Chapter 14
'We're the Bosses Here': Schooling, Segregation and Brotherhood

Thomas Johansson and Ylva Odenbring

Introduction

> Interviewer: Are you ever afraid at school or in this neighbourhood?
> Mohammed: No, we're not afraid, because we've lived here our entire lives, so we're used to this place (Focus group interview with boys).

In this interview excerpt, one of the students in the current study presents his view of his school and neighbourhood. Based on his lived experiences of the place where he has grown up – which is one of Sweden's most socially deprived urban areas – the student expresses a strong sense of belonging to the local neighbourhood. This kind of strong connection and loyalty to the local environment and neighbourhood is quite common among young people; they certainly view their local neighbourhood and community with eyes that do not belong to outsiders. This emotionally charged way of looking at places and social spaces will be explored in the present chapter. In particular, we will look more closely at how young people talk about violence and the teacher's role in preventing violence at school.

In Sweden, residential segregation has contributed to increasing the differences between schools (Bunar & Sernhede, 2013). The majority of children growing up in urban areas live in the so-called Million Homes Programme areas [Miljonprogramsområden] – neighbourhoods that are often situated in the outskirts of major cities and that have become the most socially deprived areas in the country (Beach & Sernhede, 2012). They are characterized by a high proportion of people living on social welfare, many residents living in overcrowded apartments and higher risks of poor physical and mental health, and the children in these areas show lower academic achievement compared to other students. There is also an increased

T. Johansson (✉) · Y. Odenbring
University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden
e-mail: thomas.johansson@ped.gu.se; ylva.odenbring@gu.se

Y. Odenbring, T. Johansson (eds.), *Violence, Victimisation and Young People*, Young People and Learning Processes in School and Everyday Life 4,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-75319-1_14

risk of school drop-out for this group of children (Barnombudsmannen, 2018; Sernhede, 2011). Residential segregation has also led to a situation in which immigrant groups are concentrated to the same areas and schools, often seen and informally labelled as 'immigrant schools' (Bunar & Sernhede, 2013; Sernhede, 2011). A similar pattern has also been observed in other countries across Europe (Demintseva, 2018; Gitz-Johansen, 2003; Jaffe-Walter, 2019). This segregation is also reinforced by parents who choose to place their children in other schools located in neighbourhoods with better reputations (Demintseva, 2018).

Social exclusion often takes spatial forms. Neighbourhoods vary considerably in terms of safety, availability of services, community spaces and public facilities. This ongoing stigmatization of certain groups of people is further fuelled by media images of socially deprived urban areas (Lacoe, 2015; Leonard, 2006). Some of these areas have even been portrayed as 'no-go zones' in Swedish as well as international media and as immigrant-dense neighbourhoods that are dangerous and violent (Gudmundson, 2014, Meotti, 2018). Among the most remarkable headlines probably came from when, during a campaign rally, the American president Donald Trump suggested that something really terrible had occurred in Sweden: "You look what is happening /…/ you look what's happening last night in Sweden. Sweden who would believe this?" (Chan, 2017). In Sweden, representatives of the Government as well as the political opposition reacted with confusion to this remark. The epithet 'no-go zones' has also been heavily criticized by several Swedish newspapers. According to Lindberg (2017), calling these areas 'no-go zones' is misleading as well as untrue. This one-sided debate, it has been argued, also tends to ignore what is at the heart of the problems seen in the socially deprived neighbourhoods, i.e., the existing inequalities and segregation in society (Al-Dewany, 2018; Lindberg, 2017).

Contrary to this dark image of the socially deprived neighbourhoods, many of the people, especially the young people, living in these areas have a positive image of and relation to their local community. Young people living in these areas are aware of the negative representations of the neighbourhood, but they tend to defend their school and neighbourhood, thus counteracting these pathologizing discourses (Odenbring et al., 2017; Öhrn, 2012). Contemporary research has also shown how students in schools located in these neighbourhoods offer resistance to negative images of their school and neighbourhood. They do this by presenting a positive, alternative image of their school, in this way strongly opposing how other people view their neighbourhood (Welply, 2018).

Harassment and Violence in Schools

Research on violence in schools has revealed that, among both victims and offenders, there is overrepresentation of children growing up in socio-economically disadvantaged circumstances and neighbourhoods (Estrada et al., 2012; Gottfredson & DiPietro, 2011). Contemporary research has also suggested that school

professionals working in socially deprived areas have a closer collaboration with the police and tend to more frequently file police reports, compared to school officials working in middle-class areas (Lunneblad et al., 2017, 2019). As the above authors have argued, there is a risk that this will affect how school officials working in socially deprived neighbourhoods handle various kinds of issues. This also tends to reproduce already existing structures regarding crime rates, where young people with immigrant backgrounds growing up in socially deprived areas are at greater risk of being reported and prosecuted for crimes compared to their white, middle-class peers.

