

Doing, being and becoming

Young people's processes of subjectivation between categories of age

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Foreword

Although many of the initial research questions have been altered, some overall questions have stubbornly persisted since the study, from which this thesis departs, first saw the light of day. With regard to my own point of departure, I have always marvelled at what is the naïve and simple, yet immensely compelling question of *how* and *why* lives turn out the way they do. How do young people who are conceptualised and categorised as ‘children’ change, transform and carry on in ways that make them acquire a sense of themselves as ‘adolescents’. How do they comprehend and give meaning to processes which in psychological textbooks are referred to as ‘development’. How *do* they develop and how *are* they developed. Why do some children and adolescents seemingly *become* ‘older’ without effort while others get caught up in tense negotiations about who they are and who they may become. Reflections surrounding such questions have continuously spurred my interest and repeatedly evoked many theoretical, methodological and analytical challenges. The research questions raised in this thesis are thus academically anchored and academically framed, yet arise from a persistent personal interest in understanding the processes through which people change and transform across the life course. To this day, I still think these questions represent some of the most intriguing issues in the discipline of psychology.

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The Department of Psychology (UiO) has been my base throughout these years and I have had the privilege of taking part in two of its research groups. The group *Culture and Society* consists of a rare constellation of people who share a profound interest in theory and critical reflection. Thanks for numerous intriguing discussions to Agnes Andenæs, Rolv Mikkel Blakar, Karsten Hundeide, Hilde Nafstad, Astri Heen Wold and all the others who have participated in the group. The research group in *Clinical Psychology* similarly offered many stimulating discussions. Colleagues have contributed with humorous comments and insightful reflections. Thanks to Lutine, Margrethe, Knut, Kjell, Aina, Kristin, Areana and Bettina for memorable lunches. I am grateful to Anne Jansen for discussing theoretical challenges and to Hanne Sogn who provided valuable comments on the papers.

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Summary

This thesis explores and details the processes through which children constitute and are constituted as adolescents. The papers presented in the thesis examine how young people acquire a sense of themselves within categories of age and how such processes call attention to the body. In doing so, the thesis attends to the body in two ways; first, it illuminates the way young people conduct and deploy their bodies when constituting themselves within and against categories of age. Second, it explores how notions of the body that are embedded in discourses of gender which prevail in contexts such as schools affect how young people behave as well as how they are perceived by their surroundings. The data on which the papers are based consist of qualitative interviews collected as part of a longitudinal study of the social transition between childhood and adolescence among 32 children in a multicultural neighbourhood in Oslo, Norway. All the participants were interviewed repeatedly, first through the course of two years (between the ages of twelve and fourteen), new interviews being conducted in their final year in secondary school (at the age of sixteen) and finally some in their second year of upper secondary (at the age of eighteen). The data on which the thesis is based consist of nearly 180 qualitative interviews; all conducted over a period of seven years.

In particular, the papers address three overall research questions. The first question relates to how intersecting categories such as gender, age, ethnicity and sexuality, as embedded in discourses, influence possible ways of being and becoming as an adolescent boy or girl. The second question concerns how young people *use* and *deploy* their bodies when constituting themselves within discourses that address such categories of identity. The third question has to do with developmental psychology and how feminist post-

structural theory and research provide analytical framework for understanding the processes through which young people become who they are. Drawing on perspectives from this theoretical field, the papers in this thesis offer a way of understanding the processes through which children and adolescents constitute themselves and are constituted as adolescents. One of the arguments pursued in the importance of elaborating new theoretical concepts and analytical tools to better account for the complexity in processes often referred to as *development*. The papers in the thesis outline a frame of knowledge that differs radically from the notions of development proposed in conventional psychology which assert that human development is manifested by the emergence of transformations, many of which are assumed to be caused by biological maturation. The onsets of such transformations are often assumed as occurring within time intervals referred to as categories of age. Thus, age is posited as the chronological marker of the intervals in which *development*, i.e., a particular transformation, is expected to occur. The result of representations like these in which biology and age intersect, is that adolescence is framed as merely a passage between childhood and adulthood.

All the papers in the thesis attend to age by focusing on the body; how children and adolescents perform, style and deploy their bodies and how notions of the body, as embedded in discourse, affect ways of being and becoming of age. In different ways, the papers illuminate how young people constitute and are constituted within categories of age through practices on and with the body. The argument pursued in the thesis is that to further knowledge of the processes through which children acquire a sense of themselves as adolescents, the body, both as notions embedded in discourse and as practice, needs to be the focus of inquiry.

List of papers

Paper I

Hauge, M.-I. (2009). Bodily practices and discourses of hetero-femininity: girls' constitution of subjectivities in their social transition between childhood and adolescence. *Gender and Education*, 21(3), 293 – 307.

Paper II

Hauge, M.-I. and Haavind, H. (forthcoming). Boys' bodies and the constitution of adolescent masculinities. *Sport, Education and Society*.

Paper III

Hauge, M.-I. (2008). The transformation of self from 'child' to 'adolescent': young people's processes of subjectivation between categories of age. Manuscript submitted for publication.

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction to thesis

This thesis examines the processes through which children constitute and are constituted as adolescents. In exploring these processes, it offers a frame of knowledge that particularly attends to how children conduct their bodies. It focuses on the bodily practices young people perform with the aim of becoming ‘older’, and it explores discourses, the systems of meanings which young people negotiate and interpret when making sense of themselves and their surroundings. The thesis details how the constitution of oneself as an adolescent involves continuously negotiating possible ways of *being* and possible ways of *becoming* as a particular boy or girl. Notions of ways of being and becoming an adolescent girl or boy are embedded in discourses young people deploy and encounter. When, however, young people constitute senses of themselves as children and adolescents, they not only negotiate ways of being and becoming with regard to age, but also deal with intersecting notions of categories of identity such as gender, sexuality and ethnicity that are embedded in the many discourses that the young people and their surroundings draw on.

The papers presented here are based on interviews conducted as part of a longitudinal qualitative study where 32 children from a multi-ethnic primary school in Oslo were interviewed repeatedly in the course of several years. The aim of the study was to examine the children’s participation and development in their social transition between childhood and adolescence. In a Norwegian educational setting, this involves the transition between primary school (*barneskole*, for 6 to 12-year-olds) and secondary school (*ungdomskole*, for 13 to 16-year-olds). The study was later extended to include

new interviews in the final year at secondary school and subsequently some in the second year at upper-secondary level (16-19-year-olds). The study explored the means by which children constitute and are being constituted as adolescents, particularly picking up on issues elaborated by participants in the interviews: issues such as whether to wear the Muslim headscarf, hetero-romantic relationships or the mastery in physical endeavours such as football.

When we investigate how young people ‘come into being’ as adolescents, one approach is to explore how notions of age are embedded in the discourses they deploy and how they relate to these. In contexts such as schools, discourses that refer to age can be viewed as meaning-systems that address ways of being and becoming. For instance, while children are expected to ‘act childish’ and to conduct their bodies in ways considered common for children, the category *adolescent* similarly presupposes certain ways of conducting the body, while rendering other ways of deporting the body impossible. Such a framework allows us to see style, appearances and sports as bodily practices through which the person is positioned within the many discourses that address notions of age and gender. Through the performance of some practices rather than others, young people constitute themselves and are constituted as subjects; they are recognised as *adolescents* and hence no longer *children*. Conversely, since discourses of childhood embed notions of the body that differ from the body as embedded in discourses of adolescence, young people are expected to behave differently from children, and are accordingly expected *not* to conduct their bodies like children or adults do. In this way, discourses affect how young people think, act and feel and how they continuously negotiate ways of being. Moreover, since discourses that concern categories of age such

as *adolescence* often intersect with other categories, such as gender, ethnicity and sexuality, children encounter and negotiate expectations that not only concern ways of becoming with regard to age generally, but also ways of becoming as an adolescent boy or a girl of a certain age, ethnicity, religion and sexuality, etc. The outlined framework allows us to see discourses that prevail in contexts such as schools (e.g. the discourse of adolescence as a time of storm and stress) as influencing the processes through which children acquire senses of themselves and become adolescents. And it allows us to see the practices children conduct on and with their bodies as ways of being recognised as subjects.

