, such as well functioning labor market policies, full kindergarten coverage and a good educational system for all. These are featured as important prerequisites for developing safety, social equity and social inclusion (ibid.:32).

Notions of "risk prevention" and "health promotion initiatives" may be seen to interrelate, in the sense that risk prevention contributes to better health and wellbeing, and vice versa. However, the former is associated with a problem orientation whereas the latter is associated with an opportunity perspective. I noted a tendency in some policies – particularly those dealing mainly with health issues – to select a "health promotion" approach.[30] Such an approach generally gives more weight to providing opportunities for the entire population by arranging the physical and social environments in ways that bring healthy lifestyles within reach. This includes building awareness so that individuals are more capable of making good choices for their own health and wellbeing. Thus, the scope and scale of such initiatives extend beyond at-risk groups. In comparison, risk prevention initiatives and services tend to target at-risk individuals and groups, their families and the local community, and are more concerned with preventing or diminishing risks.

[30] This tendency has increased in the present decade (2010–2019).

The policies take a proactive approach to framing both risk prevention and health promotion initiatives. The idea of "early intervention" concerns the introduction of an initiative ahead of a potential problem occurring (or at a time when the problem is only minor). This proactive approach may result in a larger number of individuals being exposed to different types of interventions aimed at influencing their actions, decision making and behavior. Subsequently, this approach may prevent some individuals' (potential) pain and affliction; however, it may also impose more control on the ways in which they conduct their lives.

2.5 Products of the risk narrative

In the policies, the concept of youth risks and propositions for how these should be acted upon center on the notions of inclusion and exclusion, with the former representing a desirable state of affairs and the latter representing an undesirable circumstance for young persons. The definitional frames are normative in the sense that, by defining a deviant or unwanted trajectory, they contribute to setting the boundaries of normality.

It was interesting to examine the policies' criteria for inclusion and their principles and strategies for achieving it. The policies propose that the ideal route to inclusion involves young persons' mastering and completing school, serving as active participants in society and taking control over their lives. This implicitly attributes value to active, responsible and autonomous (self-governing) individuals.

The policies argue that early intervention with risk prevention and health promotion measures may prevent the need for later intervention and exclusion, and hopefully enable young persons to develop the capacity to actively participate in society and make sound decisions for themselves and their lives. The documents alternately recognize youths as persons who ought to be listened to and persons requiring guidance to adhere to a steady course. Stressing the need for more coordinated measures and collaboration between service providers and sectors, the policies lay the groundwork for a massive system to support and guide youths along the right track. At the same time, great efforts are directed towards developing more participatory schemes within social and health work. Taken together, these emphases signal that adults should save youths who are at risk of going astray, and that children can and should play an active part in saving themselves.

The goal of inclusion not only targets youth in the here and now, but also (and maybe primarily) targets future social inclusion. In this way, the policies' risk narratives pertain to a long-term timeframe and take on a development perspective that largely considers youths in terms of their social becoming. At-risk youths are, from this perspective, conceived of as occupying a developmental phase between childhood and adulthood in which they stand at risk of developing in the wrong direction. Although some documents incorporate an opportunity perspective (through, e.g., reference to health promotion and participatory methods), the risk narrative predominantly surrounds youths' flaws and shortcomings. For this reason, similar to several other youth researchers (Kelly, 2006; Kjærgård, 2013; Sirpa & Reetta, 2006; Solli, 2016), I read the risk narrative as rather normative and disciplining, asserting the importance of standards that might be difficult for some youths to fulfill (or escape). In Chapter 10, I return to these normative standards to discuss the degree to which they may have influenced the youths I worked with as the youths managed their identities through the filmmaking task. In this way, I seek to understand the youths and their ways of looking at their worlds in the context of being understood and acted upon as "at-risk."

In the final section of this chapter, I briefly present the groups of actors who were mandated to act upon youth risks, giving way to a better understanding of their ways of working with at-risk issues.

2.6 Actors mandated to act upon youth risks

In the Official Norwegian Report entitled "What you do, do it fully: Improved coordination between services for vulnerable children and youths" (NOU, 2009:22), the actors mandated by the State are listed and their mandates and responsibilities are described. The report mentions five (groups of) actors: Child Welfare authorities, health and social welfare services, kindergartens and schools, the justice sector and a broad category of "other services."[31] I will briefly describe each of these groups' mandates and responsibilities, as described in this report, to provide a picture of the State's organization of responsibilities across these actors.

[31] Our collaborators – the NAV youth division and Youth Support team – are included in this latter category. Community nursing services are included in the "social and health services category," whereas the Follow-Up Service falls in the category of "kindergartens and schools."

Child Welfare authorities

The main task of the Child Welfare authorities consists in contributing to the conditions in which children and youths grow up safely and ensuring that children and youths living under potentially harmful conditions (to their health and development) receive adequate help and care at the right time (NOU, 2009:22 :13). Most of the mandated measures consist in ensuring that parents receive sufficient help and support to establish a safe environment for their children. In some cases, the Child Welfare services assume custody of children when parents lack the ability to care for them or when the children are faced with gross neglect, violence or their parents' drug abuse. The central responsibilities of this agency lie in *preventing* gross neglect and behavioral problems and *uncovering* instances of gross neglect and social, emotional and behavioral problems (NOU, 2009:22 :13). In 2008, 44,000 children and youths received a Child Welfare measure (ibid.:17).

Health and social welfare services

Amongst the larger portfolio of health and social welfare services, certain services stand out as central to vulnerable children and youths: community nursing and school health services, the regular general practitioner scheme (*fastlegeordningen*), the drugs and mental health unit, nursing and care services (*pleie og omsorgstjenesten*), municipal habilitation and rehabilitation services and specialist health services (NOU, 2009:22 :21-22). These services provide both health and social services. The general objectives of the health services are to promote public health, wellbeing and adequate social conditions. The services also commit to preventing and treating disease, injury and blemish in accordance with the Primary Health Care Law § 1-2 (ibid.:22). Within the health sector, mental health constitutes a target area in work with children and youths. Between 1996 and 2008, the Storting passed an escalation plan to improve mental health services, due to a growing number of children and youths suffering from mental difficulties and disease (St.prp.nr.63, 1997-98). In 2009, the public health institute estimated that between 15 and 20 percent of all children and youths suffered from mental difficulties, whereas 8 percent had mental sufferings (NOU, 2009:22 :28).

The general objectives of the social services consist in contributing to economic and social safety, improving living conditions for the deprived, contributing to equal opportunities and preventing social problems. Furthermore, this group seeks to ensure that

every individual has an independent place to live and an active and meaningful life in fellowship with others, in accordance with the Social Services Law §1-1 (NOU, 2009:22 :22).

Kindergartens and schools

Kindergartens and schools are considered the central social arena for children and youths. In this category, educational services include kindergartens, day care facilities for schoolchildren (SFO), primary and secondary schools, high schools, the Educational Psychological Service (PPT), the Special Education Service and the Follow-Up Service. In Norway, primary and secondary schooling is compulsory and children have a right to placement in a kindergarten and day care facility. Similarly, all youths have a right to attend high school. The Educational Psychological Service provides extra support for children with a difficult learning and home situation. Their mandate consists in advising schools on how best to adjust education for pupils with special needs. The service administers tests and provides guidance and reports, according to the demands of the Education Act. Finally, the Special Education Service provides special education for pupils receiving little benefit from the ordinary teaching scheme. Such services are provided on the basis of expert assessment (by PPT). In 2008, 7.2 percent of all pupils received special education; of these, 70 percent were boys and 30 percent were girls (NOU, 2009:22 :30).

In cases in which pupils with the right to a high school education abstain from going to school, training or taking a job, the Follow-Up Service offers consultations. The key objective of these consultations is to assist pupils with finding a traineeship, a new line of studies, a job or another type of employment (NOU, 2009:22 :28). The Follow-Up Service was established after the Educational Reform of 1994 (Reform'94, 1993), due to a growing high school drop-out rate. The service was later decreed by law, following the Education Act of 2006 (Opplæringsloven, 2006).

The justice sector

Within the justice sector, the primary obligation concerns guaranteeing the legal protection of society and its members. In this sector, the key actors who work closely with children and youths include the police, officials in the penal system and the mediation board. Members of the police force occupy an exceptional position, in terms of their work towards developing and sustaining good relations with children and youths, and in terms of their

development of suitable sanctions and punishments for young offenders. In this capacity, they practice various criminal preventative methods, such as being present and engaging in informal conversations with youths in their arenas. Alongside contacting and building trusting relations with youths, they also map risk and investigate legal violations. Since the change in the law in 2004, the police have had a duty to investigate legal violations committed by children older than 12 years; however, when the perpetrator is younger than 12, the police may leave the case but pass a note of concern to the Child Welfare authorities (NOU, 2009:22 :33). The government discourages youth imprisonment and instead suggests alternative measures, where possible. The mediation board's efforts at reconciliation exemplify one such measure. This board provides restorative justice, which constitutes a response to criminal acts aimed at finding solutions that balance the needs of victims, offenders and the local community, with the ambition of restoring the injury that was made (NOU, 2008:15 :24). In 2006, 6,767 youths aged 15 to 17 received a criminal sanction, with the most frequent offences relating to traffic and profit-generating crimes (ibid.:27).

Other services

The fifth group of actors consists of a bundle of institutions that are assembled into the category of "other services." Such services include the Child and Family Protection Agency, the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Organization (NAV), the Children's House, the Women's Refugee Center, Youth Support team and municipal leisure activities for children and youths.

From this broad group of actors and their mandates, one may distinguish the key challenges faced, including children and youths' uncertain home conditions, mental sufferings, learning disabilities and behavioral problems (NOU, 2009:22 :40). The services are mainly directed at children and youths (and their families) who struggle with health challenges; who demonstrate difficulty following the school scheme; who have breached the law, who face relational, social or economic challenges; or who struggle with problems in the home.

2.7 Summary, Part I

In this chapter, I have drawn out what I found to be the central traits of a dominant risk narrative during the decade of my fieldwork. General principles and webs of causation

expressed in this risk narrative added up to a distinct domain of meaning. This domain of meaning comprised an important contextual backdrop to my analysis of youth filmmaking processes and youth concepts of self, as it provided a set of assumptions about what is "good," "natural" and "normal." I found it interesting to mirror the youths' presentations of self against these presumptions, and, in Chapter 10, I explicitly treat this interrelationship between the risk narrative presented in the policies and the youths' audiovisual presentations of self.

In Chapter 1, I presented four theoretical directions that have influenced youth researchers' conceptualizations of and approaches to youth. I demonstrated that the approaches could be differentiated between a universal systemic approach (the development phase approach), a group-based approach (the subcultural approach), an individual "understanding youths in their own rights" approach (the agency approach) and a relational approach that attends to the interactions between generations (the transitional/relational approach). Subsequently, I discussed how each of these could be seen to contain a distinct value base implying a specific ontological understanding of youths. Together, Chapters 1 and 2 provide the necessary background for understanding the external identifications of (and approaches to) at-risk youths made by social and health workers and researchers. In the Youth Gaze project, such identifications had a significant impact on roles and relations.

In the coming chapters, I introduce the Youth Gaze project (Chapter 3) and reflect on the roles and relations in the field (Chapter 4) and the audiovisual methods applied (Chapter 5). Taken together, these chapters provide a picture of the underlying methodology, ideology and assumptions that guided our application of the Youth Gaze project.

PART II: THE YOUTH GAZE APPROACH

Chapter 3:
Introducing the Youth Gaze project: Prospects and procedures

Introduction: Youth Gaze, an applied research project

The Youth Gaze project came to life at the intersection of several discourses. It was designed by Trond Waage, Reni Wright and myself, and it was heavily influenced by our experiences and expertise within visual anthropology, as taught and practiced at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway. Furthermore, the project was inspired by current approaches and debates within anthropological youth research (i.e. the agency approach and the transitional/relational approach, as discussed in Chapter 1) and aligned with socio-political discourses, in that it responded to the central challenges and strategies presented in policy documents concerning at-risk issues (as presented in Chapter 2).

In this chapter, I describe the central features of the Youth Gaze project. I begin by presenting the project's ideological and idealistic bases, to convey the potential we saw in the film course scheme at the start of the project. Subsequently, I describe our ways of thinking about and depicting the situation of at-risk youths in our early project proposals, and I situate these in relation to general concepts within the policies, as presented in Chapter 2. In the following section, I outline the organizational features of the project and describe its development from the pilot stage to the research stage. Following this, I briefly introduce our institutional partners. Finally, I depict the ways in which we worked practically with the youths, enacting a particular pedagogical/methodical approach.

3.1 The "kinder egg" vision

In December 2004, Trond Waage, Reni Wright and I drafted a Youth Gaze project proposal to introduce the project to potential funding bodies. At that point, our goal was to secure

financial support for a pilot project that would enable us to test the pedagogical/methodical film course scheme that we had recently developed: a course in which at-risk youths would make films about their lives and experiences. In the project proposal, we presented our primary aim as: “contributing to competence building and enhanced self-awareness amongst vulnerable youths, and collecting and communicating experience-near knowledge on processes within these youths’ milieus” (Hope, Wright, & Waage, 2005:2). This illustrates our double objective of wanting to contribute to social and health services targeting at-risk youths while simultaneously researching the life situation of at-risk youths.

The Youth Gaze film course was inspired by the pedagogical methods practiced in the Visual Anthropology ´s Master’s program at UiT. Specifically, the course applied pedagogy bound to ethnographic film production and cross-cultural learning,[32] as we had experienced these pedagogical tools as effective for promoting dialogue, learning and reflection. In this initial phase, we keenly referred to “the kinder egg vision” of the Youth Gaze project, making note of how the project could be beneficial to a variety of actors (youths, social and health workers and researchers), on different grounds.[33] Specifically, we envisaged that the course would provide youths an opportunity to raise issues of concern and enable them to experience being listened to and taken seriously. Moreover, it would provide youths an opportunity to delve deeply into and work creatively with topics they experienced as important. For social and health workers, the Youth Gaze project would provide a means for them to approach, dialogue with, build trustful relations with, gain knowledge about and trigger reflexive processes in members of their target group. Finally, for researchers (us), the course would provide access to and enhance dialogue with youths about issues they considered important and relevant, and thereby provide insight into their situations, perspectives and the processes and structures that affected their lives.

We considered access, dialogue and understanding valuable on not only a scientific level, but also on a societal level. In our proposal, we wrote: “as parents, politicians and researchers we have problems understanding why these youths do as they do. Their ways of

[32] Cross-cultural learning as practiced in the Visual Anthropology program at UiT aims at engaging students with different cultural and disciplinary backgrounds in discussions in which they can exchange their points of view. Central activities included making films collaboratively and collectively viewing and analyzing footage.
[33] In daily speech, “kinder egg” describes a situation in which several positive outcomes are produced by one and the same factor. Its point of reference is a piece of candy called a Kinder Egg, which contains a chocolate, a toy and a surprise, all in one.

being may appear irrational and problematic. They are met as 'problems' more than as experts of their own experiences" (Hope et al., 2005:2). Subsequently, we argued that research and policies lacked thorough empirical descriptions of the social processes surrounding at-risk youths. In this regard, we hoped to contribute by providing youths with a tool and an opportunity to give their accounts of central aspects and issues in their lives. Moreover, we argued that enabling youths to tell their stories could entail other benefits, such as the breakdown of communicative barriers between youths, family members, teachers, researchers, politicians and/or social and health workers.

At this initial stage, our primary goal was to explore what we could learn about these youths by following them closely through the process of filmmaking. We were curious to know what stories they would tell, how they would tell these stories, what would affect their storytelling and what the personal and social significance of their storytelling would be. We were also curious about the ways in which social and health workers would accommodate and evaluate the Youth Gaze initiative and the ways in which (and the extent to which) the camera and filmmaking scheme would work as catalysts for dialogue and reflection, to the benefit of all actors involved.

3.2 Our early assumptions about at-risk youths

The project proposal relied on distinct assumptions about at-risk youths and their situation. In the proposal, we provided the following two descriptions of at-risk youths (i.e. the target group for the Youth Gaze initiative):

> It may be seen as a recurring problem that youths withdraw, quit their leisure activities, skip classes and drop out of school, try out drugs, are in breach of law, and appear to be maladjusted and poorly integrated. These are youths who do not adapt to the expected education and qualification course; they may appear unmotivated and immature at school. (Hope et al., 2005:1)

> Youth who we will work with may be characterized as living in the borderlands: they may be at risk of developing mental disease, they may have had some life experiences that left scars and they may have complicated relations with people in their close surroundings and therefore envision an uncertain and indistinct future. (ibid.:1)

In relation to these depictions of the "status quo" for at-risk youths, we pointed to two major challenges for this category of youths: first, they stand at risk of maintaining their position on the outskirts of society when entering adult life; second, they stand at risk of having politicians, researchers, family members, teachers and others misunderstand or devalue their actions and behaviors.

In retrospect, I see that our ways of defining the situation of at-risk youths and our reflections around what we could do to diminish or prevent risks resembled the definitions of risk and proposed measures in the policy documents. However, in comparison to most of the policies, we gave greater emphasis to the socially and relationally constituted nature of risks, and we considered youth risks closely connected to communicative challenges between youths and adults in their lives (e.g. parents, teachers, social/health workers, researchers and politicians). Thus, the major risks we identified were not bound to certain characteristics or behaviors of individual youths, but to scenarios in which youths and adults struggled to communicate and understand each other.

The Youth Gaze film course could be regarded as our proposed solution to prevent or comply with such scenarios. As we clearly pronounced in the proposal, we believed that engaging at-risk youths in filmmaking through the Youth Gaze scheme would constitute a good strategy for promoting dialogue and reflection that could enhance mutual understanding. In regards to the project's reflexive potential, we felt that working carefully with the youths' self-presentations would increase our awareness of their ways of understanding their situations. Additionally, we thought that, when exposed to the perspectives of others (e.g. peers, social and health workers and researchers), the youths would potentially revise their thinking about issues they had formerly taken for granted.[34] Furthermore, this potential for "thinking anew" and breaking with former concepts would apply to all situated actors, including the social workers and researchers.

Our approach correlated with some of the principles and strategies emphasized in the policy documents at that time (see Section 2.4), particularly in relation to the concepts and practices of "holism" and "inclusion/participation." Emphasizing a holistic approach

[34] The film medium can trigger self-awareness due to its mirroring function. When looking at video footage of oneself, filmed either alone or in interaction with others, one may come to notice new things about oneself, others or the situation. Furthermore, one gains an outsider's position. Thus, in this context, self-awareness may be strengthened.

aimed at understanding the youths from a wider perspective (i.e. meeting them as "whole" persons and not solely on the basis of the problems/challenges they faced) constituted an important principle within the Youth Gaze project. Furthermore, the research agenda clearly resonated with the policies' attention to youth inclusion and participation and supported the idea that youths should be included and have a say in all measures concerning their health and wellbeing—and indeed in all matters that affect their lives.

We sent our proposal and funding application to the Social and Health Directorate, the regional Centre for Child and Adolescent Mental Health (RKBU Nord)[35] and the Sami National Competence Center (SANKS); ultimately, we received funding for the pilot project from all of these institutions. Through dialogue with our contacts at these institutions, I came to understand that the Youth Gaze initiative was recognized as a potential preventative measure that took user involvement seriously. Thus, it was considered a relevant project in line with the direction taken by policy for at-risk work.

3.3 Organization and development: From pilot to research

In the Youth Gaze pilot phase, we designed the film course, built a network between the researchers and the social and health workers, applied for funding and delivered the test courses. With the pilot, we sought to explore the potential benefits for the youths, the social and health workers and (us) researchers of gaining hands-on experience through the film method. To us, important indicators of success included the youths finding the course meaningful and beneficial, the social workers finding the method useful for furthering dialogue and insight, and our finding, as researchers, of preliminary and relevant threads to develop into a larger research project.

The pilot ran for two years, between 2005 and 2006; during these years, we tested the method in four film courses, delivered in different parts of Norway: two in Tromsø, one in Stavanger and one in Kautokeino. Each course lasted approximately five weeks and included five to ten participants who were recruited by social workers. In these courses, we collaborated with the Youth Support team in Tromsø and Stavanger, and the municipal youth and sports consultant in Kautokeino.

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[35] RKBU Nord is a regional center that engages in research and teaching on the subjects of child welfare and mental health. The center is financed and commissioned by the Health Directorate and the Child, Youth and Family Directorate. See: https://uit.no/om/enhet/omoss?p_dimension_id=154287.

As the Youth Support team partnered with us in delivering three of the four pilot courses, they were our principal collaborating institution. The selection of the Youth Support team as a collaborating institution was not random. When we developed the Youth Gaze course, we envisioned that our concept would represent a relevant tool that could complement the Youth Support team's ordinary services. We were familiar with their outreach work and found their approach interesting, in that it largely resonated with the principle of understanding youths in their own terms (also dominant within anthropological youth research). Outreach work implies fieldwork in the arenas frequented by youths (e.g. downtown areas, schools, football fields, youth clubs) in order to contact, dialogue with and gain knowledge of youths, their practices and their social environments. As the Youth Support team's approach aligned with the Youth Gaze objectives, it was easy to envision that the film initiative could fit into the Youth Support team's larger repertoire of services and activities. The Youth Support team had offices in both Tromsø and Stavanger, so it became our collaborating institution in the courses organized in these cities. In the Sami village of Kautokeino, however, there was no Youth Support service; thus, for that course, we collaborated with a local youth consultant, instead.

The institutional collaboration exceeded the frames of the film course. Approximately one month ahead of the course start, social workers from our collaborating institutions started recruiting youths from their target group. In Tromsø, the courses were held at the Youth Support team's offices; in Stavanger, the course was held at a local youth culture house; and in Kautokeino, it was held at the village secondary school. Reni and I were the course leaders for all four courses. We taught the youths about filming and editing and closely supervised them as they learned to operate the camera and produce a finished film. In each course, one or two social workers from our partnering institution attended the course meetings, participated in some of the activities and helped with the practicalities of the course delivery (e.g. picking up participants who had difficulty reaching the course, preparing meals, distributing materials, etc.). After the courses ended, the social and health workers followed up with the youth participants.

The pilot proved beneficial in the sense that the youths were eager to make short films about themselves and their daily lives. There were hardly any dropouts from these courses, and most of the youths invested significant effort into their work and felt proud of

their achievements. The participants made films treating a variety of topics, including: becoming a teenage parent, being a foster child, growing up with parents abusing drugs, losing a friend to suicide, finding one's place amongst peers, experiences at school, drinking and partying, bullying and violence, hanging downtown, relating to one's home village, navigating friendship and love, being a rapper, feeling lonely and being unemployed over the long term. At the pilot phase-out, employees at the Youth Support team expressed their wish to continue collaborating on the Youth Gaze project in terms of facilitating more courses with the intent of gaining the sufficient skills to conduct courses independently.

In 2007, the Youth Gaze project entered a new phase. At this point, we initiated collaboration with the psychology researchers Catharina E. A. Wang and Joar Vittersø.[36] Trond Waage (project leader), Wang and Vittersø wrote an application for an interdisciplinary research project surrounding the Youth Gaze project. The project received financial support from UiT and was granted two PhD stipends – one for an anthropologist and the other for a psychologist. I applied for and was accepted to the Anthropology PhD position. The idea in this new phase was that Ragnhild Magnus Lindekleiv (Psychology PhD candidate), Reni Wright (the other course leader) and I would plan and deliver an additional four Youth Gaze film courses that would constitute our empirical field for research. The data used in this thesis mainly stem from the courses delivered in the research phase, due to the fact that, in this second phase, I collected data and wrote notes more systematically.

The pronounced title of the overarching research project indicates the different interests amongst the research team: "Film production as identity formation and health prevention." Whereas Ragnhild was interested in looking into whether – and in what sense – the Youth Gaze film courses could be considered a health preventative measure, I found it rather interesting to explore the youths' ways of managing their identities within the frames of these film courses and to identify what and who contributed to their presentations of self. However, in sharing the same empirical field, Ragnhild and I mutually benefited from our continuous conversations, through which we shared our respective understandings of

[36] At the time, both were associate professors at the Department of Psychology at UiT. Wang was (and still is) the manager of Psykhjelpa – a drop-in psychological counselling service for children and youths run by psychology students.

the youths' filmmaking processes from our different experiential and disciplinary backgrounds. Reni also contributed significantly to these conversations.

The four courses that comprised the research phase of the project were all delivered in northern Norway: three in Tromsø and one in Vika.[37] In this phase, we expanded our network of collaborators, as we wanted to explore how the Youth Gaze initiative would "work" in varying institutional contexts demonstrating different ways of thinking about and acting upon youth risks. Thus, we collaborated with the Youth Support team, the NAV youth division, The Follow-Up Service and the community nursing services. Reni and I continued to lead the courses, with Ragnhild acting as an assistant facilitator in two courses (in Tromsø and Vika, respectively).

The transition from the pilot phase to the research phase implied a change in direction for the Youth Gaze project. The pilot phase was mainly driven by our (Trond's, Reni's and my) interest in developing and testing out a new method that could bring together and respond to shared concerns and questions within youth research, social work with at-risk youth and visual anthropology. In all of these fields, one could identify an expressed interest in finding ways to gain access and closeness to at-risk youths/research subjects' emic understandings of their being-in-the-world. The Youth Gaze project was framed as an intervention that could possibly meet these requests.

The inclusion of partners from academia and social work and health institutions contributed to the introduction of new and additional agendas. The psychologists' ambition to test whether the Youth Gaze project could function as a preventative health initiative provided the project with a frame that potentially influenced how the social- and health workers conceived of and responded to the project. More specifically, the psychologists' agenda appeared to more strongly affect how these partners came to think of the projects' potential, over and above the impact of the anthropologists' (more open-ended and explorative) agenda, which was to examine the identity processes that the project might trigger. Approaching the Youth Gaze project as a preventative health initiative, the social- and health workers adapted their recruitment strategies and their expectations of how we, as facilitators, should perform our task and the processes and outcomes that should be achieved by the project. Simultaneously, the orientation towards health measures

[37] Vika is a pseudonym. See footnote 20, page 36.

encouraged our institutional collaborators to conceive of the project as interesting, relevant and personally beneficial, as it directly engaged with their working mandate. Filmmaking was new to all of our collaborators, and, similar to the researchers, the social and health workers expressed enthusiasm for the project and curiosity about the processes that the camera and filmmaking would elicit.

3.4 The collaborating institutions

The institutions we collaborated with through the Youth Gaze project all target at-risk youths. However, their approaches to these youths differ, and they are all assigned different mandates and working areas by the State. In the following, I provide a brief overview of the key features of the services provided to youths by our collaborating institutions.

Community nursing services carry the mandate of promoting psychological and physical wellbeing, promoting well functioning social environments and preventing disease and suffering. In their general practice, public health nurses working with a youth population provide information and guidance on intoxication, sexuality, sexual disease, mental health and diet (Helse & omsorgsdepartementet, 2004). Through school health services, pupils can meet with a public health nurse during school hours. For many children and youths facing challenges, the public health nurse at school represents the first person they turn to with their experiences, thoughts and feelings. The public health nurse is subject to client confidentiality, but sometimes assists in raising issues and promoting dialogue with, for example, youths' parents, teachers or doctors. The public health service at school is a low-threshold service; that is, pupils can drop in at any time during opening hours to gain information and guidance concerning any matter. Some youths are followed up regularly by the public health nurse, whereas others frequent the service more sporadically (e.g. when they are facing a particular challenge or when the public health nurse gathers groups of pupils to disseminate information/guidance). When youths demonstrate a need for more specialized treatment or therapy, public health nurses may refer them to the Specialist Health Services. Public health nurses also maintain close contact with general practitioners, dental services, other social services and county authorities. Additionally, they collaborate with schools in finding suitable measures for promoting good psycho-social and physical learning and working environments (ibid. 2004).

The Follow-Up Service provides assistance to youths who have the right to a high school education but abstain from going to school, training or taking a job. The service is mandated the responsibility to consult youths and offer them assistance with finding a traineeship, a new line of study, a job or other employment. The Follow-Up Service was established by the Educational Reform of 1994 ("Reform 94"), in response to the growing high school drop-out rate at the time. It was later decreed by law, following the Education Act of 2006. The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation (NAV), in contrast, was mandated by the State to regulate various economic benefits (such as daily allowances, maternity benefits and pensions), to run the work-related qualification program, to provide temporary housing and to regulate social security. The general aims of the NAV are to improve living conditions for the disadvantaged, contribute to individuals' social and economic safety and promote individuals' transition to work life, social inclusion and active participation in society. In regards to marginalized children and youths, the NAV and the Follow-Up Service share responsibility for youths who have dropped out of high school. Specifically, the NAV is required to offer consultations concerning education and work and to assist youths in finding a job, placement in a labor market program or a combination of the two (NOU, 2009:22 :34-35). The NAV can also apply economic sanctions (holding back daily allowances) to youths who do not demonstrate that they are searching for a job or engaging in other activities related to education or training.

The Youth Support team receives its mandate from the NOU report "Outreach work with children and youth" (NOU, 1980:37). The institution primarily targets youths in need of assistance whom the ordinary social and health services have difficulty reaching. Although the Youth Support services are not decreed by law, many of their services, such as those relating to risk prevention, are enforced on a municipal level by the Child Welfare Law §3-1 (NOU 22, 2009: 36). In some cases, the Youth Support team is the first public entity outside the school that notices when a pupil has dropped out. In this regard, the institution is often in close contact with the Follow-Up Service and the NAV (ibid.: 36–37). The Youth Support team is often familiar with at-risk individuals and their local milieus, and at times offers personal support to individual youths in their meetings with social and health services. In contrast to the other institutions mentioned, which mostly receive youths at their offices, the Youth Support team predominantly engages in outreach work. This implies meeting

youths where they gather (e.g. in downtown areas, at malls, on soccer fields, at gas stations and on school grounds). However, the Youth Support team also provides consultations and activities at their own offices. Central tenets of the various services on offer (e.g. guitar lessons, sewing courses, discussion groups) include providing youths with responsibilities and including youths in the design and formation of services.

In the research phase, one course was held in collaboration with the community nurse (Vika), two courses were held in collaboration with The Follow-Up Service and the NAV (Tromsø) and one course was organized in collaboration with the Youth Support team (Tromsø). In all cases, our institutional partners recruited youths from their respective target groups. The number of recruited youths varied, ranging from three to ten. Since neither the Follow-Up Service nor the NAV had any premises suitable for hosting the course, we co-organized and held their courses at the Youth Support team's offices. Each course ran over a period of five weeks.

3.5 Pedagogical method

In the following, I describe the pedagogical scheme of the film course and reflect on its methodological potential. Although we demonstrated pedagogical/methodical flexibility across the various courses – by way of identifying and responding to the wishes and needs of the youth as they progressed with their filmmaking – all participants went through the same four phases: 1) practical camera training, 2) brainstorming (topics and approaches), 3) filming and editing and 4) film screening.

Phase one: Practical camera training

In the initial phase of the course, we used mainly short, practical exercises with the aim of teaching the participants how to use the camera and perform simple filming techniques (such as framing and angling, zooming, taking pan and tilt shots, recording sound and planning filming). These exercises were intended to motivate the youths as they developed (through the tasks) an understanding of how to work the camera for various purposes and therefore gained confidence in their ability to master and control the filmmaking task. The idea behind teaching them techniques for managing the camera and telling stories with

images was to provide them with a basic filmic repertoire and to help them develop a new mode of expression.[38]

In some of the courses – where it was practically and financially possible – we took the youths on a short trip on the first weekend. This allowed participants to get to know each other better and enabled them to receive the practical camera training in groups, rather than individually. Furthermore, with the entire weekend available, it was possible for participants to create a short trial film. For this purpose, we divided participants into small groups of three to five members and, within these groups, invited the youths to shift between being in front of and behind the camera. The aim of this early hands-on task was to give the youths an opportunity to experiment with the camera and editing equipment, in the hopes that, by doing so, they would develop a better understanding of the filmmaking process and what worked well (or did not). We also hoped that, by closely collaborating in their groups, the participants would get to know each other in a small amount of time, and that this would contribute to building their confidence and strengthening cohesion in their groups.[39] Finally, we also designed this early film task to boost the youths' enthusiasm for the later film project. Predominantly, these activities produced data on how the youths related to the camera and the other people present at the outset of the course.

Phase two: Identifying a film topic

In the second phase of the course, we worked on planning the participants' individual film projects. The youths proved to be very differently positioned when it came to having set ideas about the subjects of their films. While some youths told us "I don't know" when we asked them about their ideas, others were able to immediately describe in great detail their

[38] Contemporary youths are highly literate in their presentations of self and daily life experiences through imagery, mainly through the use of technology such as smartphones and social media. At the time in which we conducted the film courses, few youths had mobile phones with good cameras; furthermore, social media platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram did not exist, and Facebook had not yet gained popularity in Norway. Accordingly, for the youth participants, the Youth Gaze project represented a new mode of expression. Some of the youths had experience with filmmaking/photography from school, but few owned or had access to their own camera.

[39] The creation of trustful relations amongst the youths, between the youths and the course leaders, and between the youths and the social and health workers, was something we strived towards and incorporated in our pedagogical design. All anthropologists work to build relations with their informants in the field, but only a few explicitly discuss their strategies for doing so. In the Youth Gaze project, which involved many youths who had faced challenging life experiences, such relational work was central to obtaining access and knowledge, and could not be overlooked. In Chapter four, I explicitly discuss this matter with the support of concrete examples.

choice of subject. These contrasting starting points indicated the youths' different needs for assistance: some needed help brainstorming a topic, others needed reassurance that their tentative ideas were "good enough" and others were more or less "self-driven" and eager to start filming.

In this phase, we introduced exercises to help participants map and evaluate the significant activities, arenas and situations in their everyday lives. Such exercises enabled us to get to know them better, for them to get to know each other better and for us to tease out possible ideas for their films. Methodically, the exercises accumulated data on how the youths chose to present and evaluate their physical and social surroundings. The majority of the exercises we used were inspired by the learning tools applied in the Master's of Visual Anthropology program at UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, and some were collected from a manual on participatory learning approaches (Aune, Foss, & Skåra, 2001). The exercises included: 1) filming/photographing a place of significance, 2) filming a process concerning a significant activity, 3) composing a brief self-portrait and 4) drawing a timeline to describe (and evaluate) the activities of a typical week. These exercises helped me, as a researcher, observe the strategies that were tentatively applied by the youths when presenting themselves in a group setting. In discussing these exercises – both within groups and with individual youths – I also conversed with the youths (who were willing) about the meanings, intentions and motivations they associated with the places, people and activities they had selected to film.

In analyzing the youths' film footage and timeline drawings within the larger group, we (as researchers) and the social and health workers gained insight into the ways in which the youths viewed their daily lives and what they deemed important places, activities and persons. In a sense, those engaging in the collective analysis became catalysts for others' reflection by posing questions and comments that sometimes shook former and assumed understandings (Rudie, 1994). In the collective analysis, the differently positioned actors (youths, researchers, and social and health workers) picked out and gave relevance to different signs, and also interpreted the signs in contrasting ways. Such discussions provided data on how the youths depicted, explained, defended, (re)negotiated and sometimes changed their perspectives, within the frames of a particular situational context related to a concrete task and feedback from an audience of differently positioned actors.

Phase three: From idea to finished film

Once the youths had selected their individual film topics, we began planning the realization of their ideas on film. For this purpose, we applied a brainstorm exercise called "The sun" (see Aune et al., 2001). Participants were given a piece of paper on which they drew a circle; inside the circle, they wrote a few keywords concerning their film topic. Following this, they drew a number of sunbeams and, at the end of each beam, described particular scenes that might be filmed in relation to the chosen topic. This exercise worked as a map (or checklist) of the scenes the participant aimed at filming. However, the map was not fixed; some of the beams could be discarded in the process, and new ones could be drawn. In other words, the sun sketch could be revisited and modified whenever the work encountered stagnation.

The sun exercise not only provided a map for each film, but it also enabled me to discuss with individual youths the significance of the selected experiences, persons, situations, arenas and objects they planned to include in their film. In this way, it functioned as the starting point for an informal in-depth interview, through which we discussed the details of a particular issue, situation or relationship. In some cases, we elaborated upon potential scenes by drafting a cartoon-like shooting script. This was particularly helpful when a youth wanted to enact a concrete situation or experience, or to represent a particular location. In such cases, Reni or I would sit with the individual youth and discuss and sketch how we could best represent the situation or experience – and the sensations bound to these – through filming and combining specific video shots.

The youths' film projects often took twists and turns along the journey to completion. Between the course meetings, the youths would film scenes in accordance with their topic and filming plan. Often, they would film themselves interacting in everyday life situations; at other times, they would film monologues or conduct interviews; in still other cases, they would reconstruct events that had previously occurred. They would bring in filmed material that we would discuss, either as a group or individually (involving Reni or I and the participant). By working closely with the participants – reviewing and discussing their filmed material – I gained insight into the participants' reasoning behind their choices and occasional changes of direction, as well as the significance they attributed to their various life experiences. However, it was not solely the youths' words and conversations that provided key insights. In some cases, I noticed subtle details in the youths' filmed

material, which provided knowledge of a tacit and/or sensorial kind. At times, the youths would also look at their footage and seemingly realize new things. When this occurred, it often caught them by surprise. Alternatively, sometimes other participants, social or health workers or researchers would point things out in the recordings that the youths had not been attentive to. In this way, filmmaking as a methodical tool allowed me to explore the interface between what the youths strategically and intentionally sought to communicate about themselves and what they revealed about themselves, often unwittingly, through their films. Any discrepancies were due to the double aspect of the medium in terms of providing both "a language" (a controlled statement) and "a record" (an unintended reflection or imprint) (Vaughan, 1992).

Within the course setting, I not only paid attention to what the various actors did with the camera and how they responded to their own and others' footage, but I also paid attention to the types of social interaction that took place within the course, which surrounded and impacted the youths' filmmaking processes. In particular, I sought to capture the ways in which group dynamics contributed to setting the frames in which the youths acted with their film and socially engaged with others in the course setting. In addition to closely following up with the youths throughout their work on the filmmaking task, I also closely observed and collected data on how the youths communicated and engaged with each other within the course, itself.

As a final task, when the filming period was over, the participants edited their filmed material. To support them in this task, we scheduled editing appointments with each participant so they could take turns editing their films on our three laptops. For this task, we used Apple's simple editing software (iMovie), which the youths were able to skillfully navigate in only a short amount of time. In this editing task, we helped the youths structure their material. Some participants had clear ideas about the composition of their films, whereas others needed more assistance. If a participant had a lot of material and felt "lost," we assisted him or her in the task of filling out a shot list (i.e. a list of all film material, described and coded according to time, content, length, technical quality and ideas for possible application).

The editing phase – similar to the filming phase – involved discussions about meaning making. A central topic of this dialogue between the participants and the course

leaders during the editing phase included the significance of the connection between particular events, the messages the participants wanted to communicate and the target audience for their film.

Phase four: World premiere

Once all of the films were complete, we arranged a "world premiere" screening in the local cinema or youth house. Each participant chose whether he or she wanted an "open" or a "closed" screening of their film. Closed screenings were designated for persons who had been personally invited by the youth filmmaker, whereas open screenings additionally welcomed the invitees of the other participants on the course. Practically, when some participants chose an open screening and others chose a closed screening, we began the premiere with the closed screenings (shifting the audience between each film) and then moved to the open screenings (which were open to all invitees). Almost all of the youths chose an open screening; specifically, out of the more than 40 films screened, only three were closed screenings. In two of these cases, the reason pertained to the participants' treatment of sensitive information and their wish to control the recipients of that information. In a third case, two participants had made a film in which they reflected on friendship, drinking and partying. They selected a closed screening because they did not wish to share their film with teachers who had been invited by other participants.

In cases in which all participants selected an open screening, the cinemas were often filled with buzzing teenagers excited to see their friends' freshly made films. In all of the course screenings, the audience was mainly comprised of the participants' friends. Some participants also invited family members (e.g. parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts and uncles) and some invited teachers. Whether or not family members and/or teachers were invited correlated with the participants' film topics (i.e. whether these reflected a side of them they felt comfortable sharing with family members and/or teachers) and the nature of their relationships with family members and/or teachers.

The premiere was quite a formal event, in the sense that we, the course leaders, began by introducing the films and then, following each screening, provided positive remarks to highlight each individual filmmaker's particular skills and talents. One at a time, the filmmakers would come in front of the audience to receive a DVD of their film, a diploma, a rose and audience applause. This celebratory ending to the filmmaking process

was designed in collaboration with the social and health workers, who valued the potential of such an event to leave the youths proud of their accomplishments and with a felt sense of mastery.

After the screenings, the participants, involved social/health workers and course leaders gathered for a celebratory meal at a nearby restaurant. In this setting, the youths often expressed their happiness and relief about having dared to tell their stories and having received positive feedback for their work. In these gatherings, I obtained data on the youths' evaluations of the course experience. I often asked the youths about what they had initially expected from the course, what they had learned along the way and what it had felt like to share their films and personal stories in a public setting. From these conversations, I was able to reflect on and better understand the significance the youths placed on the film course experience and their criteria for "successful film projects." Later on, I collected similar information from the social and health workers.

3.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the ideological and epistemological bases of the Youth Gaze project. Specifically, I described its guiding principles and assumptions, its organization and development and its pedagogical/methodical scheme. I also described the project's transition from its pilot to the research phase. In this transition, the project changed from being oriented towards testing the feasibility of the film course scheme and its relevance for at-risk youths and social workers to exploring how the film course could provide both a source and a means of accumulating knowledge on the relational constitution of at-risk youths.

The transition of the project from its pilot to the research stage had a significant effect on my research focus. In the pilot phase, I was rather narrow-sighted, deeply engaged in following the youths' small moves with their films and encouraging them to tell the stories they wanted to in their preferred ways, always with an eye to how I could assist them in this process. In the research phase, I continued to function in the role of a course facilitator, but I also took a step back in order to note the ways in which the actors (including myself), through their various positionings, contributed to the filmmaking process. Accordingly, I became more attentive to the roles and relations and the social

interaction amongst actors within the frames of each course. In the coming chapter, I reflect on my mixed role of facilitator and researcher and the challenges that occurred in my attempts to balance these two roles.

Chapter 4:
Participation and involvement

Introduction: Reflections on the researcher's role

In this and the subsequent chapter, I discuss methodological issues related to my research project. As my selected research design and position in the field may be seen to part from mainstream ways of conducting anthropological research, I identify and discuss some of the opportunities, limitations, implications and consequences bound to my chosen methodical approach and role as a researcher. In this chapter, I treat issues related to the degree and manner of my participation and involvement. In the following chapter (Chapter 5), I discuss the opportunities and challenges that apply to the use of audiovisual methods in research.

4.1 Participant observation in applied anthropological research

Within anthropology, participant observation is a core research method that implies the researcher's systematic observation of and participation in the lives of the study subjects (Madden, 2017:1). Practices and ideas related to the appropriate conduct when participating in research have changed over time and formed a long-standing methodological debate. Within this debate, some hold that the researcher should observe with minimal participation while others believe that the researcher should involve him or herself as an active participant in the local community, over time. The locus of participant observation tends to be a "naturally occurring social situation," with the researcher most often engaging in the regular activities and everyday routines of the research subjects (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Madden, 2017; O'Reilly, 2012).

In the Youth Gaze project, my colleagues and I familiarized ourselves with the youth participants' "naturally occurring social situations" only indirectly, through viewing their representations of the places, persons and arenas they deemed significant in their everyday lives. As depicted in the previous chapter, my colleagues and I initiated what could be described as a "facilitated social process of dialogue and reflection" between the participants, and it was these distinct, partly arranged social processes that took place within (and because of) the film course that came to constitute the object of my study.

Although this approach was warmly welcomed and regarded as a "natural" and relevant methodological approach by our collaborators (institutions offering social and health services for youths), the approach was sometimes met with hesitation by my fellow anthropologists.

Over the years, when presenting the Youth Gaze project at conferences and PhD workshops, anthropologists have occasionally approached me with questions and criticisms concerning the methods employed in this project. Sometimes I have felt obliged to defend these methods – or at least to carefully explain the background reasoning that informed the research design. However, such questions have usually been gently posed, motivated by a will to better understand how one can work anthropologically whilst simultaneously engaging in social intervention. Questions have commonly been directed towards my role as a facilitator, such as: "How can you conduct your analysis when your fingerprints are all over the place?" and "How can you study a group of individuals when this group would not exist if it were not for your intervention?" Such questions reflect the contours of prevailing norms for the researcher's role and the degree of methodical flexibility within the discipline, indicating that the researcher should not use methods or roles requiring too much intervention.

Anthropologists may differ in their perspectives on the degree of (and suitable strategies for) participation and involvement. However, most anthropologists agree that all anthropological research projects are constructed and delimited by the researcher, and that the researcher must assume a position that is relevant in the chosen social sphere of study in order to gain access and proximity to the informants. The Youth Gaze project provides an example of one such strategy for finding a relevant position within social and health institutions from which to participate in and observe processes of at-risk youths' identity management. As described in Chapter 3, the researchers' roles and participatory strategies in the project largely resonated with current discourses and practices for approaching at-risk youths within our collaborating social and health institutions. Our pedagogical/methodical scheme shared much in common with the social and health workers' social organization and approaches to youths; thus, it could be considered a "naturally organized activity" within the contexts of these institutions, suggesting that my colleagues and I took on recognizable and relevant roles within these fields.

Nonetheless, questions communicating doubts and hesitation were useful for triggering me to think more critically about the significance of my choices, as well as my practiced methods and roles. In the subsequent sections, I explore issues of participation and validity and discuss the opportunities and limitations bound to my role as a facilitator in the Youth Gaze film courses.

4.2 Participation, involvement and validity

Some of the central questions that should be be raised and discussed in regards to the researcher's role include: What does it mean to participate? Who should participate? And to what extent is involvement and intervention legitimate within anthropological research? Such questions may be answered differently according to two distinct approaches – both of which were dominant in the Youth Gaze project: pragmatism and social constructivism. The former was essential to the pilot phase with its applied interests (i.e. testing the efficacy of the film course as a social initiative) while the latter was essential to my approach in the research phase (i.e. my study of the youths' filmmaking processes). In this section, I illuminate how these differing perspectives posed a dilemma for me as a researcher, due to their contrasting conceptualizations of participation, involvement and validity.

At its conception, the Youth Gaze pilot project assumed a dominant pragmatic perspective. Our major concern was to test the feasibility of the Youth Gaze courses and to note whether (and how) the scheme could be beneficial to different actors (youths, social and health workers, and researchers) and contribute within the social and health sectors. In general, the pragmatic approach favors practice over observation, as the effectiveness of knowledge beliefs is thought to be demonstrated by the effectiveness of action (Kvale, 1996:248). The implication is that anthropologists (or other scientists) may introduce ideas, interpretations and theories, but from a pragmatic viewpoint, these only gain a foothold if they are put into practice and instigate social change. Although the Youth Gaze project had not yet entered its research phase, it proved to have much in common with "action research" or "action learning" projects. Action research may be seen to have grown out of a pragmatic tradition, as action researchers move from "descriptions of social conditions to actions that can change the very conditions investigated" (Kvale, 1996:248-249).

Accordingly, the Youth Gaze project could be categorized as an example of action research in terms of its aims and motivations, which moved towards individual and social change.

Action research projects typically prioritize "democratic" research methods, whereby researchers and participants work together to collect and/or analyze research data (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006; Reason & Bradbury, 2008). The researcher's participation in such an orientation involves participating with research subjects in a common cause in which the goal is to improve the conditions that affect the subjects' lives (Powers & Tiffany, 2006). In this way, action research requires both the researcher's active involvement and the active involvement and participation of research subjects. Normally, the research process goes through specific cycles of action–reflection, whereby ideas are favorably tested in practice throughout the study design (Reason & Bradbury, 2008). A central task for the researcher is thus to assist in merging emic and academic knowledge in order to uncover a new type of knowledge or practice that is applicable and relevant for the subjects in their everyday lives (Høier, 2007:168). Validity, from this perspective, may be based on two criteria: "whether a knowledge statement is accompanied by action, or whether it instigates changes of action" (Kvale, 1996:249). From this perspective, one may see that the researcher's involvement and interventions are not only acceptable, but also required for the purposes of validity.