Currently, there is a lack of research on how students in socially deprived areas experience their own situation, and how they talk about harassment and safety in schools. Given this picture, the current chapter will address how teenage students in a lower secondary school located in a socially deprived urban neighbourhood in Sweden perceive and talk about safety and risks at school and in the surrounding neighbourhood. We will also look at where the students turn to get support and to talk about and address their problems with harassment and violence at school. By analysing the students' narratives, we hope to understand more about their everyday lives at school. If we are to understand the stories told, we must also properly situate the school in its urban and sociocultural context.

This chapter draws from empirical material consisting of focus group interviews, interviews in pairs, and individual interviews with students in the ninth year of lower secondary school. All interviews were conducted during November 2017. The selected school, called Shipowner School in the study, was selected due to its location in one of Sweden's most socially deprived areas. In this neighbourhood, 90% of residents have an immigrant background. The majority of residents, as well as students at Shipowner School, originate from Middle Eastern countries such as Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Turkey and Palestine, and a quite large number of the residents and students originate from Somalia (see also, Odenbring & Johansson, 2019a, b). As for the investigated school class, all students in the class had an immigrant background or parents with an immigrant background.

The interviews were semi-structured, and a strategic approach was used to ensure that we covered specific themes, such as experiences of different forms of violence, trust and distrust at school, in the neighbourhood and in peer and family relations. The personal narratives were gathered as carefully as possible, leaving room for the students to construct and tell 'their' story as well as to provide different angles on their own story. On the recommendation of the main teacher, the interviews were organized into gender-separate groups. The reason for this separation was the idea that, in gender-mixed groups, the boys would silence the girls. In addition, we divided responsibility for the interviews in accordance with the gender of the researcher; that is, the male researcher conducted all the interviews with the boys, and the female researcher all the interviews with the girls. After all interviews were conducted and transcribed, we jointly read, discussed, processed and coded the data into themes (cf. Nowell et al., 2017). Confidentiality has been ensured by anonymizing the name of the school, as well as the names of all the participants. This

work was supported by The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation and Support Authority (grant number 02794/2017).

In the next section, we will present some of the theoretical concepts used in the chapter. Thereafter, we will take a closer look at the empirical material and analyse how the young informants deal with and discuss violence and safety in their school.

Territorial Stigmatization and Trust

Urban poverty and advanced marginality have increasingly been located to certain areas in the big cities of Europe and the US. These areas are typically populated either by immigrants who have been living in Sweden larger parts of their lives or by new immigrant and refugee groups. The younger generation has often grown up in Sweden, and they are also Swedish citizens. These areas are often characterized by high unemployment rates, low incomes, and a high density of social services and police presence. Using a concept from Wacquant (2008), these urban areas are often subject to *territorial stigmatization* and, consequently, seen as poor, problematic and no-go areas.

> Not only because it is arguably the single most protrusive feature of the lived experience of those entrapped in these sulphurous zones, but also because this stigma helps explain certain similarities in their strategies of coping and escape, and thereby many of the surface cross-national commonalities that have given plausibility to the thesis of a transatlantic convergence between the 'poverty regimes' of Europe and the United States (Wacquant, 2008, p. 169).

First, the stigma imposed on certain areas leads to a sense of personal indignity and of being marginal, an outcast. Second, areas considered to be dumpsters for the poor tend to be avoided by other people. Finally, in the worst cases, community building and collective action are discouraged. However, it is also important to point out that these analyses of socially deprived areas are very general, and in practice there is naturally great variation between countries, local communities and areas. For this reason, these descriptions must be understood and used carefully when analysing concrete case studies of urban poverty and schooling. In addition, as we have already discussed, young people living in these areas often oppose and criticize negative images of their neighbourhood. Young people living in these areas are often aware of the negative images circulating in the media and in the urban city at large, but they often defend the area. Belonging to a specific community can fuel a strong sense of identity and affinity, causing young people to develop a feeling of solidarity with the neighbourhood (Johansson & Herz, 2019).