1.2 Research focus and aim of thesis

This thesis addresses three issues in particular. First, it examines the ‘passage’, i.e. the temporal processes through which children become adolescents. While most researchers in the field of developmental psychology and childhood studies acknowledge processes of change and transformation as temporal, surprisingly few studies are designed with the aim of following young people over the time such processes may take. In applying a longitudinal qualitative methodology, the study on which this thesis is based was designed with the intention of examining the social transition of children between childhood and adolescence. Beginning from when the children who participated in the study were twelve years of age, the study was planned as a longitudinal qualitative study with repeated interviews conducted over the course of several years. This meant that some of the participants in the study were engaged for up to seven years. The papers in the thesis all demonstrate the significance of applying a methodology that includes time

when furthering knowledge of the processes through which young people become who they are. Thus, applying a longitudinal qualitative research design when studying the processes through which children become adolescents has enabled studying how young people craft their sense of themselves and become who they are and the temporal dimensions of these processes.

The second issue addressed in this thesis pertains to how children ‘become’ adolescents. In detailing such processes, the thesis offers a comprehension of the processes through which young people become who they are which radically departs from the explanations asserted within conventional psychology. Here, transformations and changes are posited as owing to biology that takes place *within* the body, thus leaving the body as what Shilling (2003, p. 179) has referred to as ‘an absent present’. The papers in this thesis explicitly counter the comprehension of adolescence as a time of transformation proceeding from within the biological, yet unarticulated, body. In addition to depriving young people of the agency and effort invested in these processes, the framework suggested in most developmental theory also neglects the way they negotiate *when* and *how* such transformations may occur. As a result, little focus has been directed at how young people actively deploy their bodies in the processes through which they become who they are. This thesis calls attention to the body in that bodily practices and ways of deporting the body serve as analytical entrances to the study of processes of becoming.

The third issue addressed in the thesis concerns the significance of elaborating conceptual frameworks which provide new ways of understanding processes that within psychology usually are referred to as ‘development’. For instance, concepts such as

subjectivity and *processes of subjectivation* are in the thesis used to cover many of the processes often referred to as ‘development’, pointing to a post-structuralist frame of knowledge not usually applied in developmental psychology. In this thesis, concepts such as *processes of subjectivation* refer to the temporal processes through which subjects acquire a sense of themselves inseparable from the many comprehensions of being and becoming as embedded in discourses. The papers in the thesis suggest that young people’s *subjectivity*, i.e. their ‘sense of a self’ (Staunæs, 2003 p. 103), comes about through bodily practices such as style, gestures and ways of shaping the body – practices that are deployed with the aim of constituting the young person within or against discourses that prevail across the many contexts in which they interact. Through addressing these issues, the papers in the thesis provide a conceptual framework of how children become adolescents which offer new insights into these processes.

1.3 Locating the research field

Research on children and adolescents comprises a number of different research traditions. From my background in psychological scholarship I was familiar, although always somewhat uneasy, with the epistemology on which conventional developmental psychology was based; for its tendency to produce normative and ‘normalising’ discourses of development (McNaughton, 2005), its use of methods which posit children as objects (Torstenson-Ed, 2007) and its holding an ontology of children in which they are believed to passively develop (Burman, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2008).

In contrast to the frameworks included in conventional developmental psychology, research emerging from adjacent disciplines such as education and childhood studies

have to a larger degree developed frames of knowledge that emphasise the social contexts through which children and adolescents become who they are. This may not be a surprise since, for example, childhood studies was created as a critique of the fundamental assumptions on which developmental psychology is based (Jipson, 2001). However, despite the much-cited critique raised against developmental psychology (see Burman, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2008; McNaughton, 2005; Morss, 1996), the discipline has nevertheless maintained a focus on processes of change and transformation, both theoretically and empirically, thus emphasising the significance of temporality when attempting to comprehend the processes through which young people become who they are. The temporal dimension of social life is present both in theorisation (see e.g., Horowitz, 1987; Lerner, 1986) and research. In contrast, research emerging from fields such as childhood studies are accused of ‘lacking a time perspective’ (Torstenson-Ed, 2007, p. 62), thus producing temporal ‘snapshots’ (Berthoud, 2000) of children and adolescents. However, I have become more convinced of the potentials of both perspectives; developmental psychology for acknowledging temporal dimension of social life and childhood studies for its openness to theories and research from a number of disciplines. The papers in this thesis thus draw on theory and research emerging from a number of overlapping disciplines. This is theorisation which not particularly attends to children and adolescents, and research which uses methodologies other than those applied in the present study. The analyses presented in the papers thus combine and rework knowledge from different research traditions when investigating the processes through which young people acquire a sense of themselves and their surroundings.

2 Background

2.1 Introduction to developmental psychology

One notion of adolescence that prevails in many western societies is it as a time of transformation that prepares children for their lives as adults. This notion is embedded in discourses that metaphorically render adolescence as a stormy passage; in comes the innocent child who is to undergo significant transformation before finally being transformed to become a proper adult. What actually takes place during this passage from childhood to adulthood is framed as unsettling, whether it is hormonal flux or detachment from parents. The comprehension of adolescence as unsettling goes back to Stanley Hall, who in 1904 argued adolescence as a time of storm and stress (Arnett, 1999). The problem with this discourse is that it asserts that children are incomplete and adults-in-the-making (Thorne, 1993, p. 3). For the child who is to become an adolescent, failure to adhere to the notion of transformation as embedded within these discourses is rendered impossible, since *change* and *destabilisation* are outlined as ‘natural’ processes that proceed regardless of the young person’s active participation. This ‘psychological slant on youth’ has informed much subsequent research within social sciences and social policy (Bradley, 1996, p. 161).

A second problem with the representation of adolescence embedded in the ‘storm and stress’ discourse, is that it assumes the change and transformations that may take place as mainly due to biology. Lesko (2001, p. 7) details this framework and its effects:

The natural view of adolescence that grounds most of psychology, medicine, and policy-making assumes that young people between the ages of 12 and 18 have

naturally occurring, largely biological generated characteristics, behaviours, and needs. In this view biology is destiny, in that the adolescent body with hormone-induced growth spurt creates psychological, emotional, and interpersonal problems as young people and those around them respond to the physical and psychological changes. This adolescent is outside society and history, and the important concepts and issues are intra-individual, defined largely by the knowledge of psychology, medicine and, to a lesser extent, sociology and education. The theoretical perspective is a developmental framework, often discussed at stages of cognitive, psychosocial, or pubertal growth, out of which youth's need can be determined.

In *being* this biomedical entity, so to speak, young people's ways of acting, thinking and feeling are explained through discourses that embed notions of adolescence as a time when biology causes mood-swings and instability: 'She is really difficult these days, a typical adolescent'. Although this framework posits the shift between the age categories 'child' and 'adolescent' as to the result of a biological storm, however, the shift between 'adolescence' and 'adulthood' is often framed as a phase in which the storm settles.

Where the adolescent is posited as unstable and irrational, the adult is constructed as the peak of productive and rational responsibility and thus positioned as what may be seen as the top of the life course maturation graph. Such applications of concepts as *childhood* and *adolescence* are nevertheless usually used in ways that assert changes and differences between those times of life as mandatory (Lesko, 2001, p. 196).