In the research project, the social processes triggered by the Youth Gaze film project constituted the basis of my empirical data. However, I mainly sought to understand these processes from a social constructivist, rather than a pragmatic, standpoint. Along these lines, I was interested in exploring the conditions bound to the social construction of "at-risk youths" by means of studying the relationships between the youths' filmmaking, the group dynamics and the proper dynamics bound to the recruiting institutions.[40] For this reason, I did not approach the individual filmmaking processes from a pragmatic viewpoint focused on benefits and change, but oriented my study around the circumstances and conditions bound to the youths' development of distinct presentations of self. In this perspective, validity was bound to communication. According to Steinar Kvale, "communicative validity involves testing the validity of knowledge claims in a dialogue" (Kvale, 1996:244). He further

[40] The concept of "proper dynamics" is taken from Reidar Grønhaug's theories on field analysis (Grønhaug, 1978). With the term, Grønhaug refers to the emic codes, rules and categories that are known and applied by a distinct set of people. Grønhaug's theoretical concepts and perspectives are introduced and discussed in Chapter 6.

elaborates: “valid knowledge is constituted when conflicting knowledge claims are argued in a dialogue” (ibid:244). In this way, Kvale emphasizes the negotiable character of knowledge claims and the inclusion of multiple perspectives. It is precisely my attempt to understand the negotiable character of the meaning making processes of differently positioned actors within the Youth Gaze film courses that was the driving force in my PhD research.

The dilemma I faced as a researcher was bound to the fact that I found myself with one foot in each camp, squeezed between realizing pragmatic ideals and conducting research with a social constructivist interest. I had to find a solution and strategy for studying a process in which I, as a facilitator, played an active part. When the pilot phase was over and I started my research on the Youth Gaze project, I was able to select my position as a researcher in the field. Although I could have chosen a role of a less intervening researcher – participating in but not leading the film course – I ultimately chose to continue on as a facilitator. In the following section, I present and discuss the background to and consequences of this choice.

4.3 Facilitator and researcher: A double bind?

In anthropology, the researcher is often considered a key research tool (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Madden, 2017; O'Reilly, 2012; Rudie, 1994), often with reference to the methodical practice of participant observation, which presumes that the researcher is present in mind and body in the daily activities and everyday lives of the research subjects. Additionally, the perspective also serves as a reminder that subjectivity is a component of the ethnographic research and writing experience (Madden, 2017:20). With this follows a request for reflexivity, calling researchers to be sensitive to (and to show transparency towards) the ways in which their bodies, personalities, thinking and ways of being in the field may influence the types of data that are obtained. Reflexivity around the position of the researcher involves reflection on possible blind spots – aspects that cannot be seen from the researcher’s precise position – as well as aspects that are easily observed and perhaps triggered by such a position (c.f.Abu-Lughod, 1999; Favret-Saada, 1990; Rudie, 1994).

From a reflexive standpoint, my selected role of facilitator could be perceived of as a strategic position from which to observe the youths’ social lives. In the pilot phase, I

experienced that the facilitator position represented a means of becoming closely acquainted with not only the youth participants, their thoughts and their points of view, but also their ways of filming and projecting situations, relationships, arenas and experiences from their everyday lives. Furthermore, from this position I gained access to the youths' ways of responding to each other's projections and communicating with social and health workers and facilitators. Through the film task, the social and health workers and facilitators (myself included) developed a distinct way of approaching the youths and talking about their life experiences. We would discuss concrete situations, experiences and points of view they considered relevant in terms of their filmic representations of topics, issues and messages. Furthermore, by adapting their experiences to film, the youths gained a new way to approach their experiences – one that enabled them to not only give accounts of particular situations, experiences and points of view, but one that also reflected on how these accounts interconnected with other situations, experiences and arguments to form a consistent narrative.

Reni and I treated the youths as filmmakers, and, between us (the youths and the facilitators), we had a shared interest in realizing the films. This shared interest contributed to building trustful relations and increased the youths' willingness to share their personal experiences and points of view. The facilitator role thus represented a strategic position from which I could gain access and close proximity to the youths and their ways of understanding and acting upon their lives and social circumstances. It equally provided an opportunity for me to build and engage in relations of trust with the youths. It was against this background that I chose to continue in my role as a course facilitator throughout the research phase.

As a facilitator, I did not participate in the social situations, activities and places "out there" that the youths often referred to and sometimes described on film. For this reason, events in the youths' arenas and their daily lives that were not accounted for in the course setting represented blind spots in my study. My data could thus be characterized as depictions and statements of lived lives rather than my own observations of these lives. Nonetheless, my intent was never to compare the youths' filmic presentations of self with the ways in which they "actually" led their lives, as a means of distinguishing whether their film tales correlated with ethnographic reality. Rather, I sought to gain a better

understanding of how the youths portrayed and reasoned about their everyday lives and experiences in dialogue with other youths and adults, within a distinct social and institutional context, and to determine the factors that affected or contributed to their storytelling. The facilitator position allowed me to guide the youths through this process and, at the same time, observe how they negotiated meaning and developed their film projects.

It was advantageous that two facilitators (and trained visual anthropologists) ran the Youth Gaze courses. Reni and I divided responsibilities between us. As we entered the research phase of the project, Reni took more responsibility for camera and editing training, whereas we took equal responsibility for following up with the youths individually and in groups. Having two facilitators allowed for more methodical flexibility, as we could, for instance, split up the groups and run different activities (e.g. one facilitator could do individual follow-ups while the other could engage the rest of the group). In terms of data collection, it was also favorable for there to be two facilitators, as this provided space for me to take notes while Reni led, and vice versa. Reni and I often reviewed our notes and discussed our impressions after the course meetings, and this process was very helpful for advancing my ideas and interpretations.[41] Although the pedagogical scheme was largely pre-arranged, it was also flexible in the sense that, as a facilitator, I could integrate questions that were relevant and interesting to my research project without the youths sensing that I was breaking into and disrupting their work.

However, my close involvement also posed some dilemmas. In the following discussion, I examine two of these closely. The first dilemma involves how the role of the facilitator possibly overshadowed my role as a researcher. Because I presented only few cues in relation to my researcher role (with respect to the youths' general expectations of such a role), I imagine that the youths primarily saw me as a facilitator who was there to assist them in their filmmaking task. For instance, I conducted no structured interviews during the film course. Although I asked the youths questions, these questions predominantly related to the filmmaking task (as appropriate for a facilitator); furthermore, they mainly followed the natural topic of conversation and were not necessarily

[41] Ragnhild, the Psychology PhD scholar, also joined us in such discussions when she participated in the course held in Vika. I took much inspiration from these talks, and many of the ideas, correlations and interpretations that we discussed are reflected in the analyses in this thesis.

experienced by the youths as related to my research. Nonetheless, I constantly had my notebook with me and occasionally jotted down key sentences and words that the youths spoke. Even still, the youths most likely considered my notes to be related to my supervisory work with their film projects.

In order to solve this dilemma during the research phase, I clearly presented my status as a researcher at the start of each course. I introduced my research project and my particular interest in learning more about the youths' perceptions and experiences of being young today. I also sought to explain anthropological methods, and how these commonly involved in participating, observing and conversing with informants. All participants received an information letter concerning their research participation, and all of them signed an informed consent form.[42] To remind the youths about my research agenda throughout the project, I periodically commented while conversing with the youths that I wanted to understand a certain issue or statement better, and that getting a stronger hold on their points of view was valuable to me as a researcher.

A second dilemma bound to the facilitator role related to the feedback and advice I gave to the youths. Reni and I closely supervised most of the youths in their step-by-step work in constructing their films. Although some youths preferred to work independently and were rather self-driven, most participants asked for our advice and assistance. Sometimes we provided technical advice, regarding how to operate the camera or edit a sequence. At other times, we advised youths experiencing stagnation, offering them help in making decisions concerning what to address, how to film and how to manage their filmed sequences. With some youths – often those needing extra support to feel confident about their choices and achievements – I spent hours sitting next to them throughout the editing phase.

In working closely with the youths, Reni and I clearly affected the processes that constituted my object of study. I sought to solve this dilemma by means of being transparent in my analyses about the ways in which I interacted with and supervised the youths, and how they acted in accordance to the advice and input that Reni and I gave. Rather than regarding such intervention as a bias, Trond Waage (2013, 2018) argues and

[42] See appendix 1 (information letter) and 2 (informed consent). Both of these were approved by NSD – the Norwegian Center for Research Data. NSD is a resource center that assists researchers in data gathering, data analysis and issues of methodology, privacy and research ethics.

demonstrates that, when an informant's reaction is triggered by the researcher, interesting data can be produced that the researcher might not have otherwise received. Ingrid Rudie (1994: 29) posits that interventions of some sort exist in all anthropological research projects, as "anthropologists and informants act as catalysts to each other´s efforts to make sense." In this lies the idea that, similar to any social situation in which people interact, in anthropological settings, the researcher takes an active part in a communicative process through which knowledge is produced (Abu-Lughod, 1999; Holtedahl, 2010; Wikan, 2013). With respect to the Youth Gaze project, I felt it important to acknowledge this and to consider how we, as researchers, contributed to the processes we studied by means of our personalities, our assumed roles and our methodical approach.

4.4 Moving from field to text

In making the shift from *observing and participating* in the social life of the film course to *writing analytically about* the social life of the film course, I changed positions, moving from looking at what people did to distinguishing what led them to act in that way. Raymond Madden posits that it is in the writing process that researchers "finally realize what it is that [they] want to say about our ethnographic experiences" (Madden, 2017:156). At the same time, anthropological writing does not solely revolve around ethnographic experiences. This is because, in ethnographic writing, researchers not only seek to construct valid and reliable representations of the empirical data, but they also seek to structure these data in the form of an ethnographic tale that contributes to anthropological knowledge and theory building. The writing process thus involves the researcher establishing sufficient distance to collate, report and interpret the activities and processes that he or she observed and participated in and to connect these insights with anthropological concepts and debates.

When sitting down to write about the experiences and insights I had gained about the youths and their issues and concerns, I found that the doubtful and hesitant anthropologists I had met along the way had a point: it *was* indeed a challenge to write analytically about processes in which I had played such an active part. However, the passage of time and exchanges with supervisors and other scientists helped me to achieve the necessary distance to my material, enabling me to see certain patterns and interconnections that I could explore further. At the same time, my field notes and copies of the youths' films

ensured that I could also preserve the closeness that I had acquired to the participants and their thoughts and concerns. My notes provided detailed descriptions of the activities and social interactions within the course, as well as my own thoughts, concerns, emotional reactions and preliminary interpretations of what had taken place. Through the notes, I could thus explore and reflect upon the developments of not only the youths' filmmaking and group dynamics, but also the evolution in my own learning.

I considered it important in my writing to give priority to rich descriptions of the youths' ways of acting with their films and with the group. For the analysis, I decided to take as a starting point the youths' actions, voices and perspectives. At the same time, I sought to convey the insight I had gained into the extent to which their voices and agency interrelated with their relationships with others and the "order of things" reflected in the institutional practices. I found, in the symbolic interactionist approach, a theoretical framework that highlighted this intersubjective aspect of the youths' filmmaking. Grønhaug's concept of field analysis (1978) extended the analysis by providing a methodological procedure for identifying the interconnections between subjects' actions within micro conditions and the proper dynamics of systems on a more macro scale. Through his approach, I was able to move from distinguishing tasks, issues, roles and relationships on a micro level (i.e. the interaction situation) to exploring traits and mechanisms bound to the social fields (systems of social interconnections) in which the youths acted. This allowed me to better understand the youths' strategies for self-presentation in contexts in which they were already recognized and acted upon as members of the at-risk category.

With this orientation, the present thesis contributes to the standing debate within anthropology and other social sciences over the primacy of structure or agency in shaping human behavior. It also contributes to youth research, which aims at understanding youths in their own right, in that it demonstrates the function and effects of a distinct method that prioritizes youths' emic perspectives on their own lives and situations. Finally, it contributes to methodological debates within social and visual anthropology concerning concepts of participation, involvement and reflexivity, and the epistemological potential bound to the application of audiovisual methods in research.

The ethnographic tale in this thesis is centered on the youths' struggle to communicate about themselves and their lives on film, and it reflects the ways in which they

navigated their films within their particular social and cultural contexts. A supporting story gives an account of my own struggle, as a researcher, to understand the processes through which the youths grappled with communicating about themselves and their lives on film.

In the following chapter, I continue my discussion of the methodological issues bound to the Youth Gaze project and move on to discuss the implications of the film course as method. I conclude by distinguishing some of the opportunities and limitations bound to this approach.

Chapter 5:
The film course as a method

Introduction: Reflections on the application of audiovisual methods

In this chapter, I draw attention to some of the implications of applying audiovisual methods in anthropological research. My methodical approach involved subject-generated filmmaking, which constitutes a niche within visual anthropology. Subject-generated filmmaking may be organized in multiple ways; in the present case, the youths' filmmaking was carried out in a participatory scheme whereby the youths were asked to film their everyday life experiences and discuss their own and their peers' filmed footage within the course setting in sessions organized by anthropologists. In the discussion to follow, I situate this approach in the broader field of visual anthropology and draw out some of the opportunities and limitations that I observed when applying this method. In the final section, I discuss some of the ethical challenges of using the film course as a method.

5.1 The visual in anthropology

Visuals have been applied in anthropological research since the turn of the 20th century. However, visual anthropology did not emerge as a subdiscipline of anthropology until the 1970s. Paul Hocking's edited book, *Principles of Visual Anthropology* (2003 [1974]), contributed to consolidating the field, bringing together a range of interests and activities largely associated with visual ethnography and ethnographic filmmaking, under the denomination of "visual anthropology" (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2005:3). The book contained a powerful introduction written by Margaret Mead, which reflected some of the major concerns within visual anthropology at the time. In her piece, Mead noted that visual anthropology found itself "in a discipline of words" (2003 [1974]:1), and she plead for anthropology departments to equip their students and staff with more than paper and pencils. She drew a picture of quickly disappearing worlds and stressed the urgency of documenting cultural practices on film before their extinction. Her words bear witness to how developing an anthropology in which audiovisual tools were commonplace was not an

easy task, despite a persistent concern within the discipline about studying, understanding and documenting socio-cultural life across the globe.

Nonetheless, the use of images in anthropological research has a long history, particularly with respect to photography. In anthropology, photographs have been commonly applied as a means of supporting, illustrating and amplifying written arguments. This type of application dates back to Bronislaw Malinowski, who took and used photographs as documentary evidence. The application of images as illustrative material not only provides readers with a feel for the anthropologist's culture of study, but it also provides visual evidence of having "been there," thereby building the anthropologist's authority (Madden, 2017; O'Reilly, 2012). Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson played an essential role in demonstrating how photography (and film) could additionally function as a research tool for detecting important details bound to bodily conduct. In their study of child upbringing in Bali in the 1930s, they took more than 25,000 photos that came to constitute important data for their analyses (Jacknis, 1988).

Alongside this use of photographs, early attempts were made to collect "moving artifacts" of human behavior for study and exhibit (Rony, 1996). At the turn of the 20th century, the film medium was widely considered eligible for generating reliable and objective data, thereby contributing to the positivist dream (Rony, 1996; Ruby, 2000). Regnault, one of the pioneers of ethnographic filmmaking, stated: "Only cinema provides objective documents in abundance, thanks to cinema, the anthropologist can, today, collect the life of all peoples; he will possess in his drawers all the special acts of different races" (Regnault, 1923, translated by Rony, 1996:48). The idea of safeguarding cultural heritage by documenting diverse cultural practices (i.e. rituals, ceremonies, dance, art) constituted the dominant motivation for applying cameras in anthropological research in the first half of the 20th century. While very few anthropologists engaged in making full-length ethnographic films at the time, some documentary filmmakers, such as Robert Flaherty and Dziga Vertov, produced films that became important sources of inspiration for later researchers. Whereas Vertov set out with his Kino-Pravda ("film-truth") series to capture – with his camera – a type of "human truth" lying beyond what could be perceived by the naked eye (see Vertov, 1925; 1929), Flaherty presented (with his *Nanook of the North* (1922)) one of the first documentary films on a grand scale, featuring the daily life struggles of an Inuit family. Both

of these filmmakers contributed to opening the eyes of the wider public to the documentary genre.

The invention of sync-sound and portable film cameras in the 1960s enabled ethnographic filmmakers to film individuals and interactions in informal settings in a way that had previously been impossible. In earlier decades, film equipment had been too heavy to carry around and recordings had to primarily be made in studios, which implied dramatization. Documentary films recorded under these earlier circumstances were commonly attributed expert commentary or other external sound. The new equipment resulted in an overall shift in documentary and ethnographic filmmaking in which “field footage began to talk” (Barnouw, 1993). The focus moved from the public to the private, from the general to the particular and from (what was previously identified as) the typical to the unique (Taylor, 1998). With this, personal experience became a possible film subject. Thus, technological innovation opened a passage for two directions within ethnographic filmmaking that were both relevant to the development of the Youth Gaze project: observational cinema and cinema verité.

Observational cinema

Observational cinema was a movement in the 1960s that took advantage of technological change to lightweight sync-sound cameras. The new film style was characterized by long takes, with priority given to the subject’s own accounts (rather than experts’ accounts) and the visible presence of the film crew (Hockings, 2003:vi). Observational cinema filmmakers aimed at discovering while filming(rather than scripting or interviewing); thus, they represented a major shift in attitude in where to look for authority and authenticity, breaking with former film styles featuring strong direction (Barbash & Taylor, 1997).

Observational cinema filmmakers shared some distinct philosophical and ethical principles –They took on a particular stance towards life where humility and expression of a fundamental respect for subjects in the world stood out as essential (Grimshaw, 2005:22). Translated into practice, the shift to observational cinema meant the abdication of the role of the director (or artist or theoretically driven scientist). According to Colin Young, a key initiator of the genre, it was the subjects who mandated the film; filmmakers would follow their subjects’ actions rather than initiating or directing them (Young, 2003 [1974]). Thus, subjects acted for themselves, rather than for the filmmaker. David MacDougall draws

attention to the influence of Harold Garfinkel's ethnomethodology in much of Young's thinking about observational cinema (MacDougall, 2002). Ethnomethodology focused on the ways in which ordinary people construct a stable social world through everyday utterances and actions (Garfinkel, 1984 [1967]), and thereby attended to the subtle details of human (inter)action. Observational cinema eschewed interviews in favor of sensitivity to the situational context, and embraced both verbal and non-verbal ways of communicating social meaning (Grimshaw & Ravetz, 2005b:22).

This faithfulness to the filming experience (i.e. discovering with the camera), where editing was made with an ambition to distill this experience, contributed to a common misconception of observational cinema as striving towards "objectivity." Young disputed such a linkage, stating:

> In fact, the ideal never was to pretend that the camera was not there- the ideal was to try to photograph and record «normal» behavior. Clearly what finally has to be understood by this ideal is that the normal behavior being filmed is the behavior that is normal for the subjects under the circumstances, including, but not exclusively, the fact that they are being filmed" (Young, 2003 [1974]:101)

Young argued that, in observational cinema, the camera was used purposely and self-consciously, rather than randomly (or "objectively"). Subjects would respond to the camera, and these responses would become part of the filmed experience. In this way, the relationship between filmmaker and subject would be visualized to form an integral part of the film. Observational cinema's attentiveness towards the subjects' actions and meaning making , alongside its embrace of the intersubjective and dialogic aspects of filmmaking, constituted a foundation for subsequent film projects and styles that took on a more collaborative and reflexive stance. In regards to the Youth Gaze project, observational cinema inspired my relational approach to investigating how at-risk youths construed meaning in the context of filmmaking and in the social engagement with others surrounding their filmmaking. Jean Rouch's cinema verité was another important source of inspiration.

Cinema vérité

Cinéma vérité first emerged in France through the anthropologist Jean Rouch. Paul Stoller (1992) refers to Rouch as a premature post-modernist, due to the multivocality and reflexivity of his ethnographic film projects. In cinema verité, participation and dialogue

between the filmmaker and subjects were not only stated as a fact, but commonly placed at the core of the films. Vérité ("truth") referred to Rouch's idea that the camera triggers responses from the subjects that may teach us something different and essentially more than what can be learned through simply observing human interaction:

> he conceived of the camera as a catalytic instrument, one whose mere presence could provoke the subjects into producing a performance that revealed the beliefs, sentiments, attitudes and dreams that lay beneath the everyday surface of things and that, in the last analysis, were of primary importance in explaining the more visible forms of social behavior. (Henley, 2009:340–341)

Rouch's approach valued experimentation, and he took much inspiration in the ideas of surrealism and Italian neorealism, together with the works of Flaherty and Vertov. The principles of participation and performance stood strong throughout his career. To Rouch, participation meant participating in the lives of his subjects. This was done in a particular technical fashion: he avoided any "professional" way of working (i.e. use of tripods, zoom, a large film crew, scripts, retakes) and showed suspicion towards "la belle image" (Henley, 2009:341). He believed that all types of technical virtuosity could block engagement between the filmmaker and the subjects. In contrast, participation to Rouch meant collaboratively determining ideas and stories with his actors and never scripting them. Most commonly, his actors performed around themes that were relevant and significant to their own lives. He coined this spontaneous engagement with the camera "ethnofiction."

Whereas observational cinema filmmakers aimed at allowing everyday situations to unfold in front of the camera, Rouch did not make films about everyday life situations – at least not in a direct sense. Rather, his universe was a composite of documentary and fiction, marked by a particular ethnographic interest. He filmed what went on in front of the camera – situations that only took place because of the presence of the camera (i.e camera as catalyst) – and reflected the nature of the collaboration between himself and his subjects within the particular film project.

Jaguar (1969) and *Moi un noir* (1960) were amongst Rouch's most successful ethnofiction projects. The first follows three migration workers from Niger as they take on jobs in the British colony of the Gold Coast (now Ghana), blending documentary footage with improvised fiction. The second equally deals with work migration, but to the Ivory Coast. The latter film depicts the harsher sides of the migrants' lives, involving exploitation, poverty and conflict. Rouch, who had written several reports on work migration in West

Africa, found that these participatory projects, which involved constant dialogue between the researcher and the subjects, taught him much more about the issues surrounding work migration than he had learned from more conventional research methods.

In one of his most celebrated films, *Chronique d'un été* (1961), made with Edgar Morin, Rouch practiced "feedback as method." This method implied screening rushes back to the subjects. In the film, a screening was included as an integral scene, depicting an interesting debate among the subjects about whether the images they had featured in were true to their lives. Rouch used such feedback screenings strategically to develop his research and film projects, as the discussions provided him with a more nuanced understanding of his subjects' life situations and conditions. Thus, the feedback screenings were essential in enabling Rouch to get closer to his ideal of a "shared anthropology":

> It is this permanent "ethno-dialogue" which appears to me to be one of the most interesting angles in the current progress of ethnography. Knowledge is no longer a stolen secret, devoured in the western temples of knowledge; it is the result of an endless quest where ethnographers and those whom they study meet on a path which some of us now call "shared anthropology". (Rouch & Feld, 2003:100–101).

Cinema verité and observational cinema shared a phenomenological interest in seeking to capture – or even invoke – the human experience of what it actually feels like to be in the world. Equally, in the Youth Gaze project, applying a video camera to pursue subjects' experiences and meaning making was a central strategy. Taking inspiration from observational cinema, I sought to use the camera for the purposes of discovery; I wanted to see how the youths would purposely and self-consciously film their everyday settings in order to learn more about aspects concerning their everyday lives and ways of making sense. Furthermore, observational cinema inspired me to pay careful attention to the subtle details of human action and interaction.

I saw additional potential in the playful and experimental approach of Rouch, sharing his conviction that there is much to learn from the ways in which subjects choose to re-enact their lives in front of the camera, and from engaging with them in close and collaborative relationships. Furthermore, Rouch's feedback method and concepts of shared anthropology were epistemological guiding stars during the design of the Youth Gaze project. The principles and practices of collaboration and reflexivity associated with these

two concepts not only informed the development of the Youth Gaze project, but also resonated strongly with our academic milieu.

The Tromsø school of visual anthropology and the Youth Gaze project

The work of Jean Rouch (cinema verité) and Judith and David MacDougall and Gary Kildea (observational cinema) is integral to the teaching and practice of visual anthropology at the Department of Social sciences at UiT – Arctic University of Norway. In this setting, principles and techniques of observational cinema and cinema verité are combined with training in text-based situation analyses that similarly attend to subjects' actions and meanings (based on the Manchester school and the agency-oriented theories of Erving Goffman and Fredrik Barth). Whereas observational cinema techniques provide an almost sensuous presence to the events recorded, situation analysis ensures a basic ethnographic process for analytic operations and generalizations. These two perspectives meet in their shared focus on practice, actors and process (Arntsen, 2018).

Together with the project leader Trond Waage and my colleague Reni Wright, I received my formal training as a visual anthropologist within this academic environment. Since 1997, the department has offered a two-year Master's program in visual anthropology[43], and every year 10 students from across the world cross the Arctic Circle to gather in Tromsø and engage in its curriculum. The educational training draws on Rouch's principles of shared anthropology, with the intent of developing students' recognition of the importance of learning from one other, as well as from their subjects in the field.[44] Pedagogically, the program employs participatory and cross-cultural learning techniques, taking advantage of the different cultural and academic backgrounds of the students and the staff. This particular approach encourages students to collaborate whilst learning about anthropological, ethnographic and audiovisual theories and methods, drawing attention to the multi-sitedness of knowledge production (cf. Arntsen and Holtedahl, 2005; Haraway, 1995; Moore, 1988). Through filmmaking tasks and other practical ethnographic exercises, students are trained to critically reflect on their own work, their position (roles and relations) in the field and the power relations within their filmic and textual representations.

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[43] See: https://en.uit.no/education/program/269222/visual_anthropology_-_master.

[44] See Lisbet Holtedahl's web-page: http://www.lisbetholtedahl.com/?page_id=1016.

The research agenda of the wider faculty similarly focuses on practice, actors and process, with particular attention placed on the research process and issues of epistemology, power and collaboration. Lisbet Holtedahl, the initiator of visual anthropology in Tromsø, has performed decades of ethnographic research on gender, societal and generational change, modernization processes and power relations – in the contexts of Northern Norway and West Africa (Holtedahl, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1993a, 1993b, 2010, 2018a, 2018b; Altern & Holtedahl, 1995). Her scholarship and films have been referred to as instances of "slow anthropology" (Stoller, 2017), due to her prolonged and episodic fieldwork and her dedication to building long-lasting relationships with her research subjects. A great proportion of her work touches upon the advantages and dilemmas of working collaboratively and reflexively with images in anthropological research (see, e.g., Engebrigtsen & Holtedahl, 2016; Holtedahl, 2006, 2009; Holtedahl & Altern, 1995; Arntsen and Holtedahl, 2005).

Trond Waage similarly exercises a kind of visual anthropology that underscores the importance of building close and collaborative relationships with research subjects. Waage has experimented with different ways of applying images in knowledge accumulation and dissemination (see, e.g., Waage, 2007, 2013, 2016, 2018; Waage & Hope, 2012; Wang, Hope, Wright & Waage, 2012), and strongly argues for the need to engage with subjects as research partners. Bjørn Arntsen and Peter Crawford have also written extensively about epistemological issues bound to the use of images in anthropological research (see, e.g., Arntsen, 2005, 2018; Arntsen & Holtedahl, 2005; Crawford & Lowe, 2018; Crawford &Turton, 1992; Otto et. al., 2018; Postma & Crawford, 2006)

The Youth Gaze project was conceived within this academic milieu and marked by the dominant teaching and research approaches described above. It followed in the footsteps of (project leader) Trond Waage's numerous research projects, in which he tested different methodologies to enhance a shared anthropology, in Rouch's spirit. With the Youth Gaze project, we sought to connect knowledge, interests and perspectives from youth research and visual anthropology to contribute a methodological tool and anthropological knowledge to social and health sectors working with at-risk youths, for use in their daily work. In this vein, we also drew heavily on Waage's expertise in and experience of youth research.

The Youth Gaze project stood in contrast to all of our former research projects, in that we were using the Youth Gaze project as a collaborative and participatory venture in which we would step out of the role of filmmaker and take instead the role of facilitator, handing the camera and editing equipment to youths. The decision to hand the camera to youths was grounded in the idea that it might represent a means of engaging in knowledge production with the youths that the youths would (hopefully) find both enthralling and relevant. Additionally, Trond's previous experience spoke to the difficulty of gaining access to teenagers' life worlds via conventional anthropological fieldwork, as teenagers are not always keen to be seen with or to spend time with adults (see Waage, 1994). The film course thus represented a methodological strategy to observe youths in their (filmed) everyday situations and stimulate discussions with youths on central aspects about their lives, as well as topics and issues they deemed important. In our design, we filled the courses with various activities, many of which were borrowed from the participatory and cross-cultural learning program at UiT. The situation analysis held a central position in the various activities. Youths' descriptions of and reflections around issues in their everyday lives stood at the center of our research, but we also aimed at grasping the ways in which social and health workers (and we, as researchers) contributed to the youths' filmmaking and meaning making processes.

Jay Ruby asserts that asking people to actively cooperate in filmmaking about their lives naturally increases their power (2000:208). Today, handling over the camera to the research subjects (subject-generated filmmaking) has become more commonplace within visual anthropology; nonetheless, such films and research seldom describe the interactions between the filmmakers, facilitators and others involved in the film production (Ruby, 2000; Blum-Ross, 2013). Partially due to my academic background in visual anthropology at Tromsø, roles, relations (including power relations) and practices in the youths' filmmaking processes constituted exciting (and familiar) topics for my PhD research.

In the remainder of the chapter, I will describe the characteristics of subject-generated filmmaking as a methodological approach. I will also discuss the implications, strengths and challenges bound to this approach.

5.2 Subject-generated filmmaking

Subject-generated filmmaking involves handing over a camera to research subjects and training them to operate the camera and editing equipment. The technique is not only practiced within anthropology, but it is also practiced within other disciplines (e.g. sociology, pedagogical science, health science and psychology) and by practitioners who work closely with marginal groups within the social, health and volunteer sectors (Gruber, 2012). Many of the practitioners and researchers who organize such projects do so using the approach of participatory video*,* whereby filmmaking is applied as a means of encouraging a particular – often marginalized – group to raise issues and concerns (Lunch, 2007; Shaw, 1997). Such projects tend to contain pragmatic and idealistic goals that relate to building awareness and finding strategies to solve concrete social problems (Haviland, 2017).

However, many anthropological research projects that apply subject-generated filmmaking as a method are driven by a less pragmatic knowledge interest. Primarily, they seek to gain insight into and proximity to a groups' everyday lives, experiences and perspectives by means of looking at the ways in which group members portray distinct situations and activities on film. In such projects, the facilitation of social change is less central, or not an objective at all. Sol Worth and Jonathan Adair's "Navaho Film Themselves" project, initiated in 1966, was cutting edge at the time and could be seen as a source of inspiration to many anthropologists using a similar approach.

Worth and Adair's project took place in a local Navaho community in Arizona. Their research centered around the question: "What would happen if someone with a culture that makes and uses motion pictures taught people who had never made or used motion pictures to do so for the first time?" (Worth & Adair, 1997 [1972]:3). They introduced a 16mm camera to a group of Navaho Indians with no former experience with Western TV and film consumption or production, in order to explore whether there was a distinct Navaho way of not only seeing the world, but also representing it on film. The researchers refrained from teaching the subjects about filmmaking conventions and only provided general instructions concerning how they should use the camera and editing equipment. In so doing, they aimed at exploring the participants' culture-specific forms of communication

and sought to diminish the degree of influence they had on the participants' films.[45] The project is now considered one of the first of its kind to explore the potentials of subject-generated filmmaking and the extent of what can be learned when participants "express their own cultural perspective, rather than being 'captured' and represented by technologically and academically qualified 'experts'" (Scott, 1994:6).

Worth and Adair's aim of not influencing participant processes so they could capture a distinct cultural form of expression may be seen as a sign of the time, possibly connected to the influence of direct cinema to visual anthropology in the United States. Direct cinema – a type of realist cinema – holds that cinema is an objective space and that filmmakers can provide a "mirror to the world" (Barbash & Taylor, 1997:22). Since the reflexive turn in anthropology, however, the researcher's subjectivity has been treated more as fact than as bias (cf. O'Reilly, 2012; Pink, 2007). This has made researchers in contemporary subject-generated film projects less hesitant to intervene and influence the field of study, many of these have taken inspiration in Rouch's ethno-fiction and reflexive film-style. They justify their involvement by taking a reflexive approach to the researcher role and the project's conditional frames.[46]

Whereas Worth and Adair were primarily interested in *the film product* and the identification of how films could be seen to reflect a culture-specific language, Terence Turner (1992) argues that researchers should pay closer attention to *the social processes* that encompass a film product. Turner engaged in a prolonged participatory video project with Kayapo Indians in Central Brazil in the early 1990s, through which he sought to improve their social situation by encouraging them to voice the forms of social injustice they faced in relation to Brazilian nationals' incursions into Kayapo territory for gold mining and poaching.[47] In this sense, Turner engaged in a type of activism aimed at improving the group's social situation, taking quite a different position from that of Worth and Adair.

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[45] On the Penn Museum website (www.penn.museum), there is a section devoted to Worth, Adair and Chalfen's reflections on their strategies for avoiding influence. Here, one may also read excerpts from their field notes, which reflect an awareness of how their engagement with participants inadvertently affected their participants' choices for their films.

[46] A more thorough discussion of the researcher's role in participatory anthropological research projects is presented in Chapter 4.

[47] Details about the Kayapo video project may be found on the following websites:
http://as.cornell.edu/news/anthropologist-terence-turner-dies-79
https://news.uchicago.edu/article/2015/11/17/terence-turner-anthropologist-and-human-rights-advocate-indigenous-people-1935-20.

These two projects demonstrate the wide range in subject-generated filmmaking projects in terms of the researcher's objectives and degree of involvement. Some projects, like that of Turner's, clearly support the idea that "researchers should engage themselves in helping to solve problems of communities without thinking primarily about their own professional gains (the 'ethical motive')," whereas others, like Worth and Adair's, are firmly grounded in "the view that involving respondents or community members more actively may generate unique types of data (the 'scientific' motive)" (Pauwels, 2015:96). Many subject-generated film projects – maybe most – exhibit both motives, but differ in regards to the degree of emphasis they place on one or the other motive and the extent to which they communicate and practice the participatory element in explicit or implicit ways.

Worth and Adair's approach of leaving many of the decisions concerning the "how and what" of filmmaking to participants is a useful starting point for exploring how participants select a film topic and approach that they find meaningful (in a particular time and space). In the present research, an open ended attitude[48] towards the participants' choices of film topics resulted in interesting data concerning what the youths considered relevant topics, how they presented and argued for these topics, how others responded to their topics and how they ultimately kept, moderated or changed their topics on the basis of feedback from others. By minimizing interference into their choices of topics and problems to treat, I observed how particular topics – and ultimately ways of communicating and performing identities on film – were negotiated in the group setting. Ruth Holliday (1999) took a similar interest in studying how her subjects – people in queer communities – performed identities for the camera. She found that the processes involved in her subjects acting out their identities on camera paralleled the ways in which identity was performed as a process in their everyday lives (1999:476). A major difference, however, was in the way in which, on film, the subjects could watch themselves and re-record or edit their identity claims. Seen in this light, filmmaking involves constant modification and final objectification. Accordingly, the Youth Gaze project, which required young people to film themselves in a participatory scheme, may have enforced an accentuated and condensed identification

[48] The youths were allowed to select their own topics, but their films had to reflect their experiences of what it was like to be young.

process that resembled the ways in which the youths managed their identities in their everyday lives.

Different from Worth and Adair and similar to Turner, I largely participated in and paid particular attention to the youths' group processes. Rather than taking an observational and realist stance to the youths' chosen methods of filming themselves, I closely engaged in the youths' work on their film projects by means of facilitating and supervising. Throughout the process, I dialogued with the youths around their filmed footage, seeking insight into their concerns, perspectives and choices. At the same time, I observed the social interactions and group dynamics within the film course situation. Such conversations and observations enabled me to capture and document how the youths constructed meaning in dialogue with the other persons in the course setting and in dialogue with the premises of the film course and the institutional context.

5.3 Knowledge gained through photo/video elicitation techniques

The method of looking at and discussing photos or video footage together with the subject or group (associated with Rouch's feedback method) is commonly applied within subject-generated filmmaking projects as a technique for eliciting experiential knowledge. Luc Pauwels (2015) suggests that looking at photos or film clips together with research subjects can provide two kinds of information for the researcher. First, it can offer information about what is visible in the image, such as who or what is (or is not) captured in the image; the type of action that is being performed; and the significance of certain signs and symbols. Additionally, the technique allows the researcher to "*elicit or trigger deeper, more abstract perceptions and values* of respondents" on the basis of their role as an individual who is involved in the depicted world (Pauwels, 2015:97, originally in cursive).

In his *Snapshot Versions of Life* (1987), Richard Chalfen enquires into the "homemade" videos and photographs of the American middle class. He looks at and discusses family photo albums and home videos together with members of middle class families, and discovers that, when people take or pose in photographs, they organize themselves in ways that comprise meaningful social communication. In this lies the idea that people – consciously or subconsciously – produce images that follow (or at least relate to) cultural standards not only for picture taking, but also for leading a good life. He provides an

example of how his subjects tended to take pictures of clean and smiling children (rather than dirty children) and of wedding scenes (rather than funerals). He reflects on the knowledge his subjects necessarily held in order to take these pictures.

Cristina Grasseni took a similar approach in her research, seeking to gain insight through images. In her case, she introduced photographs and video excerpts to her research subjects that she had recorded herself. Her object of research was the relationship between man and animal amongst cattle breeders within a farming community in northern Italy. In that community, farmers bred cows for a type of beauty contest, and Grasseni sought to explore the ways in which breeding aesthetics was learned through apprenticeship – that is, how the farmers went through processes of "enskillment of vision" (Grasseni, 2007). She explains: "skilled visions, once acquired, are not so much codes, or tools for actively manipulating messages as backgrounds and scenarios that make those messages meaningful" (Grasseni, 2009:11). One of her strategies for uncovering the criteria farmers used to determine whether a cow was physically attractive consisted in her taking photos of cows and discussing these photos with the farmers. Slowly, she acquired the skill to distinguish between attractive and less attractive cows, and she adopted her camera style (in terms of perspective, angle and focus) to capture and reflect the local aesthetics. Through discussing images with her informants, she became more sensitized to her subjects' repertoire of values, norms and practices.

Through their studies, Chalfen and Grasseni found that significant patterns in their subjects' cultures (in terms of norms, values, expectations, etc.) could be identified by looking at and discussing photographs and video material with them. Chalfen additionally found that cultural standards were reflected in his research subjects' photographs and home videos, as well as their image making practices (i.e. their ways of presenting their lives and surroundings). Whereas Chalfen and Grasseni took interest in the correlation between practice and cultural standards, David MacDougall has been more concerned with the experiential and sensory aspects of images and image-making (MacDougall 1998, 2006). MacDougall has taken particular interest in the types of knowledge images can produce, capture and communicate, and in exploring how images are of value to anthropological knowledge.

5.4 Images and forms of knowledge

MacDougall suggests that photographs and video may be regarded as "forms of knowledge that require a direct acquaintance with social moments, physical environments, and the bodies of specific social actors" (MacDougall, 1998:80). He further argues that it is in these relations that film is of most value to anthropology. MacDougall distinguishes between knowledge through acquaintance and knowledge through description, connecting visual representations to the former category. Such knowledge is dependent on experience and affect. He further states:

> In anthropology these kinds of knowledge have traditionally been arranged hierarchically, with explanation dependent upon, but ranked higher than description, and description ranked higher than experience. This is in part the legacy of a logocentric tradition. Film alters this hierarchy, favoring experiential understanding over explanation. (MacDougall, 1998:84)

MacDougall describes that images are analogues of vision. There are parallels between the interactions experienced in everyday life and the acquaintances made with characters in a film. He notes that "films construct their arguments physically out of their primary data. Written anthropology comes closest to this when it deploys indigenous verbal texts as the building blocks of its own arguments" (ibid.:68-69). Subsequently, from the viewer's perspective, projected images are open for interpretation and the principle of discovery stands strong. Images thus involve different readings at different levels and in different contexts, and, as such, they may be understood as "sites of meaning potential" (ibid.:77).

I agree with MacDougall's claims and found his concept of "sites of meaning potential" essential to my methodical approach. In my work, I regarded the youths' produced film material as consistent with such sites. While this promoted a potentially problematic understanding of images as ambiguous signs open to a variety of interpretations, I took advantage of the ambiguity and contextual unboundedness of the images by screening the youths' footage to initiate dialogue around the images. As asserted by Chalfen, above, our seeing and image making is deeply predetermined, and much of the knowledge we gain through vision and other senses is highly organized and culturally conditioned. MacDougall (2006) adds to this that whatever our to some extent "literally." He states:

> As we look at things, our perception is guided by cultural and personal interests, but perception is also the mechanism by which these interests are altered and added to. There is thus an interdependency between perception and meaning. Meaning shapes perception but in the end perception can refigure meaning, so that at the next stage this may alter perception once again. This applies as much to making images as to our seeing, and to seeing images made by others. (MacDougall, 2006:2-3)

In this lies the argument that meaning is produced with our whole body, not just by conscious thought. Through watching images we are acquainted with a certain "being" by seeing bodies, social encounters and physical environments; we are also confronted with the "meaning" that may be communicated through the filmmakers' deliberate pointing, describing and judging, The knowledge of both being and meaning that is communicated through images places the viewer in contact with the experiences of others.

In the collective screenings of the youths' footage within the Youth Gaze setting, I attempted to capture the ways in which the differently positioned actors (participants, social workers, facilitators/researchers) received, reacted to and interpreted the images they were served. These collective screenings thus functioned as a means of teasing out the actors' differently situated interpretations, reactions and contextualizations of both meaning and being that were communicated through the footage they watched.

In the following, I introduce three cases from the Youth Gaze project that exemplify how the screening of film footage enabled me to gain knowledge about the youths' ways of looking at and experiencing their worlds. Between the three cases, insights were gained in contrasting ways; but in all of them, the insights stemmed from looking at the youths' images.

Three cases from the field

Video footage as a site of meaning-potential: The case of Silje and Sigrun

Silje and Sigrun are 14 years old and attend the same school. Recently, there has been a growing problem of bullying and occasional violence amongst the pupils at their school. Sigrun has been pestered and physically attacked by a group of girls at her school, and, at one time, this group included Silje. At the time of the film course, however, the two girls had reconciled and were friends. They decide to make a film together about their experiences at school and the significance of friendship.

The girls bring in footage that they have filmed in their classroom during recess. We watch the footage as a group. In the filmed excerpt, some of the pupils are sitting at their desks whereas others are moving around. Some of the girls and a single boy confront the filmmaker, interrogating her about the video project. Others try to avoid being filmed by moving out of frame or turning their backs to the camera. In the subsequent discussion, the course leaders present some of their observations of the video material. These observations include: some of the girls sitting in the back of the classroom are dressed in black and heavily made up; some of the boys wearing sweatpants are in a cluster, laughing loudly; a couple of girls wearing light colored clothes are occupied with reading and sit close to one another; and one boy sits alone, looking out the window. From there, the facilitators – in dialogue with the participants – tentatively distinguish between the different groups of youths, questioning who is friends with whom, based on clothing, posture and communication. We land on the hypothesis that there are two groups of girls in the class, one group of boys and some pupils who appear to be outside any group.

I notice that Silje and Sigrun straighten in their chairs and appear more attentive and eager during the discussion. They correct and comment upon the categories we propose by applying similar signs (clothing, schoolbooks and placement in the classroom) and sorting the pupils into social categories of "losers," "angels" and "bitches." As they do so, they reveal that, in their definitions of the classroom and its social groups, they slightly diverge from one another. They begin to argue about why, for example, a particular person should not be considered a bitch, referring to something that happened in the last weekend or month, at school or downtown. They also refer to something they have been told. They compare a particular girl in their class with a girl in a neighboring class. As a researcher, I take note of some of the organizing principles that the girls apply when distinguishing one girl from the next. I learn about the "facts" that are agreed upon and those that are contested. This little exercise becomes the starting point for our further elaboration on issues of social relations in their filmmaking process.

Knowledge through acquaintance: The case of Vanessa and Vibeke

Vanessa and Vibeke, aged 15 and 14, have decided to make a film about friendship and love. When I sit down with them to identify and discuss the scenes they would like to film, they withdraw from the conversation, avoiding my questions by means of laughing, lifting their

eyebrows, fiddling with their mobiles and looking attentively at something happening in the other corner of the room. I ask them questions about how they spend their free time and occasionally pause to ask whether they might want to film one of their mentioned activities or situations. Vanessa sneers at my input. Vibeke, who is slightly more compromising, assures me that they will figure something out to film for the next session; but at each session, they arrive with no footage. The excuses are many: Vanessa was grounded, they had too much homework, the school play required too much time, they had to attend a friend's birthday and so forth. It seems that the two girls lack an interest in making the film and that my attempts at teasing out ideas for situations to film are far from motivating. But at the same time, I am puzzled by the fact that they keep attending the course meetings.

As I start to see an end to most of the other participants' film projects, I have doubts that Vanessa and Vibeke will manage, dare or make the effort to finalize their film. But two days before the scheduled premiere screening, they bring in footage from various sites and activities. They had been filming all along, but simply never brought the footage to our meetings. When I sit with them and watch their film material during editing, I come to understand more about the girls. Through their footage, I come to see the types of roles they take on in other situations and in arenas outside the film course setting.

In their footage, the two girls interact verbally and physically, both alone and in the company of friends. They smoothly shift between different roles in different situations. When they are alone, they are self-critical and giggly. They express uncertainty about their appearance and their presentation on camera. I can tell from their gaze, which pulls slightly towards the left, that they are looking into the camera's LCD screen, monitoring their own performances while filming. When talking about their friendship, they appear embarrassed and shy. The footage is largely comprised of Vibeke giving an account of how they met and what she likes about Vanessa. Throughout this, Vanessa laughs and sometimes listens intently. When the footage shifts to the school setting, there is a sharp change in role play. There, the girls approach male peers in a direct and self-confident manner, ordering them around and putting them on the spot with questions about love and friendship. They demand answers, even when the boys are hesitant and reveal great reluctance in answering. For instance, the boys resist when they are asked to single out their best friend

whilst surrounded by their mates and when, in that same setting, they are asked about whether they prefer to spend time with their mates or their girlfriend.

The above examples from the Youth Gaze setting illustrate two contrasting paths that generated insight into the youths' ways of experiencing and acting upon their worlds. With Silje and Sigrun, I mainly gained entry into their experiences of social life at school by *discussing* their filmed material with them and confronting our different understandings of the footage (Waage, 2007, 2013; Waage & Hope, 2012), taking advantage of images as sites of meaning potential (MacDougall, 1998). With Vanessa and Vibeke, however, we never got to the point of discussing the filmed material, as they abstained from bringing in their footage until the last minute. It was only when *looking at* what they had filmed during the editing phase that I came to learn important lessons concerning their striving to embody suitable roles in different social situations. In this case, my insights were obtained through acquaintance with their *being*, rather than dialogue around meaning-making (cf. MacDougall, 2006). Noticing how Vanessa and Vibeke acted in the filmed footage – how they related to others and eachother, and communicated with words and body language in various settings – I came to sense the types of situations in which they appeared to experience a sense of mastery and those in which they expressed uncertainty. My acquaintance with the girls' role playing across social situations led me to reconsider my earlier impressions of these girls as disinterested, unmotivated and lazy. I was now aware of the great efforts these girls made to manage their roles and identities in order to fit in and gain acceptance from peers. Through this, I came to realize that the Youth Gaze scheme had forced them to share their lives and identities before they had even become sure, themselves, about what constituted suitable roles and actions in this precise situation. Their answer was to withdraw and assume strategies of social distancing (e.g. lifting their eyebrows, looking away, laughing, fiddling with their mobile phones) (Murphy, 1964).