In the present study, we are interested in the connection between territorial stigmatization and students' trust in the school system, teachers, and society at large. Trust can be defined as a feeling of *ontological security*. This feeling is organized in relation to significant others and can be defined as *basic trust*. This basic trust is gradually generalized into trust in more abstract institutions and systems, for

example the school and the social services. There is a discrepancy between basic trust in significant others and trust in abstract systems, or as Giddens puts it:

> Abstract systems depend on trust, yet they provide none of the moral rewards which can be obtained from personalised trust, or were often available in traditional settings from the moral frameworks within which everyday life was undertaken (Giddens 1991, p. 136).

To construct and develop a viable narrative of the self, people are dependent on their capacity to integrate and use daily interaction in the day-to-day world, as well as their ability to relate to the external and abstract world. The concept of trust can be seen as a bridging concept, connecting the ongoing narrative of the young students, in this case, and their relation to, for example, Swedish society or school officials. In the same vein, distrust indicates difficulties in creating a bridge between the students' everyday life narratives and their relation to the system. Distrust signals a gap between generations, and a sense of being left alone with different kinds of adolescent 'problems'. Our aim is to investigate the dynamic relation between trust and distrust in the everyday life of a number of Swedish students living in a socially deprived urban area.

Safety, Brotherhood and Distrust in the System

In this part of the chapter, we will present the empirical material, using a number of interview excerpts to capture more general and typical patterns in the material. During the analytic process, three main broad themes connected to safety and risks at school and in the surrounding neighbourhood have been discerned, and the results will be organized and presented according to these three main themes (Nowell et al., 2017): (1) 'Swedish' and 'immigrant' schools, (2) Distrust and (3) Trust in the brotherhood. Initially, we will look more closely at how the students talk about safety at school and in the urban area where they are living. Thereafter, we will zoom in on their feeling of trust/distrust in adults and teachers when they are in need of help. Finally, we will focus on the relational networks and social communities that are important in building trust in everyday life.

'Swedish' and 'Immigrant' Schools

When asked about safety at school and in the urban area where most of the students lived, the answers were initially quite coherent and similar. Later on, we discovered more nuances. In general, most of the students reported feeling safe at school and in the area, but they also talked about harassment and violence at school. The students also tended to trivialize much of the violence occurring in their everyday school life. When talking to the students in the current study about the local neighbourhood, the boys in particular strongly defended their neighbourhood. Quite aware of the

stigmatizing media images of their area, they presented a positive image of solidarity and a strong sense of belonging to the community. When we as interviewers tried to find out more about this, a polarized image of Swedish people and immigrants emerged in the stories told about the area.

Interviewer: How do you view safety in your school and neighbourhood?
Abdullah: There are many immigrants here, which feels safe.
Interviewer: Why does it feel safe?
Amir: You know many people here, immigrants, if you are Swedish then you live in a Swedish area and you feel safe there, right? Here you feel a connection to the immigrants.
Interviewer: But there are some Swedes here too, right?
Some yes.
Interviewer: Do you feel safe at this school?
All students: Yes, yes.
Mohammed: Because we are the bosses here (Focus group interview with boys).

The feeling of community and trust is built on perceived similarity. The boys also make a very clear and distinct statement regarding the differences between Swedish areas and people versus immigrant areas and people. Immigrants are, of course, not a homogenous group. Instead, we must seek an explanation for the making and construction of this *imaginary community* in the experience of growing up under similar circumstances and socio-material conditions. The feeling of having a bond and a strong sense of trust was also described in terms of "everyone knows each other", as expressed by a group of girls during a focus group interview:

Mona: You are close. Everyone knows each other here.
Interviewer: Do you mean that you have a strong bond?
All girls: Yes.
Interviewer: Does it feel safe to know each other?
All girls: Yes.
Sonya: Well, the school isn't that big, so everyone knows each other. /…/ There are many siblings and cousins who attend this school as well.
Interviewer: Is that a good thing?
All girls: Yes.
Interviewer: Does that make you feel safe?
All girls: Yes (Focus group interview with girls).

Talking with the students, both the girls and the boys, the strong kinship relations – as well as knowing people living in the neighbourhood – seem to create a bond of trust and a feeling of informal social control. At the same time, the distinct and marked relation between Swedes and immigrants emerging from the narratives also indicates and suggests the presence of a feeling of not being at home in the larger society. Defining their school as something different from the Swedish territories and schools, they also in a certain sense strengthen the feeling of being the other, which is often defined as something different from belonging to the majority society (cf. Wacquant, 2008).