2.2 The missing body in psychological research

Many of the questions that surround human development are old, some with roots in ancient Greece and the traditions of Western philosophy (Lerner, 1986). This particularly applies to the body and how it is represented within psychological scholarship. When Descartes (1596 – 1650) formulated the distinction between the mind and the body, often referred to as the mind-body dualism, he maintained a distinction running back to Plato that has had an immense impact on how the body is conceived within psychology in general and developmental psychology in particular. Descartes's philosophical starting-point was how humans come to know the world and how reliable our knowledge of the world is (Paechter, 2003, 2006). Viewing the body as separate from thought and reason, which he located in the mind, Descartes outlined the body as independent of the mind. This approach of distinguishing the mind and the body solved an epistemological problem between two substances: *res extensa* (the physical world) and *res cogito* (thinking) (Smith, 2007). Given this distinction, sense of self became a derivative of the thinking subject, fundamentally located in the mind in ways that left the body redundant (Paechter, 2006).

Within the field of psychology, the 'stubborn philosophical problem' (Crossley, 2001, p. 1) of the Cartesian legacy of the mind and body has had an immense impact on research and theorisation within developmental psychology. For instance, the focus on the mind is particularly evident in theories that assert that child development takes place due to biological maturation in which improved capacities precede higher forms of reasoning (Cole & Cole, 1996). Such representations of development thus 'locates' development in the mind. Although it is present, the body is seldom explicitly addressed.

As a site for higher forms of reason, the mind is instead maintained as distinguishable and different from the body. This ‘absent presence’ body is evident in many developmental psychological textbooks, as the following excerpt illustrates:

Modern theory in developmental psychology is based on biological and social insights from evolution, from embryology, from our understanding of processes of physical growth, from social, linguistic, and cultural processes. As a scientific discipline, one of its major concerns is with the origins of knowledge and the contributions of self-initiated and social factors to cognitive growth.

(Butterworth & Harris, 1994, p. 31)

Since psychological scholarship has become a discipline that studies the mind when attempting to understand behaviour, and has its foundation in a natural scientific epistemology, it is accused of neglecting the body (Finlay, 2006). Thus, whilst recent years have seen a ‘corporal turn’ in academia (Braun, 2000), which posits the body a focus of research instead of an implied presence in the background (Davies, 1997), this turn has remained remarkably absent from psychological scholarship. In viewing the body in a broad sense, however, one exception is the field of neuro-psychology which attempts to yield an understanding of the body in focusing on cellular and molecular mechanisms. The goal of this research is to be able to explain phenomena located in the ‘mind’ (such as memory) in biological terms. As Smith (2007, p. 150) suggests, this can be seen as a way of exceeding the ‘Descartesian ghost of dualism’, since this research somewhat paradoxically renders the mind no longer separate from the body, but rather as

part of the body. Moreover, although some research emerging from the discipline of psychology does focus on the body, the meanings attached to representations of the body have largely been neglected (Woollett & Marshall, 1997). Neither has the body been the focus of much theoretical enquiry (Budgeon, 2003).

Although the body in recent years has attained an increased interest within social sciences and childhood studies, the field of psychology continues to disregard the body as socially and subjectively meaningful, thus overlooking the body's non-biological significance. Moreover, neglecting the body other than as a biological unit within psychological research also relates to how the category age is treated in research (Bradley, 1996). Subsequently, how young people acquire senses of themselves as adolescents through ways of deporting their bodies has yet to receive the attention it deserves.

2.3 Young people's notions of being and becoming

A frequent notion embedded in the interview sequences that comprise the empirical data on which this thesis is based is that of the transition between childhood and adolescence as a regular, progressive and continuous transition from one age category to the next.

This notion of *becoming* can be seen as a discourse that prevails across the contemporary contexts in which children and adolescents interact. When making sense of the here and now, as well as the years ahead, children and adolescents make use of this discourse.

The discourse of becoming also influences young people as they get older. Many describe a notion of regular progression such as improved mastery of particular skills which follows with the becoming of age. The categorical and stepwise division of age which

mark much developmental psychology thus manifests itself in how young people think of the processes through which they come about as adolescents; they negotiate and enact the cumulative progression which developmental psychological theories assert. Thus, one of the major criticisms of developmental psychology is that the discipline produces *regimes of truth* that manifest themselves in notions through which people make sense of themselves and others (McNaughton, 2005).

3 Theoretical frameworks

3.1 Bringing the body back

Ways of conducting the body as a means of expressing age are evident when we observe pupils in the school yard. Children and adolescents use their bodies when participating in social practices with peers; they deport their bodies and perform practices that make them appear boyish, girlish, as children and as adolescents. The practices young people perform on their bodies and with their bodies thus embed meanings that go beyond the particular practice and the particular situation. They can be thought of not as randomly performed, but as constitutive in that they contribute to make the subject a particular person.

In analysing the interview sequences with the boys and girls who participated in the study as part of my Master's degree in Psychology, I became interested in the way many of the girls would address their bodies. In particular, many would describe practices such as ways of dressing or negotiations of ways of conducting the body in terms of what they considered appropriate or inappropriate. These were practices I interpreted as ways of making oneself come of age, many of which the girls experienced as expected of them owing to their age. Through the performance of such practices the girls *became* adolescents in that they themselves and their surroundings no longer conceived them as children (Hauge, 2001, 2003). In other words, they could be viewed as practices through which the girls constituted gender, this in ways which also concerned age. Not only did the girls perform practices which were considered usual for girls, but practices which were considered common when performed by girls of a certain age (and could be added, ethnicity). The performance of practices not previously performed could thus be

understood as transforming the girls from being recognised as children towards being recognised and acknowledged as adolescents. In other words, they could be viewed as practices through which the girls constituted intersections of gender and age which transformed them from being children towards becoming adolescents.

It was this thread of analysis which finally directed my attention to the body, and the ways the young people who participated in the study used their bodies when *making* or *constituting* themselves as adolescents. The many interviews revealed descriptions of self that maintained the body and sense of self as inextricably linked. Thus, unlike notions of the mind and the body as separate entities, the many interviews revealed descriptions of self that maintain the body and sense of self as inextricably linked; the *me* and sense of self were often articulated as inseparable from the body, as expressed in utterances like: *'I am a girl who always has been a bit boyish, I dress like a boy and I walk like a boy'*.

When starting the analyses for the second paper in this thesis, I decided to examine how the boys who participated in the study articulated their bodies and the notions of the young male body that were embedded in these descriptions. Although I had devised an analytic framework from previous analyses, it nevertheless took some time to notice how the body remained far more absent in the interviews with the boys. This related not only to the fact that references to the body were far more implicit or absent in the interviews conducted with the boys when aged twelve to fourteen, but also that the boys in these interviews would draw on discourses that embedded notions of the body which were very different from those many girls would deploy. For instance, when some of the boys would emphasise the importance of mastery in sports, it was not only the enjoyment of the practice itself (such as playing football), but also the practice as a way of becoming a

boy of a certain age, and thus as capable of certain endeavours not expected of younger boys. Bodily practices were constitutive in the sense that they produced or confirmed the subject as a boy of a certain age. Through some practices he would become a particular boy of a particular age within the many discourses of masculinity that prevailed in contexts such as schools.

When elaborating such tools to help make sense of processes usually referred to as ‘development’ accounting for the body, I first turned to theories that were familiar from earlier analyses of qualitative interviews. I soon found, however, that these theories, which can broadly be referred to as *social constructionism* and *cultural psychology*, to be limiting in terms of the analytical focus I gradually developed. The following sections briefly explain the theoretical frameworks that throughout the study have provided tools that subsequently guided the analyses. The understandings these theoretical perspectives offer, when reworked and transformed in combination with issues and descriptions embedded in the interviews, provided a basis for elaborating how children and adolescents constitute a sense of self as adolescents. Perspectives from these theories have drawn attention to how the body, both as practice and as embedded in discourse, enters into the processes through which the young people constitute themselves and by others are constituted as adolescents.