Social effects of viewing images: The case of Mona

The two first examples mainly illustrate how I as a researcher came to gain insight in the experiential worlds of the filmmakers through viewing the youths' filmed footage. In the case of Mona, a girl who participated in the same course as Silje and Sigrun, it was more obvious that the whole group gained new insights in Mona's life situation and that these

insights played an effect in catalyzing social change. In the early phase of the film course, I noticed that Mona often sat by herself, was reluctant in contributing to group-conversations and appeared to stand somehow outside of the group of participants. For the self-portrait exercise, Mona brought in and screened footage from the basement-studio in which she lived with her father. In her recording, she gave a tour of the studio, which was tiny and rather somber. As she filmed the bedroom, she commented that her father and her used to shift between sleeping in the bedroom and on the livingroom-couch as the studio contained only one bedroom. It was not until the very last minute of the recording, that Mona turned the camera towards some pictures hanging on the bedroom wall. We could see a few pictures of her and a sibling when they were children; a picture of her and her father in a fishing boat and finally a family picture containing her father and the two children standing in front of a big mountain. As she moved with the camera closer to the family picture, she placed her finger on an indistinct rupture that moved across the whole picture, and I came to notice that the mountain in the background was not intact. She commented that her father had torn away the image of her mother.

When the screening was over, the whole group remained quiet for a little while, before one of the girls asked where her mother was now, and another girl asked a couple of other questions. It was as if the other youths for a first time would stop up and look at and pay interest in Mona. During break some of the girls would ask Mona to come with them and take some fresh air outside the building. After this, I would not see her sitting alone no more. The example reveals how image-screenings, and gaining direct acquaintance with others' experiential and physical surroundings, in some cases clearly affected roles and relationships in the film course setting. This touches Rouch's (2003 [1973]) idea of the camera and feed-back sessions' capacity to trigger emotional and impulsive responses from the participants that may teach us something different and essentially more than what can be learned through simply observing human interaction.

5.5 Dilemmas bound to subject-generated filmmaking

Several benefits and opportunities have been mentioned in regards to subject-generated filmmaking; most importantly, the approach enables researchers to include the emic view as a necessary complement to the dominant etic view (Pauwels, 2015). Engaging, involving and

giving much of the lead to research subjects may improve access and evoke new and sometimes surprising insight into the subjects' lives that might otherwise not be captured. Finally, from watching and discussing film material with subjects, a researcher may come to distinguish the contours of the systemic and cultural standards that lie behind the subjects' emotions and conceptions.

However, alongside the benefits and opportunities of this approach exist some dilemmas that must be acknowledged. One such dilemma pertains to the "presentation of self" and the tendency of many filmmaking projects (particularly those advocating for social change) to assume that the visual participatory method will produce certain effects. A recurring argument made by the organizers of such projects claims that the processes that are evoked through the application of visual participatory methods empower subjects, strengthen their communication skills, give them a voice in their community and raise awareness of problems and solutions. However, rather than referring to these as *possible* outcomes and *desired* effects, some researchers present them as *features* or *natural results* that automatically result from the distribution of cameras and facilitation of group processes (Pauwels, 2015). Such ideological positioning is often detected by participants and may sometimes be seen to guide them in their practices (wittingly or unwittingly) via a distinct power of definition. When this occurs, it is rarely attended to in the analysis.

I find it problematic when such theories of change produced by researchers are maintained in their analyses and communication of findings in reports and scientific productions. This situation may confound issues by mixing the researchers' motives and objectives with those of their research subjects, under the assumption that all actors involved operate with the same conception of what constitutes a successful process or outcome (which is seldom the case). This is particularly problematic when a researcher's interpretations and evaluations of his or her subjects' filmmaking processes are based solely on whether the subjects adhered to the theories of change that the researcher defined. In such cases, determining whether the project contributed to social change comes to overshadow everything else in the research setting, including unforeseen, unplanned and surprising outcomes.

From my perspective, researchers who apply subject-generated filmmaking and participatory methods must achieve sufficient distance to reflect on how both they (as

researchers) and their research schemes may have delineated and affected their subjects' behavior. Power imbalances connected to the roles and relations in the research field must also be considered in all phases of the research project, and strategies must be found to appropriately manage these.

A second dilemma that relates to the one just mentioned is the tendency of most participatory video projects to be used with groups of persons who are understood as marginal. David MacDougall questions whether researchers and practitioners within participatory video projects stand at risk of forcing a victim role on their participants (Grimshaw, Papastergiadis, & MacDougall, 1995). With the effort to put injustice on the public agenda by inviting members of a marginalized group to express their personal situations, there lies a clear expectation that participants should focus on the ways in which they are victims of unjust marginalization. This may contribute to reproducing stereotypes and categories that paint a rather black and white picture of a social or political situation, as well as the relationship between differently positioned actors. In this situation, the researcher may lose hold of the nuances in the situation and the prevalence of ambiguous positions and roles.

Yet again, such a dilemma may be met by the researcher maintaining a reflexive and attentive attitude towards the roles and relations and strategies and social mechanisms within his or her project. Furthermore, reproduction of stereotypes and marginalization may be prevented by a commitment to explore problems and issues from different angles. When producing scientific accounts of the processes and topics that arise in a project, a researcher may work towards ensuring a better understanding of the socio-political context that contributed to his or her research subjects' conveyed experiences.

A final dilemma concerns the ethical principal of "do no harm." Within most subject-generated film projects, the researcher applies filmmaking as a means of inviting subjects to depict and reflect on aspects of and experiences in their own lives. When initiating such processes of self-articulation and reflection, the researcher has a small degree of control over the outcomes and reactions of his or her subjects. When the subjects raise sensitive and challenging issues about their lives and experiences – as many of the Youth Gaze participants did – the task of filmmaking can stand out as emotionally challenging. In the

following section, I elaborate on some of the ethical dilemmas related to reflexive filmmaking with youth through a wider reflection on the "camera as catalyst."

5.6 The camera as catalyst – Ethical reflections

Terence Turner states that "few reflect upon the possible effects of an objectifying medium like film or video on the social or cultural consciousness of the people filmed" (T. Turner, 1992:6). In subject-generated filmmaking, participants not only make videos, but they are also influenced by the videos they make. Blum-Ross refers to a participant in a participatory video project who spoke about how filmmaking had allowed her and the other participants to "see things a bit more" (Blum-Ross, 2013:99). David MacDougall similarly talks about how filmmaking (in general) engages a certain type of gaze – one that focuses on a single aspect of a scene, separating it from the rest of the world in which it is encompassed "in order to look at it more closely as we might pick up a leaf in the forest" (MacDougall, 2006: 4). Both point to film's potential to raise consciousness.

As referred to earlier in this chapter, Jean Rouch was, throughout his career, particularly concerned with the social processes and effects that appear to be triggered by the camera. In the film project *Chronicle of a summer* (1961), there is a scene in which some of the films' protagonists meet each other. Discussion is centered around a number that Marceline, a woman in her 30s, has tattooed on her arm. Two African men are unaware of its connection to concentration camps involving the persecution of Jews during WWII. This scene is followed by a scene in which Marceline walks the streets of Paris while speaking into a concealed microphone about her tormenting memories of the shattering of her family during the war, her father's death in Auschwitz and her return to Paris following liberation. Her story brings her into a state of anguish.

Similarly, in the Youth Gaze project, some of the youths' filmmaking projects depicted agonizing memories from their lives. One girl told a story from her childhood that included social neglect, parents on drugs and constant hunger due to a lack of food in the house. Another girl broke into tears when recounting episodes of bullying and physical and psychological abuse. Yet another girl described the agony she was experiencing due to one of her close friends having recently committed suicide. These were the stories they found it relevant to tell about themselves when asked to present themselves on camera, as these

painful experiences so affected their state of being. Some of the youths who opted to treat difficult experiences from their childhoods refrained from showing the footage to the other participants; rather, they engaged with the facilitators and social and health workers on an individual basis. For these youths, hearing themselves speak aloud about their difficult experiences – and the thoughts and feelings they associated with these experiences – on their videos led them to relive the challenging moments. Accordingly, observing themselves on film triggered a range of emotional reactions, alternating between great relief, anger and sadness. As facilitators and researchers, we met the youths' reactions by listening to them and supporting them as best as we could. Such moments required us to demonstrate competencies that were not strictly related to our roles as facilitators and researchers, and contributed to developing our relationships with the youths beyond the professional sphere.

Feedback sessions could elicit noticeable emotional reactions in the youths, such as pride, happiness and relief, as well as sadness, despair and discomfort. When the youths received positive feedback from the other participants, they often smiled and appeared relieved and happy. In other cases, when the other participants critiqued or questioned the issues or performances they had presented on film, they would respond by attempting to explain the (challenging) circumstances bound to their filming, introduce a new topic of conversation or simply remain silent. In all of these cases, I sensed their feeling of dis-ease. It was clear that the camera and the filmmaking task, in combination with the presence of others, catalyzed a range of social and psychological effects.

Since we could not fully prevent such outcomes from occurring, we prepared for them as best we could. In all of the courses, we ensured that the youths were followed up by their contact person at the host institution, both during and after the film course. In the Vika course (see Chapter 8), a great number of participants decided to thematize challenging experiences from their childhood. Here, Ragnhild (the psychologist and affiliated PhD scholar) participated closely, together with the community nurse. Another strategy for preventing harm consisted in incorporating regular discussions about strategies to avoid compromising oneself and others, the importance of gaining consent when filming others and the need to show respect and discretion towards the other participants' material. Also, we communicated – through our words and action – that the participants could always

speak to us, the facilitators, if they had any doubts or anxiety; many of the participants took advantage of this offer.

In this thesis, I deal with the dilemma of sensitivity by omitting details that could potentially embarrass or insult the party or parties involved. I also maintain anonymity by giving all participants new names and never mentioning exactly when (or where, with respect to Vika) the courses were held. I have made every effort to represent the participants respectfully and to only communicate information that was shared with me openly, rather than in confidence; this is especially important because, should any participants read my work, they might easily recognize themselves and their co-participants. For this reason, I met with all of the youths who are key characters in this thesis after I wrote the relevant chapters (Chapters 7–9). At these meetings, I interviewed the youths in an unstructured manner, seeking to gain information on what had happened in their lives in the (approximately) three years that had passed since the course and how they interpreted the individual and group processes in the Youth Gaze project in retrospect. Finally, I tested out my preliminary analyses with them, to see if they would agree, protest or add further details.[49]

5.7 Concluding remarks on methods

In this and the previous chapter, I have raised issues concerning the use of subject-generated filmmaking as a method and the researcher's role in participatory research schemes. In regards to the latter topic, I argued that researchers undergoing participatory research must reflect on the manner and extent of their participation and involvement and attend to the ways in which roles and relationships in the field may influence the data. At the same time, I demonstrated (drawing on my experiences as a facilitator in the Youth Gaze project) that the facilitator role is a position from which one may gain access to and build trustful relationships with research subjects. I further demonstrated that both of these conditions were necessary for my success in reaching, dialoging with and motivating youths to participate in the Youth Gaze research scheme.

[49] The analysis of this thesis is delimited to social situations and processes associated with the youths' filmmaking in Youth Gaze settings. What happened to the youths in the aftermath of the course, is described only very briefly in the epilogue of this thesis.

Subject-generated filmmaking engages research subjects in the task of constructing a film. Through my discussion of the opportunities and challenges bound to this approach, I provided examples of projects in which anthropologists have taken different approaches. On the basis of these and my own experiences, I argued for an approach that investigates participants' choices and strategies with their films as a means of understanding more about their worlds. At the same time, I argued that it is important to adopt a critical constructive stance to the ways in which participants' processes may be affected by their social and cultural contexts, including the film course setting. In many participatory video projects, such a critical reflexive orientation is lacking.

In the following chapter, I introduce the theoretical perspectives and concepts that I found useful for my analyses of the youths' filmmaking processes. In line with the methodological arguments provided in this chapter, the theories were selected on the basis of their capacity to reveal the interconnections between the youths' filmmaking, the social dynamics of the film course, the organization and practices of the host institutions and, finally, dominant cultural values and norms in Norwegian contemporary society.

PART III: ANALYTICAL TOOLS AND ANALYSES

Chapter 6: The analytical tool kit

Introduction: Establishing a theoretical framework

This chapter introduces the theoretical perspectives and concepts that I used to analyze the youths' filmmaking processes. In my quest to better understand what it means to be at risk and what contributed to the youths' audiovisual presentations of self and their lives within the Youth Gaze film courses, I took as a starting point a theoretical approach that considered how identity and self-concept are constructed via process and dialogue, with particular emphasis on the significance of "the other" in this process. Using this approach, I analyzed the youths' filmmaking as part of a larger social process whereby identity and meaning were negotiated and consolidated. Specifically, my analyses were grounded in a social phenomenological and ethnomethodological philosophy of science.

6.1 Social phenomenology and ethnomethodology

Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness (Smith, 2018). Attention is paid to "phenomena" and to individuals' experienced meaning of them. Phenomenological description requires the "bracketing" of our ordinary experience of the world (i.e. our assumption that things in the world are as they appear), in order to distinguish how acts of consciousness ceaselessly produce the apparent naturalness of the world (Turowetz et al., 2016).

"Social phenomenology" is a stream of phenomenology that is commonly associated with the work and perspective of Alfred Schutz. Schutz made connections between sociological theory (particularly that of Max Weber) and the central ideas of

phenomenology (mainly held by Edmund Husserl). Following Weber, Schutz argued that we act with awareness that others are acting; on this ground, he developed a theory of the possibility of mutually coordinated social action. Through his work, Schutz highlighted the role of common sense thinking and knowledge in social action and social scientific theorizing, suggesting that:

> The sciences that would interpret and explain human action and thought must begin with a description of the foundational structures of what is prescientific, the reality which seems self-evident to men remaining within the natural attitude. This reality is the everyday life-world. (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973:3)

Schutz is well known for his theorization around "the structure of the life-world" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973, 1989), or "the fabric of meaning taken for granted in the natural attitude, the basic context of 'what is unquestioned' – and in this sense what is 'taken as self-evident' – that undergirds all social life and action" (Zaner & Engelhardt Jr., 1973:xxviii). Schutz suggested that a person's life world is not his private world; rather, it is intersubjective and shared, in that "the objects of the outer world are in the main the same for my fellow-men as they are for me" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1973:4). Schutz aimed at examining "how this commonness of the life-world is constituted, what structure it has, and what its significance is for social action" (ibid.:4). In comprehensively analyzing the structures of the lived world, Schutz hoped to develop a phenomenology of social reality and thereby account for the foundations of the social sciences (Zaner & Engelhardt Jr., 1973).

Ethnomethodology – a term coined by Harold Garfinkel (1984) – closely ties to the thinking of Schutz and social phenomenology, studying the ways in which ordinary people construct a stable social world through everyday utterances and actions. Compared to Schutz, who theorized about social action in the abstract, Garfinkel had a more pronounced interest in empirically observing people acting in actual, everyday situations. He paid particular attention to "the lived, recognizable, and accountable actions that individuals concertedly exhibited in interaction" and strove "to *empirically* demonstrate and specify the practices that constituted the seen-but-unnoticed background against which social action becomes visible and possible" (Turowetz et al., 2016:392). From this position, he treated rules as resources, rather than forces, used by people to accomplish tasks and perform actions. He was sensitive to the ways in which people bring their actions into alignment with rules, which require competences that are often not encoded in the rules, themselves. This

attended to what Garfinkel called “members’ methods” – members’ practices for making their actions intelligible.

Garfinkel’s early ideas and writings inspired a number of colleagues and students to conduct their own ethnomethodological research. Some of these persons engaged in developing the genre of ethnomethodological ethnography, which applied ethnographic methods to study subjects’ practices for achieving the intelligibility of their actions (see, e.g., Bittner, 1967; Sudnow, 1965, 1967; Wieder, 1974; Zimmerman, 1969). David Sudnow, for example, entered institutions such as the courtroom and the hospital to study operative classification systems and how these affected professional practices and social interactions between professionals and clients within these institutions. He found that, in interviews with defendants, public defenders often asked questions that aided in situating the defendants as “criminal types” (recognizable in the penal system) rather than individuals in difficult circumstances (Sudnow, 1965). In his hospital study, Sudnow found that patients’ ways of dying correlated with the social organization and how employees were generally treated within the distinct hospital setting (Sudnow, 1967).

Ethnomethodological and social phenomenological thinking and practice inspired my analytical gaze upon the youths’ filmmaking. These approaches contributed to broadening my attention beyond the youths’ individual processes of depicting and making sense of their worlds and their position in it, to also consider their filmed accounts as interacting with the roles and relationships that were prevalent in the course setting and “the rules” associated with the respective institutions and their practices. The ethnomethodological approach inspired me to look for the “members’ methods” for standing out as intelligible and accountable – both on and off camera – within the context of the social and institutional setting. I was also inspired by the detailed orientation towards words and gestures of some ethnomethodologists and conversation analysts (e.g. Jefferson, 1974, 2010; Schegloff, 1972, 1986, 1996) in their studies of how meaning is managed dialogically. These researchers emphasized the communicative strategies applied by conversation partners to co-produce the intelligibility of everyday and institutional actions. Similarly, by engaging closely with the youths and following their detailed work in their films, I identified the small gestures and words they employed to stand out as intelligible to others on and off camera.

Since the 1990s, social phenomenology has largely merged with other micro-sociological paradigms in a kind of "theoretical syncretism," mixing phenomenology with elements of symbolic interactionism, Goffmanian micro-structuralism and ethnomethodology (Turowetz et al., 2016). Although key concepts within social phenomenology and ethnomethodology served as guiding stars in my analysis of the youths' filmmaking processes, I mainly relied on symbolic interactionism and, in particular, the theories of G.H. Mead and Erving Goffman, when delving into the youths' ways of negotiating and constituting self in the presence of others. The works of these theorists, I would argue, are drawn in the same direction and largely intersect with social phenomenological and ethnomethodological thinking and practice in their shared orientation towards the ways in which society is preserved and created through repeated interactions between individuals. However, ultimately, I selected a symbolic interactionist framework for my research due to its prioritization of the concept of self and identity.

6.2 Youth filmmaking through the lens of symbolic interactionism

The symbolic interactionist approach assumes that our concept of self and our ways of performing self rely on our engagements with others (Blumer, 1962; Cooley, 1964 [1902]; G. H. Mead, 1934, 1998 [1913]). In this approach, analysis orients around the interaction situation, with close attention paid to the ways in which meaning, identity and social order are negotiated and socially constructed on a micro, face-to-face, level. Rather than focusing on the individual and his or her personality characteristics, or on how society or concrete situations affect human behavior, symbolic interactionism focuses on the "nature of interaction" – that is, the dynamics, activities and processes that occur amongst actors (Charon, 2004: 28). It thereby examines how people "do" social life, emphasizing the role of human agency in this process.

A dominant idea associated with this approach is that individuals do not sense their environments directly; rather, they define situations as action unfolds and act according to these definitions (Charon, 2004:29). Herbert Blumer argues that people act towards things on the basis of the meaning they give to those things; such meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation (Blumer, 1962, 1986). This implies that, rather than responding to other people's words, actions, clothing and body language

directly, individuals define these objects as they are encountered and act according to whatever definition they give at that specific time.

Acts of communication are central to this approach – particularly communication via signs and symbols. During interaction, individuals apply symbols and interpret each other's actions, words and gestures as symbols (Robinson, 2007:96). A symbol is an object that is used to represent something more than what can be immediately perceived (Charon, 2004:48). Symbolic acts are made intentionally; they are meaningful and significant to the actor who applies them and, most often, also to the people to whom the acts are directed (ibid.:49). The ways in which we collectively engage in and contribute to meaning making processes is thus the primary focus of symbolic interactionism.

As the symbolic interactionism approach includes a conglomerate of theoretical contributions, it may therefore be understood as a framework, rather than a uniform theory – a framework that draws attention to distinct aspects of our social engagement with others, our meaning making and our efforts to establish a concept of self.[50] In the Youth Gaze film courses, I used the approach to explore the dynamics, activities and processes that occurred in the interactions between actors. I understood the youths' film material to be closely tied to the events of the interaction situation. Through this perspective, I considered the films relational and communicative products reflecting social life, rather than mere reflections of lived experience.

Within this theoretical framework, I mainly relied on the ideas and concepts developed by George Herbert Mead and Erving Goffman. Both Mead and Goffman stress the importance of "the other" in developing a concept of self and confirming one's identity. They hold that it is the people with whom individuals engage who trigger reflections and an *understanding* of who one is in relation to others; through these persons, individuals are also able to *live out* the roles and identities that they select for themselves. In the following, I outline Mead and Goffman's theoretical frameworks and single out the concepts that were

[50] Symbolic interactionism has developed over time, in terms of both its application and its position within the social sciences. In the 1950s, it was perceived as an oppositional perspective, confronting the dominant positivist, quantitative approach of mainstream sociology (Fine, 1993:61). It also represented a counterbalance to the dominant perspective of functionalism. At present, the major ideas of symbolic interactionism have more or less become incorporated into general sociological theory, which takes human agency in situational contexts as a starting point for understanding the ways in which structural conditions affect our lives.

especially valuable for me in my analysis of the youths' social engagement with others and their ways of managing their films.

6.3 Mead's reflexive self and the role of the other

Mead provides a distinct concept of the self that emphasizes a reflexive "self-ing process" (Robinson, 2007) closely tied to social interaction. This concept of self was useful in my work to pinpoint and reflect on the intersubjective aspects of the youths' work in constructing their films.

For Mead, the self is nurtured (but not determined) through interaction with others, since interaction stimulates reflexivity. The "others" whom Mead is concerned with may be particular and concrete others or "generalized others" – representing the average man or woman who represents common norms, values and standards associated with a group or community. Through social engagement with others, the subject views his or her behavior from what he or she imagines to be the perspective of the particular or generalized other; in this lies the idea that the subject takes on "the role of the other" (G. H. Mead, 1934) and sees him or herself from their point of view. [51]

Forming a self-concept through play and games

In order to exemplify what "taking the role of the other" may indicate, Mead introduces the concepts of "play" and "game" (G. H. Mead, 1934:149-164). He notes that, from early childhood, children engage in play, whereby they mimic the roles of others and pretend to be someone else. They may, for instance, act out the role of a mother and baby, a teacher and pupil or a police officer and prisoner. In such play, the child may say something as one character and respond as another. This role play contributes to developing the child's sense of self in multiple ways. First, it particularizes and relativizes the child's own perspective, in that the child acts out and becomes familiar with other people's different attitudes and perspectives. Second, in situations in which the child assumes the role of a parent or sibling

[51] Sveinung Vaage notes that Mead, in his application of "the other," constantly shifts between referring to the generalized other and referring to concrete others. Accordingly, Mead's "other" constitutes both a concrete and an abstract figure. As a concrete figure, it embraces the interaction partners one meets in everyday situations; as an abstract figure, it manifests as socio-materiality – a system of thought such as science, religion, literature, art or a social institution such as the educational system or the family (Vaage, 1998:34) .

(or someone else in his or her close social surroundings), the child can take on an outside view of him or herself (Crossley, 1996:63).

Participation in a "game" is a more complex endeavor, following Mead. In a game – particularly a team game – a player must be ready to take on the attitude of everyone else involved in the game (G. H. Mead, 1934:151). In order to successfully participate, the player must acknowledge the definite relationships between each role played in the game. In addition, the player must have a sense of the structure or rules of the game, and must come to learn what is expected from the persons fulfilling different roles. Mead states:

> The organized community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called "the generalized other". The attitude of the generalized other is the attitude of the whole community. Thus, for example, in the case of such a social group as a ball team, the team is the generalized other in so far as it enters – as an organized process or social activity – into the experience of any one of the individual members of it. (G. H. Mead, 1934:154)

A common outcome of role play and participation in games is that the subject becomes an object of his or her own observation. The child or the player comes to view him or herself from the point of view of a particular other (in the case of play) or fellow players, as well as within the context of the abstract and general purpose and rule structure of the game as a whole (Crossley, 1996:64). In this way, play and game intertwine processually. Certain reflexive capacities are acquired through play, and these are transformed to the point at which the subject succeeds in viewing him or herself from the view of the larger community. Specifically, the subject "learns to see itself as a particular member of a larger group and to judge itself, in its particularity, against the universal standards of this group. It at once learns to differentiate itself and to identify with its community and its traditions" (ibid.:64).

Mead argues that the self is socially produced by means of the mirroring actions of others. Here, Mead takes inspiration from Charles Horton Cooley and his theories on "the looking glass self" (Cooley, 1964 [1902]). Cooley claims that there are many aspects of ourselves of which we are not aware, but which other people can see and reveal to us. In this way, others provide a mirror or reflection of ourselves that reveals their perceptions of us: "The self is formed within social relationships which reflect images of self back to self" (Crossley, 2005:134). Not only do others actively provide us with such images or feedback,

but at times their sole presence triggers reflection. Crossley notes that some attributes are relational and only make sense in the context of others (ibid.:134); for instance, being tall, kind or rich is a comparative attribute that is always relative to others who are, respectively, short, unkind and more poor.

Mead pushes this further by positing that the individual regards him or herself and evaluates proper conduct *as if through the eyes of specific or generalized others*. In this way, he or she may be seen to fit his or her life and actions to that of (certain members of) the social group. Mead states:

> It should also be noted that this response to the self's social behavior can occur in the form of someone else's role - we let others' arguments emerge in the imagination, with their proper cadences and gestures and perhaps even their facial expressions. (G. H. Mead, 1998 [1913]:207, my translation)

Mead exemplifies such role taking by pointing to the child who distinguishes his or her proper acts as kind or naughty on the basis of the parent's words, which are kept in memory, having been accumulated through experience. He claims that the concept of self emerges as if through a drama in which the individual engages with particular others imaginatively. However, this inner drama gradually enters the domain of thought. The characteristics and intonations of the various actors fade, and what remains is the significance of the inner speech (G. H. Mead, 1998 [1913]:207).

"I" and "me"

According to Mead, individuals feature twice in reflexive processes. To support this claim, Mead distinguishes between "I" and "me" (1998 [1913]:205). While "I" and "me" both describe the same person, "I" constitutes the active agent who reflects on the "me," whereas "me" constitutes everything included in the self-image. Through this differentiation, Mead demonstrates that "I" fashions "me" (Crossley, 2005:133).

No reflection of self is ever up to date. One can only ever know oneself in the past and imagine oneself in the future, but can never know oneself in the present. In discussing Mead's idea of the reflexive self, Nick Crossley compares a person's engagement in self-reflection with a dog chasing its tail:

> Every step that the dog takes in anticipation of getting closer to the tail necessarily whips the tail around, further away. So it is with the self. Note, however, that this is not because the self is mysterious in any way – we are likening it to a dog's tail after all! – but rather because of the simple logical impossibility of thought thinking about itself. When I reflect upon my activities, my life, self or thought, I necessarily take a step back from them. I cease doing them in order to do something else – to reflect. And I cannot reflect upon my reflection without stepping back from and ceasing to do that too. (Crossley, 2005:131)

Here, Crossley draws out Mead's point that a sense of self can only be acquired by regarding one's actions and convictions from a temporal distance. The "I" can only distinguish a "me" when the act is over. Mead understands self as "a conglomeration of the recollected actor and the accompanying choir" (G. H. Mead, 1998 [1913]:207) (the latter I understand to be the incorporated attitudes of others). The reflexive approach thus comprises an "I" that fashions a "me" influenced by the points of view of particular and generalized others.

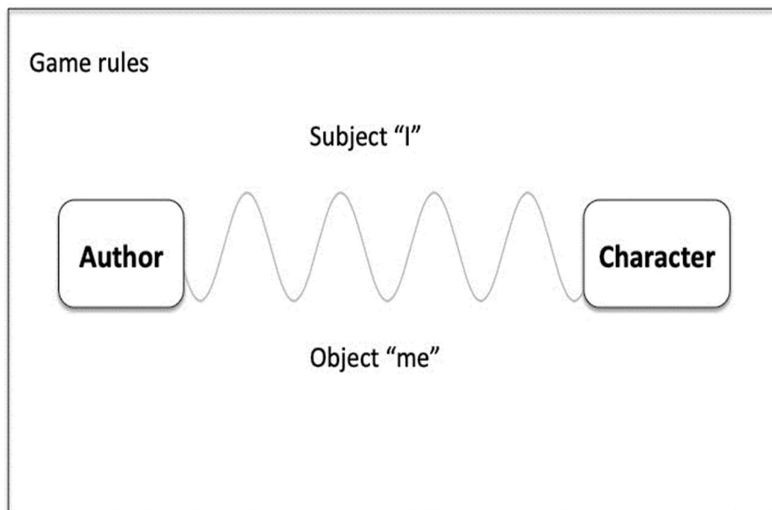
Mead's ideas, and Crossley's readings of Mead's ideas, inspired me in my thinking about the youths' reflexive filmmaking, as Mead's analytical distinction between the "I" and the "me" made me aware of the somewhat similar distinction between the author and the character. Crossley actually points out the resemblance of these terms:

> When I look in the mirror, for example, I split into two, metaphorically speaking, becoming both a subject who perceives an image which is looked at. Similarly, when I think about myself, I am both an agent who thinks and an object which that agent thinks about. And when I tell a story about myself, either to another person or to myself in the course of recollection and memory, I thereby occupy the role of both storyteller and character or protagonist in the story. (Crossley, 2005:132)

I found the analytic distinction between "I" and "me," as well as "author" and "character," central to my attempts to distinguish and understand the processes through which youths made meaning of their world and their place within it. When composing a film about him or herself, each youth ("I") went through a reflexive process of imagining – and possibly negotiating/trying out – and finally establishing a character ("me"). In this way, when making their films, the youths engaged in materializing objectifications of self. This process occurred in the presence of particular others (other participants, the course leaders and the social and health workers) and within the frames of situational and institutional contexts (i.e. in dialogue with particular and generalized others).

The pedagogical scheme of the film course enabled this filmic objectification of self. In designing the course, the research team aimed at using the audiovisual medium and methods to encourage the youths to not only describe their lives and points of view, but also to step back and observe, reflect on, interpret and evaluate the significance of their acts and activities.[52] In this way, we sought to gain insight into their meaning making. Mead argues for the significant role of the other in triggering reflection around "who I am." In the Youth Gaze course, reflection was triggered not only by the presence and input of others, but also by the presence of the camera and, particularly, the camera's enabling of an observation of self (its mirroring effect). Thus, the youths' task of filming themselves and their everyday lives could be understood as one that escalated and accentuated their reflection.

In the following model, I illustrate how I came to distinguish the filmmaking process in the Youth Gaze courses, inspired by Mead's concepts of "I," "me" and "game."



Model 1

In the film course, the youths were initially "authors" – predominantly due to the nature of the film task – and ended up as film characters (and filmmakers). In the course of their filmmaking, they alternated between the roles of active subject ("I") and filmed object

[52] As argued and demonstrated in Chapter 5, living images may enhance "knowledge through acquaintance" and provide "sites of meaning potential" (MacDougall, 1998).

("me"). As subjects, they experienced, interpreted and acted upon their situational surroundings and the task given, whereas as objects, they stood out in terms of their proposed self-image. During the filmmaking process, the youths constantly worked on their object versions of self, and with each new recording added to, emphasized and sometimes overwrote their former self-images. Each participant's decisions with respect to how he or she could make themselves into a particular character were made in interaction with others (i.e. other participants, the course leaders and the social and health workers), and these others' evaluations of the participant as "me" often affected how the participant as "I" moved on to elaborate upon the "me." Furthermore, this process took place within the contextual frame of a distinct film course functioning in a specific institutional space. This situational and institutional context comprised a "game," in Mead's sense, with its own set of rules, positions and relations that defined which types of "me" were achievable, desirable and honored. Yet while a game presupposes a distinct "I" and "me," things may also happen in a game that change the definition of these roles.

What I took from Mead in my analyses of the youths' filmmaking processes was the idea of the intersubjective and reflexive self – the idea that individuals depend upon others to obtain a sense of self. In particular, Mead's concepts of "I" and "me" were useful for noting how individuals were constructed as subjects and objects – via process and social interaction – within the film course and the particular institution governing the rules of the "game."

Mead's ideas are inherent in the foundation of Erving Goffman's theories of face-to-face interaction. Goffman orients his theories around the ways in which individuals act in the presence of others and their attempts to influence the definition of the situations in which they participate. In this way, Goffman casts the individual in a slightly different light, as one who is not only informed by "game rules" (G. H. Mead, 1934), but who also acts upon these rules and attempts to influence them, often with the ambition of putting up a good appearance or avoiding embarrassment (Goffman, 1959, 2005 [1967]). I found Goffman's attention to the ways in which individuals constantly enact a self and strive to control others' impressions of them useful in my attempt to capture the central techniques and social dynamics bound to the youths' presentations of self within the Youth Gaze film courses.

6.4 Erving Goffman's theories on face-to-face interaction

Goffman takes a particular interest in the micro mechanisms and dynamics in situations of face-to-face interaction. Through careful and repeated study of what happens when individuals meet and communicate with one another in manifold ways (e.g. using words, body language, gestures and action), he distinguishes distinct patterns that enable him to draw generalizations around the "normative order"[53] (Goffman, 2005 [1967]), informal rules and ways of organization that shape social interaction in everyday situations. A red thread in his work is the idea that subjects are sensitive to the presence of others. Specifically, he claims that individuals adjust their actions according to the types of persons they are dealing with and the (social and physical) characteristics and informal rules of their situation.

Stagecraft in everyday life

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman applies dramaturgical metaphors to introduce an angle from which one may distinguish and understand essential aspects of social life, role play and identity management. Specifically, he compares social actors in everyday interaction situations to actors on a stage, performing for an audience. Each actor seeks to perform his or her role in a convincing fashion, so that the audience approves and responds according to the performer's wishes and expectations. When performing, the actor tends to first define the situation by estimating its possibilities and limitations. Consequently, a particular presentation of self is selected on the basis of the actor's skills, knowledge and resources, and played out in order to secure (or at least encourage) the desired feedback from others.

Goffman particularly emphasizes the expressive equipment that people apply in their performances. He holds that a person's expressive equipment comprises a range of voluntary/involuntary and explicit/implicit forms of expression that affect the impressions that others come to form of them. To support this idea, he distinguishes between the "expressions we give" and the "expressions we give off" (1959:4). The former involves (primarily verbal) expressions used purposely and explicitly to convey information; such expression is typically associated with regular communication or conversation between

[53] Goffman defines the "normative order" as "the behavioral order found in all peopled places, whether public, semi-public, or private, and whether under the auspices of an organized social occasion or the flatter constraints of merely a routinized social setting" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:2).

persons. The latter refers to actions that are performed for non-informative reasons; such actions are often non-verbal and comprise a type of communication that others treat as symptomatic of the actor (e.g. one's body language, dress style and ways of situating oneself in social and physical space). An actor's expressions are often closely bound with the impressions the he or she wishes others (the audience) to have of him or her. However, expressions may also be connected to one's habitual, ritualized and culturally standardized (rather "unstrategic") manners of engaging with others.

When presenting his or herself to others, the actor may indicate his or her distinct definition of the situation; if the audience accepts this performance, they simultaneously accept the actor's notion of what is relevant in the situation (e.g. how one should relate to others, what can be said and done, etc.). Goffman reveals that people generally prefer to work in teams so as to maintain a distinct definition of the situation, rather than to challenge it. However, although most people tend to avoid open conflict, conflict does still occur: indeed, Goffman is also interested in what happens when performances fail and when definitions of situations are disrupted.

Goffman claims that individuals have many different motives for wanting to control others' impressions of them and the situation. He does not set out to capture these mixed motives or the specific content of individuals' activities, but is rather concerned with "the common techniques that persons employ to sustain such impressions and with some of the common contingencies associated with the employment of these techniques" (Goffman, 1959:15).

Goffman's dramaturgic approach speaks, in many ways, to my empirical material. The youths I worked with constructed audiovisual presentations of self and employed different strategies to do so. Within this process, they also engaged in performances that were filmed; these performances can be seen to have a stronger and more direct link to the theater stage than Goffman's metaphorical link between stagecraft and social engagement in everyday life. However, crucially, Goffman taught me to attend to the "social" or "relational" work and skill involved in performing, as well as to the techniques and contingencies involved. This enabled me to identify that presenting oneself is quite a complex and demanding task, with success highly dependent on the extent to which the actor understands and masters the rules of relevance particular to the situation, has access

to relevant resources, and has his or her performance recognized as suitable by the audience(s).

Ritualized forms of interaction

The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Goffman, 1959) is one of Goffman´s early works. In his later works, he leaves the dramaturgical metaphor behind and somewhat changes his concept of the individual. He becomes more attentive to the vulnerability and risks that subjects face when they engage in social interaction, as they can never be sure of how other persons are responding to them. It is in the early chapters of *Interaction Ritual*, in particular, that Goffman most pronouncedly treats the "emotional investments actors have in interaction" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:ix) and elaborates more deeply on what is at stake for participants in an interaction. He frames the individual less as strategic and profit-maximizing and more as humble and respectful towards other persons, roles, authorities and institutions. It is this approach to the individual that I found most applicable in my analysis of the youths' filmmaking processes, as it drew attention to the ways in which particular systems of giving and receiving recognition informed the youths' social engagement with others and presentations of self.

I found this approach particularly relevant in regards to my empirical material, which highlighted the youths' great attentiveness towards other participants, the course leaders and the social and health workers. From my perspective, many of the youths were seeking to better understand the social currency within the course (i.e. the types of skills, behaviors and perspectives that were appreciated and those that were not). Observing the great efforts they made to "get things right" and their expressions of joy and despair when succeeding or failing, I decided to give due analytical attention to their emotional investment when engaging with others and the effect this had on their film work. Goffman's *Interaction Ritual* provided the analytical foundation for me to explore the patterns of respect and recognition exchange within the various film courses and to differentiate these patterns between courses. These structures of social conduct came to constitute an important contextual frame through which I understood the youths' ways of managing their films.

In *Interaction Ritual*, Goffman is particularly interested in the ritualized aspects of social interaction, drawing inspiration from Emile Durkheim's work (1947). In particular, he

takes from Durkheim's approach the advice to "look for the symbolic meaning of any given social practice and for the contribution of the practice to the integrity and solidarity of the group that employs it" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:47). Goffman draws on a section of Durkheim's work in which Durkheim considers the individual's personality or "soul," noting that it can sometimes be seen as one apportionment of the collective "mana"; therefore, in some cases, rites are performed towards individuals in ways that are similar to the ways in which they are performed towards deities.

Goffman takes Durkheim's notion of ritual – originally applied in religious settings – and transports it to the profane and mundane setting of everyday life. He seeks to explore the ways in which persons in a modern urban setting are allotted a similar sacredness that is displayed and confirmed through symbolic acts (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:47). Such symbolic acts meant for dutifully honoring individuals with whom they engage may be seen to carry integrative potential, in that they contribute to building (and maintaining) relations between people.

In this context, Goffman introduces the concept of "ceremonial rules," and he regards such rules as having their primary importance as "a conventionalized means of communication by which the individual expresses his character or conveys his appreciation of the other participants in the situation" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:54). In other words, ceremonial rules pertain to expressions, gestures and other ways of acting towards others that imply honor or respect for those persons. Goffman draws a distinction between two components of ceremonial rules: deference and demeanor.

By deference, Goffman refers to "that component of activity which functions as a symbolic means by which appreciation is regularly conveyed *to* a recipient *of* this recipient, or of something of which this recipient is taken as a symbol, extension or agent" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:56). It refers to marks of devotion, or "ways in which an actor celebrates or confirms his relation to a recipient." It is "commonly seen in the little salutations, compliments or apologies that punctuate social intercourse" and is typically bound to actors' affections towards one another and their sense of (or strivings for) belonging (ibid.:57). Examples of deference can include revealing one's trust in a person, expressing interest in a person, including a person in a conversation or activity and paying a person minor services. Sometimes, keeping distance may also be considered an act of deference –

such as when overlooking a person's embarrassing gesture. Goffman calls this latter example an "avoidance ritual." At other times, deference is clearly pronounced through a presentational ritual such as saluting, passing on an invitation or giving a compliment. As the examples above indicate, acts of deference often contribute to building relations, particularly in cases in which the actors possess a sentiment of regard for one other.

However, within asymmetrical conditions[54], deference may be given merely to fulfill obligations or strong expectations (rather than to demonstrate affection), as when showing respect to a person of higher rank. In such cases, deference is rendered to a recipient not on the grounds of what the actor personally thinks of him or her, but due to the recipient being an instance of a category or a representative of something. Goffman is interested in how, regardless of variations in the motivation of application, every society and culture has its own set of ceremonial languages and ways of rendering deference. He gives emphasis not to "the amount of ceremonial that is injected into a given period and kind of interaction", but to the types and practices of ceremonial languages (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:56). He suggests that analytical attention should be paid to "whether [a] required ceremony is performed as an unpleasant duty or, spontaneously, as an unfelt or pleasant one" (ibid.:56); that is, how deference and demeanor operate within interaction situations. Focus on the ceremonial aspects of social life is useful in that it draws attention to the words, gestures and ways of socializing that subjects value, and how these impinge upon the types of persons and selves they can "be" in particular situations (and, in the case of the Youth Gaze project, on film).

Deference and demeanor empirically co-exist, and are only separated for analytical purposes. By demeanor, Goffman refers to "the individual´s ceremonial behavior typically conveyed through deportment, dress and bearing, which serves to express to those in his immediate presence that he is a person of a certain desirable or undesirable qualities" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:77). In many cases, good demeanor pertains to succeeding in communicating that one is a trustworthy person. Goffman provides the following examples of attributes associated with demeanor: discretion and sincerity, modesty in claims

[54] Goffman distinguishes between two classes of conduct rules: asymmetrical and symmetrical: "A symmetrical rule is one which leads an individual to have obligations or expectations regarding others that these others have in regard to him" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:52). On the other hand, an asymmetrical rule is one that "leads others to treat and be treated by an individual differently from the way he treats and is treated by them" (ibid.:53). With these concepts, Goffman shows an awareness of the distinctions and power relations present in some instances of social interaction.

regarding oneself, sportsmanship, command of speech and physical movement and self-control over emotions (ibid.:77). Importantly, demeanor involves the mentioned attributes and its likes, which derive from “interpretations others make of the way in which the individual handles himself during social intercourse” (ibid.:78). In this way, demeanor depends on the recognition of others.

Acts of demeanor and deference may be overlooked because they are sometimes ritualized to such an extent that they become taken for granted. Sometimes one comes to notice them only through acts of misconduct. Acts of misconduct (which Goffman calls “profanations,” as they break with ceremonial rules) can be the result of mistakes, ignorance or purposeful calculation. Such actions can receive a variety of reactions: sometimes they are sanctioned, whereas at other times they are simply overlooked. Goffman explains that ceremonial rules play a social function, in that many of the acts that are guided by such rules – although perhaps appearing trivial or unimportant and easily overlooked – may affirm the moral order and contribute to social integration. In his words: “The gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps in fact the fullest things of all” (ibid.:91).

In my research, I found it relevant to explore the ways in which acts of deference and demeanor contributed to a sense of moral order and social integration within the Youth Gaze groups, and in what sense the youths’ film works could be seen as integral parts of this ceremonial exchange. The film course brought differently situated actors together (youths, social and health workers and the facilitators/researchers) and encouraged them to engage in intergroup interaction. Thus, the various groups of actors had to learn about the standards of deference and demeanor maintained by members of other groups (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:82). In such situations, individuals can experience what Goffman calls “ceremonial difficulty,” due to the fact that “different societies and subcultures have different ways of conveying deference and demeanor, different ceremonial meanings for the same act, and different amounts of concern over such things as poise and privacy” (ibid.:85).

In the Youth Gaze project, alongside the variation in situatedness amongst actors *within* the course, there was also variation in the ordinary ways of practice and ceremonial language *between* the courses. It was thus relevant to explore the variation in the

institutions' suggestions of distinct ceremonial rules through their ordinary practice. Some degree of institutional influence on members' roles and relationships was expected in the Youth Gaze film courses, due to the nature of the institutions we collaborated with. All of the institutions demonstrated asymmetrical relations between "professionals" and "clients," as their mandate was to support and guide at-risk youths through therapeutic processes and/or counseling. In this sense, I found Goffman's analysis of the ceremonial language and rules bound to interaction situations fruitful for exploring the practices, negotiations and adaptations in exchanges of respect amongst and between group members in these variously standardized institutional settings.[55]

I used my study of youths' filmmaking processes in a participatory scheme populated by youths, social and health workers and researchers to analyze the youths' agency within the frames of structuring systems. Mead and Goffman's perspectives and concepts were very useful in this process, enabling me to capture the conditional frames on a micro level (bound to the interaction situation). In looking beyond the micro conditional frames and determining how youths' actions could be tied to macro conditions, I found Reidar Grønhaug's proposed analytical method useful.

6.5 The interface between micro and macro conditions –Grønhaug´s field analysis

In my analysis, Grønhaug's (1978) concepts of "scale" and "field analysis" were particularly fruitful for guiding my exploration and investigation of the micro and macro conditions that, to varying degrees, affected the youths' ways of managing their films, their roles and their relationships. I also found his suggested analytical method, featuring a bottom-up perspective, relevant for structuring my analyses.

At the core of Grønhaug's analytical model lies the presumption that study of a social process (in my case, the social aspects of the film course) cannot be limited to

[55] This approach relates to Mead's concept of "game rules" (see section 6.3). However, I believe there is a slight difference between Goffman's concept of "ceremonial rules" and Mead's game rules. Mead emphasizes that attention to the positions and rules of a game carries *the function* of increasing an individual's awareness of his or her own position in the social setting. It thus provides a means of understanding oneself in the larger social picture and forms part of a process of socialization. Goffman is more concerned with *the types and practices* of the moral order pertaining to concrete situations; that is, he aims at detecting the ways in which individuals manage norms and values in order to acquire recognition from others. In this way, I consider Mead's concept of game rules the foundation for Goffman's interest in the practical dimensions of such rules.

observations of activity within a particular local context. Grønhaug argues that one cannot know the scale and complexity of a social phenomenon in advance; rather, one can only explore it. His analytical ambition is to move from one empirical aspect to another, in order to transition from a single to a more composite picture of social life. Grønhaug takes Redfield's question as a point of departure: "Considering a peasant community as a system of social relations, as social structure, how shall we describe its relations with the world outside that community?" (Redfield, 1967:128 in Grønhaug, 1978:80). In line with Redfield, Grønhaug remarks that all people live in small communities and, at the same time, within inclusive systems of a much larger scale. Thus, he poses the questions: What are these systems or units, and how large are they? (Grønhaug, 1978:81).

As a means of investigating "how events in large-scale fields affect local level processes" (ibid.:86), Grønhaug recommends that every analysis begin by attending to the social interactions and social organization of a distinct "locality" – an observable unit. He considers locality as one field amongst others, and suggests that researchers attempt to understand the activity within a particular locality within a "multi-field" picture, in order to evaluate the significance of the local context (in comparison with that of other fields) in determining actors' ways of acting and interacting.

Grønhaug defines social fields as "systems of social interconnexions" (ibid.:81). Such systems contain emic codes, rules and categories that are known and applied by a distinct set of people. A social field may be recognized as a system of interaction, with certain institutional traits and exclusive communicative codes.[56] As an analytical starting point for investigating a social field, a researcher should first identify the central issues and tasks that its members seek to accomplish. From observing the ways in which the members solve tasks – either individually or in collaboration – the researcher may come to distinguish their patterns of relating to tasks, issues and each other (i.e. the field's proper dynamics). Such proper dynamics may generate a distinct organizational pattern (ibid.:81) with a distinct

[56] Grønhaug's definition of a "social field" must not be confused with that of Pierre Bourdieu. The two authors are sometimes concerned with the same types of fields (e.g. the educational field, political field, religious field, etc.) and they both understand fields as a type of social network. However, Bourdieu treats fields as hierarchical social units, wherein actors assume predetermined positions (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1993). This presupposes that power and status are at stake (Grenfell, 2011:85). Grønhaug's concept, on the other hand, aims at exploring (from an empirical micro level) the ways in which tasks are solved, in order to *discover* participants, roles, relations and emic rules.

complexity and scale. Pursuing members' engagements may bring the researcher out of one distinct field and into another, facilitating insight into the interrelationships between fields. Grønhaug suggests that, as a final phase of analysis, the researcher should investigate the ways in which different fields interconnect to construct distinct social persons.