Making a clear distinction between 'Swedish' and 'immigrant' schools, the boys erect a boundary between different categories of people. In this connection, feelings of belonging and trust are fundamentally anchored in a perception of similarities being something good, and differences being something bad.

Ali: This is a good school, because they’re used to immigrants here! They’re used to immigrants here! This isn’t like the Swedish schools!
Interviewer: What do you mean by Swedish schools?
Abdullah: The English school, for example, if you talk Swedish at the break you’ll be shut off.
Interviewer: Aren’t all schools in this city Swedish?
Ali: Yes, yes, this is a Swedish school, but the teachers here are used to immigrants. They’ve been here for such a long time, so they’ve almost become immigrants. For example, our teacher Hans, he supports immigrants more than Swedes, right?
Interviewer: But this is a Swedish school!
All students: Yes, no, yes.
Ali: Now I’m getting angry! (Focus group interview with boys).

The teachers working in the neighbourhood are defined to a certain extent as immigrants, or as “almost immigrants”. This also closely follows the rule of keeping things apart, differentiating between us and them. When we take a closer look at the relation between the students and teachers, it is important to keep this ‘almost’ in mind. As we will see, the degree of trust in the teachers and the system is limited. The territorial stigmatization of the neighbourhood and the school clearly affects how the students talk about as well as try to defend their school. This kind of stigmatization is internalized, but it does not automatically lead to negative self-images. On the contrary, the students defend their local territory and make sharp distinctions between immigrant schools (something positive) and Swedish schools (something negative). In this way, we can trace a resistance to labelling certain schools and areas as something “bad”.

Distrust

The students’ strong views about living in a parallel sub-society, defined as something different from Swedish society, have a great impact on their help-seeking patterns. Although many of the students interviewed felt safe at their school and in the neighbourhood, they also talked about violence, harassment and the lack of a calm school environment for studying. These patterns were mostly communicated in the individual interviews. In the focus group interviews, especially in the interviews with the boys, we discerned a *silence culture*, that is, a strong tendency to keep quiet, and not to talk, about certain situations and actions. Consequently, turning to the teachers for guidance and help seemed to be quite difficult.

Interviewer: Who do you talk with?
Ali: I talk with myself!
Interviewer: So, how about you others, do you turn to him too?
All students: Yes, Yes, Yes.
Interviewer: How about the teachers then?
Abdullah: No, not the teachers. You turn to your buddies instead, they raise you.
Ali: The teachers would not be able to do something about it, and the problems would just linger on then.
Interviewer: The student welfare team then?

Ali: No!!
Ali: We trust our teacher Hans, but not the other teachers, they can't do anything.
Interviewer: Adults then? Do you not turn to adults?
Ali: The small ones solve their problems with the small ones, and the big ones with the big ones (Focus group interview with boys).

In general, we discovered distrust in the system, that is, in the teachers, the principal and the student welfare team. The students did not see any point in contacting teachers, or even talking with their parents. Rather, when worried or exposed to violence or harassment, they turned to other students, especially to older brothers and siblings. There is a general feeling of distrust in the adult generation, especially in representatives of Swedish society.

The feelings of distrust and of being misunderstood are clearly articulated when talking about the police and social services in the urban area. The young boys feel they are often misjudged and treated unfairly. They admit to having done things, such as shoplifting, but they also feel they have been stigmatized and pushed into the position of being a criminal.

Amir: That was someone else, not living here, and they've snitched on me, I really can't understand what happened here?
Interviewer: You talk a lot about people snitching, it seems important
Amir: When I came to the social services, they told me it was a mistake
Interviewer: Did they visit you at home?
Amir: No, we got a letter, so I had to go there
Interviewer: So, they make mistakes?
Amir: Yes, I've been at the social services several times, if they see someone with a hoodie, then I'm to blame.
Ali: He is well known there
Amir: I have done things, yes, shoplifted, but as soon as they see someone with a hood, then it's me!
Ali: This is how it works in society. If you've done something, the police will always have you under observation (Focus group interview with boys).

The young boys describe how they are monitored and controlled by the social services. The stigmatization process concerns not only the area, but also the individuals living there. In this sense, there is a lack of trust in the system; the system only tends to produce stereotypical images of the young people, and to not offer any support or comfort.