3.2 Discourses, the body and subjectivity

The term *discourse* refers to ‘a set of meanings, metaphors, representations [...] that in some way together produce a particular version of events’ (Burr, 1995, p. 48) or, as Youdell (2006a, p. 2) suggests, ‘meanings that frame social contexts’. Discourses can

thus be thought of as prevailing meanings which people use to interpret and make sense of themselves and others. Following such a comprehension of discourse, the person's sense of self is seen as constituted through and within a multiplicity of discourses that are deployed in the many contexts of social interaction. For Foucault, a central aspect was that discourses had the effect of producing truths about what is considered 'normal' and 'common', 'unnatural' or 'deviant'. On this basis, discourses of adolescence can be understood as producing 'normalising truths', many of which young people encounter as expectations regarding what is 'common' of them owing to their age and gender.

Foucault suggests that these processes involve the subject as an actor who influences and shapes the context as well as being acted upon by the context (Foucault, 1990). When Foucault theorises that subjects are constituted through discourse, he sees discourses as having the power of regulating ways of being. Here, some ways of being are accepted as 'normal' whereas others are rejected or considered troublesome. When Michel Foucault uses the concept of subjectivity, he refers to 'the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject', an active self-formation that takes place on people's bodies, and interferes with how people think and act (Rabinow, 1984, p. 11). Through such processes, Foucault suggests that discourses are *inscribed* on the body. He rejects the distinction between the body and subjectivity and the idea of the soul being within the body. Instead he argues that 'the inner self' is produced through its inscriptions *on* the body (Butler, 1999a, p. 311). Describing what he sees as *docile bodies* Foucault (1984, p. 179) uses the soldier as an illustration of how such inscriptions come about:

To begin with, the soldier was someone who could be recognised from afar; he bore certain signs: the natural signs of his strength and his courage, the marks, too, of his pride; his body was the blazon of his strength and valour; and although it is true that he had to learn the profession of arms little by little – generally in actual fighting – movements like marching and attitudes like the bearing of the head belonged for the most part to a bodily rhetoric of honour.

By learning attitudes like the bearing of the head, discourses are inscribed at the same time as the bearing of the head in a certain manner simultaneously *cites* a discourse. The subject becomes like the soldier through ways of deporting the body.

In her writings, Judith Butler (1990, 1993) builds on Foucault's notion of discourses as productive in constituting subjectivity. She foregrounds the body and suggests viewing gender as performance and subjectivity as constituted through the recitation of bodily practices, like ways of deporting the body, gestures, etc. Discourses thus may appear in articulations, i.e. they are deployed in daily speech, and they may also be cited in practices such as gestures, ways of deporting the body and ways of dressing. Butler also emphasises that subjects are performatively constituted to make sense as subjects. By this she means that ways of performing the body must then be intelligible within discourse for the subject to be recognised as a particular subject. Put simply, particular discourses of masculinity make the practices through which some boys constitute their bodies as strong and muscular intelligible. When some of the girls style their hair, nails and lips, this can be read as ways of constituting themselves as subjects within discourses of hetero-femininity while they at the same time are being subjected to

these very same discourses. Similarly, performances that do not make sense may fail to constitute a subject within the boundaries such as those represented in arenas such as schools (Youdell, 2006c, p. 45). The papers in the present thesis draw on theorisation and research emerging from feminist post-structuralist writing and research, and elaborate a framework of processes that are often referred to as ‘development’ within conventional psychology. In suggesting the body is a site on which discourses are inscribed, the papers in this thesis all suggest seeing children or adolescents as performing such inscriptions in ways that constitute them within or according to discourses which they deploy and encounter.

3.3 Intersections of categories of identity in processes of subjectivation

Discourses that prevail across the contexts in which children interact embed meanings that relate to several categories of identity. Discourses of hetero-femininity embed different meanings owing to intersections of categories such as gender, age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and so on. What is considered ‘usual’ and ‘expected’ of a girl will, for instance, change with age. For instance, while childhood is asserted as a time of ‘sexual innocence’ (Renold, 2005), many discourses claim adolescence is a time of sexual exploration. Discourses of sexuality thus address diverse notions of ‘what is usual’ depending on the different intersections of gender, age and sexuality embedded in them. Identity categories thus produce differences in how people understand themselves (Staunæs, 2003). A girl of a certain age and sexual orientation may understand herself according to intersections of categories such as gender, age and ethnicity: ‘I am a young girl, half Chinese and half Norwegian’. Since, however, the different constellations of

categories of identity produce different meanings; a young girl who is lesbian may perceive herself and be perceived by others differently from a girl who is heterosexual. In other words, the different *intersections* of categories produce different subjects and subjectivities.

Although the papers in this thesis detail how different intersections of categories affect and provide possible ways of being an adolescent boy or girl, it is particularly the intersections of categories of age and gender, and to some extent sexuality and ethnicity that are detailed in the analyses. In addition to gender categories, categories of age are the most salient category of identity through which subjects are differentiated and institutionalised throughout their lives. Institutions such as kindergarten, primary, secondary, and upper secondary schools all attend to the special needs and capacities the different ages are assumed to entail. The problem with this is that differences and variations of subjects are subdued, whereas resemblance based on age are emphasised. Thus, since age is used as a benchmark of certain characteristics, it is more often than not recognised as a category left unquestioned. Burman (1998, p. 213) calls attention the lack of contextualisation of age as a category of identity:

Age, the marking of time on bodies, seems to lie outside culture, within biology. Like gender, 'race', class and sexuality, age plays a key part in the organization of social relations, and, like these, differential treatment is typically justified by the appeal to 'nature'. But while assumptions about gender, 'race', class and sexuality are now being increasingly understood as social constructions that are historically

and culturally contingent, age, and in particular ‘the child’, seems particularly intransigent to this contextual analysis.

A common failing of frameworks that position age as lying outside culture is that they ignore age as discursive categories that in addition to entailing different meanings across contexts and time are also performed and understood differently by children and adolescents. As suggested in this thesis, when children constitute themselves as ‘adolescents’, and as *different* from who they are when positioned as ‘children’, they make use of such discourses of age. One way of conceptualising this is to say that children actively *use* and *draw* on discourses of age when negotiating their ways across contexts and time.

3.4 Reworking tools for analysing ‘development’

The term *feminist post-structuralism* refers to a number of perspectives that have in common approaches to personhood and subjectivity in ways that radically depart from the comprehension offered by conventional psychology. For instance, research that applies feminist post-structural perspectives has provided empirical analyses that have led to a rethinking of the body (Budgeon, 2003; Burkitt, 1999; Crossley, 2001; Frost, 2001, 2005; Gill, Henwood & McLean, 2005; Shilling, 2003, 2005; Staunæs, 2003; Søndergaard, 1996; Youdell, 2006c). In bringing the body back into research as other than a biological unit, these analyses have detailed how children and adolescents constitute senses of themselves through ways of deporting their bodies (see e.g. Nayak & Kehily, 2006; Staunæs, 2004, 2005; Youdell, 2004, 2006a,b,c). Particular to analyses that

applies feminist post-structural perspectives is that many have called attention to how *gender* is constituted through ways of performing the body.

The papers in this thesis, however, have a slightly different aim from the above research. First, while much research that draws on feminist post-structural perspectives usually calls attention to how gender intersects in processes of subjectivation, it is the categories of *child* and *adolescence* that are particularly fore-grounded in this thesis. Second, although research that applies feminist post-structural perspectives focuses on the conditions through which certain subjectivities become possible, few analyses explicitly address temporality. In this present thesis, then, perspectives from feminist post-structuralist theory are reworked and put together with the aim of accounting for processes often referred to as ‘development’. The ‘result’ of this reworking is what may be seen as a feminist post-structural account of processes that within psychological scholarship often is referred to as development.