Interfield dominance and steering between fields

Although distinct social fields are demarcated by "their distinct patterns of organization, values and symbols, tasks, issues, fora, situations, networks, groupings and rules for including and excluding personnel" (Grønhaug, 1978:89), fields do affect each other. Grønhaug assumes that fields are interrelated and causative of each other, and that some fields and relationships are more determinative and causative than others (ibid.:119). He further asserts:

> A specific field becomes dominant because the roles it implies affect role allocation in general for most people, and because its' social relationships integrate the population in an especially effective way. Thereby that field's proper dynamics can work with greater force both upon the actor and the society as a whole. (Grønhaug, 1978:119)

Grønhaug proposes a means of studying interfield dominance at the level of status and role. Interfield dominance can be captured by distinguishing determinative or "imperative" roles that are allocated to actors from a distinct social field – roles that steer them to further roles in other fields. He suggests that the processes and intensities of steering in role allocation comprise a theme that requires further empirical study (Grønhaug, 1978:116). He argues:

> When analyzing this theme, we must distinguish among three levels: the person, the field, and the societal formation as a whole of all interrelated fields. The social construction of the person can be described in terms of role-allocation, while the fields themselves can be seen as aggregates of related role-sets. We can thereby study the specific effects of an assumedly dominant field by examining formative processes at the levels of both the social person, and societal formations. (ibid.:116-117)

When treating role allocation within and amongst fields, it is essential for a researcher to identify the suggested roles within a field (and possibly across fields) and "role sets." Role sets may be conceived of as the sum of all role relationships in which a person is

involved, simply by virtue of occupying a particular social status (Merton, 1957). The notion of a role set, from my reading of Grønhaug, draws attention to the degree of variation and flexibility in roles and relationships within a field, and to a field´s degree of social complexity and steering. As Grønhaug (1978) notes, there is variation in the types and degree of a field's steering (of individuals) in relation to role allocation, and there is also variation in the degree to which – and the ways in which – that field is exposed to steering from other social fields.

When examining a field's *steering* and *degree of influence* or *domination* over other fields, the researcher simultaneously considers the types and effects of structural power and inquire into the relationship between agency and structure. In the final step of my analysis, I explored the *forms* and *effects* of steering, both within and among social fields in which at-risk youths formed members. This enabled me to examine the social construction of at-risk youths and the ways in which the proper-dynamics of distinct social fields contributed to this construction. The film task took the youths in and out of social fields (e.g. the school, the family, the football court, the downtown youth milieu, social and health institutions and the Youth gaze film course setting) that each allocated them different (or sometimes similar) roles. Exploring the ways in which the youths navigated their filmmaking processes thus brought me into contact with the youths' actions, both within and upon the systemic conditions of particular social fields. Furthermore, it enabled a study of how the youths would work to find acceptable compromises as to how they would present themselves on film (composing an objectification of self – a "me," in Mead's sense). Giving weight to the youths' negotiation of meaning and concept of self at the interface of different social fields of various complexity and scale, my research thus contributes to a better understanding of the social construction of at-risk youths.

6.6 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have presented approaches and concepts that were relevant for my analyses of the youths' filmmaking processes. Rather than conceiving of the films and filmmaking processes as mere reflections of the participants' lived experiences, I took a relational approach to understanding the youths' (filmic) presentations of self, looking into the social and structural contingencies bound to their production. I organized my analyses in

terms of gradually proceeding from understanding the youths' filmmaking processes in light of micro conditions to viewing them in light of macro conditions. This involved giving initial attention to the interaction situation, whereby the youths engaged in presenting self and negotiating their identities in dialogue with others. Subsequently, I drew my analytical attention to the ways in which the youths acted and interacted within the frames of distinct social fields, and the extent to which these systemic conditions could be seen to have steered the youths in terms of allocating them distinct roles. In combination, these approaches (micro and macro) enabled me to effectively enquire into the social construction of at-risk youths.

Introduction to the empirical chapters

In Chapters 7, 8 and 9, I depict the social processes that I observed in the three Youth Gaze film courses (with each chapter covering one course). In the chapters, I describe and analyze the contrasting social processes between the three courses and reveal how these processes generated distinct film types with specific characteristics. I connect the differences analytically to the collaborating institutions, which carried different mandates, provided different types of services to at-risk youths and related to youths in different ways.

I show the varied processes and intensities of steering (in relation to role) within the different institutional settings (cf. Grønhaug, 1978) and reveal how the youths responded to the institutions' (often implicit) conditional frames. I also show how their ways of responding were detectable in their film work. The three cases show a progression from less to greater institutional steering, corresponding with larger to more restricted spaces of action for the youths, respectively.

Chapter 7: Rap, biking, dancing and slapstick humor: Negotiating presentations of self

Birk's new clothes – The analytical focus of this chapter

It is our last meeting with the youth participants before the premiere screening of their films. Birk and Michael arrive early. I notice that Birk is carrying a plastic bag filled with clothes. He soon vanishes into the restroom. Michael informs me that he and Birk have just been out shopping. Birk is about to change style, he explains. A few moments later, Birk emerges from the restroom wearing saggy trousers and a large hooded sweater. On his head, he wears a bandanna, which he has covered with a cap with the brim pulled slightly to one side. I note that Birk looks like a true copy of Michael. Birk looks at himself in the mirror in the hallway. Michael, who is standing right next to him, comments: "You look good. It looks good on you." Birk looks into the mirror and replies, "Yeah, I can see that."

The above example describes a transformation: Birk, a formerly "straight"-looking boy who arrived wearing plain jeans and a black sweatshirt, has now adorned himself in "rapper's" clothes. Michael not only observes the transformation, but he has also (as we will come to see in this chapter) played a central role in triggering Birk's transformation. The example hints at some of the themes of this chapter – namely the significance of signs, symbols, resources and peer influence for youths' understandings and performances of self.

The chapter focuses on the social engagements and filmmaking processes of Michael, Birk and the other participants of a film course in Tromsø, which was delivered in collaboration with the Youth Support team. The Youth Support team provided the youths with a large space of action, appropriate for their low-threshold service offering youths

activities and consultation upon request. [57] Thus, in this chapter, I depict the types of space that the youths created and negotiated for themselves during the course. In particular, the chapter describes the interrelation between the group dynamics and the youths' filmmaking, with particular attention paid to the "relational" work and skill involved in the youths' performances.

7.1 Finding at-risk youths

As discussed, the institutional actor we collaborated with in this Youth Gaze course was the Youth Support team in Tromsø[58], northern Norway. As described in Chapter 3, the Youth Support team is a low-threshold service for all youths; however, in practice, the service primarily targets youths at risk of developing social and mental problems due to, for example, family-, school-, leisure- or drug-related problems (Utekontakten, 2007:5). The Youth Support team in Tromsø is relatively small with a flat organizational structure. At the time of the film course, the Youth Support team consisted of seven to eight employees with a variety of formal qualifications and backgrounds (e.g. Child Welfare officers, social workers, social and humanistic scientists, pedagogues and social educators). Their key tasks included secondary risk prevention work[59], information seeking and reporting, and relationship building (ibid.).

The Tromsø course was organized and delivered in collaboration with Hanne and Maria – Youth Support team employees with an educational background in the humanities and social sciences. At the time of the course, we had already collaborated on three prior courses, so we were well acquainted with the ways in which each party worked. In this particular course, the Youth Support team suggested that the participants be comprised of a multicultural group of youths aged 18 or younger. This approach coincided with the Youth Support team's current approach of targeting youths in their early teens and their ambition to gain contact with and more knowledge about immigrant youths. Through observations

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[57] See further description of the Youth Support team's services in chapter 3, section 3.4.
[58] Tromsø is the biggest city in northern Norway, with a population of approximately 75,000, spread across Tromsø island, parts of the neighboring Kvaløya island and the mainland. The different areas are connected via bridges, and the city center is located on Tromsø island. UiT – The Arctic University of Norway and the University Hospital (UNN) attract laborers from across Norway and abroad, and contribute to Tromsø having an above average young and culturally heterogenic population.
[59] Secondary risk prevention work consists of minimizing the scope and duration of a problem, injury or disease (see http://www.forebygging.no/Ordbok/Q-A/Sekundarforebygging/).

made downtown, the Youth Support team found that youths frequenting the downtown area were divided into several groups that were largely organized on the basis of ethnicity. They believed that, by mixing youths of different ethnicities, the course could promote integration and a common understanding amongst the participants, which could lead to positive spillover effects by blurring the divisions between the various groups of youth in the city.

Hanne and Maria – in dialogue with the rest of the Youth Support team – were in charge of recruiting participants. In this process, they used their contacts at Bymisjonen (the City Mission) and InterInfo (the cultural information service) to reach immigrant youths, in particular. In addition, they engaged in a period of night wandering, during which they walked the streets for several nights in a row, mapping and meeting with youths hanging downtown in the late hours.[60] Recruitment was conducted by directly inviting individuals who were thought to potentially benefit from the program and by putting up information posters at the Youth Support team's offices. Some individuals were thus handpicked, whereas others signed up on their own accord. When putting together the group, Hanne and Maria aimed at forming a group that would work as a cohesive group. Amongst the handpicked youths, some were selected not solely on the basis of their perceived personal benefit for participating, but also on the basis of Hanne and Maria's belief that they possessed personal qualities that would contribute to integrating the group. Youths who were known to abuse drugs were precluded from participating in the course, as Maria and Hanne feared that they might recruit other participants into their milieu.

Maria and Hanne composed an initial group consisting of twelve youths aged 15 to 18 (six girls, six boys), belonging to different cultural milieus: some youths belonged to the groups that gathered downtown in the evenings and others came from a shared house for minor asylum seekers (and were recruited by the City Mission). The recruited participants were of different ethnicities: approximately half were Norwegian and half were non-Norwegian.

Not all of the recruited youths showed up when the course started, and some came along throughout the course. Ultimately, the final group of participants was comprised of seven

[60] This activity was part of their regular outreach work, which consisted of wandering the city during the day and evening, throughout the year. Night wanderings took place only occasionally, often at the start of a new semester or when a conflict or social problem was noted amongst the youths downtown.

boys and two girls, with an age range of 13 to 18. Some were familiar with one another, whereas others were new to each other. In the box below (Box 1), I provide an overview of the participants, course leaders and Youth Support employees who were involved in the course.

While the course was underway, Maria and Hanne shifted at attending the meetings. They helped us prepare food and they participated in most of the activities. While they expressed interest in and availability for the youths, they maintained a predominantly observational role in regards to the film course activities.

7.2 Formation of the group

The first encounter: Expressions and impressions

In this section, we enter the film course setting and examine aspects of the social interaction amongst participants in their first encounter. The youths and adults were largely new to one another. Some of the youths were familiar with some of the other youths present, but not all of them. Furthermore, some knew the employees at the Youth Support team, but none of them knew us, the course leaders. Besides this, the youths had only limited knowledge about the course, its activities and what might be demanded of them. In this way, the Youth Gaze film course provided the youths with a new social situation/activity, wherein a collective *definition of situation* had not yet been established. In my account of this first meeting, I focus on the youths' *expressive equipment*[61], which they applied when presenting self in this new social setting. Through this perspective, I uncover the youths' tentative and subtle ways of approaching each other, including their initial ways of marking social closeness and distance and their ways of suggesting roles, relations and resources for this particular situation.

The first meeting was held at the Youth Support team's loft during a weeknight at 7pm. Michael and Ida[62] were the first participants to arrive. As we waited for the others, we

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[61] According to Erving Goffman, a person's expressive equipment comprises the totality of their voluntary or involuntary, explicit and implicit forms of expression, which affect the impressions that others come to form of them. He distinguishes between the "expressions we give" (often verbal expressions applied purposely to convey information) and the "expressions we give off" (communication that is symptomatic of the actor, such as body language, clothing, use of objects or placement in physical space) (Goffman, 1959:4). See Chapter 6, section 6.4, for further elaboration on this concept.

[62] In this thesis, all youth participants are given pseudonyms in order to protect their identities. The course leaders/researchers and Youth Support team members are referred to with their real names.

PARTICIPANTS:

***MICHAEL**: BOY, 15 YEARS OLD, HALF-FILIPINO HALF-NORWEGIAN. GREW UP IN NORWAY, MOVED TO TROMSØ TWO YEARS AGO. WRITES AND PERFORMS RAP MUSIC. FAMILIAR WITH THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM AND SERVICES.*

***IDA:** GIRL, 14 YEARS OLD, FROM TROMSØ. MICHAEL'S CLOSE FRIEND AND RAP ACCOMPLICE. FAMILIAR WITH THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM AND SERVICES.*

***LASSE**: BOY, 15 YEARS OLD, FROM TROMSØ. INTO COMPUTER GAMING. KNOWS MICHAEL, IDA AND BIRK. FAMILIAR WITH THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM AND SERVICES.*

***AMER**: BOY, 16 YEARS OLD, FROM IRAQ. HAS LIVED IN NORWAY FOR EIGHT MONTHS. LIVES IN A SHARED HOUSE FOR MINOR ASYLUM SEEKERS (TOGETHER WITH MALIK AND RACHEL). NEW TO THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM.*

***MALIK:** BOY, 18 YEARS OLD, FROM IRAQ. HAS LIVED IN NORWAY FOR ONE YEAR. LIVES IN SHARED HOUSING FOR MINOR ASYLUM SEEKERS. NEW TO THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM.*

***RACHEL**: GIRL, 16 YEARS OLD, HALF-ERITREAN, HALF-AMERICAN. GREW UP IN ERITREA. HAS LIVED IN NORWAY FOR THREE YEARS. LIVES IN A SHARED HOUSE FOR MINOR ASYLUM SEEKERS. NEW TO THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM.*

***BIRK:** BOY, 13 YEARS OLD, FROM TROMSØ. FRIENDS WITH MICHAEL, AQUAINTED WITH LASSE AND IDA. FAMILIAR WITH THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM AND SERVICES.*

***ISAAC**: BOY, 14 YEARS OLD, FROM THE IVORY COAST. HAS LIVED IN NORWAY FOR THREE YEARS. LIVES WITH HIS UNCLE. NEW TO THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM.*

***SAM:** BOY, 17 YEARS OLD, FROM THE IVORY COAST. HAS LIVED IN NORWAY FOR THREE YEARS. ISAAC´S BROTHER AND RACHEL´S EX-BOYFRIEND. LIVES WITH HIS UNCLE. NEW TO THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM.*

INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATORS:

***MARIA**: WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30S, FROM TROMSØ. EMPLOYED AT THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM. SOCIAL SCIENTIST.*

***HANNE:** WOMAN IN HER MID-30S, FROM OSLO. EMPLOYED AT THE YOUTH SUPPORT TEAM. HUMAN SCIENTIST.*

COURSE LEADERS:

***RENI:** WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30S, FROM BERGEN. MA IN VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY, PHOTOGRAPHER.*

***SIREN:** WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30S, FROM STAVANGER. ANTHROPOLOGY PHD STUDENT, AUTHOR OF THIS THESIS.*

Box 1

practiced small talk and Michael soon directed the conversation towards music and a new rap song that Ida and he had written. Michael appeared to be Asian, and he wore saggy trousers, a dark sweater and a varsity jacket; he had a bandana on his head, covered with a cap. I instantly recognized his outfit as a "rapper's uniform." The brim of the cap was pulled slightly to the side, rendering his face visible. Michael talked in a Bergen dialect, and when he talked about his rap music, he picked up his pace, talking vividly and passionately. He played excerpts of his new song on his mobile and, as he did so, his gaze softened, his eyebrows lifted and he smiled faintly and nodded in rhythm to the beats. As he listened to our questions and comments, he played with the two piercings on his lower lip, softly chewing on them. Ida stood quietly next to him. She appeared attentive to our conversation, but did not contribute much. She wore slim trousers and a dark sweater, and had long blonde hair. Around her neck was a large Palestinian scarf, which, for most of our conversation, served to bury the lower part of her face.

At approximately 7pm, another three youths arrived: Amer, Malik and Rachel.[63] These youths had come together from the shared house for minor asylum seekers. They greeted Reni and me with handshakes and we directed them to the sofas and chairs surrounding the coffee table. The boys wore heavy coats that remained on throughout the meeting, and Amer wore a bandanna on his head. The youths sat quietly, smiled and did not speak much. The boys appeared Arabic, whereas Rachel appeared African. Rachel asked a couple practical questions about the course, and I detected a slight accent in her Tromsø dialect. Following the brief exchange of questions and answers, she sat quietly in her chair. Her hair was nicely plaited, and she wore slim jeans and a green top. She appeared energetic and aware of what was happening in the room.

Lasse, a "straight"-looking boy wearing plain jeans and a dark jacket, entered the room as we were about to start the meeting. He sat down next to Michael and Ida, who had installed themselves at some distance from the rest of us. The room contained two seating arrangements: a coffee table with sofas and chairs and a large

[63] Two more boys accompanied them, but as these boys ultimately decided not to join the course, I do not describe them here.

dining table with twelve chairs. Reni and I sat down with Amer, Malik and Rachel in the coffee table section, whereas Michael, Ida and Lasse sat by the dining table, a couple meters away. Hanne and Maria (from the Youth Support team) pulled their chairs into the space between the coffee table and the dining table, opening up a larger circle and connecting the group. The three seated at the dining table repeatedly leaned towards each other to whisper amongst themselves.

After Reni and I presented ourselves, the course scheme and my research project to the group, we invited the youths to present themselves. We started with the boys sitting by the coffee table. Amer provided basic information on his age and nationality and the length of time that he had lived in Norway. When introducing himself, he frequently paused, giving himself time to think about and select his words. His Norwegian language skills were quite basic, but he could form simple sentences. Amer assisted Malik in his presentation of self. The two of them first discussed in Arabic and Malik then formed brief Norwegian sentences. When Malik presented his name, Michael exclaimed “Cool name!” from across the room.

Rachel presented herself as half-American and provided details on her preferred use of leisure time. She highlighted that she was interested in hip-hop dancing and that she loved singing and hanging out with friends. In his turn, Michael made special mention of his interest in listening to and producing rap music, as well as his interest in landscape photography. Furthermore, he said that he intended to move to Finnsnes – a small town two hours south of Tromsø – in the next year to attend a high school that offered courses in media and communication. “In this way I can live by myself, and get away from my parents,” he said.

Ida addressed the group from inside her Palestinian scarf. She spoke rapidly and her introduction was brief, only indicating her name and the school she attended. She turned towards Lasse and gave him a brief glimpse that, to me, signaled that he should speak next. Lasse’s introduction was similarly brief.

After the presentations, we screened a film made by a former Youth Gaze participant, Harald. We asked the three sitting by the dining table to take the seats that Reni and I had vacated so they could more easily see the TV screen. Lasse moved to the sofa where we had sat, while Ida and Michael took a chair next to

Rachel. Michael sat on Ida's lap. I noticed that the other youths frequently snuck glimpses at Michal and Ida. As Malik and Amer did not have a good view of the TV from their seats, we told them to move beside Lasse on the sofa. Accordingly, the three of them were cramped on the two-seater, causing Lasse to lean towards the armrest.

All of the participants sat quietly when watching the film. Harald's film was about being a rapper whose inspiration was "real life" experiences. He had inserted small music videos of him performing his rap songs, which mostly concerned social injustice and critiques of conformity. Michael was highly inspired by the film. As we drew the meeting to a close, he sat down to write lyrics for a new song. He asked Lasse to help him make some recordings in the studio next door, after the course.

My attention to the youths' expressive equipment in this first encounter enabled me to explore the youths' early (rather hesitant) moves and strategies for approaching each other, making sense of the situation and situating themselves. Most of the youths proved to be attentive and curious towards the other participants (mainly signaled through their expressions given off, such as their glimpses at and attention paid to what the other participants said and did). Some of the participants, such as Michael, Ida and Lasse who placed themselves by the dining table at some distance from the rest of the group, appeared to engage in sizing up the others, possibly as an attempt to make sense of whom they were dealing with and what type of situation this was.

Hanne shared my preliminary understanding of the situation. When we spoke after the meeting, she referred to her observation that the youths appeared to be "on the lookout" – perhaps in reflection of their need to prove to both themselves and their friends that these people, this place and this activity were okay for them to engage with.

Weekend trip – Establishing a working consensus

On the weekend following the first meeting, everyone involved in the course took a cottage trip to a village south of Tromsø. We considered the trip a fruitful opportunity for the participants, course leaders and social workers to become better

acquainted with one another. During the weekend, we intended to introduce participants to the camera and editing equipment and to give them small film exercises to solve in groups. Spending so much time together, provided the youths an occasion to negotiate and establish a "working consensus" – a single overall definition of the situation (Goffman, 1959:9-10) that would guide their interaction. As such, this trip provided me with an opportunity to gain insight into the signs, strategies, resources and emotional investments bound to the youths' efforts to form a group.

Bardufoss is situated approximately two hours south of Tromsø by car; to get there, we rode the scheduled bus. During the bus ride, the youths mostly conversed with the persons seated next to them. In particular, there was communication between Michael and Ida, and between Lasse and Birk[64], who were seated behind them. However, for long periods, all participants listened to music on their mobile phones, using headphones. After almost one hour on the bus, I watched Ida get up from her seat and move towards the front. She spoke to the bus driver and returned to her seat, happily announcing that there would be possibility for a smoking break shortly. When the driver soon after stopped the vehicle, Ida, Michael, Lasse and Birk got off. They were about to light their cigarettes when the doors closed behind them and the bus started to move, leaving them behind. I ran to the front to tell the driver to stop the bus. The four ran after the bus and there was a lot of laughter shared between the four nearly lost participants and the others, who had observed the situation from inside the bus. It turned out that Ida had misunderstood the driver who, five minutes later, made a fifteen-minute stop at a terminal.

This situation came to stand out as an icebreaker, as it constituted a common topic of conversation amongst the youths. At the terminal, several of the youths joined me in a search for the toilets. As we waited in the queue, Michael stood behind Malik and spoke with him in English. Malik, in turn, appeared to understand little or nothing of what Michael was saying. However, they both laughed

[64] Michael suggested Birk as a course participant just prior to the weekend. As there was room for more participants, we accepted him.

wholeheartedly about the unsuccessful smoking break and Michael rested his hand on Malik's shoulder in a friendly manner.

After another hour on the bus, we finally arrived at Bardufosstun – a cottage complex that is frequently used for school camps. There was no specific program for the afternoon and so Michael, Lasse and Birk sat down to play poker, betting cigarettes instead of chips. Malik and Amer sat by the table and watched them play. After unpacking, Reni and I sat down with the boys. Michael asked whether we (Reni, me, Malik and Amer) would like to join their game. We replied affirmatively and Michael borrowed some chips from a board game to bet with. He then taught us the game and we played.

After a few rounds, Hanne and Isaac[65] arrived. The game came to a stop and Michael rose to greet Isaac. The two boys grabbed hands as if to arm wrestle, and while holding the grip, Michael's right shoulder touched Isaac's right shoulder (similar to a half-body hug). By the time we left Bardufosstun a couple days later, all of the boys had come to greet each other in this manner. During the weekend, I noticed that Michael assumed a leadership role in the group. He was the one to initiate smoking breaks, poker games and conversations, and all of the other participants appeared to pay particular attention to the things he said and did.

In the following section, I describe the establishment of a shared repertoire of signs in the group, including the specific form of greeting described above. I further reveal Michael's pertinent role in introducing such signs for acceptance and replication by the other participants, how the signs were negotiated in the group and how mastering – or failing to master – the repertoire became significant for group inclusion or exclusion.

The negotiation of signs and resources

That same afternoon, Ida entered the boys' cabin carrying a football, and she and the boys ran outside to play at a nearby field. As Michael ran to the field, he stated: "Ah, my friends should see me now. They would not believe their eyes!" During the

[65] Isaac was recruited prior to the course start but could not attend the first meeting. While Isaac and Michael had met before, they belonged to different friendship networks. However, they both belonged to groups that tended to gather downtown.

game, Michael frequently bent over with his hands on his thighs, breathing heavily. To me, this act appeared rather exaggerated. After the game, Michael expressed that his physical condition was bad due to his excessive smoking. “I’m amazed that I could play a whole game,” he said. I did not give this episode from the football field further thought until I observed a second football game the following day.

On Saturday midday, Lasse, Michael, Amer and Malik arranged a football match that would be filmed as part of an exercise we had given them. The task was to make a film depicting either “a good day” or “a bad day.” Lasse, Michael, Amer and Malik’s group chose to depict a good day and they invented a story about a day in the life of four young bachelors co-habiting an apartment. Malik filmed while the other three ran across the field. I observed the boys passing the ball to one another and taking shots on goal. Contrary to the previous day’s match, in this match, Michael was very active. I watched as he ran to fetch the ball, passed the ball to Amer, sprinted towards the goal, received a pass and made a goal. He raised his hands and ran around the field cheering. This time, he appeared energetic and fit.

I was puzzled by this contrast in his behavior, and it led me to reflect on the situational circumstances that had changed and perhaps made a very different type of behavior (e.g. talent in football) relevant. It occurred to me that the “excessive smoking” statement had been intended as a contribution to the ongoing negotiation of identity in the group, rather than an informative health update. For some reason, maybe due to the change of “audience” between the two football matches or the presence of the camera and the film task, it was no longer relevant for Michael to emphasize his excessive smoking. This example may demonstrate how signs were introduced to the group but not necessarily accepted immediately, or at all. It also reveals how the youths were attentive to each other’s definitions of the situation and valuation of concrete signs and resources, and were ready to change and adapt their behavior accordingly. Finally, it exemplifies how the other participants (to my surprise) simply overlooked the discrepancy in Michael’s behavior between the two matches – this could be considered an act of deference, in Goffman’s sense (Goffman, 2005 [1967]), serving an integrative function.

Over the weekend I came to notice that Michael was the most active when it came to suggesting signs that should be adopted by the group. In many cases, he succeeded in gaining the others' acceptance. Most signs were associated with skills, dress codes and codes of conduct connected to "being a rapper." Michael frequently spoke about and sometimes performed his rap music. On one occasion, when we were all gathered in the living room after dinner, Michael played some "funky beats" on his laptop, before performing his original rap expressing a concern about "what's happening on the streets," touching on the topics of friendship, bullying and social injustice. His rapper identity was constantly placed at the forefront, not solely through his music, but also through his appearance: his saggy trousers, large hooded sweaters, bandanna and cap, as well as his lip piercing, his metal thumb ring and the piece of cloth tied around his left wrist.

Michael also introduced a particular language to the group. Already on the first evening I came to notice that Michael, Birk and Isaac occasionally slipped into communicating in English. In particular, they spoke in a manner reminiscent of Afro-American "gangsta" or "street" language. However, their skills were limited, as English was not their mother tongue. The other participants did not comment on these shifts between Norwegian and English. Rather, they gradually adapted to the custom, and these switches between languages became a normal element in the conversations between participants.

The participants not only adapted to the occasional American "street" language, but the boys also gradually adapted to Michael and Isaac's manner of greeting. In line with this, the participants' copying of Michael's black painted nails and small X'es drawn on his knuckles evidenced their general value of and adaptation to Michael's version of being a rapper. Accordingly, these came to constitute signs of group inclusion. The introduction of these signs could be seen as a social investment from Michael's side, in that the signs clearly suggested certain standards and person types that were valued in the group – those that Michael and some of the other participants managed to present more effectively than others.

I observed how the youths' use of certain signs in the group impacted the positions they were able to attain in the group, and how their agreement upon a

distinct repertoire of signs to be used in the group contributed to their formation of in- and out-groups. It was not easy for all participants to adapt to the signs and resources bound to the "street-wise rapper," as this role required knowledge of certain frames of reference (e.g. relevant rap music and artists, lyrics, dress codes, codes of conduct and language), material resources (dress) and preferably (but not necessarily) skills in rapping/singing. As these codes, resources and skills were not evenly distributed in the group, a divide was established between the "rappers" and the "non-rappers." It was Lasse who first made me aware of the interconnection between the use of concrete signs and social positioning in the group. After dinner on the Friday night, the participants gathered in the girls' cabin while Reni and I prepared Saturday's program in the boys' cabin. Suddenly, Lasse approached us to complain about a growing hierarchy in the group. The "cool people" were watching a film on Michael's laptop, he recounted. But as the laptop screen was small, there was not enough room for everyone to watch. The result was that the cool people had made room for each other by stealing Lasse's seat. These "cool people" whom Lasse was referring to were Michael, Isaac, Ida and Rachel. Thus, Lasse, Birk, Amer and Malik were (in this situation) left out.

Lasse's complaint drew my attention to the types of relationships that were forming in the group and the vulnerability and struggles bound to gaining a good position in the group. Introducing signs for the group to accept and honor appeared to be a lucrative business, but only in cases in which doing so actually succeeded in gaining the others' acceptance. I came to notice the risks that were attached to this endeavor when witnessing Lasse's attempt to introduce new signs to the group.

Lasse commonly made jokes about sex. He used vulgar language and often attempted to introduce topics such as masturbation and sexual intercourse into the conversation. It appeared to me that he used humor and "dirty" language as a strategy to be seen and recognized by the other youths. His jokes were clearly not directed towards us adults, but Lasse revealed no hesitation or embarrassment in telling them in our presence – around the dinner table, for instance. Similar to Michael's "gangsta" language and way of greeting, Lasse's jokes seemed to comprise a type of communication that others could treat as symptomatic of the actor (cf.

Goffman's 'expressions given off', Goffman, 1959). From this perspective, Lasse's behavior could be considered rather risky, as it could result in either social embracement or rejection.

I observed that Lasse failed in gaining acceptance for his joking behavior. In most cases, the other participants simply ignored his dirty jokes by refraining from laughing, looking away or introducing a new topic of conversation. Only when Lasse and Birk were alone would Birk laugh at his jokes. When all of the participants were together, none of the participants (including Birk) responded to the jokes in a significant way. I came to notice that, after several attempts, Lasse would cease to tell his jokes when we were all together, but he would continue to sometimes tell them later on, around Birk or within a smaller group.

However, at one point Lasse succeeded at establishing a common point of reference. Once, when I was not present, he told a joke that was commonly referred to by all of the participants as "Face"[66] (in English). Every time this joke was referenced, all of the participants would laugh. The meaning of this joke was a mystery to me, but I observed how referencing Lasse's joke functioned as an effective way for the youths to mark group belonging. Similar to painting one's nails, drawing on one's knuckles and greeting another participant with a half-hug, saying the word "Face" came to work as a sign of group inclusion.

The film task that weekend came to constitute an integral part of the ongoing negotiation of signs to be honored, identities to be recognized and positions to be granted. The participants were split into two groups, with Michael, Lasse, Amer and Malik in one group and Ida, Rachel, Isaac and Birk in the other. Whereas Michael's group used the film task to portray a good day in the life of four bachelors, Ida's group made a film about a little boy being abducted by aliens. In Michael's group, I observed that Michael quickly took the lead in planning and executing the task. Although the film was about all four of the boys, it was clearly Michael who played

[66] In an interview with Lasse three years after the course ended, we spoke about the youths' repeated reference to "Face." He believed that it had to do with something he had picked up from a boy in school. This boy used to say "Look at that face" ("*Se på det facet*") in order to make fun of people. Lasse believed that he had most likely introduced this expression to the Youth Gaze setting. In retrospect, he regarded the move stupid, as he remembered how much he had hated and feared being ridiculed.

the main character: he was the star on the football pitch, the winner of the poker match, the provider of funny remarks during a smoking scene and the heartthrob who finally won the girl (with Rachel starring as the guest actress). In Ida's group, the girls took the lead in planning and directing the film. Birk was assigned the lead role of a little boy who experienced misfortune due to his nasty older sisters (Rachel and Ida) who ordered him around. The film ended with him being abducted by an alien (Isaac draped in woollen blankets with antennae made from silver paper). The boys followed the scheme, but Birk, especially, hesitated frequently. It appeared to me that he possibly feared being ridiculed due to his assigned role in the film (the little brother who was bossed around). Birk left the editing work prior to its completion, possibly in an attempt to signal his disavowal of or detachment from his role. Instead of editing, he played football with Michael's group, who had already completed their work.

The participants' ways of managing the film tasks reflected their social "work" and investments throughout the weekend. Taking and allocating film roles was interconnected with the work of finding and taking a position in the group. The repertoire of signs introduced to the group was also referenced in the film work, particularly in the boys' film, which included the "rapper's greeting," Michael playing the guitar and singing a self-composed song, a smoking break and scenes in which "gangsta" language was spoken. In this sense, the film work likely contributed to the youths' early negotiations of identity and social position in the group.

Through attending to the youths' expressive equipment and strategies of negotiating and contributing to a "working consensus" in the group, I came to learn that, for the youths, presenting themselves (in the group and on film) was an intricate and demanding task, as social inclusion (or social exclusion) was at stake. Success was highly dependent on the extent to which the actors managed to contribute to, understand and master the rules of relevance of the film course situation. This not only required them to exhibit the relevant resources that had been agreed upon by the group, but it also depended on the other youths' good will in recognizing their attempts as adequate.

7.3 The relationship between group dynamics and film expressions

The social interactions at the first meeting and during the weekend trip were guided by the youths' quest to make sense of who they could be within the film course setting. They were highly aware of and responsive to what the other youths said and did, and some chose to act upon the situation by suggesting relevant roles to play and identities to pursue. Back in Tromsø, the main task of the film course awaited. The coming section explores the relationship between the group dynamics and the youths' films.

Objectifying self on camera – A first attempt

Back in Tromsø, we were at the main location of the film course – the Youth Support team office – sitting in the living room. As Amer and Malik entered, Michael, Birk, Isaac and Lasse greeted them with their now-standard handshake and shoulder-to-shoulder tap. The boys had arrived early and I could sense their excitement about seeing each other again after the weekend trip. They started discussing the self-portrait assignment we had asked them to produce ahead of that day. In a loud, energetic voice, Lasse explained (and enacted through his facial expressions) how a teacher had looked at him (with astonishment) while he had filmed himself playing a computer game at school. He underlined that he had not been asked to stop filming, even though computer games were forbidden at his school. Michael responded by airing his concerns about how the sound on his recordings had come out as "totally crap." Birk, on his side, expressed reluctance in screening his recording, as he found it boring.

The self-portrait assignment[67] provided me with a glimpse into some of the everyday arenas and activities of the participants, and it equally reflected what these youths wanted to express about themselves (cf. Vaughan, 1992, who emphasises how the film medium provides both a record/imprint and a language). This was the

[67] The exercise was loosely defined: participants could film themselves, a place they liked or frequented, an activity they favored, or someone who knew them well and would be willing to speak about them on camera. In order to limit the task, we asked that the recordings be no longer than three minutes.

first time the participants screened material they had filmed themselves, and they expressed both nervousness and excitement about this experience. Some of the youths – Ida, Isaac and Malik – said they had forgotten to bring in their recordings, but that they had completed the task.[68]

When we finished eating, we positioned ourselves on the sofas and chairs surrounding the coffee table and watched Michael's portrait:

> Michael has filmed himself close up. The sound is distorted at the beginning, and it is impossible to hear what he says. He pans out to reveal that he is at Nerstranda, the local mall in the city center, before returning to focus on himself. Birk sits next to him. "Here it is laid back," Michael says. He proceeds to give a monologue on friendship, making statements such as: "I put friends above everything else"; "appearances mean nothing"; "it is worth a million to see the inside of a person"; "I am Tromsø's biggest anti-bully"; "stop bullying, find out what is on the inside of a person"; and "friendship and love is all that matters to me." Following this, he states that he is fond of expressing himself through music. Through music, he explains, he can communicate his messages and reveal "what is bullying, why we bully, harass and fight, but how at the end we are all equals." Michael then draws attention to the fact that he sometimes looks like a gangster, explaining that his appearance and dress is based around what he finds comfortable and what feels natural to him. There is a pause. He stares into the camera: "I am crazy."

With this film exercise, Michael achieved several things: He took us to a place where he spent much time; he expressed a set of values about friendship; and, once again, he accentuated his interest in music and his style in clothing. In presenting himself as "Tromsø's biggest anti-bully," he made a claim about his morality, giving weight to solidarity and tolerance. Additionally, he framed his interest in music and his style of clothing as something far more than a gimmick; rather, he presented them as part and parcel of who he was and what he felt comfortable with. In this way, Michael's self-portrait may be seen to have added to his former contribution to the "working consensus," as it connected his former proposed signs with a value base.

[68] Although they all claimed to have completed the exercise and said they would bring their footage to the following meeting, only Malik did so. Thus, the group never got to see any of Isaac's and Ida's self-recordings. Ida later teamed up with Michael and, from that point on, the class got to see the material they co-produced. Isaac attended all of the course meetings but never brought in any of his own recordings.

The group commented on Michael's material. "Good, better than mine," Birk said. "Good," Rachel, Lasse and Isaac exclaimed simultaneously. "The sound was good," Lasse stated ironically. I asked what precisely they liked about Michael's film. "I like it because it is about real friendship," Rachel responded. "He is good at expressing himself," Lasse said. Michael seemed satisfied with the group's reception of his film.

We moved on to watch Birk's portrait:

> Birk has directed the camera towards himself. He is in a dark room. He says: "This is what I do when I´m at my grandparents." He turns the camera around and films another two persons seated on a sofa, then directs the camera towards the TV. There is rap music being played from the stereo and minor sounds being emitted from the TV. On the TV screen two women are carrying swords, threatening each other. The film or TV program has a "ninja" look to it, as the women on screen are partly flying while they fight. The dialogue is subtitled in the Danish language. Birk has zoomed in on the TV and the camera shakes a lot. The filming of the TV screen continues for about four minutes.

With his recording, Birk took us to his grandparents' basement, where he had watched a film together with his uncle and cousin. Only Michael commented on Birk's material, stating, "I became dizzy watching it." We entered into a discussion about the handheld camera and the difficulty of obtaining a steady shot while using zoom. I asked Birk whether watching films was something he did often. "No, only when I am at my grandparents," he replied. I asked him about his choice of film and music in his recording, and he stated that the music was something he liked a lot, but the film was a random choice: "I sat with my uncle and my cousin, and they like those types of adventure films."

Birk was left silent with a serious expression on his face. He appeared dissatisfied with the discussion of his film. He had completed his self-portrait exercise in a very different way to Michael. Rather than placing himself in front of the camera, commenting upon his person and giving his points of view, he had selected to direct the camera away from himself. The impression I was left with after watching his material was that he was uncomfortable with filming himself. Since he explained that the choice of film had not been his own, it appeared to me that his

filming of the TV screen had been a strategic choice on his part for solving the task without having to expose himself (and not because he wanted to highlight that film, in particular). The music, on the contrary, had not been selected at random. The rap music that he claimed to like a lot overshadowed the sound of the television in his film. Against the background of the negotiations that had taken place in Bardufosstun, I read his inclusion of rap music as a way of marking out (or requesting) belonging to the outspoken rappers in the group.

Rachel then screened her recording:

> Someone films Rachel while she dances. She dances hip-hop and a type of African dance. After a while, Amer enters the frame and the two of them dance together. Rachel jumps on his back and shouts "Face!"

While watching Rachel's portrait, Isaac commented on what a great dancer she was. In response, Rachel curled up and hid her face in her lap and arms. We could hear from inside her arms: "It is not me, it is my sister" (we all knew it was her). "Your sister is pretty," Isaac said. There was applause when Rachel stopped the tape. Michael said, "It hit me in the face," and there was laughter. I asked him what he meant by that. "It entered directly into my head," he replied. I did not follow up on this. Through her recording, Rachel revealed her competency in hip-hop dancing. She appeared timid, but also proud of the comments she received. Her shouting of "Face" on film could be considered a social investment due to the joke's value in the group. A conversation between Lasse and Rachel during one of the pauses confirmed this interpretation of the significance of Rachel's reference to the joke. Lasse told her, in a loud voice most likely meant for others to hear, that he had also said "Face" in his recording, but that he had coughed at the same time, so it may not be audible.

We moved on to Amer's portrait. Amer had made a short fiction-like film featuring himself; the film followed him throughout a day on which most things went wrong.

> We see Amer asleep in his bed. His alarm clock rings; he grabs it and throws it on the floor, breaking it. He gets out of bed and puts on trousers and a sweater. He enters the bathroom and washes his face. While fixing his hair, he says "Face!" looking at himself in the mirror. He moves into the kitchen, prepares some bread and cheese and puts on water to boil. While preparing

> tea, he (pretends that he) spills some water on his crotch, and screams. He runs into the shower and rinses himself off with cool water, while screaming. In the next scene, he enters the shed and grabs his bike. He bikes along a pathway. Next, we see the bike lying on the street as if broken. Amer starts walking in the direction from which he came, rolling the bike with him. The camera zooms in on the keys he has left behind, lying on the street. He returns to his house. He cannot find his keys. He bangs on the door and shouts.

I asked what the others thought about Amer's film. There were two responses: "Cool" (Michael) and "Good" (Lasse). We discussed how to put scenes together and Reni pointed to Amer's skill at planning and sequencing scenes to compose a good story. Neither Reni nor I mentioned the fact that he had produced another fiction-like film, rather than a self-portrait, which had been the assigned task. It turned out that Malik had been the camera man while Amer had directed the story.

I saw in Amer's film a lot of overlap with the fiction film that Amer, Malik, Michael and Lasse had made about a good day during the weekend; only now, Amer had twisted the story to depict a bad day. In particular, the wake-up and bathroom scenes resembled the previous film. For example, in his film, Amer made funny faces when looking at himself in the mirror, just as all four boys did, in sequence, in the film they had made over the weekend (this scene had provoked great laughter when it was screened to the group at the cottage). In Amer's film, it was in the bathroom scene that he shouted "Face." This was the only word he said throughout the film. Similar to Birk's inclusion of rap music and Rachel's filming of hip-hop dance and shouting "Face," Amer's reference to the previous film and the face joke seemed to signify or request group belonging.

Lasse's portrait was the last to be screened. He had filmed himself at school:

> Lasse directs the camera towards himself: "Hi, my name is Lasse and I´m 15." He makes a retake: "Hey, my name is Lasse. I´ll show you my school." He turns the camera around and films the school corridor. We see a boy going into a classroom. Lasse: "Here we see Christer entering the classroom." In the next scene, Lasse films a computer screen and starts playing a computer game. Arrows of different sizes move up the screen, and Lasse scores points by matching them. The computer blinks "Good," "Great," "Marvellous" or "Perfect" when he succeeds. In the first round, Lasse receives 105 points,

> which gives him a score of "B." On the second round, he achieves a better score of "A." The camera zooms in on the result: a blinking "A." We see that Lasse selects a higher level for round three. The arrows move faster. In this round he also achieves a good score of "A."

As Lasse began round two on his computer game, Michael sank further down into the sofa. Isaac sighed openly and commented: "It is boring to watch other people play computer games." Reni asked whether Lasse spends a lot of his time playing, most likely in an effort to direct attention away from the critical comment. "About two hours a day," he replied. At the initiation of the third round of the game Birk commented: "Come on, Lasse, finish up!" Isaac exclaimed, "I'm about to pass out!" Birk continued, "Lousy imagination!" When the screening was over, so was Lasse's former expression of excitement. He began to make excuses for his recording: "I had initially planned to film at a copying store where I work, but I forgot the camera. And then I had to film at school." Lasse had a sad expression on his face. I tried to redirect the conversation by pointing out that he had revealed that he has a talent for the game. But my comments seemed to hit a wall and fall flat on the ground.

From the screening of the participants' self-portraits, I came to realize how demanding the assigned task had been. They had been asked to film locations and activities bound to their everyday social environments and to bring the recordings into the social environment of the film course.[69] It seemed as though the participants who had filmed presentations of themselves that largely complied with (or at least paid reference to) the roles and signs that had been agreed upon as relevant in the film course group (Michael, Rachel and Amer) received positive feedback on their work. On the contrary, those who had broken with the rules or introduced competing signs bound to the roles and identities (Birk and Lasse) were negatively sanctioned. What stands out in this example is the emergence of a distinct ceremonial language in the group: "a conventionalized means of communication by which the individual expresses his character or conveys his appreciation of the other

[69] In Mead (1934) and Grønhaug's terms (1978) this required filming the performance of a 'me' within the context of a distinct social field and subsequently transport this presentation of self into a different social field, making it subject to others evaluations within this new context.

participants in this situation" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:54), which appeared to influence and constrain the youths in their presentations of self.

The interconnections between ceremonial language and filmmaking

Goffman argues that researchers should investigate the types and practices of ceremonial language that are relevant in a distinct group.[70] An underlying presumption in his analytical orientation is that all individuals depend on the recognition of others and steer their performances in accordance with a set of informal rules for recognizing and receiving others' recognition that is specific to their particular group. Goffman is particularly concerned with "whether required ceremony is performed as an unpleasant duty or, spontaneously, as an unfelt or pleasant one" (Goffman, 2005 [1967]:56). Thus, he seeks to bind the ways in which individuals pay respect to one another to the particulars of their social circumstances (i.e. their social organization and dynamics). In my analysis, I found this orientation towards the ceremonial aspects of social life useful, in that it drew my attention to the words, gestures and ways of interacting that were valued and practiced in the group, and how these impinged on the types of persons and selves these youths were permitted to "be" (on and off camera) in the particular situation. It also contributed to highlighting the emotional investments and costs bound to socially engaging with others in this situation.

In this film course, it was interesting to pursue how the youths managed their audiovisual presentations of self in relation to the ceremonial language that had been developed and practiced in the group. The ceremonial language particular to this group could be characterized as one that was largely informed by a repertoire of signs, symbols and codes connected to a rapper's identity, alongside group-internal "invented" signs such as reference to the face joke. Acts of deference were largely bound to signaling respect for and dedication to the repertoire of signs associated with rapping and, in so doing, honoring group members who demonstrated the necessary resources and skills to act out the "street-wise rapper" role. To stand out positively, participants had to convey – through their deportment, dress and bearing

[70] For a more elaborate presentation and discussion of this approach, see Chapter 6, section 6.4.

– that they had mastered this role of the rapper or rap adherent and had the sufficient resources, skills and dedication to act it out. Alternatively, as we shall come to see, participants had to prove that they were situated within the realm of the participants who managed such roles. In the remainder of this section, I depict the participants' filmmaking processes and demonstrate the strategies they used to stand out positively in the group – strategies that required varying levels of effort and investment.

When it came to carrying out the filmmaking task, many participants decided to partner with a fellow participant (or a friend from outside the course, as with Rachel). Michael and Ida made a film together, as did Lasse and Birk, and Rachel and her friend Sam. Amer, in contrast, received help from Malik and a friend from his Norwegian classes. Isaac and Malik did not make their own films, but they closely followed the course scheme and the other participants' projects.

7.4 Michael and Ida: Objectifying their rapper selves

Michael took the lead on his and Ida's film project, suggesting that their film should portray their everyday lives as rappers. He expressed his wish to create and include a music video to their new rap song, "Gatebarn" ("Street Child"). At the same time, he wanted to use the film as a platform for critically investigating some youths' habit of spending too much time "hanging" out downtown.

It was interesting to observe how Michael worked with such determination to realize his ideas. In contrast, Ida participated in the work only occasionally, as there was much going on in her life at that time. As a first step, Michael recorded an interview with three girls who sat outside a downtown café in the evening. He asked the girls why they spent so much time downtown at night, rather than staying at home. He also asked for their opinions on issues such as bullying, school, smoking, immigrant youths, leisure activities, friendship and love. In some of his questions, Michael assumed a rather critical perspective that seemed to operate as a strategy to distance himself from the street and the activities that occurred there (e.g. "Why do you spend so much time downtown?" "Why are you not at home?" "What is so difficult about school?"). I also noticed that some of Michael's questions were

rhetorical, seeming to strongly indicate his own opinions ("So, if there were more practical subjects in school, or subjects of the kind that you like, would you have liked school better then?"; "If there were a youth house in town open 24/7 serving hot meals, playing music, having instruments available and a little dance floor, would you have gone there?"). The girls answered affirmatively to these questions. Michael's repertoire of questions could be seen to communicate the moral positioning of both his interviewees and himself (i.e. valuing strong friendships and solidarity with immigrants). In addition, the interview came to express the girls' arguments that they did not have any alternative to spending time downtown. In this way, the downtown area was framed as a shelter for youths fleeing from their nagging parents, their demanding teachers, bullies at school and peers with whom they had complicated relations.