Snitching is a central word. The culture of silence makes it difficult to talk to representatives of Swedish society. This also spills over into the interview situation, where it is quite difficult to get interviewees to provide thick information on problematic issues, such as violence, harassment and sexual harassment. Particularly the girls reported having been exposed to sexual harassment at school, which was not always an easy issue to deal with. As one of the girls, Sonya, put it: "When the teacher calls your parents about it, the boys at school walk over to that girl and say: why are you telling the teacher? You're a fucking snitch, and things like that. They stop calling her slut, but they call her a snitch instead". During the individual interviews, as well as during the interview in pairs, several of the girls expressed frustration about the verbal harassment at school. At the same time, it is also important to not show weakness and 'lose face', because in similar situations the girls said they

have to be tough and strong, and that they have to “put up with it”, as Sonya put it (see also Odenbring & Johansson, 2019a, b).

It was the girls, in particular, who shared their experiences of the harsh school climate. This image of being tough and hard could also be linked to the existing distrust among the students. During the individual interviews with the girls, this issue was something they specifically highlighted. According to the girls, if they turned to another student about any issue, the whole school would soon know about it, which created great distrust in one’s peers among the students. In the girls’ narratives, their mothers were mentioned as one of the few people, if not the only person, in their lives they could turn to and actually trust.

> Fatima: It feels like you can’t trust your friends at all.
> Interviewer: Never?
> Fatima: Well, you can’t really expect that from your friends. /…/ If you fight with one of the girls, you can’t say “I want to tell you something, but please don’t tell anyone”, you know what I mean? If someone is angry with you, they’ll tell your secret and embarrass you in front of everyone. Your mom would never do that, you see? Because she’s your mother.
> Interviewer: So, if you tell your mom you know she won’t tell anyone.
> Fatima: Yes, because she would never do such a thing. That would be weird (Individual interview with a girl).

One of the other girls, Mona, had experiences similar to Fatima’s. She was even more explicit about the issue of trust at school and in the local neighbourhood.

> Mona: Almost everyone here is phony. It’s crazy. There aren’t many people who keep their mouths shut. I don’t trust that many people actually.
> Interviewer: You mean there’s a lot of gossip?
> Mona: Yes, if I tell something big or private, everyone knows about it the next day (Individual interview with a girl).

The students’ narratives were not only strongly framed in terms of distrust in society and school officials, but also by the ever-present risk of being called and labelled ‘a snitch’, i.e. a gossiper, which created distrust in and among students. The prevailing *silence culture* in the student group was also strongly surrounded by what could be characterized and interpreted as *social control*; this can be understood in light of the local social control prevailing at school as well as in the local neighbourhood. The students’ distrust in society and the teachers can be understood as an effect of their feelings of not being part of Swedish society. What we call a silence culture is an emotional and protective shield, used to create barriers to “some people” – in this case teachers, social workers, the police and other officials – in order to signal collective affiliation with other people. In this sense, this is a social psychological mechanism that also serves to keep us, the researchers, outside the “circle of trust”.

Trust in the Brotherhood

Listening to the young students, it is obvious that if we lift the lid off the *silence culture*, we discover everyday harassment and violence. There are strong tendencies toward trivializing and downplaying different forms of exposure to violence. Similar findings have been recognized in previous studies, which suggest that everyday harassment and violence have become trivialized and normalized among young people (Henriksen & Bengtsson, 2016; Zaykowski, 2016). This also includes being street smart and being able to manage the situation without involving other people or adults (Zaykowski, 2016). Particularly for young boys, this is also a means of avoiding being labelled as a victim or as helpless (Henriksen & Bengtsson, 2016; Zaykowski, 2016).

Talking about incidents with teachers, or even worse with the social services or police, can easily be seen as snitching and betraying the group. These codes of honour make it difficult to seek help or support, and they create a gap between representatives of the school/society and students in need. Although some of the young students can talk with their parents, they mostly turn to their siblings, particularly to their brothers, to seek protection and help.

> Interviewer: You don't feel any particular trust in the adult generation? Do you talk with your parents?
> Amir: Yes, but mostly we talk with our brothers, they understand more, because they've also been brought up in Sweden. Our parents are living more in accordance with old traditions, long time ago.
> Mohammed: My mum will scream at the teachers, if I'm innocent.
> Sasha: Yes, I also got to know about one teacher who discredited me, someone had heard about this in the staff room, and he told me (Focus group interview with boys).

Many of the narratives are filled with similar experiences, pointing to a general problem of legitimacy at school. The lack of trust between the generations, and between students and school officials, undermines the function of the social security and safety mechanisms that should kick in. Instead, students in need of help turn to their older brothers or other relatives, who tend to intervene when necessary. When an incident occurs at school, news of it will always reach outside the school, because most people in the local neighbourhood know each other; but it will not reach the relevant people, such as the school nurse or the counsellor, inside the school.