4 The present study

4.1 Introduction of study

The present thesis draws its empirical data from a longitudinal school-based qualitative interview study that took place in Oslo, Norway. The overall aim of the study was to examine children's social transition and development between childhood and adolescence. In a Norwegian context this transition is institutionalised by a change of school from primary (in Norwegian, *barneskole*, which can be translated as 'children school') to secondary (in Norwegian, *ungdomskole*, which can be translated as 'youth school'). Later, the project received a grant from the University of Oslo that enabled the inclusion of new interviews when the participants had attended upper secondary school. The aim of the study was to gain knowledge of how children, in the company of family, peers and teachers, entered into practices and drew on discourses that facilitated and encouraged their becoming of age.

Encouraged by cultural psychological conceptions of children as active in transforming and constituting themselves in ways which made them appear older and thus as different from children who were younger than they themselves, the study was particularly interested in how young people growing up in an urban multicultural context negotiated their becoming of age. We were interested in all the different practices the participants conducted in their everyday lives and paid particular attention to how they invented and reasoned such practices across contexts and time.

The study was initiated by Professor Hanne Haavind, University of Oslo and Professor Liv-Mette Gulbrandsen, Oslo University College. Together with a group of female students of ethnic Norwegian majority background from the professional

programme in psychology, we formed a research group that was introduced to qualitative methodology, discussed theory and co-analysed interviews. All had some experience of interviewing, and did also conduct test-interviews prior to the interviews with the participants in the study. In line with the running idea behind the *Life Mode interviews* which was the chosen interview style, the interviewers were particularly trained to maintain an explorative attitude, some of which is particularly important when studying issues the researcher is familiar with. All the students based their Master's thesis on the data collected in the study, all with their own specific research questions outlined in the different interview guides that were applied. The study was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) and received funding from the Norwegian Research Council's Programme for Welfare Research.

4.2 Selection of schools and participants

The primary and secondary schools were selected on the basis of their location in a socially diverse neighbourhood in Oslo, the capital of Norway. Previously known as an area inhabited by industrial workers, this area has in recent years attracted families with immigrant backgrounds, and half of the schools' pupils are ethnic minorities. Meanwhile, particular parts of the area are popular among middle-class families of ethnic Norwegian majority backgrounds. Today this is a neighbourhood with an eclectic mix of people of different social, economic and ethnic belongings. As is usual in Norway, children enrol their local public primary school before proceeding to the secondary school which is usually located not far from the primary school. Both primary and secondary schooling are compulsory for all pupils. While primary education consists of seven years, lower and

upper secondary each consist of three years. Unlike the primary and secondary schools, upper secondary schools attend pupils from all over Oslo.

After gaining consent from the school authorities to conduct the study at the particular primary and subsequent secondary school, we informed the pupils' parents/guardians of the study and its aims. After visiting classes at the same primary school, an approximate total of 57 children, 32 of them (eighteen girls and fourteen boys) agreed to participate. Of these, one withdrew from the study, and one new participant was included during the course of the first two years. Extended funding allowed us to continue with the study, and the participants were asked to attend a further interview in their last year in secondary school of which sixteen accepted. The participants who had moved to other areas, and thus changed schools, were interviewed at their new school. In the first phase of the study, the participants were all interviewed by the same student researcher, and each researcher usually conducted the interview sequences with two of the participants. The interviews at upper secondary were conducted by me as a part of the work for this thesis.

One problem in many studies that apply a longitudinal research design is difficulty of keeping in touch with the participants. The Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) permits researchers to contact participants without the parents' permission at the age of sixteen, so many were at this point contacted via mail or telephone. This did nevertheless raise some challenges, since many did not respond. In the second phase of the study, when the participants had reached the age of eighteen and were in their second year at upper secondary school, ten agreed to take part in two new interviews. Of these, three were friends of one of the participants (two boys who in a Norwegian context were

of ethnic minority background and one girl of Norwegian ethnic majority background). In terms of age, the participants were interviewed starting from the age of twelve until the year they would turn fourteen, with follow-up interviews when they were sixteen and some finally at the age of eighteen.

The participants were of different ethnic backgrounds. Approximately half of them were born or had parents born in an Eastern European, Asian or North African countries and the other half had Norwegian ethnic majority backgrounds. They differed in their social and economic circumstances as well as religious affiliation. The participants reflected the diversity which marks young people who grow up in contemporary urban contexts.

4.3 The school context as the site of study

One way of viewing schools is as arenas in which categories of age and gender serve as the main social divider of young persons. This is particularly evident in the division of primary and secondary schools, but also in class divisions based on age. The aim of such divisions is to group young people according to expectations of competencies and abilities. Because age is the main category of identity which schools organise pupils according to, it is one of the main categories through which young people comprehend themselves in time and place. Children and adolescents encounter expectations of how to behave when at school and through school curriculums, from which they acquire sense of themselves and their surroundings.

Schools may be thought of as arenas that presuppose some subjectivities while excluding others (Youdell, 2006a), this in ways that concerns ways of deporting the body.

For instance, while some ways of conducting the body are considered usual at primary school, the very same practices will be referred to as childish while at secondary school. Thus, as Shilling (2003, p. 18) remarks, ‘schools are not just places which educate the minds of children, they are also implicated in monitoring and shaping the bodies of young people’.

4.4 Life Mode interviews

‘If you want to know how people understand their worlds and their lives, why not talk to them?’ With this simple, yet observant question, Steinar Kvale (2007) introduces his book *Doing Interviews*, which particularly elaborates upon the qualitative interview. There are a number of different approaches and techniques broadly referred to as qualitative interviews; what they have in common is that they are conversations with a structure and a purpose determined by the one who is responsible, i.e., the researcher (Kvale, 2007). In this study, we were particularly interested in the processes through which children constituted themselves across contexts and time and how they constituted senses of themselves across these contexts. The challenge arising from such a research focus was to structure the interviews so that they could generate insights into subjectivity and processes of subjectivation, which also had been noted by other researchers who deployed qualitative interviews in studies that run across time (McLeod, 2003). In addition, such a research focus called attention to whether qualitative interviews could provide the empirical data needed to further knowledge of the processes through which young people become who they are.

As one of the initiators of the project, Hanne Haavind previously had developed the Life Mode interview format (Haavind, 1987, 2003, 2007) and Liv Mette Gulbrandsen had many years' experience in using this format in research with children (Gulbrandsen, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2006) this particular interview format had demonstrated its usefulness in providing data on how young people make sense of themselves and their surroundings.

The overall idea of the Life Mode interview format is that the previous day or the previous week is used to structure the dialogue. From this format other research issues of interest such as style, youth culture and interactions with friends and the family may be explored. The running idea in the Live Mode Interview format is a focus on comprehensions that may seem self-evident and which often appear as taken for granted in the participants descriptions. The researchers who conduct the interviews are therefore trained to particularly pay attention to the content of concepts such as 'the popular girls', 'a nice body', 'too thin'. This is done by exploring and disentangling such statements as they emerge in the interview ('when you say it has been vital for you not to have sex with your boyfriend before you are ready, can you say something about what it means for you to be ready?'). Although a focus on maintaining openness to the many statements and stories are crucial in most qualitative interviews, the running idea behind the Life Mode interview format is for the researcher to especially be attentive to issues which may appear self evident and familiar. From the participant's point of view, the focus on, for them, apparently evident details generated joyful comments such as: 'are you going to ask me about what I think of the clothes I wear this time as well?!'. It was also this aspect of the interview situation that were brought forward as the main topic when the participants after being interviewed discussed the study in the schoolyard.

A concern this way of interviewing calls attention to is the challenge of balancing the topics of interests so that questions, at least to a certain extent, 'follow' from descriptions given by the participant who is being interviewed. This means that the researcher never will name such as for instance a 'best friend' relation before such a concept is introduced by the participant. Like all qualitative interviewing, the researcher is thus faced with the challenge of steering the conversation from general descriptions towards more detailed elaborations ('thick descriptions'). Within this framework, the previous day thus becomes an aid to structure the conversations and to regain the initial focus ('I see, but if we return to when you got back from school...').