When Michael's material was brought back to the film course and screened to a rather restless group of participants who were more concerned with what was being said and done amongst themselves rather than the film material we screened, he received limited but good feedback. Although many of the participants did not communicate that they liked his material at that initial screening, I came to understand that certain participants were more attentive to Michael's material than they let on at the time. When Reni later discussed film ideas with Isaac, he proposed to film people hanging on the street as he asked them more or less the same questions that Michael had posed. He made this proposition without referring to Michael's work, as if he had been the one to come up with this idea. This demonstrates the continuous awareness that the youths demonstrated towards each other's projects – particularly Michael's.

As a next step, Michael composed a music video for his "Gatebarn" rap. The lyrics gave an account of the harsh reality of youths spending all of their time in downtown Tromsø, enforcing the claim that they had nowhere else to go and that the downtown area was a dangerous place (see Appendix 3). He achieved this task by having a friend film him as he mimed the rap song whilst walking along the paved main street, Storgata. In the recording, Michael walked in rhythm with the beat and gesticulated with his arms. During the refrain, he posed on top of a brick fence while

bending towards the camera below, miming and moving his body in sync with the musical beat. A final recording was made of a close-up on Michael inhaling from his cigarette, which he held between his thumb and index finger. After two puffs, he walked out of frame. This last recording was filmed in a dark alley by the harbor.

With this recording, Michael positioned himself not only as a rapper who knew how to act as such (i.e. who revealed his skills in and knowledge about rap music and music videos and how to look and act as a rapper), but also as one who had been initiated into the downtown area, warning against the harsh life on the streets. The combination of his lyrics and performance contributed to him being seen as an “authentic” and skilled rapper valuing friendship, solidarity and justice and, at the same time, as a “trickster” – someone street-wise who could manage life on the street without going under.

Michael and Ida’s filmmaking was produced through a rather streamlined process whereby they stuck to their plan without retouching or remaking their objectified versions of self along the way. The codes of conduct bound to standing out positively amongst peers in the downtown area largely corresponded with the codes of conduct that were necessary to gain acceptance amongst the participants in the film course. This resulted in both Michael and Ida standing out favorably to both of these audiences (their peers downtown and their peers in the film course), largely due to Michael’s position. The fact that Michael had sufficient power to strongly influence the working consensus at Bardufosstun provided him with an advantage. He stood in position to bind the acts of demeanor that were cherished in the group with the codes of conduct of the street-wise rapper. This gave him a rather free rein in his character formation. For most of the other participants, however, the filmmaking process demanded hard work, as they did not necessarily possess the skills and resources that were valued in the group.

7.5 Lasse and Birk enter the biking field

An interaction that occurred during the editing phase illustrates the different nature of Lasse and Birk’s filmmaking process, relative to that of Michael and Ida. After having completed editing his music video, Michael turned his laptop screen

towards Lasse, Birk and I, who were sitting at the other end of the dining table. "I'm super satisfied with the music video", Michael said, as he played it for us. He wore a big smile and nodded his head in sync with the beats. On the screen, we watched Michael walk down the paved main street in rhythm with his rap, looking confident. Birk commented: "Self-digging." But right after, he added: "Just kidding." When returning to their own work, Lasse looked at the screen and stated, "This is all crap." I objected and reassured them that their material would feel very different once they inserted their planned music and text. Lasse and Birk sat quietly editing for some time. After they added music and reviewed the edited scene for the nth time, Birk commented, "Let us not care about what other people think, let us keep it this way." It was obvious that the two boys felt uncertain about their project. They often looked sideways as they planned, filmed and edited their film, alert to others' reactions to their ideas and film material.

Their awareness of other participants' reactions to their work may be understood in connection to the boys' experience of having been sanctioned by Michael and Isaac (and Lasse also by Birk) during the screening of their self-portraits. I came to realize that this experience had been unpleasant and had made social interaction in the film course more complicated for both of them.[71] The critiques had signaled that the activities they engaged in – and, in Lasse's case, his skills in computer gaming – were poorly appreciated by the group. The boys would have to find ways of getting around that in their film project.

In contrast to Michael and Ida, Lasse and Birk frequently shifted direction in their project. The boys came up with a variety of ideas and stuck to each idea for a while before ultimately throwing it away, often before even trying it out. They thus engaged in a type of self-censorship whereby they evaluated most of their potential objectifications of self as not good enough in relation to the implicit standards of the group. Their discarded ideas included filming a secret game cheating task ("They will

[71] Due to these observations and interpretations, Reni and I decided to closely follow up with Lasse and Birk in their film work, in order to help them get started on their film and to assist them in finding ideas and ways of executing ideas that they would be satisfied with. In addition, we were ready to intervene if the group feedback took a similar turn to that of the initial screening. These precautions were made for ethical purposes, as we wanted to prevent the course from being a negative experience for the boys.

shout out 'Nerd' in the cinema hall," Lasse concluded), the hassle of putting together IKEA furniture while renovating Lasse's room ("But I put most of it together, already," Lasse said after a long discussion about the issue), boredom ("The others will be bored watching us being bored," Birk intervened) and even a porn film ("Ha ha ha," the two boys laughed). I noted from Lasse's timeline exercise, in which he had drawn a sketch of his activities in a typical week[72], that he had marked off "Club" as a highlight on Friday night. He had just started working at the local youth club as a DJ, and the two boys settled on filming from the club that Friday. Birk would operate the camera and film Lasse DJ-ing, and they would both maybe interview some of the youths who attended, if the youths permitted them to do so (they came up with this idea after having watched the screening of Michael's interview with the girls downtown).

However, they came back to the course the next week having filmed something very different. As an explanation, they mumbled something about poor lighting at the club. Lasse had made some recordings of the "bike boys" downtown. He screened his material to the rest of the group:

> We see boys that are Lasse's age or slightly older ride their bikes down stairs and on brick fences, jump with their bikes and tip onto one wheel. The boys are near the culture house at the town square. There is a group of girls and boys standing in a crowd and the bikers sometimes stop to chat with them, or bike slowly past them, throwing out an occasional comment.

In the recording, Lasse did not appear in front of the camera. We only saw one of his hands holding onto the handlebar on one occasion, as he had filmed while biking. Occasionally, he shouted out comments about the bike boys' tricks. However, apart from this, there was no dialogue between Lasse and the bike boys or onlookers. Nonetheless, there appeared to be a mutual agreement that the bike boys should reveal their tricks in front of the camera.

As we discussed the material afterwards, Lasse quickly defended the material: "What we saw is much more boring to watch than the tricks they normally do." He moved on to tell us about a time in which he had suffered a terrible fall on

[72] See chapter 3, section 3.5, for further explanation of this exercise.

his bike, throwing his feet above his head. He expressed how he would have liked to have captured such an action scene, or perhaps fighting or a car crash. I replied that, in this course, the youths were supposed to "stick to reality" and to film matters from their everyday lives. Lasse continued: "Maybe I could film a soft gun scene?" Michael and Ida immediately raised their hands to sign up as volunteers. "Yeah, I could show when people shoot each other in the head and on the balls…" I noticed that Lasse was attempting to control the conversation, rather than waiting for others to comment on his work. In so doing, he was drawing attention away from his filmed material. I interpreted his derailment as a strategy to avoid negative feedback or to communicate to the other youths that he had not invested much effort in the material and it was not a big deal to him.

Lasse's effort to derail the discussion became a pattern that repeated itself after several screenings (accompanied by Birk's incessant requests for cigarette breaks) and could be seen to indicate the amount of emotional investment and risk these boys faced when presenting themselves on video in front of the group. As they did not possess the skills, talents and material resources that were most valued in the group, they worked hard to compensate for their shortages so they could hopefully stand out in a positive manner. Filming the bike boys had been one such compensation strategy, as their footage represented the boys' proximity to and appreciation of people, arenas and activities that were somewhat connected to what the group considered "cool." In this way, the bike scene could be understood as an attempt to comply with the group's ceremonial rules for giving and receiving respect. With this recording, Birk and Lasse situated themselves in a valid arena (downtown) in the realms of people with a valued demeanor (the bike boys).

In a subsequent recording, Lasse and Birk filmed Michael in the late hours of the evening while outside Plaza[73] – a typical downtown hangout destination for

[73] Plaza is a café that, at the time of the course, was located on the second floor of a building on the paved main street of Storgata in Tromsø. When young people referred to Plaza (e.g. "Let's meet at Plaza"), they normally referred to the piece of paved street just outside the building, rather than the café, itself. Many youths would "hang at Plaza" in the day and night, as the spot provided good oversight of who was arriving and leaving town, given that it was situated near the main bus stops. Here, youths tended to stand in clusters or to sit on benches or on the ground, leaning against buildings and shop windows. Michael refers to hanging at Plaza in his rap.

youths. In the recording, Michael leaned on his bike. He talked to the camera, expressing that it was late at night and that he was about to freeze his butt off. In filming these two scenes, Lasse and Birk found a means of both conveying their appreciation of the persons they filmed (the bike boys and Michael) and conveying their interests and skills to these same persons. Furthermore, the filming constituted a means for the boys to celebrate and demonstrate their relations to Michael and the bike boys. As they were hesitant about whether they would master the required resources in the group by means of filming from their everyday contexts (revealing their own skills in, e.g., gaming, DJ-ing or building IKEA furniture), they instead found ways to act with good demeanor without having to expose themselves on camera.

Lasse and Birk's filmmaking process was by no means streamlined, as their planning and execution was characterized by indecisiveness and uncertainty. The boys made great social and emotional investments in their work, and they were uncertain whether their indirect ways of standing out as characters in their film would enable them to receive recognition from the other participants. Their constant finding and discarding of ideas, and their attempts at derailment after the screenings, evidence their sense of standing on shaky ground. Their ways of rendering deference through filming Michael and the bike boys could be characterized as attempts to meet group expectations, as much (or maybe more than) as attempts to express affection. These efforts were bound to their position in the group and their initial experiences of having been sanctioned in the self-portrait exercise. In Amer's case, acts of deference were paid on a different basis.

7.6 Amer's two films

Amer set out to make a film depicting his everyday life. He received help with filming from Malik and a friend from his Norwegian class. When brainstorming ideas for his film, Amer was quite clear about wanting to film himself working out at the gym, and the gym became the arena in which he made his first recording.

> We see Amer shooting football at a goal. Next, he is the keeper and a friend is the shooter. Subsequently, there are clips of Amer weight training. Lifting heavy loads, Amer strains to complete as many repetitions as he can. Between lifts he looks into the camera, saying "Face!"

As a next step, Amer's friend from Norwegian class assisted him in filming more scenes. In a single day, they recorded a number of scenes that, together, told the story of "a typical day" in Amer's life, pursuing typical activities and endeavors:

> We see Amer leave his house, walk through the woods, greet his friends at the bus stop and get on the bus. Following this, we see Amer and a friend dance to rap music in the classroom. On a TV screen, a music video is showing Norwegian rap artists singing about how everything used to be better before. In the next scene, Amer appears in a suit and stands in the doorway of his house. He welcomes the cameraman into the house and shows him the living room, his room and the bathroom. He lifts weights in the living room while talking about training. In the next scene, he is in a hamburger store where he and a friend buy and eat hamburgers.

Amer was way ahead of the others in the group, who, at that time, had brought in only a small amount of footage. Reni and I imported his video material into the editing program so he could sew the scenes together and get an overview of what scenes he might still need to film. Amer started this process by placing one clip after the other, chronologically. He then went on to systematically remove things: he removed the scene in which he stood outside his house, wearing a suit, and his friend (and cameraman) asked to see his home. In the scene, Amer replied, "Yes, just go… no, just come." Amer also removed the scene in which he gave his friend a tour of his house. He expressed that he particularly disliked the recording from his bedroom, in which his friend asked him whether he had a girlfriend and commented that his bed would not fit two people. He also removed a scene in which he showed a poster of a half-naked woman, pointing at it, saying "Face!" The scene from the hamburger shop was also cut. This scene featured a conversation between the vendor and Amer's friend, in which the vendor asked whether they would like cheese and bacon on their burgers. Amer's friend replied (from behind the camera): "No bacon, because we are Muslims."

By removing these scenes, Amer removed all of the scenes in which there was dialogue and scenes he most likely considered risky in terms of their potential to embarrass him in front of the group. When he watched the remaining scenes, he expressed that he found them boring, as they were not funny, and that the ending was too abrupt. When Michael passed by and commented that the rap song he had

recorded on the TV was really old, Amer resigned. He sighed and stared apathetically at the computer screen.

Amer ended up discarding these first recordings and starting afresh. This time he directed his project in a new (but somewhat familiar) direction; his material still conveyed scenes from his everyday life, but this time most of them consisted of episodes depicting practical jokes and slapstick humor. Amer was clearly applying storytelling techniques that he had picked up during the weekend at Bardufosstun. Again, Malik helped him film the various scenes.

In Amer's second and final film, there was almost no dialogue. Rather, the scenes consisted of communication via body language and facial expressions. Amer made a character out of himself by revealing his talent in acting and dramaturgy. Humorous scenes included practical jokes (pulling out chairs, being sly and framing people) and "accidents" (a friend walking in on Amer while using the restroom, Amer falling on snow, Amer losing his wallet). In addition, Amer revealed certain other skills and talents through the inclusion of scenes of himself dancing with a friend (to rap music) and lifting weights at the gym.

For Amer, Lasse and Birk, it was important to produce films that would meet the approval of the other youths in the course. For Lasse and Birk, it was essential that they be associated with distinct persons, places and activities; for Amer, it was more about building on a distinct film form that had proven successful in the group. Both strategies could be considered acts of deference, as they represented a means of paying respect to Michael, in particular, and the agreed group working consensus, in general. Amer both referenced and revealed his appreciation of a film form that had been largely developed by Michael, whereas Lasse and Birk marked their proximity to arenas, activities and styles that were valued by Michael. In both cases, the acts of deference could be considered requests for social inclusion.

7.7 Rachel on friendship: Making explicit the vulnerability bound to social relationships

Rachel's film project could be considered less tied to the ceremonial rules and language developed in the group. However, her film still reflected a similar striving for belonging and social inclusion, and demonstrated the vulnerability bound to

friendships. Rachel set out to make a film about "love, friendship and me" and planned to film herself together with friends "as we kiss on the cheek, and hang out." In addition to filming such situations, she also planned to film a monologue in which she would talk about what her friends meant to her. She also wanted to film herself dancing hip-hop.

Rachel partnered with her friend Sam, and Sam started attending our meetings in the middle of the course. However, the collaboration between Rachel and Sam proved challenging, as they wanted to achieve different things with their film. Rachel still wanted to focus on friendship, and she pronounced that, as a central part of the film, she wanted to depict the friendship between her and Sam. When hearing this, Sam wrinkled his nose and said, "Nah, I don't think so." Sam wanted to make a film depicting their leisure activities, including football, basketball and rapping.

In a subsequent meeting, Rachel complained about how Sam had fallen asleep when they had planned that she would interview him, and that when he had recently been scheduled to film her, he had left because he had remembered that he had homework awaiting him at home. When she finally succeeded in filming the interview she had planned, Sam reacted with dissatisfaction, feeling that Rachel had asked too many questions about friendship and, in particular, probing him about his best friend. After Rachel left that day, Sam laughingly told me that Rachel had been trying to coerce him to express on camera that she was his best friend.

The two of them decided to start filming separately. Rachel stuck to her plan of presenting herself and her friends and Sam focused on presenting his leisure activities. In a monologue that I assisted Rachel in filming, she expressed how important her friends were to her, as she had no family around. She moved on to talk about how she felt alone without her family: "I think a lot about my family, when I don't want to think so much, I dance or sing. Family is the most important thing. Parents can be irritating and strict, but only in order to be good. They give support. Friends do too."

From this recording and my talk with Rachel following her completion of the recording, I came to understand the urgency she felt around having close friends, in

general, and receiving Sam's confirmation of their friendship. She told me that she had a brother whom she used to live with in Harstad (a city south of Tromsø), but they had fallen out because she had refused to let him control who she could date and be friends with. She moved out, and, during the past year, they had had no contact. Her mother still lived in Eritrea, and her sisters lived in the USA. She expressed that she felt sometimes alone and that she only had friends to turn to. Sometimes her friends were busy, however, and had no time for her. She ended the interview saying: "It is important to have a reliable friend. Sam is my best friend. He can be irritating, but still, he's my best friend."

The final recording that Rachel and Sam made constituted a scene in which the two of them danced together at a youth club. It was just the two of them on the dance floor, and they danced eagerly to upbeat music. During the editing process, they brought with them photos that a friend had taken of them, together. They wanted to place these photos at the end of the film, alongside the credits. Taken together, the dancing scene and the photos (in which they held each other) expressed their close relationship. Rachel's explicit focus on the importance of friendship appeared to lend words to what was at issue for all of the participants on the film course – namely, the importance of having friends who saw them, appreciated them and recognized them.

For all of the youths, the filmmaking task became interwoven into a larger process of seeking social inclusion and belonging, both within and outside the Youth Gaze group. Within the frames of the course, the participants found specific ways to act with deference, by means of applying the signs that marked group belonging (e.g. shouting "Face," filming people and places that were valued in the group, copying approved film forms). To some, filming their everyday endeavors and activities proved challenging, in that the codes, skills and resources bound to these settings and activities received poor evaluations from the other participants. As success in their film projects strongly depended on recognition from the other participants, some of the participants had to work hard to find ways of presenting themselves in accordance with the group's ceremonial rules and language.

The premiere screening event came to constitute a test as to whether the local standards and rules of relevance endured amidst a larger, mixed audience.

7.8 World premiere: Presenting an objectification of self

On the evening of the premiere, the Verdensteatret cinema hall was filled with youths, employees at Youth Support team, colleagues from the university and participants' family members. When I looked at the crowd, I understood that Michael's statement that he had invited everyone he knew had been no exaggeration. The other youths had agreed to allow Michael to distribute flyers at school and downtown, as Michael had expressed that he wanted to reach the widest possible audience with his music. Lasse and Birk told me that they had invited the bike boys and the girls who had hung around them. Amer and Malik had invited their friends from Norwegian class, and Rachel and Sam had invited friends from school and their dance class.

The atmosphere in the cinema hall bore witness to a population of youths who were impatient to see their friends (and for some, even themselves) on screen. There was a constant humming of voices. When Reni and I entered the stage to welcome everyone and introduce the project and the films, I noticed that the participants were sitting next to one another in the second row. They appeared nervous and impatient, and shifted between talking to the person sitting next to them, turning their heads to look at the crowd behind them and turning back to look at us.

We started the screening with Michael and Ida's film. During some scenes, the audience was totally silent. But there was great applause when the film was over. With Lasse and Birk's film, there was a lot of laughter, particularly during the bike scene. There was also great applause, shouting and whistling when the film came to an end. At the end of Amer's film there was rhythmic applause and the participants initiated a chant: "Amer, Amer, Amer!" During Rachel and Sam's film, there was applause and cheering during the dance scene. Some of the films received a standing ovation (initiated by the filmmakers' friends, most likely). Each of the fresh filmmakers entered the stage after their respective film screened. They

appeared both proud and shy when receiving a copy of their film, a diploma and a rose, and whilst listening to our short speech (in which we highlighted their unique personal strengths in filmmaking).

At the end of the film course, the youths stood out as a group. Many had struggled to find ways to merit respect from the other participants, and, as argued above, their films had likely been embedded in their quest for the other participants' recognition. At the premiere, the response of the other participants and the audience to their films was evidence that they had succeeded in their attempts to stand out with good demeanor (Goffman 2005[1967]). In particular, the warm reception from the audience may indicate that they succeeded in both fulfilling the social requirements of the Youth Gaze group and standing out as relevant and attractive persons to the wider audience of friends and peers.

7.9 Approaching the relationship between social fields and at-risk youths' films

In this chapter, I have presented a micro-analysis of the social dynamics of group formation amongst the participants of the Youth Gaze film course that was delivered in collaboration with the Youth Support team. I depicted how the youth participants, amongst whom only some had pre-existing relationships, were brought into a new setting – the Youth Gaze film course – in which they developed a distinct repertoire of signs and standards for expressing themselves and socially engaging with others. The meaning system developed in this group supported a distinct ceremonial language (a language for how to express deference and stand out with good demeanor, c.f Goffman, 2005 [1967]) that contributed to both social inclusion and social exclusion, depending on the individual's mastery of the language and his or her positioning in relation to the signs and resources that were valued in the group. I also demonstrated how the youths' strategies of solving their filmmaking tasks were closely bound to their adherence to the developed ceremonial language.

In this final part of the analysis, I situate what took place on the micro level within a "multi-field" picture (Grønhaug, 1978), in order to reflect on the significance of the local context (as opposed to other social contexts) in influencing the participants' ways of acting and interacting within the course. As noted by Grønhaug,

social fields[74] interconnect and overlap, in the sense that all people simultaneously live in small communities and large inclusive systems. In supporting the participants in their film tasks, I was brought in and out of distinct social fields. This in the sense that the youths went out and filmed from different social arenas that could be analytically considered different social fields. This enabled me to study the ways in which distinct social fields interrelated and to examine the ways in which different fields provided structural conditions that affected their film expressions (i.e. the person types that could be presented in their films) and the roles they could assume in interaction situations.

Two social fields appeared dominant to the youths' ways of managing their film projects: Plaza and the field of the Youth Support team. In the following analysis, I demonstrate the ways in which the participants acted according to these partly overlapping social fields. I delineate the proper dynamics of these fields and argue that they were both at play in the participants' actions and interactions.

The social field of Plaza comprised the social milieu of the youths who gathered in the downtown area on the paved main street of Storgata, near the café by the same name. Michael, Ida and Isaac – and occasionally Birk, Lasse and Rachel – regularly frequented the downtown area to socialize with peers. The repertoire of signs that Michael introduced to the participants (i.e. the ways of greeting, dress code and codes of conduct) largely paralleled those that had currency amongst the youths who hung out at Plaza. In this way, Michael not only introduced identity cues bound to a rapper's identity, but he simultaneously introduced signs associated with being street-wise, signalling a particular bearing, deportment and dress that was considered attractive amongst the youths at Plaza. Once such signs were adopted by the participants, it was easy for Michael to film his performances from the downtown area (demonstrating his appropriation of valued skills and resources) and to receive recognition for his achievements in the group. Many of the other

[74] Grønhaug defines a social field as a "system of social interconnexion" (1978:81). Such a system contains emic codes, rules and categories that are known and applied by a distinct set of people. For more elaboration on this concept, see Chapter 6, section 6.5.

participants similarly filmed themselves or others nearby Plaza.[75] This indicates the significant position that Plaza held for this group.

In Grønhaug's terms, the social field comprising the "youths hanging at Plaza" could be seen to allocate distinct roles. Through the youths' film work, I became acquainted with a repertoire of signs significant to the youths downtown, emphasizing certain person types, skills and resources. Plaza was largely considered a place of refuge for youths who were regulars there – a place free from nagging parents, demanding teachers and harassing peers. Distinguishable signs and roles in this social field were bound to being street-wise – knowing one's way around socially but, at the same time, expressing toughness, a carefree attitude and autonomy. Proving to have a talent for something other than school (e.g. biking or rapping), or simply demonstrating one's social capital in this setting, appeared significant. Michael's performance of a rapper's identity appeared to fit well into these role requirements.

The Youth Support team described the youths who frequented Plaza as persons who were tired of school, would experiment with drugs and often faced trouble at home or at school. They had also witnessed rivalries and conflict between the different groups that frequented Plaza and its surroundings. They expressed worry that some of these downtown youths would ultimately leave school and/or enter drug or criminal milieus, and so they actively built relations with these youths through their outreach work. The fact that they selected Plaza as a significant milieu for recruitment for the Youth Gaze film course testifies to its priority.

What I came to witness through this particular Youth Gaze film course was how the youth participants took codes of conduct that were prominent amongst youths frequenting Plaza (together with new signs that signalled group inclusion) and made these relevant in the new setting of the film course. In this way, they transferred codes from one social field to another. I believe they did so with the intent of suggesting standards for paying and receiving respect (cf. ceremonial

[75] All of the participants apart from Amer included at least one scene of themselves hanging downtown with friends/peers in their film. Rachel had a friend film her whilst she joked and fooled around outside the Nerstranda Mall, whereas Michael, Ida, Lasse and Birk filmed from approximately the same stretch of the paved main street of Storgata.

language) and negotiating social positions. However, these codes and signs of Plaza were brought into a particular social field (the Youth Support team) with a different system of social interconnections.

A central task to the social field of the Youth Support team consists in risk prevention through early intervention. The team offers youths a safe place, healthy (largely youth-driven) activities and close contact with team members (at the youths' discretion). Building trustful relations with at-risk youths and offering them low-threshold activities and consultations stands at the center of their mission. In the film course, our collaborators at the Youth Support team saw the Youth Gaze initiative as an opportunity to gain insight into the youth participants' everyday endeavours and ways of looking at their worlds, and an opportunity to dialogue with and build (or strengthen) relationships of trust with the participants. As the primary task for the team was to capture what was at issue to the youth participants, the youths were given a rather wide space of action. Furthermore, as a key priority of the Youth Support team was to strengthen relationships with the youths hanging downtown, the participants' films and discussions of activities bound to this location were warmly welcomed. Thus, there was shared interest from both the youths and the Youth Support team in the youths filming the downtown youth milieu. This shared interest could be seen to have encouraged the youths in their choice of location/activity to film, although such encouragement was not explicitly pronounced.

The youths' films were most prominently directed towards the other youths in the course (and their peers at the locations in which they filmed). However, certain clues in their film material point to their simultaneous attentiveness to an adult audience. Michael's representation of the downtown area is particularly interesting in this regard. On the one hand, through his performances (particularly his expressions *given off*), he provided what could be recognized as a rather glorified and convincing presentation of himself as a street-wise rapper – someone who knew his way around and had mastered the codes of conduct. On the other hand, through the questions he posed to the girls in the interview scene and the lyrics of his rap song, he presented a critical approach to hanging downtown. In his rap, he warned

against the risk of committing too strongly to a life on the street (see Appendix 3); in his interview, he asked critical and investigative questions in regards to why the girls hung around on the street rather than at home or in other arenas. He also questioned them on the things they considered difficult at home, at school and amongst friends and boyfriends, and whether they had witnessed negative things happen on the streets. In his performance of this interview, it seemed as if he occasionally borrowed the voices of the social and health workers and engaged in a type of moral positioning – possibly directed towards an adult audience. His orientation may represent an attempt to stand out positively vis-a-vis the Youth Support team (and most likely the researchers and other adults in the audience).

Michael's critical approach could indicate the roles and capacities that were honoured within the Youth Support institutional setting. Juxtaposing Michael's interview scene with the Youth Support team's depictions of their approach and main tasks, I came to determine that the relevant roles for the youths within this social field (i.e. those that were granted recognition from adults) demonstrated a will and capacity to "open up" and share from their lives and to critically reflect on issues surrounding their lives, as well as a wish and ability to change things for the better (to become less at-risk by means of, e.g., accepting support, undergoing consultation or making changes for oneself such as spending less time hanging downtown and more time at school). Whereas Michael and Ida (and to some degree Rachel) sought to balance the two types of audiences with differing role expectations, the other participants appeared to be already overwhelmed with figuring out ways to act that would ensure success amongst the youth audience (particularly their fellow participants).

These youths' intensive work on "proving themselves" – finding ways to stand out as attractive – may have been partly motivated by their multiple experiences of not having been adequately seen and recognized by significant others or lacking the "right" skills or resources that were necessary to stand out positively when moving across social fields. Outside of the group activities, when I sat and talked with the youths individually or in small groups, they expressed that they found school to be a difficult experience. Some gave accounts of experiences of

bullying, whereas others mentioned conflictual relationships with teachers or peers. I came to realize that all of the youths lived in single parent families or with a guardian. Some had witnessed their parents go through a painful divorce. One had been followed up by the Child Welfare authorities, due to an unstable family situation. Some expressed a sense of loneliness, and one expressed not having as many close friends as he would have wished. The youths' films and filmmaking processes reflected their desire to be recognized as attractive and valuable by exhibiting a concrete repertoire of skills and resources. Their identity management on film was an integrative element in the ongoing social process in the group of requesting and marking out social belonging.

In a society oriented largely around youths' capacity to perform well in school and, later on, work (cf. the review and discussion of policies presented in Chapter 2), little value is placed on the attributes of being street-wise or a good biker. It could thus be questioned whether the repertoire of signs, resources and identities that was developed among the participants in this film course setting translated well into the other social fields in which the youths formed members, such as the school, the local community and the family, and contributed to their recognition as relevant and attractive in these fields. In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the work of translating signs, resources, roles and identities from one social field to another can be quite risky and demanding, requiring tremendous effort, skill and investment. However, when the endeavour succeeds, it may produce experiences of social inclusion. Maybe this is a risk worth taking for at-risk youths.

In the following chapter, I describe a film course in which the social dynamics were quite different to those of the course described in this chapter. The course I am about to describe was held in Vika. In this course, the community nurse was our closest institutional collaborating partner.

Chapter 8:
Processing and structuring memories from the past

Kristine turns the pages: The analytical focus of this chapter

> We see a chair and a table. On the table lies a photo album. Kristine enters the frame from behind the camera and takes a seat at the table. She opens the album and starts to flip the pages, looking at the photos. She lifts her head, glancing at the camera and remarking that she often sits like this, looking at the album, as it brings back many memories. She looks down again and continues turning the pages for some time, then gets up and approaches the camera. She stops the recording.

The above passage illustrates Kristine's initial self-portrait exercise, and it also reveals her rather tentative way of approaching the difficult experiences she had as a child, on video. In her recording, she hints at the significance of memories but abstains from providing details on concrete issues and situations. This was the case for most of the participants at the onset of the course, and it hints at the theme of this chapter – how the youths found ways to turn their challenging life experiences into films.

This chapter focuses on the filmmaking processes of Kristine and other youths who participated in a course in Vika[76] (a village in northern Norway) that was delivered in collaboration with representatives of the educational, social and health sectors who worked on local youth issues. The community nurse was our closest collaborator, as she recruited the majority of the youths and participated in parts of the course. All of the youth participants had sought consultation from the

[76] Vika is a pseudonym. The real place name has been made anonymous due to the small size of the village and its high degree of transparency, which could potentially expose the identities of some of the persons involved. The participants and our collaborators are also referred to through pseudonyms.

community nurse at some point prior to the course, as a way of seeking support when coping with challenging life experiences.

The chapter is structured similar to the previous chapter, exploring the youths' gradual development in their filmmaking and analyzing the interrelationship between the social dynamics of the group and the youths' management of their film projects. However, the filmmaking processes depicted in this chapter take on a very different tone to those of the Tromsø participants described previously. In the Vika course, the social field of the community nursing services and its dynamics constituted a more distinct and pronounced frame that influenced the ways in which the youths could present themselves in the group and on film – and the ways in which we implemented the Youth Gaze film course.

8.1 Selecting suitable youths

The collaboration with institutional actors in Vika[77] was initiated at a meeting with representatives of the social, health and educational services and sectors that worked closely with at-risk youths.[78] At this meeting, it was decided that the community nurse and the representative from the Follow-Up Service[79] would take on primary responsibility for recruiting the youth participants. It was also decided that the community nurse (Janne) would attend some of our course meetings and follow up with the youths after the course ended. The community nurse had an office at both the village elementary school and the local high school.

The recruitment for the film course targeted youths who had received regular counseling from Janne. Among the recruited youths, several had in addition received counseling from therapists at the Children's Outpatient Clinic (BUP) and/or the Follow-Up Service. Janne selected participants who had a story to tell and who stood to benefit from going through a reflexive process concerning their life experiences. When the handpicked youths were asked to participate in the course, Janne

[77] "Vika" is a small village in northern Norway with approximately 1,500 inhabitants. It has a village center with a town hall, a church, a combined elementary and secondary school and a high school, a few shops and a health center.
[78] This meeting is described in Chapter 2, section 2.1.
[79] The Follow-Up Service is mandated to consult youths who have dropped out of school and offer them assistance in finding a traineeship, a new line of study, a job or another type of employment. For more information about this institution, see Chapter 3, section 3.4.

informed them that the course concerned making films about their experiences of being young in the village. She pointed out to each youth that he or she carried a "load" (she used the term *ballast* in Norwegian) that they could assess through the film task if they wanted. All of the recruited participants were having difficulty following the ordinary educational program, and some had started skipping school and were considered at risk of dropping out. Recruitment was thus made on the grounds of the youths' challenging life experiences (health risks) and their risk of dropping out of school.

The course was held during school hours in one of the meeting rooms at the high school, in the same corridor as the teachers' offices. The principal and teachers expressed enthusiasm about the film project and regarded it as a good measure for pupils who were tired of school. Lene, a social teacher with some filmmaking experience, was allotted time to join some of the course meetings so she could learn our methods and organize similar activities/workshops for other pupils at a later date. Neither Lene nor Janne could attend all of the meetings, but they participated when they were available to do so. Janne followed up with each participant through individual counselling, both during and after the film course.

The community nurse's recruitment method differed from that of the Youth Support team in several ways. In Tromsø, the Youth Support team targeted youths who spent much time socializing in the downtown area. They also sought to recruit youths in their early teens from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. They saw social and integrative potential in mixing youths from different milieus and cultures. The community nurse's strategy, in contrast, was to recruit from amongst her "regulars" – those who came in for consultations on a regular basis. Whereas the Youth Support team wished to facilitate a group of new acquaintances and a group process, the community nurse emphasized the potential benefit of the film course on an individual level. The course was considered an opportunity for the youths to process their challenging life experiences, and the community nurse primarily considered reflexive filmmaking a means of achieving therapeutic and integrative/motivational aims, particularly relating to school.

The institutions’ contrasting recruitment strategies may have been tied to their different mandates and target groups, with respect to specific backgrounds and challenges. However, the community nurse’s hand-picking of youths with troubled life experiences could also be explained by the fact that the two institutions were introduced to the Youth Gaze project in contrasting ways and at different project phases. We initiated collaboration with the Youth Support team in the pilot phaseand the team had already gained some experience with the social and integrative group processes from former Youth Gaze courses. Contact was established with the community nurse and her network during the research phase, when the notion that the Youth Gaze project could potentially serve as a preventative health initiative had already achieved traction. This may have resulted in the community nurse recruiting youths whom (she believed) could benefit from a process that may prove to have therapeutic health effects.

8.2 Group dynamics

The first encounter: Few expressions and impressions

The first course meeting was held at Vika High School, after school hours. Janne and Lena greeted Reni, Ragnhild and me outside the building and guided us to the canteen where the meeting was to take place. We drew together three tables and sufficient chairs so we could all sit together. Slightly before 6pm, four girls – Kristine, Ingrid, Camilla and Linn – and one boy – Rikard – joined us. We greeted them with handshakes and they sat down at the table. Kim arrived a bit later. He was observed through the large glass windows separating the canteen from the corridor as he walked towards the gym, accompanied by some of his friends. He was “hijacked” by Janne and, in response, said he had forgotten about the meeting. Kim sat down next to Rikard on one end of the table. Kristine and Ingrid sat together on the other side of the table, facing Linn and Camilla. The five adults sat in the middle. Throughout the meeting, all of the participants seemed shy and hardly spoke a word unless specifically addressed. With the exception of some whispering between Ingrid and Kristine, there was no chatting within the group.

PARTICIPANTS:

CAMILLA*: GIRL, 13 YEARS OLD. ORPHAN. WAITING FOR A NEW FOSTER HOME. LIVES IN A TEMPORARY FOSTER HOME. RECRUITED BY THE COMMUNITY NURSE.*

KRISTINE: *GIRL, 18 YEARS OLD. FORMER FOSTER CHILD. REMOVED FROM HER PARENTS DUE TO NEGLECT. LIVES BY HERSELF. RECRUITED BY THE COMMUNITY NURSE.*

INGRID: *GIRL, 17 YEARS OLD. EXPOSED TO BULLYING AS A CHILD. LIVES WITH HER PARENTS AND SIBLINGS. RECRUITED BY THE COMMUNITY NURSE.*

LINN*: GIRL, 14 YEARS OLD. INTERESTED IN EMO MUSIC AND LIFESTYLE. LIVES WITH HER MOTHER AND YOUNGER SISTER. RECRUITED BY THE COMMUNITY NURSE.**

RIKARD: *BOY, 15 YEARS OLD. INTERESTED IN BIKING, MOTOCROSS, SNOWSCOOTER DRIVING AND MECHANICAL WORK. LIVES WITH HIS PARENTS AND SIBLINGS. RECRUITED BY THE COMMUNITY NURSE.**

KIM*: BOY, 18 YEARS OLD. DROPPED OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL. NOT CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN ORGANIZED ACTIVITY OR WORK. LIVES WITH HIS MOTHER. RECRUITED BY THE FOLLOW-UP SERVICE.*

INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATORS:

JANNE: *WOMAN IN HER 40S. EMPLOYED AS A COMMUNITY NURSE. OFFICE IN BOTH THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AND THE HIGH SCHOOL.*

INGA*: WOMAN IN HER 40S. EMPLOYED AT THE FOLLOW-UP SERVICE. OFFICE AT THE HIGH SCHOOL.*

LENA: *WOMAN IN HER 30S. SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER AT THE HIGH SCHOOL.*

COURSE LEADERS:

RENI: *WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30S. COURSE LEADER IN THE YOUTH GAZE PROJECT. MA IN ANTHROPOLOGY. PHOTOGRAPHER.*

RAGNHILD: *WOMAN IN HER LATE 20S. COURSE ASSISTANT IN THE YOUTH GAZE PROJECT. PSYCHOLOGY PHD STUDENT CONNECTED TO THE YOUTH GAZE PROJECT.*

SIREN: *WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30S. COURSE LEADER IN THE YOUTH GAZE PROJECT. ANTHROPOLOGY PHD STUDENT, AUTHOR OF THIS THESIS.*

** THESE YOUTHS DID NOT PROVIDE THE REASON FOR WHICH THEY WERE BEING FOLLOWED UP BY THE COMMUNITY NURSE. ALTHOUGH I RECEIVED INFORMATION ABOUT THIS FROM THE COMMUNITY NURSE, I DO NOT INCLUDE IT HERE, AS THESE YOUTHS CHOSE NOT TO TREAT THESE ISSUES IN THE FILM COURSE SETTING.*

Box 2

After Reni, Ragnhild and I introduced the course and our research projects, the participants were asked to briefly present themselves. Each said their name and age, and we asked them whether they had worked with video before. Kristine was 18 but looked younger, as she was slender and short. She had long blonde hair and wore jeans and a white knit pullover. Ingrid was 17; she had medium-long blonde hair and wore jeans and a grey pullover. She had a quiet voice. Camilla was the youngest in the group, at 13. She had a watchful eye and spoke rapidly. Her hair was long and brown, and she was short and slim. She wore dark jeans and a brown turtleneck. Linn was 14. She had long, straight black hair and wore black jeans and a striped black and purple sweatshirt. Rikard, at 15, wore a black woolen cap and black tracksuit with white stripes on the sides. He was the only one of the participants with some experience of filming and editing. Kim was 18; he had short black hair and was rather tall. Like Rikard, he was also wearing athletic gear. When we asked the participants whether they were interested in joining the course, they all responded positively. They signed their names and phone numbers on our participant list and took a copy of the letter of consent to read and sign at home.

In contrast to the group presented in the previous chapter, this was a rather silent group. As they were fairly un-talkative and revealed few immediate identity cues through their dress and body language, it was difficult for me to form clear impressions of them. They mostly sat quietly, listening to the information we provided. Nevertheless, despite their silence, I felt that we were met with friendliness and curiosity. In particular, Kristine, Ingrid and Camilla looked at me attentively, occasionally offering a smile. Linn, Kim and Rikard, in contrast, mostly carried a serious expression. Different from the participants in Tromsø, these participants were all familiar with one another due to the relatively small size of the village. Later on, I came to learn that Kristine and Ingrid belonged to the same group of friends, and they were both classmates with Kim; Camilla and Linn were friends, neighbors and classmates; and Rikard attended the same school as them, only he was one year older. I imagined that their silence was somewhat connected to the fact that they were experiencing a new type of situation. Some things were of course familiar to them (their fellow participants, the community nurse, the social teacher,

the canteen and the school building), whereas the course leaders, the filmmaking activity and this particular group constellation was new.

We distributed cameras and gave the participants a couple of minutes to explore how they worked. The two boys immediately mounted the microphones onto their cameras and put on the earphones to test the sound. Camilla switched on the camera and explored the room by looking through the viewfinder. The other girls were more reluctant and did not do much before they were given small tasks (e.g. find the power switch, find the snapshot mode, etc.). Kristine and Ingrid sat next to one another and collaborated in solving these tasks.

After the youths left, Reni, Ragnhild and I discussed this first meeting with Janne. She pointed out that she liked that we had given the youths their cameras at this first meeting, as it signaled that we had trust in them. This, she believed, would contribute to motivating the youths to participate in the course and open up. However, we came to experience that it would take much more time to obtain such trust and openness with the participants.

Objectifying self: First attempts

Rather than assigning the participants a group exercise from the start, as we had done in the Tromsø course, in this course, we assigned an individual photo exercise.[80] The participants were asked to take photographs from a place in which they spent a lot of time and to select a maximum of five photos to present back to the group.

The photo exercise aimed at allowing us to get to know the youths better and to make them more comfortable with photographing, filming and discussing issues in their everyday lives. The youths' ways of solving the exercise and commenting on the photos revealed their reluctance to share many details about themselves. The examples of Ingrid and Rikard's separate photo exercises illustrate the participants' careful ways of indicating their states of being, skills and identities, and the

[80] In the various courses, we shifted between starting the course by assigning a photo exercise of the kind given in Vika and assigning the more time- and resource-demanding group exercise, as in Tromsø. This choice was tied to the financial resources and time allotted to our collaborators to participate in the course activities.

discussions that followed their photo exercises illustrate the course leaders' inadequacy in reading and understanding these participants' expressive equipment.

Ingrid brought in one photo that she had taken of her bedroom:

> We see a bed. On top of it lies a rug and a pink stuffed rabbit. Over the bed there is a window with curtains and a blind that covers most of the window. Only a small ray of light enters below the blind, and the room is poorly lit.

To me, this photograph expressed somberness and solitude. Rather than articulating this, however, I asked Ingrid whether she would like to comment on her photograph. She replied: "It is a place where I spend a lot of time, relaxing, sleeping and listening to music." She proceeded to tell us how she had climbed up into the attic storage room to fetch her pink rabbit – a stuffed animal that had been given to her right after she was born. "It's the only thing I considered indispensable for my photograph," Ingrid said. "It *had* to be there." "Why did you consider it indispensable?" I asked. There was a pause. "I just did…" she responded with a faint smile, and then looked away. Sensing her dis-ease, I let the issue go and we turned to look at Rikard's photos.

Rikard had taken more than 50 photos in and around his garage. He showed us the five photos he had selected for completing the exercise:

> In the first two photos, we see a motocross bike placed outside a garage. In one photo, the motocross is positioned next to a car. These photos are followed by a photo of the interior of a spacious garage that is set up as an engineering workshop. The photo includes a wall with hanging tools and a tool bench. The last two photos consist of a close-up of the motocross bike and a close-up of the car, respectively. Both of these objects are situated inside the garage.

None of the participants had any questions or comments on Rikard's pictures. I asked Rikard to tell us about his selected motifs. He told us that he spends a lot of time in the garage and that, during winter, he likes to do mechanical work on the car, his motocross bike and his snowmobile. I followed up with a couple questions regarding how much time he spends there, whether he is alone or with friends, and which is his preferred vehicle. We left it at that and moved on to the next participant.

Upon running into Rikard's mother at the local supermarket the next day, I learned that he had spent hours cleaning up the garage before taking the pictures. This had astonished her, she said, as she normally would have to beg him to clean up the place. Rikard's degree of devotion and his great effort to complete the photo exercise had been invisible in the photos. Similarly, Rikard's "given" and "given off" expressions in the course meeting exposed nothing of this work; to me, he appeared rather indifferent. Rikard's way of solving the exercise did convey information about his interests, skills and accomplishments in mechanical work. However, in the feedback round, no one commented on these skills and accomplishments (by, e.g., commenting on the wheel hubs of the car, the shiny motor of the motocross or the number of tools available), presumably due to the group's (at least the course leaders') lack of insight into his field of interest.[81]

Ingrid's way of solving her exercise also revealed determination, but of a different kind. In particular, she was clear about having included the stuffed rabbit with great intention. I interpreted her way of speaking about the rabbit as indispensable a clue that there was a story or experience related to this rabbit – that the rabbit likely signified something important to her. However, she did not disclose what we should make of it, and this made it difficult to understand what she was trying to convey with her photo.

Rikard and Ingrid's exercises were similar in that they both used the camera to point out things that they wanted the group (of youths and adults) to see. However, in Rikard's case, the group did not possess the knowledge required to properly evaluate and acknowledge the car and motocross and his mechanical skills. In Ingrid's case, she did not provide the relevant contextual information for the group to understand the significance of her photograph. In both cases, the group lacked the codes but were left with the cues.

This first exercise was solved under different conditions than it was in Tromsø. In Vika, we assigned individual exercises through which the participants were expected to share details about a place in which they tended to spend a lot of

[81] Similar to the Tromsø participants, Rikard introduced skills and resources from one social field into that of the film course. However, as was the case for Lasse and Birk, these skills and resources received little recognition within this new setting.

time; this could be considered a rather personal assignment. In Tromsø, however, the participants were given a group assignment that allowed them to play with the camera and create a piece of fiction. These two contrasting entry-points to the filmmaking task effected different social processes. The group exercise in Tromsø created space for the youths to test and negotiate signs and identities that became relevant to the group. Through the group film exercise, they not only gained familiarity with each other, but they also learned each other's proposed standards for proper behavior in the film course setting. In Vika, the youths did not go through such trials and negotiations; rather, they stood alone with their exercise and had to reveal details about themselves to the others without first having the chance to collectively experiment with and negotiate relevant signs and conducts.

In the subsequent self-portrait exercise, the youths continued to provide glimpses into their everyday lives; they pointed to personal things with the camera but did not provide detailed commentaries on their selected motifs – either on video or in discussion. Ingrid, for example, brought in a recording of her former horse (a recording she had made previously), mentioning how important her horse had been to her two years ago but not explaining why. However, she had spent hours putting the sequence together to form a nice presentation. She had thus invested much time and effort in her work, but found it difficult to comment upon her material by providing contextual information. Kristine had filmed herself turning the pages of her family album and referring to the significance of memories, without going into further detail. Camilla, on the other hand, had intended to interview her best friend and ask her questions about what she thought of their friendship, but she had pulled out because it felt a bit awkward and serious. Instead, she filmed the two of them laughingly pretending to be TV hosts.

Implicit role expectations made explicit

After the screening of their self-portraits, Janne approached us with her comments on the youths' progress. She asked: "Is this what you had expected?" She followed this up by asking whether we had found the participants rather impersonal in their ways of expressing themselves. Her comments reflected a set of thoughts that had of course crossed my mind. I had registered that the youths were careful, tentative

and seemingly withdrawn in their efforts at self-presentation. However, differently from Janne, I did not find such behavior surprising at the time, since the youths were only starting to get to know us course leaders and gaining familiarity with the camera and techniques of audiovisual storytelling. As described previously, the youths in Tromsø also seemed hesitant and uncertain about how they should present themselves when conducting their early exercises. More than reading Janne's "Is this what you had expected" comment as a question to us, I read it as an expression of her expectation of something more or something different from her selected youths.

Janne's questions were useful in sharpening my attention to the participants' ways of holding back yet simultaneously hinting at a significant object or moment in their lives, such as an important activity or relationship. Janne had expected the participants to offer more details of their personal life experiences, and I came to think that the youths might have similarly felt that they were being requested (by the community nurse and the course leaders) to speak about their rather troubled life experiences, but were uncertain about how to accomplish this task in the particular setting. They may have felt uncomfortable revealing themselves in front of adults they did not know very well and youths they knew, but from whom they would normally keep their secrets. A subsequent conversation we had with Ingrid contributed to substantiating my assumptions.