> Sonya: I have cousins, I have many cousins at school, so you have always someone you can turn to.
> Interviewer: Okay, there is always someone you can turn to.
> Sonya: It's not only that the older students deal with the matter. The families kind of know each other too (Interview in pairs with girls).

It is sometimes enough to use the potential for violence, assumed to exist among the students' brothers, to stabilize the situation at school. One of the girls in the study, Mona, who was also part of the girls' group, sometimes threatened to call her older brother, who she referred to as "a loser who hasn't done anything good in his life", to help stabilized different hostile situations.

Mona: They threatened to get some older people to beat me up outside the school. Then I just threatened back and told them who my brother was. Many know my brother and most people are afraid of him, so then they don’t do anything.
Interviewer: Why are they afraid of your brother?
Mona: I don’t know. He is scary, apparently. I don’t know, many know who he is and he has done things, maybe, I don’t know, he is scary apparently. I don’t ask, and I don’t want to know (Individual interview with a girl).

However, sometimes the older brothers or relatives have to intervene more directly. One of the things the students mentioned was the tensions that have emerged, from time to time, between residents in the different socially deprived neighbourhoods. Students from a neighbouring school sometimes travel to Shipowner School to attend language classes and, according to students at Shipowner School, visits from other students have led to tensions and fights between the different student groups. These conflicts have also been solved within the family and the local community.

Sonya: They come here to for language classes [for instance, Spanish, French and German]. On one occasion, the kids at Wood Hill School had stolen from my cousins’ store, the fruit and vegetable store, you know. They said that it was the kids from Wood Hill who had stolen things from my cousins’ store and my cousins were like: “what the fuck, have you stolen from our store?” Then there was a fight, but not here. My cousins went to Wood Hill and beat them up there (Individual interview with a girl).

The existing culture of silence creates a kind of ‘private legal system’ in which the students and residents from the neighbourhood solve problems between the students, within and between families, and within the local communities and neighbourhoods.

Concluding Discussion

In this chapter, we have addressed how students in a lower secondary school located in one of Sweden’s most socially deprived areas experience their own situation at school and in the local neighbourhood, and how they talk about harassment and safety in their everyday life at school. We have also highlighted what kind of support the students want and try to get from significant persons, when they face hostile and difficult situations. Another important contribution to the research field is that the study draws on minority students’ experiences and views regarding these issues. However, we also noticed while conducting the study that there were considerable difficulties in gaining access to and creating the trust that would allow us to go behind the culture of silence.

Following the theory of territorial stigmatization, our analysis reveals that the students are aware that the area and school are situated in a ‘problematic area’, but nonetheless refuse to let this colour how they perceive of and depict the area (c.f. Gudmundson, 2014; Meotti, 2018; Wacquant, 2008). Instead, they defend their neighbourhood and paint a bright picture of solidarity and sameness. In this context,

sameness refers to being an immigrant or having an immigrant background. There are also clear distinctions made between immigrants and Swedes, as well as between immigrant schools and Swedish schools. In the students' worldview, trust is based on sameness and on living in the same area. It is also evident that there is a gap in trust between the students and adults at the school. This gap makes it difficult for students to talk with adults about their everyday life and problems. The results also reveal that daily life at the school and in the local community is strongly framed by a *culture of silence*, as well as by distrust in adults and ultimately in the Swedish system, here represented by the teachers, principals, police and social workers in the area.

Several levels of distrust emerged in our analysis of the students' narratives: lack of trust in school officials, lack of trust in Swedish society at large, as well as distrust between students. Instead of talking with teachers and adults, the students often tried to solve their own problems, without involving any adults. Many times, this spilled over into social control of each other, that is, by spreading rumours and gossiping about certain students. To finally stop these processes, the students sometimes involved siblings, most often their brothers. The potential for violence and threats attributed to the brothers could sometimes be effective in putting an end to gossip and harassment. At the same time, it also meant that the students had to develop their own systems of handling conflicts and problems at school, without involving the school and adults.

The present results indicate that there is a strong prevailing local culture of 'solving' different problems at school. Even if the students referred to a support system that was built up around their brothers, family and local community, it is important to consider what this means for students' general welfare and the loneliness and precariousness that the existing distrust among students may cause. The construction of strong parallel systems – where representatives of Swedish society (in this case teachers in particular, but also the police and social workers) are not trusted by adolescent students, leading to the creation of other emergent local systems and methods of solving 'problems' – must be considered a serious consequence of the territorial stigmatization and increasing segregation taking place in Swedish society, as well as in other European countries. As suggested by Allweis et al. (2015), students and schools in socially deprived areas are often portrayed in relation to discourses of failures and low achievement.