What can we learn of the processes through which young people acquire a sense of themselves across time from Life Mode interviews? Can descriptions of everyday practices and everyday lives that emerge from such an interview format provide knowledge of processes often referred to as development? In my opinion, it is the combination of the recognisable and known structure and inviting openness to the participant's reflections which is the strength of the Life Mode interview format. While the focus on everyday practices is a format with which even the youngest children are familiar, the data emerging from such a way of interviewing enables analysis of issues which have been explicitly elaborated ('I think my thighs are too fat, but my friend Ingrid, she's perfect!') and analysis that addresses the same issues more implicitly ('You know, a man can't be thin and scrawny 'cos a man's got to be able to protect himself'). Such explicit and implicit elaborations did in a number of ways address the research topics which the study aimed to explore. We were, for instance, interested in how gender was given meaning among those who participated in the study and one of the overall

research questions was to investigate how notions of gender affected possible ways of being and becoming across the many contexts in which the young people interacted. Although gender was explicitly addressed across all the interviews, it is nevertheless descriptions that do not necessarily address gender explicitly which may be analytically the most interesting; why do girls elaborate on body figure and appearance from the very first interviews while the issues of the body are absent or silenced in the interviews with boys of the same age? Why do particular ways of performing the body render the girl 'common' in ways that need no further explanation, while other performances create tensions the girl is forced to negotiate?

When it comes to what may be seen as a limitation of such a method, I will point to the scope of data emerging from the format. As the analyses have become more focused, I have sometimes called for more specificity and elaborations on particular issues. This was evident when analysing the way the children used their bodies when constituting themselves as adolescents. Here, one option could have been to conduct interviews that thematically focused on the body only: Why wasn't the body addressed more extensively in the interviews with the younger boys? Why didn't I ask the participants to recall how they perceived their bodies when younger, when we spoke in the final interviews? Distracted by hindsight, however, I neglected the fact that the focus of my analyses was more and more drawn towards how children deployed their bodies when constituting themselves as adolescents. That is, it was *issues that emerged from the interviews that more and more came to guide the analytical enquiries that increasingly became the focus of the analysis*. If how children deploy their bodies when constituting senses of themselves as adolescents had been the initial research focus, the interview questions

would have been very different. And if we had not asked for everyday practices, if we had neglected to address issues of gender, ethnicity and practices that changed with the becoming of age, the readings of the interviews might have highlighted other issues which would have given the analysis a different focus. Therefore, since the aim of the Life Mode interview is to maintain an open focus while also focusing in depth on selected topics, the format provides data which not would have been generated if the interview was more specific. Thus, what may be considered a weakness of the interview format, i.e. its broad scope, also represents the potential and strength of the method; in that the scope and openness to issues the children bring into the interviews make possible the rich and extensive data the method allows for. This richness is reflected in analyses that have applied this format (see e.g. Andenæs, 1994a,b, 1995, 2005; Gulbrandsen, 1998, 2000, 2003; Skjær Ulvik, 2007; Søndergaard, 2006) since the analyses are more grounded in the empirical material (although usually not as prescribed in Grounded Theory) than is the case in many analyses of qualitative interview data.

4.5 Longitudinal qualitative methodology

Within qualitative research, studies that follow the participants over an extensive period of time constitute a relatively new methodology that has yet to be fully articulated as a coherent methodology (Neale & Flowerdew, 2003, p. 189). The thematic absence of such a design within the literature on qualitative methods is surprising considering such design is suitable for studying growth, change and transformation as situated in and across time (Thomson & Holland, 2003). This absence is also reflected in literature on qualitative interviews which mainly focuses on the single interview, thus failing to explain the

benefits and shortcomings of repeatedly interviewing the same participant. Rather than presenting a snapshot picture, longitudinal qualitative methodology can be seen as enabling a dynamic movie, since 'it is through time that we can begin to grasp [...] the strategies used by individuals to generate and manage change in their social life' (Neale & Flowerdew, 2003, p. 190).

Although longitudinal qualitative designs enable data to be produced across time, which in this present study allowed us to focus on how young people constitute senses of themselves as adolescents, one challenge that arises from such a design is how to deal with the extensive amount of data that emerged from it. In order to get a general view of all the interviews, I used the N-vivo which is a programme which is software for qualitative research. Although frequently referred to as a program for analysing qualitative data, it is my opinion that the program rather should be thought of as a useful tool for getting to know the data through coding and to do quick searches for particular concepts. When analysing the data more in depth, however, I drew on more recent adoptions of qualitative enquiry (Haavind, 2000ab), some of which leans heavily on post-structural theory (see Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Law, 2004; Stormhøj, 2006) and feminist post-structuralism in particular (Søndergaard, 2002ab, 2005; Staunæs, 2003). These approaches to qualitative interview data are alike in considering data generated through empirical studies to contain the complexity, contradiction and messiness which characterise everyday life.

Aside from the comprehensive amount of data that emerge from studies that apply longitudinal designs, several more challenges that are actualised through such designs should be mentioned. One is the problem of getting hold of the participants during such

an extended length of time. Many of those who participated in the study lived in government housing, which meant that their parents continuously had to negotiate where to live next. Since we did not have access to national registers, we were unable to get hold of new addresses. Another concern was how many times we could contact those of the participants who hesitated when asked to take part in new interviews. The difficulty of maintaining contact with the participants was thus a recurring concern, particularly in the final phase of the study.

Studies in which children and adolescents participate and which apply longitudinal designs raise ethical issues around establishing relations that last over time, all for the sake of the researcher's need for collecting data. As regards the ethical implications of establishing relations with young people, I would see this as strength rather than a weakness of longitudinal qualitative research that involves children. This concerns the 'quality' of the interviews which often contain more elaborations and descriptions, which may be due to both the interviewer and the interviewee becoming more 'skilled' with practice. Also, knowing that there will be many interviews can also be a relief since it enables a re-telling and explanation of issues from one interview to the next; everything does not need to be said all at once. Overall the participants expressed mainly positive feelings about being interviewed and the researchers generally reported feeling comfortable and enthusiastic as they got to know the participants.

4.6 Getting to know each other through interviews

Since all participants predominantly were interviewed by the same researcher throughout the duration of the study, the researcher and the participant became better acquainted as

the study progressed. For example, some participants would bring something they would like the interviewer to see such as DVDs, some would bring a particular kind of dish from their parents' home country and some would bring small gifts. Many were eager to talk about issues that had occupied them since the last interview. The participants would also ask questions of the researchers such as what it was like to study at the university, the researcher's occupational status, whether they had children, where they came from, and so on. This contributed to a particular kind of inter-subjective familiarity in that interviews would include references to earlier interviews ('Do you remember that I told you about me and Marcus having a fight?') as well as references to other participants.

When reading through the interviews in the aftermath of the study, one striking aspect is how the participant reflections and 'thick descriptions' become more detailed throughout the interview sequence. One assumption is to see this as a result of a 'maturation' of age. However, it may just as much reflect the participants becoming more familiar with the researcher and the interview style, as well as the researcher becoming more comfortable with interviewing through the acquisition of skills in the rather untypical conversation which qualitative interviewing represents.

Looking back on the ten years I have been involved in the study, and what seems like endless readings of the interview sequences that emerged from it, I am still struck by the enthusiasm and enjoyment that the participants expressed throughout the study. Although longitudinal research with children raises some ethical dilemmas which I will return to, I am convinced of the advantages of using longitudinal designs when it comes to research that involves children and young people. The process of getting to know each other from interview to interview was primarily expressed as being something positive,

both by the participants and the interviewers, thus lending support to longitudinal qualitative studies that have reached similar conclusion (Thomson & Holland, 2003).