That same evening, Reni received a phone call from Ingrid. Ingrid said that she would be withdrawing from the course, for several reasons. Her first reason pertained to the nature of the film task: she was of the understanding that she *had to* make a film about bullying and violence, and she did not know how to do this. When Reni asked her why she had understood the task in this way, Ingrid replied that, at the time of recruitment, Janne had suggested that she make a film about these issues. Once Reni assured Ingrid that *we* (Reni, Ragnhild and I) had no such expectations, and that she was welcome to treat any topic she wanted to, she aired a second worry: one of the other participants in the group had been part of the group of youths who had bullied her in the past. Ingrid felt uncomfortable about this.

Reni assured her that if she wanted to continue with the film course, we would find a solution to the problem.

Later, we asked Janne how the youths had been recruited into the course. She said that she had mentioned that the youths could treat their own life experiences *if they wished to*. She had listed a range of topics that former participants had treated in their films, based on an information pamphlet we had provided her. However, it was evident that Ingrid had understood the possibility of treating her past experiences with bullying more as a request than as an option. I did not think of it there and then, but later, when reviewing my notes for the analysis, I was inclined to think that Ingrid's understanding was tied to the proper dynamics within the community nursing field (i.e. common practices and ways of thinking within that social field), rather than the community nurse's distinct wording when introducing the Youth Gaze project to her.

I learned from Janne's "Is this what you had expected" comment that relevant roles allocated to youths in the community nursing setting involved youths opening up and sharing from their (challenging) life experiences. Such sharing would ordinarily take place within the closed and protected setting of the community nurse's office, in the sole presence of the community nurse. However, these role expectations seemed to have been transferred into the Youth Gaze setting through the youths' recruitment by the community nurse and the community nurse's presence at our meetings. However, in the course, the social circumstances were different from those at the community nurse's office. The participants were asked to present themselves in what could easily be conceived of as an unprotected setting, in the presence of a mixed audience of their friends, peers, the community nurse and the newly met researchers. This may contribute to explaining why some of the youths acted with hesitation and vagueness when presenting themselves to the group in the early exercises: they were perhaps trying to comply with implicit role expectations from the community nursing field, within a setting where the social circumstances were very different.

To find a solution to the challenges that Ingrid expressed, Reni, Ragnhild and I agreed to divide the group in two: Ingrid, Kristine and Kim (the 18 year olds) were

placed in one group and Camilla, Linn and Rikard (the 13–15 year olds) were placed in the other. We also decided to follow up with each of the participants individually. This led to a different course organization relative to the course in Tromsø: rather than working mostly as a group, the Vika participants worked partly in their established half-group and partly individually (with support from course leaders). When we informed Ingrid about these changes, she decided to continue on with the film course. We then informed the other youths about the restructure, with the explanation that it would enable us to follow up with them and their projects more closely.

8.3 Social dynamics, ceremonial language and filmmaking

Once we changed the course organization, I observed a change in the youths' ways of managing their film projects. In situations where they were alone with the course leaders (or simply in the presence of the course leaders, the community nurse and/or a friend they felt confident with), they opened up and told stories about challenging experiences from their childhood. In addition, some discussed challenging issues bound to their present situation. The organizational change appeared to clear a path for some – but not all – of the youths to share their life-perturbing experiences. Camilla, Kristine and Ingrid were amongst those who selected to base their films on experiences from their childhood.

Our choice to follow up with each participant individually also had social consequences. The youths became only marginally involved in each other's film projects (in contrast to the Tromsø course), and they mostly turned to the course leaders for guidance and confirmation that they were on the right track with their identity management on film. Janne was predominantly present at the beginning of the course and, in subsequent course meetings, only attended occasionally. Lena, the social teacher, also only dropped in periodically. Thus, Reni, Ragnhild and I constituted the youths' key conversation partners during their filmmaking.

In the following, I enter the filmmaking processes of two participants: Camilla and Kristine. I selected their stories, in particular, because they illustrate the correlation between the youths' filmmaking and the proper dynamics of the

community nursing field. In a subsequent discussion of the cases, I juxtapose Camilla and Kristine's filmmaking processes with those of the other participants, and distinguish some of the central features of all participants' filmmaking and the social dynamics and ceremonial language that developed in the group.

8.4 Camilla sticks to the past

Camilla and Linn came in early to the meeting in which we were preparing for work in half-groups. As we chatted casually whilst waiting for Rikard to arrive, Camilla introduced her idea. She wanted to make her film about her wait for a placement in a new foster home. She noted that this idea had been in her mind all along, but she had doubts about how she could possibly approach the issue, as she found it so personally difficult. Camilla told us that she had lost both her mother and father when she was a little girl. Now, she was waiting for the Child Welfare authorities to find her a foster home, as living with her stepfather and his girlfriend was not positive or sustainable. She expressed that this waiting gave her a lot of uncertainty: Would she have to move to a new town, and thereby lose her friends? How would she keep in touch with her sister, who would continue to live with her stepfather? Would she have to leave her handball team? She told us that she often felt anxious and sad because of the situation.

The next time we met, I was surprised to discover that Camilla had brought in filmed material. We had not given the youths any particular assignment for this meeting, as we planned to use the time to brainstorm activities to be filmed. Camilla had filmed herself giving an account of a selection of life experiences she considered relevant for defining who she was. The recording consisted of a monologue lasting for almost 45 minutes. Reni, Janne and I watched the footage together with Camilla, while Ragnhild and Lene organized brainstorming activities with Helene and Rikard.

Camilla had made the recording in her room. In the take, she sat on the floor, and the camera was evidently placed on a table or shelf at the height of her head. In fact, the camera was so close that it captured an extreme close-up of her face. Camilla had clear and alert eyes and an even flow to her speech. She seemed relaxed but very much awake and present. Her glance oscillated between looking straight

into the camera and alongside the camera (presumably taking glances at herself on the camera's LCD screen). Altogether, the close-up, her direct gaze and her continuous story added to a certain intensity in her expression.

In her recording, Camilla provided a detailed account of central experiences from her childhood up to the present time. She started by presenting herself:

> My name is Camilla. I do sports, I write a lot, particularly poems. I write about life and how I sometimes wish life was different. I spend a lot of time with my friends. I am interested in boys. Now I want to tell you a story about how things can only get better once you have hit a low point.

In her account, she gave much attention to her relationships with significant others. For the most part, she described her relationship with her mother, whom she had lost to cancer when she was 7 years old. She described her mother affectionately and vividly:

> Mum was special, kind, soft. I remember her so well. She could tell stories in a special way. I lied stiff next to her. Her stories were so exciting; I just wanted to hear more. She used to fall asleep next to me in the evenings. I knew she was always there. She let me sleep in her arms. The last day she lived, I would have wished that she could have fallen asleep in my arms.
>
> I remember the last New Year's when she was still alive. She was ill and she could hardly walk and talk. I was about 7 then. She died not long after. Or, I can't remember straight. But I won't forget this New Year's Eve. From where she was lying, she could not see the fireworks. I sat in a chair next to the window. The others had gone out to see the fireworks. I preferred sitting with mum. I told mum about the fireworks. I pretended to be a piece of firework, running here and there in the room. She said I was the world's finest firework.

Camilla's biological father was the next character introduced. Despite having no memory of meeting him, as her parents had broken up when she was only a few months old, her father (or rather her way of fashioning him) was central to her account. He had died when she was 4 years old:

> I asked my aunt one time: "Was dad present when I was born?" I knew he was an alcoholic. "Yes, he was weak, but he was there." I cried. I was so happy to know that my dad cared about me. The only things I had heard about him before were negative. That he was an alcoholic. I didn't want to believe those things. I wanted my dad to be good, to be the best dad ever.

Her depictions of her close relationship with her mother and the insistent positive image she drew of her biological father stood in stark contrast to her account of her relationship with her stepfather and the unsafe environment she entered after her mother´s death.

> My stepfather was violent, he beat up mum. We watched, we were so scared. Mum got cancer and died when I was 7. I was relieved, because now I knew she was fine. Now it was up to me to ensure that my brother and sister would be fine. The one we lived with then was alcoholic and violent. The Childcare Services entered into the picture, but we lied and said we were fine. We became good at lying. When I was 12 I told a teacher that I did not want to go home, that I did not want to live there. The Childcare Services promised they would make things better.
>
> My stepfather had a new girlfriend, they were so happy. He was kind, I didn't recognize him. We moved there. But it only got worse at home. I thought: if things don't change soon, I will have to do something about it myself. I panicked. My stepfather thought everything I did was wrong, everything was supposedly my fault. Although I had taken care of my little sister, everything was my fault. I was taken away from there after one year. I was happy I would not go back there. But then came a disappointment, I was not to live with my little sister anymore. I was in eighth grade when I was removed. They promised that I could meet my little sister, and I did after a couple of weeks. I miss her. But we'll make it together.

Camilla then moved on to talk about her feelings about her current situation, which involved living in a temporary foster home. She felt safe at the moment, but uncertain about what to expect for the future.

> Now four months have passed. I am waiting for someone to want me. This makes me insecure. Will I have to leave my friends? In a way I would like to get away from here, I do not want to be scared to meet people from the past. But at the same time, I do not want to leave friends and my little sister. I don't know what will happen. I could spend my time getting closer to friends, but maybe I should rather detach from them?

In the end, her monologue conveyed a moral message that was closely bound to her diverse life experiences: take care of those you love.

> Now, at the end, I would like to say: Take care of the ones you love. Sometimes you may wish them away, even hate them, and think I do not

> want my mum here, I do not want my little sister. Oh, stupid dad. I wish I was an orphan. But once you become an orphan, when you lose your parents, when you don't have a dad, and no home, you would do anything to have it all back. I promise. Love what you have, take care of what you have. It all means so much, you just don't know it. It is when you lose it you understand how much it means to you. My advice is therefore: take care of those you love, and show them that you love them. You can never get enough. It's incredibly important…. That's all I have to say.

Camilla's recording amazed me. She told her story in a way that I never thought a 13 year old would be capable of. She depicted the persons and situations in her life with great detail and affection. The extreme close-up on her face matched the extreme close-up she offered us into her life. Reni expressed how her recording both surprised and touched her, and I honored Camilla for her talent in storytelling. Janne also expressed her satisfaction. She praised Camilla for her good work and expressed how pleased she was that Camilla had selected to give an account of how she felt about her present situation. Camilla smiled and appeared satisfied with our feedback.

This recording came to constitute the main resource for Camilla's finished film. Amongst the course leaders, I was Camilla's primary mentor in the filmmaking process.[82] She and I started to work with the filmed monologue, discussing its content and distinguishing the types of information she wanted to include in her final film. We did this by importing the recording into the editing program and placing it on the timeline. I helped her roughly cut her monologue into different clips according to the topics they treated. When discussing the content more closely afterwards, Camilla expressed hesitation about including all of the topics she had introduced in the monologue. She said that the recording was mostly intended for us course leaders so that we could understand the bigger picture. She stated that, while watching the material together with us, she had felt uneasy about the parts dealing with her stepfather. She wanted to take them out. After we removed these parts, she decided to also take out everything pertaining to her current wait for a foster

[82] Reni, Ragnhild and I distributed primary responsibility for the youths between us. I mostly sat with Camilla and Kristine, whereas Reni followed up with Ingrid and Linn and Ragnhild followed up with Rikard and Kim. However, we often moved between the participants and collectively discussed the progress of various projects in the afternoons following the course meetings.

home. To her, it made no sense for her to speak about her waiting if the film lacked the background context as to why she needed this new home. Instead, she decided to concentrate her film on the loss of her parents.

Camilla expressed relief after making the decision to not treat her contemporary challenge of waiting for a new home and being separated from her sister in her final film. We sketched the narrative she hoped to compose on a piece of paper: it included all of the episodes about her mother and most of the accounts relating to her biological father. She also wanted to place the moral message towards the end of her film. I raised the possibility of including some audiovisual material that would support her monologue by providing illustrations of the people and situations she depicted in her monologue. She suggested that she could select some photos from her photo album.

For the next meeting, Camilla brought in several photos. All of them featured her mother, or her mother and Camilla together. Camilla was only a baby in some of the photos and most of the photos were happy, showing Camilla and her mother playful and full of laughter. However, there were also a few photos featuring Camilla's mother on her deathbed. Camilla and I spent quite some time looking through the photos, discussing them, and selecting which ones to apply in her film. Camilla picked out mostly happy photos that portrayed her mother beautifully, but also one of her mother on her deathbed.

In a subsequent meeting, Camilla announced that she had recently seen a music video on YouTube featuring a young boy performing a song in memory of his mother. She had liked how, behind him, there was a moving background wherein photos of his mother would fade in and out in sequence. Camilla's face expressed enthusiasm and she spoke with a rapid, eager voice. She wondered whether we could do something similar with the photos she had brought in. We sat down and planned for such a sequence, and at the next meeting, she brought in a recording that she had made in her aunt's car while driving through a tunnel. In the editing program, I assisted her in adding photos of her and her mother that faded in and out with the moving tunnel wall as a background. We connected these images to the parts of her monologue in which she talked about her mother (in a voiceover). I

talked to Camilla about the metaphorical significance of tunnels: how moving through a tunnel may give associations to overcoming a challenge and how exiting a tunnel may represent optimism, indicating hope. Camilla brightened; she liked the idea of communicating hope in her film. She commented that she often felt that when something bad happened, things could only get better. She thought for a while and added: "but then again, when something good happens, it rarely lasts".

Another scene that Camilla chose to film and add at the end of her film was an interview of her two best friends. She had filmed the interview in a classroom, with her two friends lined up against the blackboard. The friends expressed how much Camilla meant to them and how close they were to each other. This interview scene was in the editing combined with photos Camilla had taken of the three of them together. This celebratory ending, showing herself surrounded by friends, complemented Camilla's previously recorded moral message in which she implored viewers to take good care of their loved ones.

We reviewed the film after our reworking of the monologue and our insertion of the tunnel footage, the photographs and the friend scene. Camilla watched the material patiently and with great focus. When listening to herself describe her memory of hearing the news about her mother's death, she commented, "That day I'll never forget." Afterwards, she expressed that she had found it difficult to study cancer in school. She told me that the mother of one of her friends had been sent to Denmark to have special cancer treatment there. She felt it was unfair that her mother had not been given such a chance. We began speaking about Camilla's younger sister. On the verge of tears, Camilla described how painful it was to no longer live with her sister. She had felt responsible for her after her mother's death, but now they could only meet once a week.

Rather than treating her contemporary challenges, such as worrying about her younger sister and not knowing where her future foster home would be, Camilla decided to use her film to treat a part of her past that (I came to learn) she had already elaborated on and communicated through various media (a blog, essays and poems). The loss of her father and mother was situated many years back in time compared to her current process of shifting homes. This meant that the story she

had selected to tell was familiar and one with which she had worked through over time, rather than one conveying more recent (and raw) challenges and feelings.

Towards the end of the course, Ragnhild, Janne and I discussed Camilla's filmmaking process. Janne considered Camilla to be somewhat stuck in her story about her past, in the sense of lacking the ability to talk about herself in another way. Janne expressed how she had hoped the Youth Gaze project would provide Camilla an opportunity to break out of her consolidated presentation of self and to work significantly on more contemporary challenges and feelings (which had not yet been processed). Janne's comment may indicate a distinct way of thinking within the community nursing field about risks and how they should be overcome. It became clear to me that the youths' best ways of managing their challenging life experiences (when following the community nurse model) consisted in opening up and speaking about challenging issues as a means of processing and sorting out their thoughts and feelings, and subsequently overcoming their pains. Inherent in this process is the concept of a generalized transition from at-risk to "out of risk" by means of a healing process of storytelling, with the aim of processing and overcoming rather than to carrying (and constantly returning to) challenging memories.

In this regard, Kristine's filmmaking process (below) came to constitute a model for the process that the community nurse wished all the youths would experience.

8.5 Kristine investigates her past

After we re-organized the scheme into smaller groups with individual follow-ups, Kristine signaled her interest in treating her childhood experiences in her film. However, different from Camilla, who immediately let us in on the felt dilemma of her present situation (although she later abandoned this approach in the process), Kristine took a more tentative approach. When discussing the experiences she wanted to treat in her film and how she wanted to approach them, Kristine spoke in quite general terms, making statements of the kind: "The film will be about the time I spent living with mum. Then I will treat what happened when I moved into a foster home." When I asked her to speak more about her time spent living with her

mother, she talked about how her family had been quite poor at that time, and how she had frequently been absent from school. Our quite limited conversation stood in contrast to the concrete descriptions of distinct life experiences that Kristine provided on camera. Similar to Camilla, Kristine began her film project by speaking about significant life experiences while she was filmed by her best friend. Camilla, Kristine and Ingrid all took this approach of beginning their film project with a personal testimony of challenging childhood experiences. As they did so without having explicitly being asked to do so from the course leaders or the community nurse, they must have considered this approach relevant within the film course setting.

In her recording, Kristine sat on a sofa with the camera placed approximately two meters away. She wore a TIL football scarf and, as she spoke, she played with its fringe, running her fingers through it. Her gaze rapidly shifted between looking into the camera and looking into the air, as if pondering something. While talking, she initially paused between sentences – sometimes even in the middle of sentences (as if searching for words). However, as the take moved on, the pauses became less frequent and a more even flow was established.

She introduced herself:

> Hi. My name is Kristine and I am 18 years old. I have lived in foster homes for six years, from the age of 11, and I changed foster homes when I was 15. When I was 11, I didn't understand why, and I cried when I was collected by my foster dad. It was hard. One or one and a half years passed before I understood why.

As she continued, Kristine focused on three main topics: what it had been like to live with the first foster family, what it had been like to live in the second foster family and, finally, what it had been like to live with her family before being taken away from her parents. In her account, she jumped between single episodes and the resulting story was rather fragmented, moving back and forth in time and place. Concerning her first family, she brought in an episode of when she had run away to see her mother:

> I ran away from my new family. After school one day, I went to mum. I was fetched by the police. My new foster parents were furious, they yelled and

> screamed. I ran away once more, that time my foster dad came to pick me up. They were angry and forced me to say I'm sorry. My foster mum cut my bus card in two. I didn't run away no more. I understood that it was stupid, but I missed mum. We had so little time to be together, only once a month or eight hours every second month. It was always stressful. I cried when I had to leave.

Kristine had lived with the first foster family between the ages of 11 and 15. She explained the transition between foster homes as upsetting:

> When I was 15 I changed foster homes. I cried all the way when we drove to the new foster home, it was a three hour ride, and I cried all the way. I felt worthless; that they didn't want me. I felt let down, and felt that they were just after the money. After I changed foster homes, they bought a new car and renovated the kitchen. My family also thought they were just after the money.

She juxtaposed the second foster family with the first:

> In the second foster home I was given a more free hand. They were not so strict. I got some more time to be with my mother. But what was different with the second foster home was that my foster dad was to accompany me each time, so that he could observe what state my mum was in. Two or three times he called off the visit, claiming that my mum was not capable of taking care of me. After some time I stopped looking forward to these visits. I received so many lies from mum. I stopped believing in her, she never held her promises. It was awful that it had to be that way.

Kristine's framing of her two foster families was largely tied to the ways in which they had supervised her contact with her mother. She did not provide information about the size of the family or any characteristics of their everyday life together. She moved on to explain why she had to live in a foster home in the first place:

> I now want to talk about experiences from childhood, about the reason why I had to live in a foster home. It was because of drug abuse. Mum is still on drugs. It hurts me to see that mum is more and more falling to pieces. Sometimes she is in good shape though.
>
> When I lived with mum there was one experience that I remember well. When I was 7 and went to first grade I went into mum's bedroom. She was lying on the floor and a man was strangling her. I said he must not do that. My older brother came to fetch me; he brought me outside so that we could not see. Mum came after some time. She had blood in her face and

> scratch marks. She kept on seeing him for quite a while after that. They fought a lot.
>
> Often we didn't have food in the house. I was often hungry. I lost much of my schooling, and I lagged behind. I used to go to a neighbor to ask for food. I ate a lot of candy. I remember a Christmas when mum did not have money for a Christmas tree. I lent her money that I had got from my grandpa. Then we could buy ourselves a tree.

After watching Kristine's monologue, Reni and I praised her for her openness and the trust she conveyed in us by sharing her story. Her story touched me not only because of its content, but also because of the manner in which she presented it. Her fumbling – with both her words and her scarf – her non-chronological jumps between episodes and her tentative way of depicting difficult experiences left me with the impression that she was still grappling with making sense of many of the issues she treated in her account.

As we moved on to plan what she would film next, Kristine proposed that she film from her grandmother's house, which she would be visiting in the coming weekend. She said that she wanted to interview her father while she was there. She told me that, while she had regained contact with her father in previous years, during most of her childhood, he had been absent. I sat with her to plan her interview. She came up with questions and I assisted in writing them down for her. I noticed that the questions she planned to ask him reflected her curiosity to know more about the type of life her father had lived when she had been young. In particular, she wanted to know why he had spent so little time with his children.

When we met again the following week, Kristine told me that she had filmed three interviews during the weekend: one with her father, one with her brother and one with her grandmother. "It went very well," she said enthusiastically and with a broad smile. Ragnhild and I sat down with Kristine to watch the interviews. In the recording, her father sat in a chair in front of a window. A shadow ran across his face, due to the backlight. In the window frame were several flowerpots with pink and purple blooms. Next to the chair was a small table topped with a white lace tablecloth. Kristine's father slowly swung his chair from side to side. We could hear Kristine's voice from behind the camera:

K: Why did you start taking drugs?
Father: Why did I start taking drugs? Because the others did it… A need for exploration.
K: You thought it was a cool thing to do?
Father: I used to join in on most things other people did.
K: How much did it cost?
Father: It depends. I've tried most things.
K: Amphetamine?
Father: 1,000 NOK per gram
K: Heroine?
Father: 3,000 NOK per gram
K: How did you get hold of the drugs?
Father: I spent most of my social security money… ["And you worked," a voice from outside the frame whispers]… and I had a job. I became a criminal. I was regularly caught. They would often put me in the security cell. At most, I spent three to four nights a week in the security cell.
K: What was it like, being in that milieu?
Father: Rough. It was all about money and drugs, how to get more of both. It was a drag. I was never to experience anything new. It was amusing to start with, but it became a drag.
K: How did you live?
Father: I had a house most of the time. But in between I just had to find a place to sleep.
K: What about the kids? Did you take care of the kids?
Father: I withdrew from my kids. I kept away from them as much as possible because I was high most of the time. That's why I lost much of their childhood.
K: How was your financial situation?
Father: I was broke. I had to look for food in waste containers, and I was given food by the Church City Mission.
K: Have you been in a fight?
Father: A lot of times. There was fighting, disagreements, someone owed money...
K: Why did you want to stop taking drugs?
Father: I hurt my back. That gave me time to be clean. I had the chance to reflect. I had been used to only existing.
K: When you quit, did you decide that you would not start again?
Father: I wanted to quit, but it was hard. I didn't know whether I would make it. I was in a clinic for half a year. I wanted to quit. I recovered more and more. Two years passed before it released its hold on me.
K: What's it like watching your buddies?
Father: It's hard to see that they have not come to their senses. I have tried to help them. I recommend no one to start taking drugs. Then they'll lose their lives. They only go around existing, for as long as they live. And it's not sure that they live long. They may soon have an overdose. The quality of the drugs varies a lot. All of a sudden you get something that is totally pure, and then you pass away.

K: Do you have friends that passed away?
Father: Ten, fifteen, twenty died by overdose or abuse.

Kristine's questions to her father were direct and confronting. In her delivery, her voice bore no trace of anger or accusation; rather, she posed the questions in a casual, undramatic tone. I asked Kristine whether this was the first time she had discussed these issues with her father. She answered affirmatively. I asked the same question concerning her grandmother and brother. She answered that she had talked about the past with her grandma, but only on rare occasions. She had never discussed these issues with her brother. Her interviews of her brother and grandmother were much shorter. With her grandmother, Kristine asked two questions about how she had experienced her son's drug abuse. With her brother, she asked three questions concerning the extent to which their parents' drug abuse had left a mark on him. When watching the recordings with us, she appeared just as attentive to her family members' answers as we were, as we listened to them for the first time. It was only when watching the recordings that she had time to carefully listen to what her interviewees had said. For Kristine, performing these interviews seemed important in her search for a way to tell her story.

The monologue and the interviews came to constitute the major elements of Kristine's film. During the editing phase, Kristine decided that she also wanted to film herself and her friend together, as a means of depicting central features of her present life. She planned to place this scene at the end of her film. Ultimately, the scene that was filmed reflected two giggly girls who had clearly planned how they would act in front of the camera. In the recording, they stood in front of the camera and introduced each other by grinning and pointing at each other, stating "This is Kristine" and "This is Leah." They then embraced each other and said in chorus: "Best friends forever!" Afterwards, they giggled and Leah exclaimed, "Oh my God!" laughingly.

In the editing, I found that Kristine had difficulty making decisions for her film. She found it challenging to select what to include and exclude and how to put the pieces together. She often asked me: "What do you think?" "What would you choose?" It seemed that she had a strong wish to do it "right." On one occasion,

when selecting her material, she explicitly asked me to sit next to her so she could "get it right."

Similar to Camilla, Kristine seemed overwhelmed by her material – particularly, how she should choose certain elements over others from rather extensive monologue and interview material. All of her material dealt with the same story (her past experiences) and she seemed to find it difficult to evaluate some experiences as more important, relevant or meaningful than others. Different from Camilla, who at times revealed frustration bound to the selection work, Kristine seemed to enjoy our joint engagement in scrutinizing her material, discussing and selecting pieces and putting them together. Kristine and I made most of the choices for her film in dialogue, though I aimed at giving her several options that she could choose from in order to make her feel that it was her own production (and not mine). She smiled timidly when I gave her positive feedback for her work.

Although Kristine often sought my approval on many decisions, she was very clear in regards to one choice: she definitely wanted to include the scene she had filmed of herself and Leah. She repeatedly expressed that she wanted her film to end on something positive, and having good friends was the most positive thing in her life that she could think of. By including the scene with Leah, she hoped to communicate that she was doing much better and that her friends (particularly Leah) meant a lot to her.

Kristine decided to name her film *Dandelion Child* (*Løvetannsbarnet*). She told me that she had come up with the title when brainstorming with Janne during one of their consultations. "Dandelion child" is an established term within social and health work with young people, and it is bound to the concept of resilience. Resilience concerns the ability to rise and fend for oneself in spite of challenging experiences (Bekkhus, 2012). The dandelion flower is a common metaphor for this trait, signifying the ability to rise after endured hardships due to its hard-bitten character. Next to the title, Janne and Kristine decided to include some verses from a famous Norwegian poem by Inger Hagrup, called "Dandelion" (See Appendix 4).

Through depicting Kristine's filmmaking process, I have attempted to reveal how Kristine saw the Youth Gaze course as an occasion to not only give an account

of her life experiences, but also to confront her family members and explore their ways of understanding a period in life that had been difficult, yet central to her identity formation. The filmmaking process became an investigative process wherein the camera worked as a catalyst for action, exploration and meaning-making (cf. Rouch & Feld, 2003; Rouch & Morin, 1961). In particular, with the camera and the film task, Kristine gained an opportunity and a reason to ask questions that she had never before asked to those standing close to her. The community nurse expressed her satisfaction with Kristine's process, as she considered Kristine's investigative work helpful in contributing to her formation of a better understanding of what had happened to her as a child, and she expected that this would support Kristine in accepting and processing her life experiences.

8.6 Juxtaposing the group's filmmaking processes and film forms

In this course, three of the participants (including Camilla and Kristine) selected to treat their childhood experiences on film, whereas the other three decided to reveal a certain talent or to demonstrate mastery of a particular film genre.

Amongst those who referred to their childhood memories, I noted similar characteristics bound to their self-presentations on film. Ingrid made a film about her experiences of having being bullied at school. Similar to Camilla and Kristine, she started by filming a monologue in which she gave an account of painful memories. She also described her experiences with social exclusion and physical and psychological violence from peers. The work of telling her story proved demanding for Ingrid. She sometimes cried when recording herself speak about her painful experiences and when viewing her filmed accounts. Nonetheless, she expressed that she found it meaningful to engage in communicating her experiences and feelings, as she hoped it might comfort other youths to know that they were not alone; she also felt that her storytelling was helping her to recover from the pain of her experiences.

As the girls progressed with their projects, we worked with them more on an individual basis and less with the half-group, together. All of the girls appeared to appreciate this close follow-up and expressed interest in discussing the issues and experiences they raised in their films in more detail. With respect to their film

narratives, a distinguishable feature in all of their projects was a happy ending. Independently of the others, each expressed that they wanted their film to end on a happy note. In Ingrid's case, she filmed herself giving an account of how life had changed for her when she had got her horse, started high school and entered a new social milieu. She expressed how she had changed as a person due to these social changes: she had begun to smile more and to lift her head when she walked, and others had seemed to notice these changes in her. She described how she had made a lot of friends at the time, and her grades had gone up. In the recording, she asserted that, on a scale of 1 to 10, she would score her present life as a 10. Ingrid recorded two takes of this scene, which she intended to use as her ending. She discarded the first recording, giving the reasoning that she had carried too serious an expression and had mistakenly emphasized how sad she had felt when her horse had been taken away. She expressed that she wanted a new recording in which she would stand out as more content and happy.

In terms of narrative structure, the three films were also similar. Each started with a personal account of agonizing moments in the filmmaker's life. The individual approaches to this testimony were somewhat contrastive, however: Camilla demonstrated rapid and engaged speech with an extreme close-up; Kristine took a tentative and explorative approach, seeming pensive and searching for words; and Ingrid offered a pain-ridden and sore account. Nonetheless, each filmmaker opened up and provided a detailed account of her lived experiences. Also, each film attached a happy ending, which is something the filmmakers explicitly emphasized as important. In these final scenes, all three of the films expressed how life had improved for them. They celebrated relationships with friends, better grades in school and greater control over their lives. Both Kristine and Ingrid explicitly stated that they didn't want to show a serious expression in their final scene (as conveyed in earlier scenes), and thus their films ended with them smiling.

With Linn, Rikard and Kim, the filmmaking processes and our engagement with them were rather different from that of Ingrid, Kristine and Camilla. The three of them emphasized, from early on, that they did not want their films to touch upon serious issues. Instead, they wanted to make fun films about topics they cared

about. Linn went through several rounds of trying out and discarding ideas before settling on the idea of filming a mockumentary about "being emo."[83] Rikard made a film portraying his and his friends' talents in biking and snowmobiling. Kim never finished his film, but he planned to make a film with some of his friends that would reflect their preferred style of stunt humor, similar to that found on TV shows such as *Jackass* and *Pure Pwnage*.[84] To them, the Youth Gaze project allowed them to play around with cameras and their identities rather than to process challenging life experiences. With these youths, we took on different roles as course leaders. Rather than sitting with them to discuss details concerning their life experiences, we engaged with these youths in their quests to find eligible ways to perform their identities. Much of the follow-up activity with these youths consisted in confirming their work, instilling them with confidence that their ideas were good and working with them to structure their ideas. In this way, our work between the two groups expressed different types of "motivational work": we supported the girls' efforts to be open and personal in their approach, whereas, with Linn and the boys, we built their confidence in their chosen roles and identities as interesting and relevant.

The social dynamics in this group were clearly affected by our decision to re-organize the activities into smaller groups and individual follow-ups. This decision was initially determined as a means of adapting to the challenges faced by Ingrid. At the time, we did not carefully consider how our change in scheme could be seen as a simultaneous adaptation to the proper dynamics of the community nursing services (Grønhaug, 1978). While there was little contact and negotiation between the participants at the start of the course, after the change in scheme, such contact became even more rare. We, the course leaders, became the persons with whom the youths discussed, opened up and tested out identities. In this regard, our roles

[83] A mockumentary is a piece of fiction that is presented like a documentary. This genre is often applied to analyze, comment upon or parody current events and issues. "Emo" is short for "emotional," and it is commonly associated with a hard rock music genre that appeals to emotions. However, beyond this, it is also associated with the lifestyle/identity that surrounds emo music, pertaining to a certain type of dress and hairstyle (i.e. dark clothing, black hair and dark make-up). Sociologically, emo is defined as a subculture, wherein most members are considered to oppose careerism and social conformity (https://snl.no/emo).

[84] These are comedy shows that Kim watched. In *Jackass*, the characters perform spectacular stunts with the intention of hurting or experimenting on themselves. *Pure Pwnage* follows the daily life of a gamer who cannot quite figure out how to socially relate to non-gamers.

came to resemble that of the community nurse and some of the youths took on the role of the youth in consultation. This may have contributed to several of these youths' decisions to make films about their challenging life histories, as doing so may have represented a relevant way to act in settings associated with the community nurse.

The ceremonial language that developed in this group was tied to the roles and relationships that also developed in the group – particularly between the adults and the youths. It was only long after, when engaging in my analytical work, that I came to distinguish how the youths acted with deference towards us when managing their film projects (by opening up, revealing trust and requesting our guidance). In response, our "motivational" work was an act of deference paid towards the participants (showing interest in their life histories and honoring and supporting their identity management). It was largely on the basis of socially engaging with us within the setting co-organized by the community nurse that the youths selected their strategies for standing out positively in the setting.

The premiere event demonstrates how the ceremonial language that gained currency in the Youth Gaze setting supported certain words, gestures and ways of interacting that were relevant in the setting, but perhaps less relevant in a less protected and controlled environment.

8.7 The premiere screening

The premiere event was held in the high school media room, on a weeknight. Ingrid and Kristine arrived half an hour ahead of the start. They had curled their hair and were wearing make-up and their best clothes. Ingrid had slept over at Kristine's house, and they told me that they had hardly slept the whole night. They seemed excited and restless. Both Ingrid and Kristine had decided to screen their films to a closed audience, meaning that only the guests they had invited would be able to see their films. We started the event by screening Kristine's film. Kristine had invited three of her friends (including Ingrid), one of her teachers, Janne and Lene. Ingrid invited the same audience to watch her film, too. She had originally invited three of her friends, but, aside from Kristine, none had shown up. I noticed that Ingrid

seemed disappointed when we started screening her film, after we had already waited a short while to see if her friends would turn up.

In the middle of her film, Ingrid stood up and walked out of the room. Ragnhild went after her. The scene that was showing at the time had been filmed in the locker and shower room at school, and Ingrid's narrative was describing an episode in which her classmates had thrown garbage at her in that setting. On the large screen with an audience, the scene had been too difficult for Ingrid to watch. However, she came back to the screening room a few minutes later and watched the rest of her film together with the audience. Her film received great applause at the end. Afterwards, she told Ragnhild, Reni and me that it had not occurred to her beforehand that this scene might be challenging for her to watch in the presence of others. Although she had watched it on the computer many times by then, and knew the content by heart, she had nevertheless felt different and overwhelmed when other people were present. Despite this, she expressed relief that she had dared to tell her story in front of an audience.

After screening Ingrid and Kristine's films, we opened the screening room doors to the rest of the participants and their invitees. Amongst Camilla, Linn and Rikard, only Camilla had invited guests. Her temporary foster parents came, as well as some of her friends. Two of the teachers she had invited had not appeared. For the open screenings, the youths agreed that some BUP[85] employees who were interested in the Youth Gaze project could come and that Janne and Lene could also be present. The audience thus consisted of approximately twenty persons.

Before each film – including both the open and the closed screenings – Reni and I introduced the filmmaker and the film. In these presentations, we emphasized the youths' strengths and unique talents that we had come to observe during the film course. Kristine, Ingrid, Camilla, Linn and Rikard smiled shyly when they came to the front to receive this praise, together with a copy of their film, a rose and a diploma. After the screenings, the participants (including Kim, who neither finished his film nor came to the premiere), Janne, Lene, Reni, Ragnhild and I went out for

[85] BUP is short for "Barne- og ungdomspsykiatrisk poliklinikk," which translates as "Children and Young People's Psychiatric Out-Patient Clinic."

pizza at the local diner. At the diner, the youths – and Ingrid and Kristine, in particular – expressed their relief at having completed the course and dared to screen their films to an audience. This relief was communicated through both verbal expressions and giggly and joking behavior.

8.8 Appropriating the proper dynamics of the community nursing field

From this film course – and particularly my close work with the youths as they completed their filmmaking tasks – I came to learn about the proper dynamics of the community nursing field. From the youths' ways of managing their films, the community nurse's ways of responding to their strategies, and the roles I took on as a course leader, I came to realize the community nursing field's strong degree of steering in terms of allocating roles to its members (cf. Grønhaug, 1978).

Camilla, Kristine and Ingrid could be seen as having used their film projects to follow the community nursing field's "recipe" for reducing risk. With their films, they communicated both an awareness of and a capacity to participate in processes considered fruitful by the community nurse. They structured their life stories into narratives that paralleled the procedure desired of them by the community nurse: In the first part of their films, they opened up and told stories about challenging life experiences. Their happy endings indicated that being open and confronting towards challenging life experiences paid off; in their lives, much had changed for the better. Their stories thus took viewers on a journey from a challenging past to a promising present and idealized future. Their films closely reflected the field's perception of risk and how risk is best approached and overcome, by following the emic codes, values and categories of the community nursing field.

What caught me by surprise as I reviewed my notes for the analysis was the degree to which the community nursing field appeared to have influenced the roles that Reni, Ragnhild and I took on. In responding to the issues raised by Ingrid by re-organizing the scheme for individual follow-ups, we not only responded to her needs, but also adapted to the proper dynamics of the community nursing field. We selected to work increasingly with individual follow-ups with all of the participants, rather than engaging the participants in group activities. With this approach, our

roles and relationships to the participants became similar to those of the youths and the community nurse, who supported and encouraged the youths in telling personal stories about their childhood experiences. In revealing interest in and taking the time to listen, discuss and explore (with the youths) the youths' difficult experiences, we appropriated the adult role that was allocated from the community nursing field.

With Linn, Rikard and Kim, who decided to use their film project not to explore their challenging life experiences but to make "fun films" reflecting their talents and proficiencies in distinct film genres, we also worked mainly one-on-one. From my field notes, I came to notice how we predominantly engaged with these youths in their search for topics they considered relevant and interesting and supported the youths once they had made their choice. However, I also noticed how we occasionally made suggestions that would take their approaches in a more personal direction. For instance, we suggested that they depict and explain central features or issues in their everyday lives, talk more about why they thought an activity was fun or exciting and reveal their thoughts behind the "stunts" or "tricks" they planned to execute.[86] These youths all abstained from taking on our suggestions and instead stuck to their plans of filming tricks, stunts and enactments (with little dialogue and no explanatory comments). Our "gentle pulling" of these youths, suggesting that they share more of their thoughts and feelings (which occurred rather spontaneously and unwittingly from our side), were likely linked to the role expectations within the field. Without reflecting on it much in the moment, we acted in ways that complied with the field's role expectations (cf. engaging with the youths in ways that encouraged them to open up and share from their experiences).

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how the community nursing field allocated roles to both the participants and the course leaders, and how this allocation affected our roles and relationships within the course setting in subtle ways that were not easily detectable at the time. Comparing the Vika course with that of Tromsø, it is particularly evident that the institutional collaborators in these courses saw different potentials in the Youth Gaze project and how it could

[86] I came to realize that we made such suggestions more frequently in this course than we did in the Tromsø course, in which the youths also made films revealing their hobbies and talents.

contribute to the social production of concrete person types. The community nurse envisioned the project as one that would provide youths the opportunity to work with and process their challenging life experiences. The Youth Support team, in contrast, envisioned it as one that would provide youths the opportunity to build social competencies and new friendships, and to experience mastery through completing a film. The institutions' differing conceptualizations of and approaches to at-risk youths affected the social dynamics and film types that were accessible to the youths within these settings. In this way, the proper dynamics at play in these two institutions generated different film expressions and supported different person types and processes for the youths to enter. In the Vika course, this resulted in the youths' inclination to direct their gaze inwards, at themselves and their lives; in the Tromsø case, the result was that the youths directed their gaze outwards, at other youths, and engaged in explorations and negotiations of identity.

In the following chapter, I depict and analyze the filmmaking processes of the youth participants in another course held in Tromsø, this time in collaboration with the youth section of the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Organization (NAV) and the Follow-Up Service. In the chapter, I depict the filmmaking processes that were generated in this particular institutional setting, which took yet another contrasting direction from those depicted thus far. This course was directed towards youths who had dropped out of school and were not currently engaged in work or any other daytime activity.

Chapter 9:
Justifying self on the outskirts of mainstream

"There's something about John": The analytical focus of this chapter

John was one of the youths who had been recruited for a new Youth Gaze course in collaboration with the Follow-Up Service and the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Organization (NAV). This course specifically targeted youths who had quit school and were not employed in work or any other daytime activity. Ahead of the course, Åse from the Follow-Up Service rang me to give me a few details about the youths whom she had recruited. She provided the following depiction of John: John leads a secluded life. He sits at home in his flat, mostly pre-occupied with playing online computer games. John took two different elementary courses in high school, but he never proceeded to complete the final two years. Although he had been trying, he had not succeeded in finding a job. "There's something about him," Åse said, "but I don't know what it is exactly." She had only ever spoken to him on the phone and never met him in person. "He said that no one would ever hire someone looking like him," Åse continued, "but I don't know what he meant…. Maybe he has a handicap of some kind? He sounded like an upright kind of person."

"There is something about John" may signify how the participants in this course expressed their sense of being identified and singled out on the grounds of distinct flaws and poor achievement. From our first meeting, I came to learn that John was a tall and well-built boy with piercings, a shaved head and an inverted cross that he wore around his neck. I also came to learn that John believed strongly that, due to his looks and his extensive gaming habits, it would be nearly impossible for

him to secure a job. Others were simply too prejudiced to hire him. His pile of turned down job applications bore witness to this, he asserted.

In this chapter, I pursue the filmmaking processes of youths who tried, with their films, to talk back to "the system" (i.e generalized others) or to distinct persons in their life who disapproved of their lifestyle and choices. However, what stands out in this chapter is how difficult it is for these youths talking back without simultaneously accepting (or taking as a starting point) some "truths" and causal connections inherent in "the system".

9.1 Selling Youth Gaze to welfare officers

NAV and the Follow-Up Service are the main institutions that consult youths who have dropped out of school and do not have a job. Both of these services assist these youths in finding a suitable activity to engage with – be it a job, a traineeship or a different line of education. The youths are often first contacted by the Follow-Up Service, as this service is notified whenever a pupil drops out of school. After a particular youth's situation is mapped, he or she may remain in contact with the Follow-Up Service or – mainly in the event that the youth seeks to enter the job market – be referred to the NAV. Both services aim at finding and offering youths a meaningful activity in order to ensure that they do not go idle. The services form part of a larger network of institutions and services that carry an equal school and work mandate. This network comprises schools, the Educational Psychological Service at schools, the Office for Training and Apprenticeship, childcare services, the Youth Support team and the work training team (Arbeidstreningsgruppa ATG).

In order to initiate communication about potential collaboration, we arranged a meeting with the NAV and the Follow-Up Service to be held in the NAV's offices, situated by the harbor in downtown Tromsø. Two employees of the NAV, two from the Follow-Up Service, Ragnhild, Reni and I attended this meeting. We informed them about the Youth Gaze film course and our research connected to the project. As the institutional representatives responded positively to the project, we immediately started discussing the frames in which we might deliver the course. Through the discussion, I learned more about the ways in which our institutional

collaborators considered their own practice, what they found challenging in their work with youths outside of education and work, and the potential they saw in the Youth Gaze project.

Torsteinn from the Follow-Up Service expressed that he found our methodological approach interesting, as filmmaking could capture the youths' perspectives on their own situation – something he considered invaluable. He envisioned that the course would be most beneficial to youths who had not achieved much despite having attended counselling, courses and activities offered by the two services (e.g. individual consultations, coaching for writing job applications, job training initiatives, etc.). He hoped that such a course would appeal to these youths and motivate them both to take advantage of the services offered and to engage in a formal activity.

Per from the NAV commented that some of the youths who came in for consultation were particularly hard to reach due to their lack of motivation. He described how certain youths, when asked about their prospects, would answer that they had no preferences with respect to the type of work they were interested in and did not know whether they might want to pick up a new line of study. He saw potential in the Youth Gaze film course to engage these youths in a consciousness raising process by creating space for them to reflect on what they wanted in life. It would also ensure that they did not "go passive" in the sense of having no set daytime activities. From our discussion, I learned that our collaborators found the youths' lack of direction and motivation as the largest challenge in their ordinary practice. This challenge was given more weight than other challenges I expected them to raise, such as the youths' lack of experience and formal qualifications, or lack of opportunities for youths in the job market.

On the basis of a suggestion from Per, we agreed that this Youth Gaze film course would give the recruited youths the task of depicting their everyday life at present *as well as* depicting their future prospects, be these concrete plans or loose ideas. Our collaborators argued that this would constitute a good strategy for triggering reflection and awareness amongst the youths concerning their personal

goals. It also represented a means of meeting the challenges our collaborators associated with the type of youths they intended to recruit for this film course.

Since the youths they considered eligible for the course had no daytime engagements, we agreed to hold the course in the daytime. The NAV would provide a daily cash allowance for the participants, bound to an agreement of mandatory attendance in the course. This made the Youth Gaze course yet another tool within the NAV's repertoire of measures for improving the prospects of youths lacking work or study. Different from the previous courses, in this course, neither the NAV nor the Follow-Up Service employees could take time off from their ordinary work to attend the course meetings, except for the information meeting. In this meeting, a counselor from the NAV attended in order to inform participants about the practicalities involved in receiving the allowance. We arranged for the course to be held at the Youth Support team's office, since there were no well-equipped rooms available on a steady basis at the NAV or the Follow-Up Service offices.

Calling up the youths

Prior to their recruitment of participants, I sent the collaborators written information about the film course, as they wanted information on the task, goals and practicalities of the course at hand when they began their recruitment, mainly via the phone. In the informative material, I presented the aim of the course as supporting youths in making a film in which they would depict what it is like to be young, based on their own experiences. I focused on what the youths would learn from the course (camera work, editing and audiovisual storytelling, as well as discussion/reflection around topics of their own concern) and noted that they would receive a certificate upon completing the course. I also outlined the practicalities of the course, indicating the timeframe, location and frequency of meetings, and our expectation that participants would do an amount of independent work outside of our meetings. Finally, I informed them that the film course formed part of a research project through which we sought to learn more about youths' own experiences of being young today.

The recruitment process did not go as smoothly as we had hoped. In particular, the NAV counselors did not manage to recruit any youths. Anne-Lise from

the NAV linked this failure to timing. She noted that many youths had already been offered other activities and had accepted these offers. Those for whom this did not apply were lacking in motivation for just about anything. Ultimately, Åse from the Follow-Up Service recruited the largest number of youths. Despite this, she also noted that the recruitment proved more difficult than she had anticipated. The recruitment process had coincided with several deadlines for applications and loads of paperwork that had to be completed that month. For this reason, she and her colleagues had had little time to contact youths and very little time for recruitment. She also shared that many of the youths lacked motivation and, for this reason, tended to abstain from answering the phone during office hours. She informed us that her colleague, Ingrid, had succeeded in reaching some youths, but they had all turned down the offer. Åse finally succeeded in recruiting four youths and Thorsteinn (also from the Follow-Up Service) recruited one. Only three of these youths showed up to our information meeting.

9.2 Group dynamics

The first encounter: Impressions and expressions

John entered the loft at the Youth Support team's office ten minutes ahead of our first meeting. He greeted Ragnhild, Reni and I and installed himself at the end of the large dining table. John was tall and well built, and he was dressed in a full-length black leather coat. As he took off the coat, I saw a large tattoo of the grim reaper on his right arm. His head was shaved and he had a goatee, and around his neck he wore an amulet with an inverted cross. As he sat down, Sofie and Sara arrived.