Methodologically, it also worth mentioning the students' views on the researchers. During the interviews, it became clear that we as researchers were understood as 'guests in their reality', not only by the students expressing their views on the school and the local neighbourhood, but also by the students positioning the researchers as outsiders (cf. Archer & Hollingworth, 2010; Beach et al., 2013; Odenbring et al., 2017). Although most of the students are second generation immigrants and have Swedish citizenship, they referred to themselves as 'immigrants', whereas the researchers and the population with a Swedish background were referred to as 'Swedish'.

Moreover, particularly during the interviews with the boys, it became clear that there was a very strong culture of silence among the boys. This may have forced

them to keep quiet and not reveal sensitive information about their everyday life at school. One of the boys in particular controlled what was said during the interviews, using his body language and gaze (See also, Odenbring & Johansson, 2019b). At times this made it quite challenging for the male researcher to conduct the interviews with the boys, and to manage to deepen specific themes in the manner intended. The interviews with the girls also required some extra effort on the part of the female researcher, but during the interview process, the girls eventually opened up about their current school situation.

Given this, we wish to underline the importance of reflexivity. As a researcher, it is important to reflect on your own position when conducting research (cf. Thorne, 2005; Wilson, 2017). Thorne (2005) pinpoints this most distinctly: “academics studying the urban poor, when adults research children, they “study down”, seeking understanding across lines of difference and inequality” (p. 12). Reflecting on our own position as researchers, as the authors of this chapter, we are both white and could therefore be positioned as representatives of the majority Swedish population. Moreover, our upper-middle-class position also matters here, considering our roles as senior researchers at one of Sweden’s most prestigious universities. From the students’ perspective, this obviously positioned us as the ‘outsiders’ and ‘the Other’ in their neighbourhood – outsiders who were in addition conducting interviews at their school. One cannot ignore that our position as white, upper-middle-class adults has also had an impact on how we have interpreted different situations and how we have interpreted the students’ narratives. Still, interviewing students about their everyday life at school is vital if we wish to give different students a voice. By taking their point of view seriously, it is possible to create a dialogue and hopefully to find ways of decreasing the sense of distrust the students expressed while participating in the present study. This, we argue, underlines the importance of conducting more research on students’ different views in the future. Longitudinal studies could be an option, because they give researchers better opportunities to follow students during a longer period of time, thus creating possibilities to get ‘closer’ and build mutual trust.

References

Al-Dewany, Z. (2018). *Mer ojämlikhet är den verkliga no go-zonen* [More inequality is the real no-go zone]. Aftonbladet. Retrieved March 27, 2020, from: https://www.aftonbladet.se/ledare/a/Kv93g7/mer-ojamlikhet-ar-den-verkliga-no-go-zonen

Allweis, A., Grant, C. A., & Manning, K. (2015). Behind the photos and the tears; media images, neoliberal discourses, racialized constructions of space and school closings in Chicago. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 18*(5), 611–631.

Archer, L., & Hollingworth, S. (2010). *Urban youth and schooling: The experiences and identities of educationally “at risk” young people*. Open University Press.

Barnombudsmannen. (2018). *Utanförskap, våld och kärlek till orten. Barns röster om att växa upp i utsatta kommuner och förorter* [Exclusion, violence and love for one’s neighbourhood. Children’s views of growing up in socially disadvantaged municipalities and suburbs]. Barnombudsmannen.

Beach, D., & Sernhede, O. (2012). Learning processes and social mobilization in a Swedish metropolitan hiphop collective. *Urban Education, 47*(5), 939–958.

Beach, D., Dovemark, M., Schwartz, A., & Öhrn, E. (2013). Complexities and contradictions of educational inclusion: A meta-ethnographic analysis. *Nordic Studies in Education, 33*(4), 254–268.

Bunar, N., & Sernhede, O. (2013). *Skolan och ojämlikhetens geografi. Om skolan, staden och valfriheten*. Daidalos.

Chan, S. (2017). 'Last night in Sweden'? Trump's remark baffles a nation. *The New York Times*. Retrieved March 27, 2020, from: https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/19/world/europe/last-night-in-sweden-trumps-remark-baffles-a-nation.html

Demintseva, E. (2018). 'Migrant schools' and the 'children of migrants': Constructing boundaries around and inside school space. In *Race ethnicity and education* (pp. 1–15. Published online and ahead of print October 31st, 2018). https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2018.1538126

Estrada, F., Pettersson, T., & Shannon, D. (2012). Crime and criminology in Sweden. *European Journal of Criminology, 9*, 668–688.

Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity & Self-identity. Self and society in the late modern age*. Polity Press.

Gitz-Johansen, T. (2003). Representations of ethnicity: How teachers speak about ethnic minority students. In D. Beach, T. Gordon, & E. Lahelma (Eds.), *Democratic education. Ethnographic challenges* (pp. 66–79). The Tufnell Press.

Gottfredson, D. C., & DiPietro, S. M. (2011). School size, social capital, and student victimization. *Sociology of Education, 84*(1), 69–89.

Gudmundson, P. (2014). 55 "no go"-zoner i Sverige [55 "no-go" zones in Sweden]. *Svenska Dagbladet*. Retrieved March 30, 2020, from: https://www.svd.se/55-no-go-zoner-i-sverige.

Henriksen, A-K, & Bengtsson, T. T. (2016). Trivializing violence: Marginalized youth narrating everyday violence. *Young* Published online and ahead of print 13 October 13 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480616671995.

Jaffe-Walter, R. (2019). Ideal liberal subjects and Muslin "Others": Liberal nationalism and the racialization of Muslim youth in a progressive Danish school. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 22*(2), 285–300.

Johansson, T., & Herz, M. (2019). *Youth studies in transition: Culture, generation and new learning processes*. Springer.

Lacoe, J. R. (2015). Unequally safe: The race gap in school safety. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice, 13*(2), 143–168.

Leonard, M. (2006). Segregated schools in segregated societies. Issues of safety and risk. *Childhood, 13*(4), 441–458.

Lindberg, A. (2017). No go-zonen Täby [The no-go zone of Täby]. *Aftonbladet*. Retrieved March 27, 2020, from: https://bloggar.aftonbladet.se/ledarbloggen/2017/01/no-go-zonen-taby/.

Lunneblad, J., Odenbring, Y., & Johansson, T. (2017). *Brottsoffret i skolan. Professionellas berättelser om ungdomars utsatthet* [Crime victims in schools. School professionals' narratives about young people's vulnerability]. Daidalos.

Lunneblad, J., Johansson, T., & Odenbring, Y. (2019). Violence in urban schools: School professionals' categorizations and explanations of violence among students in two demographic areas. *International Studies in Sociology of Education, 28*(1), 63–80.

Meotti, G. (2018). Multiculturalism killed the Swedish utopia. *Arutz Sheva 7*. Retrieved from March 30, 2020: http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/22766

Nowell, S. L., Norris, M. J., White, E. D., & Moules, J. N. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*, 1–13.

Odenbring, Y., & Johansson, T. (2019a). *Hot och våld i skolvardagen. Att förstå och hjälpa utsatta elever* [Threats and violence in everyday life at school. Understanding and supporting vulnerable students]. Natur och Kultur.

Odenbring, Y., & Johansson, T. (2019b). "If they're allowed to wear a veil, we should be allowed to wear caps". Cultural diversity and everyday racism in a rural school in Sweden. *Journal of Rural Studies, 72*(2019), 85–91.

Odenbring, Y., Lunneblad, J., & Hellman, A. (2017). I småstadens marginal: Berättelser om en skolas integrationsarbete i en socialt utsatt stadsdel [In the margins of a small town: Narratives of integration in a school located in a socially disadvantaged area]. *Paideia, 14*, 51–60.

Öhrn, E. (2012). Urban education and segregation: The response from young people. *European Educational Research Journal, 11*(1), 45–57.

Sernhede, O. (Ed). (2011). *Förorten, skolan och ungdomskulturen. Reproduktion av marginalitet och ungas informella lärande* [The suburb, schools and youth culture]. Daidalos.

Thorne, B. (2005). *Gender play: Girls and boys in school* (10th ed.). Rutgers University Press.

Wacquant, L. (2008). *Urban outcasts. A comparative study of advanced marginality*. Polity Press.

Welply, O. (2018). ‘I’m not offensive but...’: Intersecting discourses of discrimination towards Muslim children in school. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 21*(3), 370–389.

Wilson, F. H. (2017). On geography and encounter: Bodies, borders, and difference. *Progress in Human Geography, 41*(4), 451–471.

Zaykowski, H. (2016). Victim consciousness among youth and their responses to violent encounters. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence.* Published online and ahead of print 13 April 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516642292