4.7 Analysing of processes of subjectivation

Interviews of children during their final year in primary school and the first year in secondary school, new follow-up interviews during the last year in secondary school and finally during their second year in upper secondary, provided empirical data that enable studying how subjects categorised as *children* and later *adolescents*, constitute and negotiate senses of themselves across shifting contexts and time. This particular data raised the question of how to analyse interview sequences, not only in terms of the challenges emerging from the amount of data, but also in terms of how to get knowledge of the processes through which young people became adolescents. Thus, one challenge I was faced with was how to account for ‘the changing subject in process’ (Thomson & Holland, 2003, p. 243) without reducing the complexities and contradictions such processes of subjectivation necessarily imply. How to analyse qualitative interviews when attempting to get knowledge of processes of being and becoming? How can qualitative interviews provide knowledge of processes of subjectivation and how can ‘subjectivation’ as a theoretical concept be read into qualitative interviews? If disregarding notions of ‘development’ as prevailing within conventional psychology, which other concepts of processes of continuity and change could else be used? And how can categories such as age, gender, sexuality and ethnicity serve as analytic tools in the study of the processes through which young people acquired senses of themselves as adolescents? Such questions, along with the comprehensive collection of data, demanded

analyses in each interview sequence as well as readings between interview sequences. These were analyses that required repeated readings with a particular focus on similarities as well as comparisons between similar and contrasting issues. How did each participant address own body and the body of others? If not explicitly addressed by the researcher, which overall issues conveyed the body? Which body were articulated as troublesome and which body was framed as worthwhile? In which interviews was the body apparent, and in which interviews was the body absent or silenced? How did meanings attached to the body intersect with other categories of identity such as age, gender, sexuality and ethnicity?

These analytic readings were inspired by research that have applied perspectives from feminist post-structuralism (see e.g. Youdell, 2004, 2005, 2006abc), which provided ways of grasping the complexity and ambiguity imbedded in the processes being and becoming as a particular boy or girl across contexts and time. Thus, research that draw on feminist post structuralist perspectives not only provided a theoretical frame of knowledge, but also offered useful and valuable descriptions of ways of analysing empirical data and comprehensions of what kind of knowledge qualitative analyses may provide.

The chosen theoretical perspectives have helped disentangle some of these complexities. However, since the interviews address a number of issues, they have informed the theoretical perspectives and made the applied theories meaningful and applicable as analytic tools. This mutual exchange and adjustment between readings of theory and interviews alike have been important in the process of elaborating, creating and generating the final analyses.

4.8 Reflections on trustworthiness, consistency and transferability

The chosen methodology and applied theories all reflect the epistemological affiliation of a study. As regards what is often referred to as trustworthiness (validity) and consistency (reliability), different qualitative epistemologies will address these issues differently.

While a number of textbooks on qualitative methodology will argue for validity and reliability in ways that bear resemblance to criteria established within quantitative methodology (see e.g. Kvale, 1996, 2007; Silverman, 2000), others stress the necessity of elaborating criteria for the quality of research that goes beyond the conceptual framework offered by the natural sciences (see e.g. Harding, 1986; Keller, 1985; Lather, 1991). I will here draw on Fog (1994) who argues for the importance of using a terminology that suits the complexities and challenges that are particularly relevant to qualitative methodology. She makes a distinction between trustworthiness (validity) and consistency (reliability) in which the first refers to the internal procedures of a study and the latter refers to the interpretation and knowledge claims derived from the data. These are aspects which all pertain to the research process and knowledge production, and should therefore be seen as overlapping and mutually informed, rather than distinct and separate.

As concerns trustworthiness, the internal procedures of a study, we chose a longitudinal design since the aim was to collect data which made it possible to study processes of becoming across time. Trustworthiness also concerns the craftsmanship of the interviewer (Kvale, 2007). In this present study, this was sought through a number of means, such as the researcher's knowledge of qualitative methodology and the study's epistemology. All the researchers were introduced to the craftsmanship of qualitative interviewing such as how to be able to conduct interviews that could provide useful and

elaborated descriptions and the importance of keeping an open and explorative mind. All the interviewers also conducted pilot-interviews before the onset of the study.

As is customary within qualitative enquiry, we usually addressed issues of interest by beginning with open, explorative questions and gradually becoming more specific. Rather than assuming a common agreement with the participant, the researchers were aware of the importance of asking specific questions about how *this* particular girl or boy experienced *this* particular event. The latter is especially important when researching 'common' everyday issues which the researcher herself has much knowledge of, such as childhood, adolescence and the school day. This can make certain issues appear self-evident in ways that the researcher may take for granted, and thus leave them less subjected to exploration.

Another issue that we called attention to was how we as adult researchers comprehended the participants in the study. As Punch (2002) notes, how researchers see young people affects the way we listen to them. This means that if we perceive children as vulnerable, we are likely to be more careful when preparing and conducting interviews with them. Similarly, if we perceive children as very different from adults we are likely to interpret their accounts differently from those spoken by an adult. One way to solve this methodologically is suggested by Solberg (1996, p. 54), who argues that a certain 'ignorance of age may be a useful methodological technique to avoid the trap of regarding children's accounts as owing to their age, rather leaving age open to empirical investigation'. The analyses in the papers all depart from such a notion. Instead of seeing the participants' accounts as *owing* to age, they were analysed with a focus on how they might be viewed as *constitutive* of age.

Another concern in studies in which young people participate is the issue of the reliability of their accounts, an issue much debated within the literature on qualitative methodology (see Andenæs, 1991; Greene & Hill, 2005; Hogan, 2005; Komulainen, 2008; Nespor, 1998; Punch, 2002). The status given to children as participants in research is also much discussed. This particularly concerns their age and whether their statements may be seen to reflect the 'truth'. Embedded in this discussion is a notion of children as being potentially less reliable than adults. As Punch (2002) remarks, children, like adults, may lie to researchers or they may say what they think the researcher may like to hear. In numerous readings of the interview sequences, however, what struck me was the effort the participants made when attempting to describe their lives to the researchers. Thus, although the interviews cover descriptions that from one interview to another differ in ways which some epistemologies would consider as lies, and thus untrustworthy, it is my opinion that different versions of stories reveals the complexity which comprise processes of meaning-making. Consequently, explanations that changed from one interview to the next were merely viewed as reflecting the ongoing negotiations as embedded in processes of meaning-making in that meanings are not understood as fixed and stable so much as fluid and transformative.

With regard to interpretation of the interviews, being a group of researchers enabled us to discuss the many interpretations with others who were familiar with the study. Was such an interpretation sound? Were there other interpretations which would point to other issues? It also enabled us to ask the researcher who had conducted the interview if a particular interpretation cohered with her own comprehension of that particular issue.

Transferability relates to whether the interpretations derived from a study may be transferable to other contexts. In my opinion, the analyses in this thesis should not be viewed as unique to the participants in the present study. Instead, the analyses and conceptual frameworks detail processes which I will argue offer knowledge which pertains not only to the participants in the study. Instead,

4.9 Ethical considerations

A study such as the present brings forward a number of ethical considerations, many of which particularly apply to research with children and young people. The study was designed to meet the requirements of the statutory data privacy administered by The Norwegian Social Science Data Services, which have accepted the study. This means among other things to obtain informed consent by parents/guardians when young people of under age participate in a study. However, the law of *protection of privacy* makes clear that those who participate in a study must give their consent to participation. The main rule is that parents/guardians consent to participation until the participant reaches 18 years of age. The law of protection of privacy states that if the collected data is not sensitive character, the adolescent can give their consent from the age of 15. The study meets these requirements and is accepted by the NSD. Moreover, the law of protection of privacy states that even if parents give their consent for the child to participate in research, the child must give their accept if at a age where this is possible. The information given to the child should be formulated in ways that make it possible for the child to understand the aim of the research, and it is stressed that the child must be informed in ways that makes it possible for him or her to understand that participation is

voluntary. This issue of voluntary participation is considered particularly important if the research is conducted at institutions on which the child depends, such as schools, hospitals or sport clubs. These were considerations that continuously were attended to as the study went along. With no exceptions, all interviews started out informing of voluntary participation and the right anytime to withdraw from the study. The anonymity of data and professional secrecy was similarly a standard issue in the introduction of each interview.