None of the three participants knew each other. Of the three, John was the most outspoken. From the start, he spoke freely about himself and his experiences. Sofie and Sandra refrained from initiating topics of conversation, but they listened and responded to questions that were posed to them directly. Sofie appeared to perk up when John began talking about his preference for metal music. She was familiar with some of the bands John mentioned and she expressed a liking for some of them. Sofie was tall and slim with straight blonde hair. She wore skinny black

PARTICIPANTS:

***JOHN**: BOY, 20 YEARS OLD. SPENDS MUCH TIME PLAYING ANARCHY ONLINE – AN ONLINE MULTI-PLAYER ROLE PLAY GAME. DROPPED OUT OF A MARITIME STUDIES PROGRAM AT HIGH SCHOOL SEVERAL YEARS AGO. LIVES BY HIMSELF.*

***SOFIE:** GIRL, 17 YEARS OLD, DROPPED OUT OF A MECHANICAL STUDIES PROGRAM AT HIGH SCHOOL. LIVES WITH HER FATHER, MOTHER AND SIBLINGS.*

***SANDRA:** GIRL, 16 YEARS OLD, DROPPED OUT OF A SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE STUDIES PROGRAM AT HIGH SCHOOL. LIVES WITH HER MOTHER AND SISTER.*

***PIA**: GIRL, 17 YEARS OLD, SOFIE'S FRIEND. FEATURES IN SOFIE'S FILM.*

INSTITUTIONAL COLLABORATORS:

***ÅSE:** WOMAN IN HER 50S, EMPLOYED AT THE FOLLOW-UP SERVICE. RECRUITED MOST PARTICIPANTS.*

***TORSTEINN:** MAN IN HIS 50S, EMPLOYED AT THE FOLLOW-UP SERVICE.*

***PER:** MAN IN HIS 50S, HEAD OF MARKETING AT THE NAV.*

***ANNE-LISE**: WOMAN IN HER 40S, EMPLOYEE AT THE NAV.*

COURSE LEADERS:

***RENI:** WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30S, MA IN ANTHROPOLOGY, PHOTOGRAPHER.*

***RAGNHILD**: WOMAN IN HER LATE 20S, PSYCHOLOGY PHD STUDENT.*

***SIREN:** WOMAN IN HER EARLY 30S, ANTHROPOLOGY PHD STUDENT, AUTHOR OF THIS THESIS.*

Box 3

jeans, a rivet belt and a black hooded sweater with an image of a grunge/metal artist who I later learned was the lead singer of a Finnish "love metal" band called HIM. Sandra was shorter and also dressed in black. She wore a black headband adorned with white sculls, which functioned to hold back her straight, short yellow-orange dyed hair.

In conjunction with presenting the film course and research project, I made sure to carefully present the film task, which consisted of the youths both presenting issues and experiences bound to their everyday lives as well as presenting on their

future prospects. Reni elaborated on how their treatment of future prospects could be bound to concrete plans or, more loosely, their dreams and fantasies. She explained that the youths could apply different techniques to their films, such as enacting a future scenario or simply filming themselves talking about their thoughts about the future. There were no outspoken reactions to the task. When we asked for the participants' thoughts, all three expressed that they were interested in joining the course; they showed no hesitation and asked no questions, but they also seemed lacking in excitement.

In the subsequent round of presentations, Sofie told us that she was 17 years old and that she lived at home with her parents and siblings in Kvaløya, the neighboring island. Without our asking, she mentioned that she had dropped out of the mechanical studies program at Breivika High School after the first year. "Mechanics was fine," she said, "but I became uncertain about what I wanted to do afterwards, so I quit." She further told us that her parents had signed her up for a non-degree granting college (*folkehøyskole*) that would begin in the coming autumn. When I asked, she said she could not recall the type of school or specialization her parents had signed her up for. However, she added that her parents had forbid her from staying at home for another year. She appeared fairly disengaged and indifferent when talking about the situation.

John was 20 years old. He told the group that he had gone to the maritime high school for one year before dropping out for personal reasons. He commented that, at the time, he had stopped caring about most things and had gone from having good grades to failing in most subjects. It was only thanks to an understanding teacher that he had managed to complete that first year. Afterwards he had gone on to a non-degree granting college for one year, where he had specialized in music and drama. Following this, he had not done much, and two and a half years passed. John mentioned that he was currently living alone in a flat in Kvaløya. He also mentioned his "deranged" sleeping rhythm and told us that, on some nights, he could sleep for only two hours, while on other nights, he could sleep for fourteen. He expressed that he found it hard to "get with it."

Sandra was more brief in her presentation. She was 16 and lived at home. She had previously studied health and social care but had dropped out during the first year. She said she had disliked the fact that there were only girls in her class. For the coming autumn, she had applied for a media and communication program at a high school near Finnsnes – a two hours' drive south of Tromsø.

Kamikaze filmmaking

At our second meeting, we engaged the participants in "kamikaze filmmaking," which required them to get straight into filming and editing after having only received very basic instructions on how to operate the camera and editing tools. The same assignment had been given to Michal, Lasse and Birk's group (Chapter 7) during our weekend trip at Bardufoss. In that group, the assignment had worked well in regards to enabling the youths to gain familiarity with the type of work involved in filmmaking. Also, by cooperating on the film task, the participants had quickly become more familiar with one another.

In the present film course, since there were only three participants and none was acquainted with either of the others, we imagined that a similar exercise could be useful to start out with, as it would contribute to them getting to know each other outside our presence. We hoped that this would help them feel more at ease with each other as the course continued. Additionally, we thought that it would enable them to get used to the camera, in terms of both filming and being filmed. Reni gave the youths a short show and tell lesson on camera management, perspective and basic dramaturgical grips.

The youths were given the task to, as a group, make a short film depicting either a good day or a bad day. When sitting down to brainstorm ideas for their film, they simply looked at each other and then us; none proposed a single idea for a scene that could be filmed. After a period of awkward silence, John exclaimed that he needed a cigarette and the three youths went down to stand just outside the entrance of the Youth Support team building, taking the camera bag with them.

I checked on them ten minutes later to see how they were doing. John said that they still did not have a single idea to work upon. He added, "Well, it doesn't really matter, because it will turn out crap anyways." I tried to stimulate ideas by

having them think about what they associated with a good day and a bad day: What could happen on a typically good day, or a typically bad day? Sandra carefully proposed that they could enact one of them being caught shoplifting. I said, "Well that's a good start." The other two said nothing. Then John looked at Sandra and said, "Then we can film you." Sandra said "No." They stood silent again.

I proposed that they try Sandra's idea and see if they could think of other scenes to film afterwards. I reminded them that the idea with this task was only to gain some experience with filming and editing. They would learn by trying out different strategies for filming, and they could shift between being in front of and behind the camera. John laughingly responded that I was the only one in the group who was enthusiastic. He came up with a new idea: "Let's go to Ivar's Musikk [a music instrument vendor] and I can try out some of the guitars, 'cause I feel like doing that." The girls revealed no signs of excitement. The three of them wandered off to Ivar's Musikk with the camera bag dangling from Sofie's shoulder.

When the youths returned, they all mentioned how poor their recordings were. The girls had asked the owner of the shop whether they could film him, but he had rejected the idea. Instead, they had selected to film John while he played a guitar, supposedly without his awareness. What they brought back was one continuous shot of John sitting on a chair, playing a guitar, for about two minutes. When we watched the take together, John commented on how poor his playing was and how he had a friend who had played for only one year who was much more talented, even though John had played for five years. When we listened to the second song John played, John commented that that song, in particular, was very technically difficult to play. Sandra, who had filmed, had zoomed in on John's face then tilted down to his fingers on the guitar; at the end of the clip, she panned the guitars hanging on the shop wall. After watching the recording, Reni mentioned that, although they had not really responded to the task, they had brought in enough material to try out the editing program.

Before we moved on to editing, we ate pizza. John did most of the talking, revealing himself as rather opinionated. The topics of conversation spun around music and tattoos. John showed us his tattoo of the grim reaper on his left arm. "I

like them plain," he said, "not those multi-colored ones." Indeed, the only color on John's tattoo was that of the red blood dripping from the blade of the reaper's scythe. He talked about how he had originally planned to get an inverted cross, but his brother had talked him out of it, making the point that one should be careful about symbols of that kind, since such symbols may not remain essential to a person throughout life. When Sofie asked whether getting a tattoo was painful, John snorted and said "No." He mentioned that he had witnessed people crying and complaining that they were about to pass out while getting a tattoo, "but that's pure bullshit!" When moving on to talk about music, John similarly ridiculed people who were fond of pop music, claiming that they knew nothing about music and how artists who made that sort of music were not really talented, since the music was technically so simple to play.

As a means for each of the participants to gain hands-on experience with the editing tool, we required them to edit each their little film on the basis of the filmed footage. When we began the editing, Sofie mentioned that she did not work very well when she did not have a concrete problem to solve. I sat down with her when she imported the recording into the editing program, and she proved to have difficulty making decisions with respect to the footage. It probably did not help that the material at hand included a two-minute recording of John playing the guitar, which rather limited the editing possibilities. Furthermore, when I helped her get started by suggesting how she could play around with the material, Sofie was uncertain and hesitant about making what I considered simple decisions bound to, for example, whether to apply a filter or special effects and how to title the short film. She expressed, "I know nothing about this" and "I have no idea what is best." She sat staring into the computer screen, abstaining from doing anything to the material. I tried to remind her of some of the things that Reni had shown the group in her fast run through of the editing software (iMovie). I proposed that she try out some of the special effects or work, in particular, on cutting and making smooth transitions. What was from our side meant to be a simple exercise of trying and failing and experimenting was, to Sofie, very difficult to achieve. Sandra and John sat

next to her – though at some distance – with their headphones on, dedicated to the task, working independently.

In terms of the group dynamics, the three of them found it difficult to act jointly to solve the kamikaze film task. No one took the lead and they did not recognize each other's rare suggestions. Thus, they did not manage to reach an agreement about a common way of defining the situation. They strived to find suitable ways to act in this rather open-ended task, in a setting in which they had not yet come to distinguish and agree upon a set of rules of relevance. They appeared less than enthusiastic about the task, which offered them the opportunity to experiment and play around with the camera. John's expression that it would come out as "crap," regardless of their efforts, indicated a lack of belief in their own capability to produce anything interesting. Instead of contributing to social cohesion in the group, the task appeared to set the participants further apart, leaving them uncertain about how to interact. I feared that this contributed negatively to their motivation to attend the course and engage in the filmmaking task.

Objectifying oneself on camera – A first attempt

In a subsequent meeting, Sofie looked tired as she slunk down in her chair. She had arrived a little before the others and told me that she had had a sleepless night because of the exercise we had assigned: a short self-portrait. "After the meeting Wednesday I spent all afternoon wondering what I should film. Thursday I kept on thinking, and the thoughts kept me awake all night. But I couldn't think of anything to film," Sofie said. She appeared dispirited, with a serious expression on her face and a slack posture. I told her not to worry and suggested that we spend some time discussing it to determine something she could film for the next meeting.

Once the others arrived, we started by watching John's recording. He had solved the exercise by filming from his flat.

> A turtle swims around in an aquarium. The camera follows its movements. A finger is pointed at the glass and the turtle starts biting the finger. In a next take, we see a medium shot of John. He presents himself: "Hi, my name is John. Here is my living room." The camera turns around and makes a pan of the living room: beginning with the aquarium, the camera swipes to a sofa section with a desktop computer placed on the coffee table and, from there,

> to a kitchenette. The camera returns to John. “I’m 20. I have lived by myself for four years now.” The camera turns towards the sofa. “This is where I spend most of the time. I guess you can tell by the sitting marks in the sofa.” In the next take we see a bedroom, and John comments on how tiny and messy it is. All of the takes are accompanied by heavy metal music coming from the stereo. In the last take John is seated on a kitchen chair with his electric guitar. He plays a piece of metal music on his guitar.

Sandra had solved the task by filming her rat and two kittens:

> A white and black rat is inside a cage. It eats and then runs on a wheel. Sandra’s voice is heard from behind the camera: “This is Billy, he’s a little more than 2 years old. He’s been with me through good times and bad times.” The next take is of two kittens. “These are Patches and Smokey.” The camera follows Smokey, who climbs on top of Billy’s cage. “Smokey really cares about Billy.”

The participants did not provide each other with much feedback. Only Sofie mumbled “It was good” when we asked whether she had any comments on John’s screening, and “Nice” after Sara’s screening. Reni and I provided comments on both the content and techniques used in the films, with the aim of encouraging the youths in their further work. We praised John for his stable use of the handheld camera and for his clever way of presenting himself and his flat. Sandra received good feedback for her choice in perspective and angle and her nice portrayal of her pets.

Whilst Reni and Ragnhild introduced brainstorming activities for their film projects with John and Sara, I sat down to brainstorm with Sofie. Sofie expressed that she found it awkward to film herself. As we talked, we came up with several options for how she could solve the self-portrait task without having to perform alone in front of the camera: She could film a friend who could say a few words about her, or film herself together with a friend and show what they normally did when they were together. She could also film her younger sister saying a few words about her, or film their wrangling. Alternatively, she could film the posters on the walls of her room or film some leisure activity that she enjoyed. Sofie liked the idea of filming with a friend and she expressed that she found it easier to collaborate with someone rather than to work alone. “It is so difficult to come up with ideas alone,” she said.

At the next meeting, Sofie brought in the recording she had made of a conversation with her friend, Pia. The camera had been mounted on a tripod with the camera angled slightly downwards:

> We see a bed situated by a window. The bed is unmade and the black curtains are closed. A ceiling light illuminates the room. On the walls are several posters of rock and metal bands. Sofie and Pia enter the frame from beside the camera. They are full of laughter. Pia gestures the count of three with her arms, and they laugh again. Sofie curls up on the lower end of the bed and Pia sits at the pillow end of the bed. The girls get into talking about different TV shows that they tend to watch. As they talk, Pia looks into a small mirror and puts on her makeup. Sofie directs her attention towards Pia. They further talk about a new conditioner that Pia is trying out, a couple of films that Sofie has seen recently and a guy from Pia's work. Pia shifts between looking into the mirror and looking up at Sofie. After some time, they get into talking about their plans for the coming autumn. The conversation goes:
>
> P: They've started nagging about school, particularly my dad. He asks: "Will you apply for Bardufoss, and how about other places?" I'm just thinking, can I be bothered?
> S: First I was thinking… they told me that they had looked into school options and here are the ones you should have a look at. It took me ages before I looked. Then I didn't think it was such a bad idea, but now… after I saw the… [there's a pause; Sofie turns to look into the camera and gives it the finger] Ah, I can't… [Sofie turns around to bury her face in the duvet, they both laugh…]
> P: We would have to live in tiny rooms.
> S: Yes.
> P: And we would have to share bathrooms with others.
> S: Where did I put my Chapstick? [Sofie gets up and fetches it from outside the camera frame; she smears it on her lips]
> P: If I told my mother I don't want to go, she would…
> S: She would be mad, just like my mum. My parents get angry if I don't answer them. They get insulted, that's what they say.
> P: Let's say I'm accepted, not that I think I will be, but… if that happens, and I tell my parents I don't want to go, they'll go [speaking in a high-pitched voice]: "Oh, but you said you wanted to go." Then I guess I have to go.
> S: What is stupid about the school I've applied to is that it costs so much money. If I don't want to go, then… I don't want to…
> P: What to do?
> S: [With a louder voice] I want to study mechanics!
> P: Have you applied for that then?
> S: Well, that's a little late now. I can't do another two years… Now, if I apply to go to mechanics again, my mum will be mad. She'll say this year has been a waste.

P: I get so easily fed up with things.
S: Yes, but I think if there was just the two of us in a class, I wouldn't be fed up.
P: That would have been sweet.
S: Yes, it would be easier.
P: Both of us just as dumb.
S: True. Would have been perfect...
[Silence for some seconds]
P: Do you want to play Super Mario?
S: Yes [Sofie gets up to turn off the camera]

The youths' first individual film exercises confirmed that they were not indifferent to the film course and the filmmaking task. John and Sandra's efforts and Sofie's expressed will to complete the task, indicated that they took the task seriously and wanted to find good solutions for it. At the same time, they found it challenging to film themselves. They took on different strategies to face this challenge. John carefully planned and directed his takes, Sandra directed the camera towards her pets rather than herself and Sofie filmed herself in an everyday situation in the company of her best friend, talking about everyday issues. Particularly through Sofie's recording, I came to glimpse what appeared to be the key issue for Sofie, and which could possibly have contributed to her expressions of indecisiveness, uncertainty and (what could be read as) listlessness. From her conversation with Pia, I came to learn that Sofie was in a situation in which she had certain ideas and dreams for herself that contradicted the directions her parents wanted her to pursue. She appeared to be grappling with discovering what she wanted for herself and the paths she could take whilst facing her parents' requests for what she ought to do and be.

9.3 Social dynamics and filmmaking

The participants in this course comprised a small group, and they were rather reserved towards one another. Furthermore, the fact that there were just as many adults (i.e. course leaders) as participants affected the social dynamics that developed. The youths tended to direct their gaze and attention towards us course leaders more than their fellow participants. Although the youths still participated in group activities, they did not contribute evenly in discussions.

Sensing that the girls would withdraw during group discussions, Ragnhild, Reni and I decided to shift between working with the participants as a group and working with them individually. We tended to screen their filmed material in group, but carried out brainstorming activities and film planning discussions separately. Accordingly, the youths' film projects were clearly informed by some of our individual discussions with them.

In the following, I enter the filmmaking processes of Sofie and John. Sandra faced a period of illness during the film course, and therefore could not complete her film project. She attended a subsequent film course that we held with the NAV and the Follow-Up Service later that same spring, during which she completed her film about what it was like to grow up with a sister with special needs. The cases of Sofie and John illustrate – in different ways – the significance of the perspectives of particular others (e.g. parents and welfare officers) on their presentations and conceptualizations of self. In Sofie's case, the filmmaking process enabled her to explore what she wanted for herself, as compared to her parents' wishes. In John's case, it allowed him to confront the image that he felt welfare officers and generalized others reflected back to him. Towards the end of this section, I illustrate the ways in which Sofie and John's films and filmmaking processes shared traits in common with the films and filmmaking processes in a subsequent course held in collaboration with the NAV and the Follow-Up Service. This analysis suggests some traits bound to the types of film stories generated in the Youth Gaze courses in this particular institutional setting.

9.4 Sofie takes control

After the film screenings of the self-portrait exercise, Ragnhild and I sat down with Sofie to brainstorm topics. Sofie expressed her wish to continue filming with Pia. I jotted down her suggestions for what she might film: watching TV; playing Wii; buying candy; dealing with irritating neighbors, siblings and parents; and talking

about not having much money to spend and what she and Pia would do in the following autumn.[87]

We talked about how these activities and topics could be depicted and elaborated in scenes for her film. I picked up on the theme of "what to do next autumn" in an attempt to steer the conversation towards her future prospects. Sofie described how she and Pia could spend an entire evening talking about their nagging parents and what they wanted for themselves. Ragnhild asked questions designed to dig deeper into the discrepancy between Sofie's own ideas of her future and the paths her parents envisioned for her. Sofie replied by giving an account of what her mother wanted for her. Her mother was an enrolled nurse, but she did not want this career for Sofie; maybe Sofie could become a doctor, a dermatologist or an architect, instead?

Furthermore, Sofie described how much her mother disliked her studying mechanics, which she called a "boys' line of education." According to Sofie, her mother disliked it because she disliked everything that moved beyond what she considered "normal." Sofie said that it had been largely due to her mother's constant expressions of discontent that she had decided to drop out of her mechanical studies program. Ragnhild asked Sofie why she thought that her mother had so many suggestions for what she should do: Was it because she was tired of Sofie hanging at home? Wanted her to grow up? Wanted what was best for her? "All of those, I guess," Sofie replied. I asked her if she found it difficult to make a change. "It's all about being bothered," she answered. She argued that she did not want to take a temporary position in a grocery shop or as a chambermaid, as her mother had suggested she do over the summer. "What do you want, then?" Ragnhild asked. "The dream is to become a motorcycle mechanic," she answered. Sofie described that the mechanical training program she had attended the previous year had been mostly directed towards mechanical work on cars, and all of the apprenticeships had been at garages that mostly worked on cars. She continued: "There are many things I would consider doing, but they are so far away. I do not want to go to school for

[87] Her choice of treating the issues of being hard up on money and autumn plans may be connected to the fact that, during our discussion of the screening of her first recording with Pia, we had paid much attention to these issues.

years. I'm so tired of getting up early, I'm so tired of school." She gave an account of how the boys at the mechanical training program had been very skilled, and she had felt stupid not being on the same level. "What do you think it would take, then, to get you started again?" Ragnhild asked. "Money?" Sofie answered. "If I could receive some financial support, I would complete school," Sofie said. "But if you finish school, you´ll be qualified for work and you can start earning your own money," Ragnhild responded. "Yeah, I guess, but that's so far away."

We moved on to discuss how she could treat her visions of the future in her film. We talked about the possibilities of enactment via acting out her dream scenario of finding work as a motorcycle mechanic. We also discussed an alternative approach of illustrating the conflicting visions held by her and her mother. As she was uncertain about how to complete this part of the assignment, we agreed that she could start with filming everyday scenarios together with Pia.

However, realizing the planned filming proved challenging for Sofie. As Pia was frequently out of town during the filming period, we had to find ideas for scenes that could be filmed without her. Ragnhild, Sofie and I initiated a new round of brainstorming for her film. At some point in the conversation, I asked whether it might be an idea to include a conversation with her mom or dad in the film, in which they could discuss their contrasting ideas for her future. "Don't know," Sofie answered briefly. As I elaborated on this, offering suggestions as to how such a conversation could be filmed and underlining that she would be the director and that this could represent a good opportunity for her to discuss these issues with her parents, Sofie started to cry. She explained that she did not talk much with her parents. In particular, she could not stand talking to them about serious issues; whenever she tried to do so with her mother, she felt that her mother turned things around on her. "If I say I want to work within mechanics, she replies that it's nonsense, that I´m just going through a phase," Sofie said. "What do you think, then, is it just a phase?" Ragnhild asked. "I don't know," Sofie said, "I don't think so."

Sofie further talked about her family: how her dad was on anti-depressants and had problems with anger management; how she was afraid that she had inherited a similar problem; how she avoided her mother because conflict arose

when they talked; how her mother was fanatic about cleaning the house each afternoon; and how her parents nagged her brother about playing computer games all day and her sister for eating too much. It seemed that conflicts at home rendered it difficult for Sofie to act and decide what was best. In addition to this, Sofie had her own doubts about her skills and qualities. After this talk, we abandoned the idea of her filming an interview with her mom and instead tried to think of ideas that Sofie could film by herself. Amongst other things, we planned a visit to the Harley-Davidson garage – a garage in which mechanics maintained and repaired motorbikes.[88]

In this situation, particularly Ragnhild (but also I) played an active part in steering the conversation towards topics that Sofie found challenging, and discussing what Sofie considered impediments to her changing her situation. In this way, we took the task that had been appointed to us by the welfare officers at NAV and the Follow-Up Service seriously, in regards to engaging the youths in reflection surrounding their futures. The situation resembled a talk therapy session, and it appeared to me that Ragnhild was more confident than I was in taking on the role of the therapist. We were clearly interfering in a difficult topic for Sofie that she, herself, had not brought up. Sensing her emotional reaction, I felt unease due to my lack of professional expertise and experience with entering such conversations with people I did not know very well. Nonetheless, Sofie did not reject us, and when the conversation was over, she appeared relieved (if a bit red-eyed). After this event, I came to understand that the mandate we had been given by NAV and the Follow-Up Service (i.e. encouraging the youths to reflect on their future prospects) carried a cost for not only the youths, but also for us, the facilitators.

A couple of days later, I accompanied Sofie to the Harley-Davidson garage. Sofie had prepared questions in advance that she wanted to pose to the garage manager, mainly concerning their apprenticeship program, the qualities they looked for in employees and their daily working routines. At the garage, I experienced a new

[88] I knew about this garage due to having supervised Master's students in Visual Anthropology. Some of the students had carried out a film project at the garage. At that time, I had called the garage manager to present the study and task and to ask whether he would receive some of our Master's students. I called again to see if he would meet with Sofie.

side of Sofie. She asked questions both on and off camera and followed up the answers by nodding, smiling and offering confirming remarks such as “I see” and “I understand”. She appeared more enthusiastic than I had ever seen her and I noticed that, on several occasions, she took the initiative to chat with the garage manager and the mechanics. It turned out that some of the mechanics at the garage had no more education than she did. They told her that “anything goes,” as long as the motivation was there. Even her taking a year off from school was met with understanding: “It can be helpful to take some time to reflect around what you want in life,” the garage manager said. As we left, they invited her to come back later in the spring when there would be more bikes in for repair. Driving home, she was excited and determined to return.

Sofie’s film came to consist of three parts: scenes from her everyday life, enactments of future scenarios and an interview scene from the Harley-Davidson garage. She titled her film, *My Future, My Choice*, and she settled on this title during a brainstorming activity with me and Ragnhild. The first part of her film comprised scenes that she had filmed together with Pia: the two of them buying candy at a nearby grocery store, sitting in Pia’s room talking about their nagging parents and future prospects, and watching TV (specifically a “docu-drama” series called *American Chopper*, in which the action takes place at a motorcycle garage). In the second part of her film, Sofie integrated text saying: “Sofie has a dream of becoming a motorcycle mechanic,” followed by the phrase, “Mum has other plans.” These text posters were followed by a slide show of manipulated photos with Sofie´s face, featuring Sofie as a nurse, a textile worker and an architect. Then there was a new text poster: “Sofie takes the case into her own hands.” Following this, the third part of her film comprised scenes from the Harley-Davidson garage, including segments from her interview with the garage manager. In particular, she included questions about whether they took apprentices, what the requirements were and whether any girls worked there. The final scene showed the two of them chatting casually. Sofie mentioned how she regretted that she had not completed the two years required for the apprenticeship and the garage manager responded that taking a year off to think

things through could be good, and that it is never too late to follow your dreams. These were the final words in Sofie's film.

9.5 John sets things straight

Reni took John through a brainstorming exercise to identify a topic for his film. In their conversation, John forwarded his two main interests: music and gaming. They devoted most of the exercise to gaming. John mentioned the game he used to play – Anarchy Online[89] – and described that gaming had put him in touch with a lot of people, many of whom he talked to on a daily basis through the game's chat platform and some of whom he had also met in "real life." Many of his friends were also into playing Anarchy Online, and some of the people he considered amongst his closest friends he had first met in the game world. John spoke about how he found it important to have a position in the game world that others admired. He had obtained a high position in his group (guild) and he would sometimes lead his group into battle. Many players would contact him to ask for advice or pose general questions. He was constantly working on improving his game character. Given his strong interest, John expressed the desire to make a film about his gaming. He particularly wanted to reveal why he found playing Anarchy Online so interesting.

Reni asked him how he wanted to approach his future prospects in his film. John was uncertain about this. He had no desire to reduce or to stop his playing. He mentioned that music and gaming were the two most valuable things in his life at that time and he wished to continue engaging with them. He found it very difficult to depict his prospects since his envisioned everyday life in the future looked very similar to its current manifestation. He made a point of claiming that he could stop playing whenever he wanted to. He noted that there had been periods in which he had not played as much – for instance when he had had a girlfriend. But at the present moment he saw no reason to play less, as playing made him happy. "Don't all people like to do what makes them happy?" he asked.

[89] Anarchy Online is a Norwegian produced multi-player online role playing game. The game takes place in a science fiction world and a desert planet called Rubi-Ka. Players assume the role of new colonists to the planet. The ambition is not to win the game, but to gradually build up and improve one's character´s resources and skills (http://archive.anarchy-online.com/wsp/anarchy/frontend.cgi?func=frontend.show&template=main).

When talking to John in the next meeting I came to understand that he had isolated himself (at least physically) over the previous years in his apartment playing computer games. When I asked him how much time he spent playing, he said that he played from the time he got up to the time he went to bed. He told me that his childhood friend, Olav, had introduced him to the game and helped him get started with his character some years ago. Since then, both of the boys had obtained prestigious positions in the game world: Olav was the president of a group of 30 to 40 people and John was the vice-president. Each of the players in the group had up to 16 active characters, so leading the group meant organizing 500 to 600 characters. John, himself, had 16 characters, of which two had reached the highest possible level. He said that he had invested more than 300 "play days" (with each play day comprised of 24 hours) in his favorite two characters. In his other characters, he had invested less time; still, in total, he had accumulated a significant number of play days across all of his characters.

When speaking about his gaming, John applied a technical language that was difficult to understand in common speech. This involved an English vocabulary that had been Norwegianized, including words such as *et guild* (a guild or a team), *å kite* ("to kite" = to fight a character from a distance, constantly moving closer, preventing the target from moving in and fighting) and *å grinde* ("to grind" = to attack over time). He would say sentences such as "Jeg er kjent for å twinke på sinnsyke items på lav level" (I am well known for my twinking in which I obtain incredible items at a low level). Often, we would interrupt him to ask him to explain these words and statements. He mentioned that he found it nearly impossible to explain what the game was about in a brief documentary. I suggested that, rather than getting into the details of the game, he should try to reveal what it was about the game that he found particularly intriguing.

Reni made several attempts to drag the conversation to the topic of future prospects. At one occasion, she asked him whether this was all he wanted for his life, and I saw him get slightly worked up. "I have a pile of turned down job applications at home," he said. "I have not completed school. It is not up to me," he said. He had considered ICT as a future educational path, "but I would have to go back to school,

and I am so tired of school, and I can't really concentrate, unless it's something that I am really interested in, like twinking and building up my character," he said. Reni pointed to some of the interests and skills he had obtained through gaming and music, suggesting that these could be relevant for distinguishing a career path, and maybe even for finding a job. "Ha," John replied, "you won't make me believe that I could take these skills and qualities and apply them out there, as if life is a game." "Don´t you have something you are interested in learning more about, or working with?" Reni asked. "I have no great interests," John replied. "But when you don't go out, how can you know that there's nothing of your interest out there?" Reni asked. "I guess you have a point," John replied.

John continued by pointing to the fact that many of the people he had met had seemed to categorize him as a game addict before even properly talking to him. He felt that they distinguished his behavior as asocial, but on shaky grounds. He wondered whether they would still consider him asocial if they knew that he was in touch with more than 100 people each day through his gaming. He felt that he was not given a proper chance because of what he did and how he looked. He continued by describing his impressions of the NAV welfare agents and job recruitment agents, who seemed to want him to be a different person. "I won't change the way I look and the way I think for a job," he said. Reni asked whether he felt treated unfairly, and whether he was angry. "How can I avoid being angry, when I am getting nowhere in life by being nice, honest and sincere?" John thought that, in order to "make things happen," one had to lie, adapt and ingratiate oneself. From his perspective, benefits were received at the cost of other people not receiving them. "I don't want to be part of this system," he replied with an agitated voice.

From this conversation, I distinguished a change in John's reasoning around his playing. Prior to this conversation, he had treated gaming as something he liked to do and found meaningful. He had treated gaming as a deliberate choice guided by preference, and he had defended this choice in light of the prejudice he claimed to have faced. However, in this conversation, he moved to talk about gaming as the only option in a society that had nothing to offer him. As the conversation continued, he brought in several examples of situations in which he had been let down. He

referred to a meeting he had taken with Adecco (an employment agency), in which a consultant had asked him to "get lost" because John could not think of a person to list as a reference. He also referred to his previous dream of becoming a chef, like his brother; in pursuing this dream, he had been hired at a restaurant as an assistant, but ended up being exploited by his employer. He also talked about how he had escaped from a drug and criminal milieu in his early teens by moving to another village to attend a non-degree college, only to end up being expelled on what he considered invalid grounds. These stories indicated John's feelings of having been let down and opposed by persons he had met.

This sense of being let down and excluded was also dominant in John's accounts of his childhood experiences and family relations. In the middle of the course, John called in twice to announce his absence – once due to lacking money for the bus and another time due to sleeping problems. When he arrived early to a subsequent meeting, I asked him about what it was like to live alone in his flat. He answered that he had become used to it, but that it had been hard to begin with, when he was only 16. He had moved out to spare his mother, as he was frequently butting heads with his stepfather. His mother had been ill with cancer, and he thought it would be better if she did not have to cope with the constant conflict. That period had been hard, because John was worried sick about his mum; also, he was only 16 and found it hard to get by alone. He had received a stipend and could fare okay for himself, but he wasted his money because he did not know any better. Since then, he had learned to live on a shoestring budget, he said. He described how he was used to eating crispbread with brown cheese for every meal, and drinking a lot of coffee. "Fast and cheap," he commented. At one point, he had tried to live with his dad, but that had not worked out. His father was straight and tidy, and had expected John to be the same way. "We are exact opposites," John said. His father had potato dinners at fixed hours, kept his home neat and clean, believed in Jesus and got up early each morning. "It was doomed to fail," John said with a short laugh. "My father dislikes everything that he considers different, and I am everything that he despises in people."

For his film, John started to bring in fraps (computer recordings) that could be applied to illustrate the Anarchy Online universe and his character. He downloaded information from Web pages he frequented to give to Ragnhild, Reni and me so we could better understand the game. As I watched John's fraps, I asked him what would happen if he did not play for one day. He said that not playing for one day would be okay, as "the world there will wait for me." He asserted that, when logging in next, he would find himself at the exact place that he left, but he would of course have missed out on some battles and events that would have taken place in his absence. "Sometimes I select to stay away," he continued. "One time I was beat up so bad, in front of everyone in my guild." The other players commented about this frequently. "I felt so embarrassed that I kept away for a whole week," John said. I asked him what he had done during that week. "I played World of Warcraft instead," he answered. He made it clear to me that this episode had been an exception: "I carry a very good reputation amongst players," he said.

Reni assisted John by filming him while he watched the fraps on the computer and explained the essential features of the game. She shifted between filming the computer screen and filming John explaining. Besides explaining the game, John also spoke about his key character and his position in the game world. He further described how Anarchy Online was a social game, as the players were in constant contact. Towards the end of the recording, he spoke about his potential to quit the game, indicating what this would look like: he would have to quit his subscription, strip down his characters and give away his resources to his friends, and finally delete his characters so he would not be tempted to return to the game.

John gave his film the title *Join the Dark Side, We Have Pie!* and presented this title on screen against the background of the *Star Wars* theme. In a further nod to the iconic film, he made the letters of his title fly into the frame. After the title clip, the film moved to a scene of John playing a self-composed song on guitar, followed by a scene in which he introduced himself and his flat, pointing out the seat marks in the sofa. Following this was a clip of John logging in to Anarchy Online. From there, he screened and commented on his fraps of a "zurg raid." He spoke about the amount of time he spent playing and how this time was invested in

building a character and reputation. He drew a parallel between the game world and the "real world," noting that these worlds functioned in similar ways: if one did things well, one would attract others; otherwise, people would stay away. He ended the film by saying that he would not do this forever. "One day ´real life´ will kick in. I know well that there are things in real life that are way more important than what happens in the game world. But as for now, I don't have much better to do, and I like playing a lot. People tend to want to do the things that make them happy, don't they? And it's a cheap way of living." In the final scene, his character runs through the sci-fi landscape of the game world, once more accompanied by the *Star Wars* theme.

9.6 Envisioned and expected futures

What came to stand out to me in this course was the way in which the youths explicitly revealed, through their films and in our many conversations, the impact that the points of view of distinct others had on their sense of self. Both Sofie and John experienced that others found their lifestyles troublesome and discredited their ability to make good choices for themselves and their lives. John reacted to this with anger and frustration, whereas Sofie reacted with sadness and despair. John sought to argue against what he considered "the system's" (as represented by welfare officers and job consultants) definition of gamers, which reduced them to antisocial addicts. Sofie approached and depicted the discrepancy between her own vision of the future and her parents' plans for her, revealing the difficult position she was put in, uncertain about what to choose for herself and where to go next.

In our conversations and in their films, both Sofie and John pointed to relational conditions (e.g. malfunctioning family relations, turned down job applications, experiences of being stigmatized by teachers and public servants, etc.) to explain how they had ended up outside of school and work life. They also mentioned that they were tired of – or had lost interest in – school; however, these were not forwarded as their main reasons for having dropped out. In a subsequent film course that was organized with the NAV and the Follow-Up Service that same spring, the participants similarly brought their attention to relational issues. A

common trait in all the participants' films (across both courses) was their engagement in "answering charges" (providing answers to implicit questions such as "Why are you not in school?" and "Why have you not taken on a job?"), explaining how challenging relations with others had made it difficult for them to stay in school or enter work. For example, in the second course, one girl made a film about her sense of loneliness and experiences of social exclusion amongst peers. A boy made a film about his experiences of social stigma caused by his stuttering. A girl made a film about her having a baby at age 16, and how this had been poorly received by the local community. Sandra managed to complete her film about her experiences of being set aside by the adults in her family and having a sister with special needs. All of these films, in their own way, expressed the strains and pains bound to the participants' experiences of not having received adequate support and understanding from the people in their close surroundings – and how this had rendered it difficult for them to succeed in school and work arenas.

As course leaders, we were bound to the changed requirements for films in this course. Different from the other courses, in this course, we supported the youths through a process in which they were asked to not only account freely from their lives, but also to carefully consider their future ambitions and what it would take for them to achieve them (i.e. a consciousness raising process). The new criteria for the films proved difficult to enforce, as raising questions about the youths' ambitions appeared to put them on the spot. In our repeated attempts to place future prospects firmly on the agenda, we implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) suggested a need for them to change; this was seemingly received by the youths as a criticism of their lives at that time.

In retrospect, I realize how our insistence that the youths treat their future prospects in their films may have contributed to pushing them and their filmmaking to "answer charges" – to defend their life situations and explain why finding a new path was not easy. However, while our insistence may have created strains, it also provided insight into what the youths considered limitations to fulfilling their life goals. Additionally, it provided information on how they evaluated a good life, what

was at stake for them and what lay behind the expressions that consultants at the NAV and the Follow-Up Service read as a lack of motivation and direction.

The more outspoken interventionist approach that we took in this course stood somewhat in contrast to the predominantly youth-oriented approach we took in the other courses, whereby we allowed the youths to steer the process as much as they could and offered support only when it was requested. In this course, we more aggressively suggested issues for the youths to discuss and were more direct – and at times provocative – with our questions. While this sometimes seemed to contribute to the youths feeling put on the spot, I believe that it simultaneously enabled them to experience what it was like to be taken seriously as persons of interest. I saw a development in the youths – particularly Sofie, who at first kept us at a distance and eventually participated more, engaging and contributing to our conversations and revealing excitement when filming at the Harley-Davidson garage. For both Sofie and John, the film course provided them with an opportunity to carefully think things through and to discuss their thoughts, opinions and dreams. For Sofie, in particular, the course enabled her to explore what it might look like to pursue her future dream of becoming a mechanic. Accompanying Sofie to the garage brought me (as a researcher) out of the film course situation and into a different social situation in which I could observe the ways in which Sofie acted, interacted and presented herself. This contributed to me gaining a better understanding of how she conceived of her situation and the things that were important to her. In retrospect, I realize that arranging such situations more frequently and accompanying youths into social arenas they considered relevant might have allowed me to extract additional valuable insight into the youths' practices and ways of experiencing their worlds.

The ceremonial language applied in this course was connected to the film task and the roles and relations it brought about. The course leaders were given a clear mandate from the institutional collaborators to take the youths through a consciousness raising process, and this affected the types of behaviors and qualities that were honored in the setting. The youths' acts of deference included their willingness to share from their lives and enter a process of discussion and reflection around their future prospects. The course leaders' acts of deference included our

interest in what the youths would share and our honoring them for their attempts at treating their future prospects reflexively and on film. The ceremonial language that developed in this course was therefore aligned with the behaviors and qualities that were valued within the settings of our institutional collaborators. Both participants succeeded in standing out positively to both the course leaders and the welfare officers, through their demonstration of their will to (consider) change in their films. Sofie demonstrated (with some support from the course leaders) her capacity to take control of her life by pursuing her dream of becoming a mechanic (implying a return to her study of mechanics). John demonstrated his change by communicating his intention to one day break with his extensive gaming, after having first shown no sign of wanting to change his lifestyle.

However, through the premiere event, I came to learn that, to our institutional collaborators, *speaking* about change was not as honored as *acting* towards change.

9.7 The premiere screening

We arranged the premiere screening at a small cinema on the university campus. Reni, Ragnhild and I erected a table just outside the cinema, and on it we arranged tall glasses, soft drinks and pretzels. We were ready to receive the fresh filmmakers, their invitees, some of our colleagues from the university and Åse from the Follow-Up Service.[90] Sofie had invited Pia, and they arrived together. Sofie appeared a little nervous, and she and Pia talked and giggled a lot. Sandra came to see the other participants' films, even though she had not been able to complete her own. John brought a friend, whom he introduced as one of his gaming friends.

The cinema hall was small with only 30 seats. Sofie and Pia sat in the inner corner of the back row. Sandra sat alone a couple rows in front of them. John and his friend sat in the middle. Our colleagues also sat in a cluster towards the middle, and Trond (the Youth Gaze project leader) and Åse from the Follow-Up Service placed themselves all the way in the front.

[90] The participants had agreed to invite some colleagues and the institutional collaborators. Only Åse from the Follow-Up Service made it to the premiere, but the other collaborators watched the films later on in a meeting we set up to plan our next course.

Reni and I welcomed everyone and introduced John´s film first. After the screening, we gave a short speech to highlight his strengths in filmmaking and storytelling. John then came forward to receive a copy of his film, a diploma and a rose. The floor was then opened for discussion, and some of our colleagues pointed out what they considered interesting, insightful and technically good regarding his film. There were also one or two questions related to Anarchy Online. John appeared proud of the positive remarks he received. Next, we introduced and screened Sofie's film. During the screening, I occasionally heard giggles coming from the back row. When Sofie stepped forward to receive our grace, her film, a diploma and a rose, she smiled shyly. Sofie also received positive feedback from our colleagues.

As we were about to close the premiere event, Åse stood up and asked if she could say a couple words. She introduced herself as a representative from the Follow-Up Service. First, she thanked Reni, Ragnhild and me for our strong collaboration and good work with the youths. She expressed that she had enjoyed watching the films very much. Furthermore, she announced that these youths were in regular contact with the Follow-Up Service, and that she hoped that what she had seen in the films would take effect. She particularly addressed Sofie and said that she could help her apply to a mechanics program, if that was what she wanted. She commented that all youths have a right to a place in high school. She then sat back down and Reni and I thanked everyone for coming.

9.8 The significance of success criteria within social fields

I experienced Åse's speech as a mood shifter in this situation. At all of the premieres we had organized in the Youth Gaze project, we found it relevant to emphasize and celebrate the participants' achievements. In our speech at this event, Reni and I addressed Sofie and John as fresh filmmakers. In this same situation, it seemed to me that Åse addressed them as clients. I understood this as Reni and I emphasizing the participants' fresh achievements in one area (filmmaking) and Åse emphasizing their underachievements in another area (school, work).

Once I had achieved some analytical distance, I came to think of our speeches differently. Rather than conceiving of Åse's words as what Goffman would call an

“act of misconduct” in its breaking with the ceremonial rules (i.e. proper behavior) designated for the situation (2005 [1967]), I came to think of both of our expressions as indicative of our standard operation in accordance with the rules of relevance in our respective social fields. It became clear to me that Åse would hardly recognize her behavior as an act of misconduct in this setting; rather, she would most likely consider it the proper conduct of a person of her status.

I would argue that Åse’s entry at the premiere event clearly indicates how she read and evaluated the films she had just seen on the basis of the distinct success criteria of her institutional setting. Her expressed hope to see these youths realize the ambitions they had indicated in their films – going back to school and quitting gaming – may reflect her institution’s understanding of risk and how it can be overcome. To her (as a representative of her institution), it was not the youths’ will, intentions or pronounced capabilities to change that counted, but their actions. Risks were bound to standing outside of school and work; overcoming risks, from this perspective, meant not only *considering* change but also *doing* change by means of entering school or work activity. A similar perspective, with its distinction between at-risk and out-of-risk (or normality) can also be recognized in policy documents (as presented in Chapter 2), and may, as such, be seen to form part of a social field – a system of social interconnection (Grønhaug, 1978) that expands beyond the institutional setting of the Follow-Up Service and interconnects with the State’s definitional frame for being at-risk. This social field comprises all of the institutions that carry a school and/or work mandate in their approach to at-risk youths, and may be understood to allocate adults the role of facilitators in promoting change and youths the role of clients who must undergo change to develop active, responsible, autonomous and self-governing capacities (see Chapter 2, section 2.5).

The roles that Reni, Ragnhild and I were allocated from our collaborators was in line with the dominant role set of this social field. By agreeing to adapt the film course scheme to take youths through a consciousness raising process, we simultaneously assumed the roles that were considered most relevant in this social field. That we took on these roles without further consideration may demonstrate the dominance of this field in terms of the allocation of roles and relationships on a

society level. Its suggested social relationships could be seen to integrate the population in an especially effective manner. Within the health field, the social work field and the school field, alike, youths who drop out of school and go idle are commonly recognized as at-risk, regardless of their reasons for dropping out or being idle. Next to being considered at-risk, these youths are often also recognized as unmotivated and lacking in direction (cf. our collaborators' references to youths in their target group during our initial planning meeting).

The reason why I reacted so strongly to Åse's comments at the premiere event may be connected to this external identification of at-risk youths. In engaging with John, Sofie and Sandra, I encountered these youths' depictions of their situations and the stigma they sometimes felt in their meetings with welfare officers, job agents, teachers and parents. I found it unfair that Åse should recognize these youths only on the grounds of their success in returning to school or entering work. Had she not listened to what they had expressed in their films? Did she not see the great efforts these youths had put into making these films?[91] Since that time, I have come to understand that my strong reaction could also be linked to my adherence to a different social field. As a trained anthropologist carrying out a participatory research project, I had taken on the role allocated by such participatory research methods – that of the researcher who encourages youths' close involvement and contribution to knowledge production. Within this social field, youths are forwarded as resources, rather than clients subject to others' help and assistance. They are framed as individuals who should be understood in their own right. Thus, success criteria in this field are bound to success in engaging the youths in processes by which they actively participate and share their experiences. In our speech, we as course leaders honored the youths on account of their role as contributors and their willingness to share their insights, and we also honored them for their newly acquired skills in filmmaking.

[91] In a meeting with our collaborators some time after the premiere event, I came to understand that Åse had indeed been attentive to what the youths had said in their films. She mentioned that what she had learned from John about gaming had been thought provoking, and she reckoned that her newly gained insight would be invaluable for her further work with youths into gaming. She also mentioned that the insight she had gained from Sofie and John's films would help her as she followed up with them in the future.

Åse's speech made me aware of how our celebratory ending of the filmmaking course was closely bound to the proper dynamics of the participatory research field. Her speech also helped me see how both the social field that guided our collaborators' practices and perspectives as well as the social field that guided us as course leaders contributed to setting the frames in which the youths completed the filmmaking task. Our collaborators required the participants to treat their future prospects in their films, and this required the youths to reflect on what they wanted for themselves and how they could achieve their ambitions. Originally, the Youth Gaze team wanted to simply create a space for these youths to dialogue and reflect on issues they found essential and important. In enforcing the two principles, I sometimes felt dis-ease. Our requests and constant reminders to the youths to treat their future prospects in their films elicited emotional reactions of anger and sadness from the youths. By questioning them about their futures, we turned our conversations with the youths in a direction the youths had not selected; rather, it was our collaborators and ourselves who enforced this path.

However, our persistency in holding on to the principle of future prospects brought about interesting insights into the ways in which the youths considered their social environments and their relationships with significant others. I distinguished a change in the ways in which the youths responded to our requests throughout the process. Initially, they revealed hesitance, expressing that they had no clear future prospects (appearing unmotivated and lacking in direction) and seeing no reason to change their current situation. Subsequently, they responded with frustration and vexation, offering explanations as to why change was difficult to enforce. Largely, these explanations centered on their experiences of being surrounded by people and a system that lent them few chances and little support (previously referred to as their "answering charges"). From expressing hesitation and provocation, however, they gradually became more willing to discuss their future prospects, perhaps due to their settling into the course environment or their gradual increase in trust in us. Ultimately, they – to some extent – complied with the role expectations of the social field of the NAV and the Follow-Up Service. Sofie (with some support from the course leaders) presented herself as a person capable of pursuing her dreams and

making choices for a future career. John went from describing his future as similar to his present to talking about how "real life" would kick in one day and he would stop gaming. I consider this processual development in their approach linked to the dominance of the social field connected to the NAV, the Follow-Up Service and other institutions, which so clearly valued staying in school and entering work. It demonstrated the steering power of this field in terms of allocating roles to individuals and defining concepts of risk/normality on a society level.

John's project started as one aimed at "talking back to the system," whereby he took a stand against his felt stigma from welfare officers and job recruiters. Ultimately, however, his narrative simultaneously demonstrated his capacity to change and step out of his gaming universe – one day. This may reflect the overall difficulty of succeeding with talking back, convincingly, to a social field that sets the roles, opportunities and attributes that are so widely accepted and taken for granted in contemporary Norwegian society. Our adaptation of the Youth Gaze scheme and the roles we took on to encourage the youths' consciousness raising process, without considerable thought given to the power inherent in those changes, may further indicate the social field's strength in setting prerequisites for individual lives in society (and thereby the social construction of at-risk youths).

Richard Chalfen (1987) argues that people – consciously or subconsciously – produce images that follow (or at least relate) to cultural standards for how to lead a good life. In all of the Youth Gaze film courses, the participants – to greater and lesser extents – acted with their cameras and their film projects in ways that complied with the success criteria of the social fields at play in their particular social and institutional settings. In doing so, they were able to stand out as relevant – perhaps even normal – in settings in which they were simultaneously identified as at-risk.

In the concluding chapter, I discuss and draw conclusions around some of the central features of the film types that were generated within each of the film courses. Following this, I reflect on the intersection between youth filmmaking and State policies and discuss what this tells us about the situation and space of action for at-risk youths.

Chapter 10:
Concluding reflections on at-risk youths and their filmic presentations of self

Introduction: Lessons learned from the Youth Gaze project

The Youth Gaze project began as an applied anthropology project, responding to social challenges and policy goals within the Norwegian Welfare state. The project proposed an intervention aimed at contributing a methodical approach (reflexive filmmaking) to the social and health sectors that could assist workers in dialoging with youths in their respective target groups. Additionally, it introduced a means for social and health workers, youths and researchers to engage in reflection on issues that youths find meaningful and important. Such reflection could potentially contribute to improved understandings and new insights for all parties involved. The Youth Gaze initiative came about in a context in which politicians, educators, social and health workers and researchers were investing significant time and resources in finding effective initiatives for – and accumulating knowledge about – youth risks. Such initiatives and knowledge were hoped to prevent at-risk youths from falling out of the social safety net and developing deviant careers.

After two years of developing and testing the Youth Gaze courses in a pilot phase, the project was granted two PhD stipends (of which I received one). The research team then began to conduct systematic research on the processes that were generated within Youth Gaze film courses. Thus far, this thesis has conveyed the story of the project's epistemological and methodological foundations and the central features and outcomes of the participants' filmmaking processes in three distinct film courses held in collaboration with three different institutions. In this concluding chapter, I reflect on the most central lessons learned through the Youth Gaze project.

10.1 Insights and developments in the research process

At the initial phase of the project, I was curious to explore what the youths would decide to communicate about themselves and their lives when given a camera and a film task. I wondered how they would respond to the film course scheme and whether the method would encourage them to share, open up and enter processes we had set up for dialogue and reflection. I came to experience that the participants would indeed take advantage of the camera and the film course to depict concrete life experiences and introduce their points of view on issues they found important. Some participants took great pleasure in experimenting with ways of portraying their everyday endeavors; others were more hesitant and unsure about what and how they should tell their stories; still others got right to it, raising their voices against felt stigma or telling their life stories vividly and passionately through lengthy recorded monologues. For some, the camera represented a discovery tool – a means of observing themselves and their recorded social engagements with others from a distance. For others, the film project gave them a reason to ask people questions they had not previously dared to ask, or to investigate social arenas they were curious about. In the course setting, some felt comfortable screening and discussing their material in the group setting, whereas others felt awkward and preferred to only share their work and reflections with one of the facilitators.

From running the Youth Gaze courses, I gradually came to realize the significance of group dynamics and institutional belonging in the youths' filmmaking. This directed me to select a theoretical framework for analysis that would capture both the youths' agency (i.e. how they managed their films and identities within the frames of the film course) and the structural conditions at the levels of face-to-face interaction and institutional aims and practices.

This approach implied that the youths' stories were not treated as mere reflections of their lives and experiences, but also as social constructs, emerging from the social engagements and social prerequisites the youths faced as they developed their films (cf. Rouch 2003 [1973]; Chalfen, 1987; Chalfen & Rich, 2007; Turner, 1992). Attention was thus paid to the types of identities that were relevant and feasible to take on for the at-risk youths in contact with the social and health

support network. I was particularly concerned with the ways in which the youths would express and present themselves in settings in which they were already recognized as at-risk. This drew my analytical attention to the dialectics between the internal and external identification of at-risk youths.

For my analyses, I selected analytical tools that would identify social dynamics and structures on micro and macro levels that might have influenced the youths' presentations of self. The theoretical concepts and perspectives offered by G. H. Mead on the reflexive self (G. H. Mead, 1962 [1934], 1998 [1913]) and Erving Goffman on face-to-face encounters (Goffman, 1959, 2005 [1967]) assisted me in my careful study of the traits and mechanisms of the evolution of distinct social dynamics and the youths' strategies for presenting themselves within the distinct courses. Similarly, Reidar Grønhaug's (1978) concept of social fields and his attention to the interconnections between activity on a micro level with interaction systems of a much larger scale applied to broaden my gaze to include the proper dynamics of distinct social fields in the analysis of youths' social interactions and identity management on film. Specifically, Grønhaug taught me to be sensitive to the subtle and implicit structures of social fields that remain largely unpronounced and implicit in social encounters, yet still guide actors in regard to what they can say and do within concrete situations.

At some point in my analytical process, I saw the need to understand the youths' filmmaking processes, which occurred in concrete social and institutional settings, against the overarching definitional frame and strategic principles pronounced by the State within policy documents relating to at-risk issues. Taking inspiration from Catherine Panter-Brick and Augustin Fuentes (2009), I delineated the policy field, giving particular weight to the documents' "risk narrative" (definitional frames) and their contained "webs of causation" (causal connections). This content analysis of policy documents (performed in Chapter 2) provided a frame for understanding common practices and ways of thinking within the social work and health institutions that worked closely with at-risk youths, and it functioned as a contextual backdrop to my further analyses of the youths' filmmaking processes. However, in my discussion of the central findings from the Youth Gaze project in this

chapter, I more directly engage with the steering power of this field (cf. Grønhaug, 1978).

While the research questions that guided my analyses were simply phrased, they helped me to discover some of the complexity bound to what it means to be at-risk, according to differently positioned actors (including youths in this category, adults who place and support youths in this category, researchers involved in a participatory video project and the State). By pursuing the processes and practices of the Youth Gaze film courses, I gleaned clues into the dynamics between the external and internal identification of at-risk youths in different institutional contexts. In particular, I paid attention to:

- the social processes within the Youth Gaze film courses;
- the identities that were presented by the youths in their films; and
- the ways in which the social and filmmaking processes within the Youth Gaze film courses were connected to institutional aims and practices and State policy.

I found clear interconnections between the social processes/dynamics within the courses, the identities presented on film and the practices and role expectations of the hosting institutions and State policies. In the following, I reveal these interconnections to demonstrate my main findings about at-risk youths' spaces of action with respect to identity management.

10.2 Three distinct filmmaking processes in three institutional settings

A central finding of this study is that the proper dynamics of institutional fields enhanced certain forms of social interaction and contributed to the generation of distinct film types within the Youth Gaze setting. In Chapters 7, 8 and 9, I described and analyzed how the youths' filmmaking (across three separate courses) interconnected with and corresponded to the social dynamics that had developed in

the groups, which further corresponded to the implicit social prerequisites of the host institutions[92].

With respect to the social dynamics, the roles, relationships and social engagements differed across the courses. In the course held with the Youth Support team, for instance, the youths mainly referred to other youths in their negotiations of and experimentations with identity. In the other two courses (held with the community nurse and the NAV and the Follow-Up Service, respectively), the youths mainly related to the facilitators when discussing issues they found pressing and relevant to their filmmaking. Selected roles and relationships in these courses largely paralleled pre-existing role sets in the different institutional fields: the Youth Support team gave way to youth steering in most of their offered activities, whereas the community nurse and consultants at the NAV and Follow-Up Service practiced individual consultations informed by theories of change (i.e. guiding youths through concrete change processes).

Within the film courses, the relevant institutional field's social organization and key tasks and issues appeared to influence the persons to whom the youths referred and negotiated their identities[93], and from whom they primarily desired recognition. In institutions where the main task involved psychosocial follow-ups (with the community nurse) or individual work/school-related consultations (with the NAV/Follow-Up Service), the youth participants were more likely to refer to adults, raising issues relevant to their therapy and consultation sessions. This tendency was perhaps further enforced by the fact that the institutions' differing practices of social organization also affected the types of roles and relationships that we, as facilitators, assumed across the three courses. In this way, both the youths

[92] Reidar Grønhaug's (1978) concept of field analysis was particularly fruitful for guiding my exploration and investigation of the micro and macro conditions that, to various degrees, affected the youths' management of their films, roles and relationships. Study of the structural premises and conditions surrounding applied research projects is often overshadowed by the study of an intervention's impact or benefit. As a result, such contextual factors are rarely problematized or taken into consideration. Reidar Grønhaug's field analysis may, in this way, be seen as a valuable contribution to future work in applied visual anthropology.

[93] Other variables may have also affected the persons to whom the youths primarily referred (i.e. whether the youths knew each other in advance and the extent to which their selected topic put them in a vulnerable position in regards to (some of) their peer participants).

and the adults within the Youth Gaze film courses were allocated roles in accordance with the respective institutional field.

It was only in the aftermath of the intervention, during the analytical work, that I came to see that we, as facilitators, took on roles that resembled a typical adult role appropriate to each institutional setting. I was also able to distinguish some of the consequences of this. Our role appropriations occurred partly consciously, and partly subconsciously. In cases where we discussed and decided with the social and health workers how to adapt our scheme to best meet the challenges and needs associated with "their" youths, we assumed agreed-upon roles deliberately and strategically, in line with the common practice and ethos of the field. However, in other cases, we acted upon situations in the film courses pragmatically and spontaneously; it was mainly with respect to these instances that I later realized (from a vantage point of analytical distance) that we had acted in line with what was considered appropriate behavior for an adult professional in the field. Examples of this include how, in the Vika course, we re-organized the scheme to better welcome the youths' processing of challenging life experiences; and how, in the NAV/ Follow-Up Service course, we assumed roles in which we tirelessly redirected the topic of conversation towards the youths' future prospects. In this way, our original ambition to stimulate dialogue and reflection between the youths, the professionals and ourselves as researchers ended with us additionally stimulating the (change) processes desired by the different institutional settings, taking on roles similar to those of the social and health workers in the respective fields.

We alternated between the roles of caring, constantly available adults who stood somewhat on the sidelines, observing and letting the youths "do their thing" (the Youth Support team course), to those of listening and comforting adults, encouraging the youths to open up and share from their personal experiences (the community nurse course), and those of supportive yet challenging adults, encouraging the youths to critically reflect on their lives and situations (the NAV and the Follow-Up Service course). These diverging roles may have gently pushed the youths into different types of social and existential processes, which brought about different types of films.

Between the courses, the films contained differing narrative style and structure and presented different identity traits and types. In studying these film types more closely, I came to see that each of the types, in its own way, reflected some of the conditional frames that surrounded its production. The youths projected and performed identities in their films that largely resonated with ideal roles and behaviors of the host institution. In Vika, for instance, several participants presented themselves as "survivors," using their films to both demonstrate and emphasize their will and capacity to speak about, investigate and reflect on past experiences. Through their happy endings, they presented themselves as resilient and well on their way to overcoming the pain that had been inflicted on them. These films' narrative structure paralleled the community nursing field's "recipe" for overcoming a troubled past, and the identities performed in the films reflected the roles and personal qualities that were valued in this field.

In the course held with the NAV and the Follow-Up Service, the youths ultimately featured themselves as "achievers," demonstrating their capacity to fend for themselves and reduce their idleness. At the start of their films, they depicted and presented dilemmas bound to their present lives, whereas towards the end of their films they addressed their envisioned future. They stood out in their films as determined, firm and capable of action, on the verge to re-entering school and worklife. Also in this course, the films reflected the institutional field's ideas of what it takes to overcome risks and lead a good life.

In the course held in collaboration with the Youth Support team, the youths featured themselves as street-wise, emphasizing their skills and talents connected to the downtown area. At first glance, their presentations of self did not seem to directly reflect the roles and behaviors that were idealized in the social field of the Youth Support team. Rather, they seemed to better reflect the ideal person types among the youths who hung out at Plaza – a main corner downtown. However, in an indirect sense, their filmed accounts also complied with the role expectations of the Youth Support field, as the films responded to the social workers' interest in hearing their accounts and observing their ways of socially engaging with peers, in order to learn more about the youth milieu in the downtown area. Compared to the other

groups' films, the films in this course did not necessarily reflect a field-specific recipe for reducing risks; however, this was perhaps because, in this field, no standard recipe was presented. Different from the other fields, which sought to consult and guide the youths through processes of change (i.e. from ill to good health or from idleness to active participation), the Youth Support team carried the looser mandate of simply reaching out to youths facing challenges, gaining knowledge of their pressing issues, building trustful relations with them and supporting them in whatever way best fit their needs. This type of organization appeared to lend the youths in this course a better occasion to take advantage of the film medium and the filmmaking task to explore their social surroundings, (re)negotiate their identities and perceptually attune themselves to new ways of looking at, listening to and experiencing the world around them. Yet, also in this course, one could observe instances of paid reference to the social workers' "worrying gaze" in some of the youths' framing of the downtown area as problematic. However, this perspective was balanced by the youths' freshly negotiated identities, which emphasized their capacities and skills bound to "hanging out." Whereas the youths in the other two courses mainly targeted their films at an adult audience, with the aim of demonstrating that they were on the right track or setting things straight, the participants in the Youth Support course targeted both adult and peer audiences – demonstrating their social mastery and skills while simultaneously responding to the adults' "worrying gaze.".

Taken together, the proper dynamics of the three institutional fields (in various ways and intensities) steered the youths in their performances of self within the Youth Gaze courses. These dynamics not only allocated the youths and adults certain roles, but they also suggested which processes the youths should enter (i.e. working through challenging experiences, raising critical consciousness and exploring and depicting identities and relations in the downtown area)[94].

[94] This conclusion must be interpreted cautiously, as the youths targeted by the different institutions tended to be recognized and "picked up" by the system on the basis of contrasting traits or factors (e.g. some on the grounds of truancy, others on the grounds of psychological stress and suffering). The youths' varied backgrounds also influenced their choice of topic for their film, how they proceeded with their film work and how they related to others in the process. However, what I have

In light of Youth Gaze's methodological flexibility, which implied adaptation to the tasks, issues, roles and relations appropriate to the different social fields, the initiative could be seen to have contributed to the institutional steering in role allocation and processes in more direct ways than initially foreseen. Nonetheless, the film course also facilitated communication and reflection in these settings, which contributed to discussions with some of the youths about their perceptions of how the institutional and societal discourses and frameworks affected their lives and concepts of self. Whereas many of the youths' films ultimately reflected the institutional ideals, our conversations about their films provided valuable contextual knowledge of the youths' reasoning behind their chosen representations. These conversations, in addition to my observations of the youths' social interactions with peers and adults within the film courses, contributed to my insights into the ways in which the youths' stories interacted and intertwined with adults' and institutional stories about youths' lives, situations and futures (cf. Cole, 2010).

10.3 At-risk youths and social inclusion: Juxtaposing State policies with the youths' identity claims

In my quest to better grasp the intersubjective aspects of youths' filmmaking, it was important for me to distinguish and discuss the position of the State – and, in particular, the policy field – in regard to allocating roles and suggesting relevant processes for at-risk youths. Actors in the policy field include researchers and professionals who are tasked by the government with producing knowledge-based reports on their areas of expertise. Such reports are then applied by politicians in their search for solutions to concrete social problems and thus contribute to the creation of laws, acts and regulations. With respect to social and health work with at-risk youths, the policy field can be considered what Reidar Grønhaug terms a "dominant field," in that it provides the overarching definitional and strategic frames for considering and acting upon youth risks in the social, health and educational sectors.

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tried to emphasize here is how each institutional field – with its specific organization type, theory and practice – laid a particular ground that made certain stories more intelligible and relevant for these youths to tell about themselves; this could be traced in the youths' films.

Following Grønhaug, a dominant field is dominant in the sense that it instigates formative processes at the levels of both the social person and societal formations (Grønhaug, 1978:116-117). In this case, besides influencing the practices of professionals working closely with at-risk youths and issues, policies may also be seen to strongly influence (and reflect) which general concepts of "risk" and "at-risk youths" predominate in society at a certain time.

When analyzing the policy documents concerning youth risks and risk prevention (see Chapter 2), I found that the concept of youth risks and propositions for how these should be acted upon centered on notions of inclusion and exclusion, with the former representing a desirable state of affairs and the latter representing an undesirable circumstance for young persons. At-risk youths were largely identified within these documents in terms of their in-between position and their imminent danger of ending up "outside of social life". In the documents, youths' social inclusion was closely connected with success in the school system, and thus much attention was devoted to youths' social becoming and great stress was placed on the importance of youths mastering and completing school in order to achieve qualifications and improve their career prospects.

The acts of defining risks and proposing strategies for avoiding risks involve not only identifying risks, but also solidifying the contemporary conception of normality. I came to distinguish that the definitions of at-risk in the policies often centered on shortcomings – indicating what those distinguished as at-risk *were not* or *how they had not s*ucceeded (e.g. not in school, not in expected leisure arenas and activities, not in good health, not in employment). Accordingly, lifting youths out of the at-risk position (and into normality) implied getting rid of their "nots." This suggested a process of change, and from my analysis of the policies, the proposed ideal route involved youths' mastery of and completion of school, active participation in society and control over their lives. These assumptions allocated the youths roles as active, responsible and autonomous (self-governing) individuals.

Marianne Rugkåsa (2011, 2012) describes the Norwegian welfare state as particularly "welfare ambitious,"[95] compared to other states. By this, she refers to

[95] *Verferdsambisiøs* in Norwegian.

the scope of the responsibilities held by statutory authorities for the welfare of citizens, and to the extensiveness of the state's welfare system (Rugkåsa, 2011). She claims that Norway is a welfare ambitious state because it offers citizens a universal and service intensive welfare system. One of her leading arguments is that social inclusion within this system depends on citizens' embrace of dominant norms and values, and that such normalization enforces homogeneity (Rugkåsa, 2011:248). These processes of normalization/standardization, as effectuated by the welfare state, may reduce social inequality and improve life standards and opportunities (Vike, 2004). Additionally, they may increase citizens' sense of safety and predictability. However, Rugkåsa asserts that the processes *also* contribute to regulating and controlling individual lives and thus shaping them, as subjects.

In the policy documents concerning youth risks, the principles of early intervention and intersectorial collaboration may indicate the state's contribution to and power in shaping individual lives. With early intervention, the State takes a proactive stance, securing measures to prevent potential problems from occurring or developing into larger problems. In this way, the State may be seen to intervene in and influence individuals' actions, decision making and behavior. This may, of course prevent some individuals' (potential) pain and affliction; however, it may also impose more control on the ways in which they conduct their lives. Similarly, the principle of coordinating measures through intersectorial collaboration may impose normalization, in that individuals become exposed to a massive network of actors who guide and support them in a given direction. Lastly, the state's strong emphasis on the school system may be seen to contribute to more streamlined trajectories for young people. This is not to say that the state and its social and health support apparatus enforce a type of power that oppresses and manipulates individuals; in fact, the welfare state does plenty of good and contributes to improving the life conditions of its citizens, often through engaging and involving them in decision making processes (cf. the policies' principles of inclusion and participation). However, simultaneously the state contributes to normalization processes that may restrict citizens' spaces of action.

Ivar Frønes (2010) distinguishes and reflects upon some traits and effects bound to the exercise of this regulation and control in contemporary society, as opposed to previously. He asserts that, two generations ago, there were more options for youths who did not want to endure long periods of schooling; indeed, very few youths completed high school, and this was not seen as a problem, as job opportunities awaited. At that time, he notes, the life stage of "youth" was commonly conceived of as a waiting phase for work and married life. Today, in contrast, the education system stands at the center of attention, with education perceived as fundamental for an individual's integration into work and social life. Accordingly, youth, Frønes argues, has turned into a period of qualification. This, in turn, has contributed to a new and perhaps wider conception of risks, with risks now commonly identified in terms of their impact on education (e.g. attention deficits, restlessness, truancy, lack of self-discipline and various behavioral problems). Furthermore, in a wider conception of risk lies a narrower conception of normality.

Ole Jacob Madsen (2018) asserts that the support system is currently organized in such a way that youths are expected to adapt to the system, rather than the system adapting to their assumptions of being able to function and succeed in the system. As an indicator of this, he refers to the new school subject called "life mastery," which is currently in development for implementation in Norwegian schools. Through this subject, youths will learn how to cope with stress and pressures, which Madsen argues partly originate from the modern school system. At the same time, Madsen points towards the concurrent growth in the number of diagnosed youths and the interventions aimed at helping youths function better within the school system. These examples may indicate a reduced acceptance of variation and a more confined concept of normality. Yet a paradox emerges in the sense that, today, youths are also faced with significantly more options for the kinds of persons they can "become" and how they can lead their lives, relative to a few generations back. At least, this is the message that contemporary youths are presented with. On this basis, there appears to exist more opportunities but narrower paths to realize them. Those who do not succeed on the educational path

find that the options quickly decrease due to the need for formal competencies and qualifications in the contemporary job market.

Madsen asserts that the message that modern youths are presented with – that they can become whatever they want in life – leads to more stress and pressure than the content of the message is able to alleviate. Kaja Melsom (2017) similarly argues that the many options creates expectations that the youths should become something (preferably something extraordinary) and take advantage of all the wonderful new opportunities. Both Madsen and Melsom treat the shame that this produces in youths who face difficulty "becoming something" at school (e.g. those who find it difficult to master school requirements or who fail to concentrate or function well socially at school or at work). Such youths have been told that they can become whatever they want in this world, and they blame themselves for not reaching their goals (Melsom, 2017).

Returning to the Youth Gaze project, one might ask: In what ways could the youths' expressions and practices within the film courses be seen to speak to the structural conditions provided by state policies and generalized concepts of youth risks and normality? I have demonstrated how, particularly within the courses held with the community nurse and NAV/Follow-Up Service, the youths communicated with their films a sense of being in motion and undergoing processes of change: towards better mental health that contributed to more friends, improved grades and thriving at school (as in the course with the community nurse); towards breaking with idleness and leading a more active life filled with school or work (as in the course with the Follow-Up Service and the NAV). In the course with the Youth Support team, change was expressed more subtly, via their hard work with finding ways to stand out as talented and resourceful and their budding critical reflection over the amount of time they spent downtown. However, the skills and personal capacities the youths' revealed on film indicated that they had the resources, ability and determination to fend for themselves and master social life. Such traits could be seen to align with the ideal of the active, responsible and autonomous youth that was allocated to them by the state policies. If one understands the policies' role allocations as tending to the optimization of individual youths, then the youths' film

management and film expressions could be seen as acts of self-optimization, whereby they projected ideal versions of themselves that largely correlated with institutional and societal standards for normality (combined with peer preferences). I found that most of the youths engaged in (and revealed a talent for) what Marianne Gullestad (1996b) calls "balancing values", in that they largely succeeded in standing out as moral persons within a mixed audience of adults (caregivers) and peers.

I have come to conceive of the camera and the filmmaking task in the Youth Gaze setting as tools for the youths to not only report, reflect upon and make meaning of important issues and experiences in their worlds, but also (and maybe primarily) as tools for them to reach out to people in their social surroundings, with a request for recognition and social inclusion. From this perspective, creating self-optimized film expressions could be seen as the "youths' methods" (cf. Garfinkel, 1984[1967]) for standing out as intelligible and attractive to others in their quest to experience social inclusion and a sense of belonging (cf. Goffman's acts of deference and demeanor (2005[1967])). The youth participants could be seen as simultaneously exposed to the State and institutional propositions of roles and processes for at-risk youths (i.e. they were steered towards particular roles) – and as agents using the role and sign repertoire of these social fields as resources for achieving social inclusion.

In their presentations of self, the youths frequently maintained a façade that, if not flawless, was at least masterful. Standing out as capable, talented and resourceful within the operative value system of their social fields and interaction partners appeared essential to all of them. Vulnerability was often ignored or placed in the shadow behind their revelations of their personal capacity to overcome obstacles. For example, while some of the youths included scenes in which they described difficult experiences, most of the youths framed such experiences as things of the past. It was mostly through our conversations and feedback sessions and my observations of their social interactions that I came to learn of their uncertainty, hesitation, indecisiveness, anxiety and affliction. I saw that, for many of them, uncertainty and anxiety was connected with their former experiences of social rejection by peers or adults or their current pain at not feeling capable of living up to

(their perceptions of) others' expectations. The effort and hard work that the youths poured into the film task is a testament to there being much at stake in regards to their succeeding in presenting themselves as successful – yet credible – persons.

The youths' concept of social inclusion thus related to achieving close relations with others in the here and now, in opposition to the policy field's future-oriented concept of social inclusion. Within the policies, social inclusion largely equivalated with functioning within "the system," emphasizing social becoming (i.e. following the educational path in order to progress effectively into working life and society, more generally). To some of the youths, who had experience of being somewhat outside of this beaten track, work with social inclusion meant the double work of managing relationships with peers and adults in the here and now and simultaneously identifying and pursuing an achievable and recognized future career.

Jennifer Cole (2010) touches upon the power and force of the stories adults tell about the young, expressing concern over the subject making that these representations facilitate. Youth listen to the stories adults tell about them, and when approximately the same story is told a vast number of times in a variety of arenas and contexts, it becomes difficult to ignore or refute. Youths may then take up the stories and integrate them into their own personal narratives. Precisely how such an entanglement of stories occurred – in subtle ways – within the Youth Gaze project constituted the main storyline of this thesis.

10.4 Methodological lessons

My experience with participatory and reflexive filmmaking with at-risk youths within the context of the Youth Gaze project provided an avenue for me to explore the disciplinary implications and theoretical impacts of applied visual anthropological enterprises. Working in engaged and applied ways transforms the way anthropologists do fieldwork, and the work they do with other scholars and with those they study (Low & Merry, 2010; Pink, O'Dell & Fors, 2017). In regards to the Youth Gaze project, the customary anthropological field study of naturally occurring social situations was replaced with a study of the outcome of three interventionist film courses.

The Youth Gaze film course design was inspired by directions in visual anthropology that have aspired to appropriate emic knowledge via collaborative and participatory methods. Such directions include Jean Rouch's concept and practice of "shared anthropology," produced through close collaboration between the researcher and research subjects; observational cinema's phenomenological interest in capturing the ways in which people see their own worlds; David MacDougall's theorizing around how images may contribute to new ways of knowing within anthropology; and the work of Worth and Adair, Richard Chalfen and Terrence Turner, which have richly contributed to the development of subject-generated filmmaking. Finally, Trond Waage's double expertise in visual anthropology and youth research contributed to the idea to connect participatory filmmaking with a study of youth culture. The educational program in visual anthropology in Tromsø also inspired the film course design.

Although the Youth Gaze project developed out of visual anthropological methodology and theory, it simultaneously departed from conventional research projects within the discipline concerned with the production of ethnographic films via long-term ethnographic fieldwork. In contrast, the Youth Gaze project attended to and tested out how audiovisual anthropological methodologies could be applied in new ways to approach and understand the experiences of at-risk youths. Within this project, the films were not the most important outcomes. Rather, "the collaborative and reflexive processes that interweaved to produce the films created social interventions in their own right" (Pink, 2007:5) by generating new levels of self-awareness and identity amongst the research participants. It was these generated processes that were of interest to my research.

In opposition to traditional ethnographic fieldwork, my research thus oriented around interventions facilitated by the researcher. Emic knowledge concerning the youths' being-in-the-world was gained by following them closely in their filmmaking and taking every advantage to engage with them (and the social and health practitioners) in collective analysis of their filmed situations, expressions and topics. These sessions were informed by Jean Rouch's feedback method (Rouch, 1961; Rouch & Feld, 2003 [1973]) and epistemologically based on David

MacDougall's (1998) concept of images as sites of meaning potential, valuing images' immediacy and aptness for exploring the social, physical and sensory contexts in which the filmmakers participated and filmed.

I experienced that youths participating in the film courses used the filmmaking opportunity to show and tell aspects of their daily lives and experiences that they considered important to communicate. In this way, the film course method proved successful for gaining access to at-risk youths' emic understandings and perspectives. I believe that the filmmaking task – and its ability to train participants in filmmaking –was a motivating factor for the youths to participate in the research, at a time when social media was in its nascent stages and occasions to experiment with audiovisual presentations of self were scarce. It also seemed to me that offering something in exchange for their participation (i.e. a concrete skill and experience) was important for building trustful relations and in increasing their willingness to share details about their lives and perspectives. I can only imagine that, for many of these youths, participating in a more conventional anthropological research project involving participant observation in daily life situations – perhaps supplemented with conversations and interviews – would have been out of the question, as they would not have wanted an adult to accompany them in many of the situations and arenas in which they chose to film. Furthermore, I came to notice that, for some of the participants, expressing themselves on video represented a new and creative way to communicate that they appeared to appreciate. For some of the youths, I came to know them mainly via their films, as they were less outspoken and reluctant to join group discussions. The films were also able to draw out tacit knowledge by revealing habits, routines and unspoken and taken-for-granted aspects of the youths' lives and situations.

The film task and the pedagogical scheme triggered social interactions marked by negotiations of identity. Through these negotiations, the youths tested out and revised "suitable" identities for their films. Conversations with the youths and collective analyses during feedback sessions elicited contextual information about the youths' interpretations of film takes and concrete experiences and issues they considered important. In this way, my research approach enabled me to

observe “members’ methods” (cf. Garfinkel, 1984[1967]) for making sense of topics and issues they considered essential to their lives and identities, and to do so in a much more targeted and condensed way than conventional anthropological fieldwork would have allowed.

In line with Rouch, I found these situations of performing self, negotiating identity, and reacting to others’ filmed material – all of which were triggered by the camera and the Youth Gaze intervention – very insightful, in that they enabled me to gain a nuanced understanding of the participants’ life situations and perspectives. Catalyzed by the camera and the film course, the youths revealed their “true” emotional and strategic reactions, even though these were part of staged events. Staged events, I would suggest, are no less “true to life” than moments of everyday life observed in fieldwork, as long as the social and cultural contexts of the events are considered and explored.

Like many projects in applied visual anthropology, the Youth Gaze project involved both working closely with the research subjects and engaging in interdisciplinary collaboration. When collaborating across disciplines, professions and generations, researchers must make special efforts at understanding the definitions and motivations of the other parties (cf. Pink, O’Dell & Fors, 2017). In our research, we synthesized our approach in such a way that the social and health workers could verbalize their work ethic and participate in the planning and administration of the courses. We practiced methodological flexibility, in the sense that we adapted the course scheme to the practices and logics of each institution and the identified needs of the youth participants.

Our methodological flexibility enabled me to learn about the proper dynamics of each institutional field. Being advised on our roles and practices as facilitators, and later embodying these suggestions in the courses, taught me about the contrasting concepts and rules of relevance between the institutions, and how these contributed to producing particular social outcomes. As a result, the facilitator role became an important object of analysis in my research, alongside the social interactions surrounding the filmmaking and the filmmaking processes, themselves.

The project also clearly benefited from the professionals' shared experiences and expertise; in some cases, the social and health workers provided information and advice that richly contributed to our success in building trustful relationships with the youths and gaining access to their life stories. Furthermore, our collaboration proved beneficial for both parties when it came to learning from one another: we taught our partners technical and filmmaking skills, as well as sensitivity to the meaning potential of images (cf. MacDougall, 1998); the social and health workers, in turn, shared with us their professional skills and knowledge of the situation of at-risk youths, which they had accumulated from their many years of engaging with at-risk youths. Ragnhild Magnus Lindekleiv, the psychologist PhD scholar, equally contributed to broadening our perceptions with her psychological perspective on youths and youth issues.

Taken together, our interdisciplinary collaboration and close participation with the research subjects shaped the Youth Gaze intervention by creating a unique collaborative context involving the informants, co-researchers and practitioners, taking into account more than simply the anthropological agendas, alone. As asserted by Pink (2007), applied visual anthropology is effective in creating platforms on which people can represent their experiences of their everyday world. Furthermore, Pink argues for a situated anthropology that accounts for – and potentially learns from – the strategies and approaches of other disciplines and professions (2017:10). These ideals, which the Youth Gaze sought to achieve, directly respond to postmodern and feminist requests for approaches that embrace multiple voices and perspectives in the accumulation and representation of knowledge.

In this way, the Youth Gaze project may represent a creative, film-based contribution to anthropology that secures the inclusion and disclosure of multiple voices and perspectives in research. To visual anthropology, the project may contribute (in communion with a range of other applied visual anthropology projects) to deflecting and expanding the discipline, in line with Sol Worth and Jay Ruby's envisioning of an "anthropology of visual communication" that encompasses the study of a range of "visual cultural forms" (Banks & Morphy, 1997). Towards both of these disciplinary fields, the Youth Gaze project demonstrates that visual

anthropological theory and methods have something to offer applied settings when it comes to adopting more dialogical and reflexive approaches in professional fields. Furthermore, it promotes a more engaged anthropology, rendering anthropological knowledge more widely accessible and influential outside academia (cf. Hylland-Eriksen, 2006).

10.5 Ways forward

The Youth Gaze project set out to respond to questions and concerns in academia and practice regarding how to approach and engage with at-risk youths. In visual anthropology, filmmaking that portrays the ways in which filmed subjects see their worlds has been a common quest, ever since the innovation of the lightweight sync-sound cameras that made this possible. Indeed, the entire anthropological project evolves around understanding issues from the native's point of view. This emic orientation corresponds with theoretical ambitions of "understanding youths on their own right" within contemporary youth research and the theoretical orientation towards "user involvement" and "client participation" within policy making and social and health work with youth. We designed the Youth Gaze project to apply to all three contexts. As these different fields "push" in the same direction, we felt that the knowledge produced through the Youth Gaze intervention would form a useful contribution across these disciplinary and practice-oriented fields.

Current public debates concerning whether UNGDATA – an annual national survey that ask youths to comment on their own experiences of health and social wellbeing –succeed in coming close to understanding how youths really understand their situations, suggest that creative approaches and interventions for achieving emic knowledge about youth are still needed. Youth research has taken giant leaps forward in recent decades, from a position of virtual non-existence (at least in an anthropological context) to one that sees youth research well-situated in almost all of the social science disciplines. However, it appears that there is still a need for interdisciplinary youth researchers and youth practitioners to come together to find good ways to approach youths in order to ensure their voices and perspectives are heard and their issues are attended to.

The Youth Gaze approach was developed to meet the abovementioned aims, as it was designed to provide youths recognized as at-risk with an opportunity to express their views on issues of importance to them with the support of an entire machinery of youth workers, youth researchers, governmental funding agents and peers. However, the method proved to have even broader potential, and it is currently being tested in other settings and with other target groups. Trond Waage has tested the approach while working with children in a small village in Finnmark county, and he is currently planning a Youth Gaze project in Mali, which he will apply as part of a peace mediation process. Maria Fredriksen Kvamme has run Youth Gaze courses (in combination with other methods) to study the life experiences of young people with medically unexplained physical symptoms (Kvamme, 2019, forthcoming). I also see potential for the Youth Gaze approach to be applied with other social groups, and I am currently planning to deliver a Youth Gaze course to university students with disabilities, together with a colleague who is an occupational therapist. In an ongoing research project that attends to the way in which persons with substance abuse problems experience services at Dagsverket (a low-threshold job scheme), an anthropologist colleague and I have both conducted our own filming and instructed participants to film themselves; we plan to incorporate the feedback of some of the participants in the editing phase.

The Youth Gaze film course has already found its footing with the Youth Support team in Tromsø, who, at the time of writing, have already organized three courses of their own. Hopefully there will be more Youth Gaze courses delivered in further occupational settings in the future, with or without the involvement of researchers. It would be interesting to conduct comparative research to closely examine the opportunities and common findings linked to the application of reflexive filmmaking with different groups.

With this thesis, I hope to have succeeded in communicating that the Youth Gaze approach, informed by visual anthropological theory and method, has a great deal to offer in applied contexts. In the act of gathering researchers, research subjects and partners in a common exploration of realities caught on camera lies the

opportunity for all parties to understand familiar and unfamiliar phenomena – and each other - in new ways.

Epilogue

Three years after the Youth Gaze project ended, I contacted many of the youths who had participated in the film courses and asked whether they would be willing to meet me individually, for an informal interview. Some met me at a café in downtown Tromsø; others, particularly those living outside of Tromsø, spoke to me over the phone. In these conversations, we provided general updates on our lives and, at some point, I directed the conversation to their ways of thinking about the Youth Gaze experience, in retrospect.

Lasse told me that his life at the time of the film course had largely consisted of his attempting to adapt to different social milieus. At the time he had been constantly on the look-out for new acquaintances and groups to hang with. He had found this to be quite tiring. He informed me that he now studied social and health studies at high school and had an apprenticeship at the youth club, where his role was to help youths who were "somewhat lost," as he had once been. At the club, they had even tried out some filmmaking with the youths, in an initiative that was reminiscent of the Youth Gaze project. Michael was still into rap. He had moved back to Bergen and told me how he tried to stand out as a good example to the kids who spent much of their time hanging downtown. He had found a temporary job as a telephone salesperson, and he told me that he had recently broken contact with his parents. Amer told me that all that had mattered to him during the film course was making a friend. Accordingly, the most important outcome of Youth Gaze was the new friendships he had gained with Michael, Lasse and Birk. He had since moved to a different town, got a job and lived by himself, not too far from Malik.

To Kristine, much had happened since the film course. She had won a court case against the Child Welfare authorities and received financial compensation for their failure to intervene during her early childhood. She recounted that the film course had represented her first foray into these issues and for investigating what had happened to her. Through the course, she said, she realized that what had happened to her had not been her own fault. She showed me a tattoo on her leg, of a dandelion flower. Ingrid expressed over the phone that she could not bear to meet

up to talk about the Youth Gaze film course. She still suffered from the bullying she had faced as a child, and she was afraid that meeting me and talking about these issues would make her sick. Her life had not quite developed in the direction of the film narrative she had made, with a happy and optimistic ending. Nonetheless, she expressed that she had found the film course a good experience. Camilla informed me that she had ended up in a good and caring foster family. She now lived in Tromsø. We spent three hours talking at a café, and, at several points in our conversation, she asserted how much she appreciated talking to someone who knew her from her early teens. Few persons in her life, she said, knew her from then.

Sofie had signed herself up for a mechanical studies course a couple of months after the film course, with assistance from Åse at the Follow-Up Service. The program her parents had enrolled her in at the non-degree college had been cancelled due to an insufficient number of applicants. However, when I talked to Sofie three years later, she told me that she had dropped out of school after the second year as she had found the theory too difficult. At that time, she had begun working part-time as a hotel chambermaid. John had received a job offer at the end of the film course. When he had arrived early for one of our meetings, he had run into one of the Youth Support team employees; they had ended up discussing options for a job as a removal man at a public apartment site. John had taken the job and kept it for some time. Later on, he completed high school and moved on to study ICT at university.

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Appendix 1 : Information letter to participants

Til Foresatte/ deltaker,

OPPLÆRING I Å LAGE DOKUMENTARFILM

Prosjektet Ungdomsblikk ønsker å tilby et dokumentarfilmkurs for ungdommer i kontakt med Oppfølgingstjenesten og NAV. Gjennom kurset vil ungdommene bli opplært i kamerabruk og redigering av film samt historiefortelling. Film som medium gir ungdommene en kreativ måte å uttrykke seg på. De filmene som skal lages gjennom dette kurset vil omhandle deres egne erfaringer knyttet til hvordan det oppleves å være ung i Tromsø i dag, med alle de gleder og utfordringer det innebærer. En av målsetningene ved kurset er at hver av ungdommene skal lage sin egen film på ca 15 minutter. Ungdommene mottar i slutten av kurset et kursbevis som viser hva de har lært innenfor håndtering av kamera/redigering samt dokumentarfilmskaping.

Kurset er praktisk-orientert: Ungdommene vil gjennom praktiske øvelser lære om teknikk, historiefortelling, og vil få mulighet til å jobbe med tema som de selv synes er relevante. Gjennom hele prosessen vil det legges opp til diskusjoner og tilbakemelding til filmmateriale og temaer som ungdommene er opptatte av. Kurset vil vare i 4 uker og omfatte en gruppe med 8 ungdommer. Dette er et intensivt kurs: Film-gruppen møtes ca tre ganger i uken. Kurset vil foregå på dagtid, hovedsakelig mandager, onsdager og fredager kl. 12-16. Vi har fått lov til å låne Utekontaktens fine lokaler i Grønnegata.

Det har vært holdt tilsvarende kurs i ulike deler av Norge. På de forskjellige stedene har vi samarbeidet tett med lokale ungdomsarbeidere som har deltatt gjennom store deler av kurset. Målsetningen med å holde kurs på ulike steder er at gjennom disse filmene skal ungdommers delte og sprikende erfaringer portretteres og settes på agendaen. Prosjektet er knyttet opp til forskning ved Universitetet i Tromsø rundt hvordan ungdommer opplever det å være ung i dag. Forskningsmaterialet skal kunne brukes til å få en bredere forståelse for ungdommers livsverden. Filmene og notater fra filmskapningsprosessen vil fungere som data for forskning. Resultatene fra prosjektet vil brukes i to doktorgradsavhandlinger innenfor Samfunnsvitenskap. Forskningsprosjektet vil ferdigstilles ved utgangen av januar 2011. Deltakelse i filmprosjektet er ikke ensbetydende med deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet, men vi håper at ungdom og foresatte samtykker til deltakelse i begge prosjekt. Det er lov til å trekke seg fra filmkurs og forskningsprosjekt dersom disse ikke skulle svare til forventninger. Vi vil opplyse om at vi som forskere er underlagt strenge regler for behandling av personlig informasjon. Etter forskningsperioden vil ungdommenes filmopptak slettes, filmene som er laget gjennom kursene vil aldri kunne vises offentlig uten ungdom og foresattes samtykke ved hver enkelt visning. I forskernes skriftlige arbeider vil ungdommene anonymiseres ved at de blir gitt et nytt navn, alder, bosted osv.

Vi som står bak dette prosjektet er prosjektansvarlig/Førsteamanuensis Trond Waage og kursholderne Siren Hope og Reni Wright. Siren Hope og Ragnhild Magnus vil være ansvarlig for forskning knyttet til prosjektet. Vi jobber alle ved Universitetet i Tromsø.

Vedlagt dette brevet er en samtykkeerklæring. Vi ber deg/dere vennligst krysse av ved spørsmålene samt undertegne dette skjemaet for å uttrykke deres samtykke til at deres sønn/datter deltar på dette kurset.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Siren Hope	Reni J. Wright	Ragnhild E. Magnus Lindekleiv
(kursholder/forsker)	(kursholder)	(forsker)

Appendix 2: Letter of informed consent

Ungdomsblikk

- Filmkurs for ungdommer

Samtykkeerklæring

I forbindelse med deltakelse på filmkurs i regi av Ungdomsblikk samtykker vi herved at

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NAVN

* Kan avbildes på film/fotografi	JA	NEI
* Kan uttrykke sine personlige historier/erfaringer gjennom film	JA	NEI
* Film som blir laget kan vises under premiere-arrangement for foreldre/foresatte og venner	JA	NEI
* Film som blir laget kan brukes i en forsknings-sammenheng og til undervisning ved Universitetet i Tromsø av ansatte ved prosjektet ungdomsblikk	JA	NEI

All offentlig visning, eventuelt salg av filmen, krever tillatelse fra både filmskaper, foresatte og ansatte ved prosjektet Ungdomsblikk.

Prosjektet Ungdomsblikk vil ta vare på en kopi av filmen som vil oppbevares utilgjengelig for andre. Deltakeren vil bli gitt en DVD-kopi av sin egen film.

Forskere og kursholdere ved Ungdomsblikk har taushetsplikt.

TROMSØ……/……2008

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Siren Hope (kursholder/forsker)	Reni Wright (kursholder)	Deltager	Foresatte (dersom deltager er under 16 år)

Appendix 3: Michael's rap

Gatebarn

Yo, hei og velkommen
til selveste Tromsø city.
Plassen her er dritt,
og folka her er shitty.
En plass oppi nord
der vi lever i snø.
Der vi lever for å dø,
der vi må leve for å blø.
Der vi kjemper hardt for å
overleve, dag etter dag.
Vi sliter med å miste
tak etter tak.

Vi sliter, vi sliter mer
for å få oppleve verden.

Men hva enn vi gjør,
så blir vi stoppa opp på ferden.
Livet er'ke lett, det er en
bok, som i en lekse.
Du kan ikke stå på en plass,
du må flekse, flekse.
Videre -
Lengere -
For å fordrive tankene,
og overvinne din verste frykt
i livet, der du ikke må gi opp.
Ikke la den tunge gata få deg
til å si stopp.

Det er et hardt liv
med harde tanker,
hardt mot hardt.
Livet e'ke lett og
blir'ke servert på
sølvfat.
Du må tenke deg om
så grip sjansen mens
du har den.
Hvis ikke ender du opp som
et gatebarn.

Skolen er et stress
og vi må fokusere på ting

Street child

Yo, hi and welcome
to the prominent Tromsø city.
The place is crap,
and the people here are shitty.
A place in the north
where we live in snow.
Where we live to die,
where we must live to bleed.
Where we fight hard
to survive, day after day.
We suffer when loosing
grip after grip.

We struggle, we struggle more,
to experince the world.

But whatever we do,
We are stopped on the way.
Life isn't easy, it's a
book, like a lesson.
You can't stand still,
you have to be flexible, flexible.
Onwards -
Longer -
To let go of the thoughs
and conquer your worst fear
in life, you must not give up.
Don't let the harsh street make
you say stop.

It's a hard life
with hard thoughts,
Hard against hard.
Life is not easy,
it ain't served on a
silver plate.
You have to think carefully,
take the chance
while it's there.
If not you'll end up
a streetchild

School is stressful
and we have to focus on things

som vi ikke vil
men som vi blir
tvingt til.
Ikke la den tunge gata
friste deg til å bli.
Tenk heller at gata setter
deg fast og får deg til å bli
gatebarn – der ingenting
er på gli.
Vi sitter ut på gata.
Istedenfor å gjøre lekser
sitter vi på gata.
Vi spiller inn musikk i håp om
å slippe ut gata.

that we do not want
but are
forced to.
Don’t let the harsh street
tempt you into staying.
Think instead that the street
traps you and turns you into
a streetchild – where nothing
runs smooth.
We sit on the street.
Instead of doing homework,
We sit on the street.
We record music as a way to
let go of the street

Appendix 4: Kristine's selected poem

Løvetannen*

Av Inger Hagerup

Der står en liten løvetann
blant andre løvetenner
i bakken på et åkerland
og blomstrer så den brenner.

Den har slått ut sitt gule hår
på toppen av seg selv.
For av en bustet knopp i går
er det blitt blomst i kveld.

Nå er den sterk og stri og vill,
en riktig løvetann,
og strekker kry sin lille ild
mot solens kjempebrann.

The Dandelion

By Inger Hagerup (my translation)

There stands a small dandelion
among other dandelions
at the slope of a farm land
in blossom as on fire.

It has spread its yellow hair
at its very top.
Yesterday's untidy bud
has turned into a bloom tonight.

Now it is strong and stubborn and wild,
a proper dandelion,
And it proudly stretches its little flame
up against the sun's giant fire.

*This is just a fraction of the poem, representing the verses that Kristine recited in her film. The original poem contains another two verses.