5 Summary of papers

5.1 Summary of paper I

Title: Bodily practices and discourses of hetero-femininity: Girls' constitution of subjectivities in their social transition between childhood and adolescence

This paper details how girls constitute and are constituted as adolescents by focusing on how they negotiate discourses of hetero-femininity through ways of conducting their bodies in relation to boys. Such negotiations become more explicit as the girls enter secondary school. The paper focuses on how four of the girls who participated in the study negotiate ways of conducting their bodies in relation to boys. This particularly concerns what are considered proper ways of dressing and relationships with boys such as hetero-romantic relations. The paper details how girls are required to negotiate discourses that embed complex intersections of categories such as gender, age, sexuality and religion when constituting themselves as adolescents across the many contexts in which they interact. Owing to the multiplicity of such intersections which are embedded within prevailing discourses, girls are positioned and position themselves within a number of subject positions when constituting themselves as adolescents and thus no longer as children. The paper argues that being and becoming an adolescent girl means continuously to negotiate oneself within or according to these discourses, particularly through ways of performing the body in relation to boys. Here, some ways of conducting the body constitute the girl within acknowledged intersections of age, sexuality and gender while other practices cause tense and difficult negotiations of possible ways of being and becoming. The paper argues that girls invent and insist upon the legitimacy of intersections of gender, age and sexuality, although such negotiations for many come at

an expense. One conclusion that emerges from the paper is the importance of paying attention to discourses of hetero-femininity, as well as how girls conduct their bodies in ways that position them according to these, when aiming to understand how girls in their diversity struggle and invest in the constitution of themselves as adolescents.

5.2 Summary of paper II

Title: Boys' bodies and the constitution of adolescent masculinities

The background for writing this paper was the way conventional psychology addresses phenomena referred to as 'development' as being the result of biology, thus ignoring how children and adolescents constitute and are constituted across contexts and time. The paper focuses on how children use and deploy their bodies when constituting themselves as adolescents, and thus no longer as children, an issue which is largely overlooked in conventional developmental psychology.

The analysis presented in this paper emerged from the observation that boys and girls articulate their bodies very differently throughout the interview sequences. The interviews with the girls aged twelve revealed that they elaborated many issues that concerned their bodies such as ways of dressing, hairstyle and body figure. They also deployed discourses that embedded notions of the female body and sexuality when reasoning which practices they might perform.

Analysis of interview sequences with the boys, however, revealed the young male body to be far more unarticulated and thus thematically absent. When the boys spoke their bodies into existence, however, they would draw on different discourses from the girls. For instance, while in primary school, the interviews with the boys revealed few

explicit references to the body other than as playful and spontaneously involved in practices they engage in, interviews conducted at secondary and upper secondary school embedded descriptions of the male body that leaned heavily on discourses of the male body in terms of technical competencies, endurance or strength. The paper illuminates how boys constitute senses of themselves in their social transition between childhood and adolescence by negotiating discourses of masculinity that in a number of ways address the male body. Demonstrating how prevailing discourses of gender and masculinity embed representations of ways of being and becoming as an adolescent boy, the paper illuminates how the male body becomes a domain for development in young boys becoming of age. The article argues that the constitution of oneself as an adolescent boy involves having to negotiate intersections of masculinity and age as embedded within discourses that prevail in their contexts of interaction. The paper suggests that discourses that are deployed in contexts of interactions influence possible ways of being and becoming as an adolescent boy. The paper further emphasises focusing on how discourses of masculinity shape and direct possible ways of being and becoming an adolescent boy.

5.3 Summary of paper III

Title: The constitution of self from 'child' to 'adolescent': Young people's processes of subjectivation between categories of age

On the basis of the empirical analyses emerging from paper I and paper II, paper III delineates the analytical framework outlined in the first two papers and suggests a conceptual framework of how children constitute and are constituted as adolescents

through processes in this paper referred to as *processes of subjectivation*. In detailing such processes, the paper argues for the importance of the suggested framework when furthering knowledge of processes usually referred to as *development*. Thus, the first paper focuses on gender discourses that address the male body in ways which make the young male body a domain for development. The second paper elaborates how girls conduct their bodies when positioning themselves within discourses that intersect with notions of age, gender and sexuality. Departing from the empirical analyses in these papers, the third and final paper in this thesis more closely illuminates a framework of the processes through which young people become who they are. The paper shows how perspectives and concepts emerging from feminist post-structural theory may be applied as analytical tools in attempts to understand how young people constitute themselves and are constituted within categories of age. It is argued that age is constituted through performance of bodily practices along chronologies as embedded in discourses children encounter with the becoming of age. Age thus becomes a matter of how the young person performs practices along such chronologies, how s/he performs the particular practices and which of the many chronologies that prevail as common in multicultural contexts that are being applied. The suggested framework posits that young people constitute themselves within categories of age by conducting their bodies in ways they consider expected of them due to their age, gender and ethnicity, as such expectations are embedded in discourse.

Two main conclusions emerge from this paper. First, the paper stresses the importance of calling attention to ways of conducting the body along chronologies as embedded in discourse when we try to understand the processes through which young

people become adolescents. Second, the paper emphasises the importance of applying a methodology that includes temporality when we try to understand the processes through which children and adolescents become who they are.

6 Discussion

6.1 Issues of power and agency

The papers in this thesis examine the processes through which young people constitute and are constituted as adolescents. The analytic focus is on how young people use and deploy their bodies, and how the different bodily practices are interpreted and given meaning by themselves and their surroundings. In discussing the processes, which can be referred to as *processes of subjectivation*, I will pay particular attention to three issues: 1) how power plays into processes of subjectivation; 2) the issue of the subjects agency within such processes; and finally 3) whether it is useful to understand processes of subjectivation as ‘development’. The following discussion will elaborate issues of power and agency in relation to the processes through which children become adolescents as outlined in this thesis.

6.2 What about power?

As explained in previous sections, the perspectives that have influenced and inspired the analyses presented in the three papers is research and theorisation emerging from a field which broadly can be referred to as feminist post-structuralism. A key assumption that exists not only within feminist post-structuralism, but in post-structuralism in general, regards to how subjects are subjected to power. Butler (1997, p. 2) draws on Foucault’s notion when she elaborates this further:

We are used to thinking of power as what presses on the subject from the outside, as what subordinates, sets underneath, and regulates to a lower order. [...] But if,

following Foucault, we understand power as *forming* the subject as well as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence and what we harbour and preserve in the being that we are.

If we follow such a notion, power may be seen as embedded in the processes through which people are constituted as particular subjects. For Foucault, processes of subjectivation take place centrally through the body (Butler, 1997), and power is exercised, for instance, through knowledge such as that considered ‘common’, ‘strange’, ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. Such knowledge is embedded in discourse and produce inclusions and exclusions, dominance and submission. Instead of power being seen as something that is possessed and asserted, subjects are instead seen as subjected to discourse in the sense that who they become and how they experience themselves – how they act, think and feel – come about through discourse.

However, although the concept of power is not made explicit in none of the thesis papers, all illuminate discourses as not existing in what Weedon (1987, p. 107) refers to as a ‘bipolar’ relation of power and powerlessness. Instead, young people continuously negotiate themselves within or according to discourses, some of which they will claim to belong, while they experience others as tense and troubled. They reject discourses they encounter, subvert some and contribute to invent new comprehensions. The point is that power, as embedded in discourses, affects how young people experience themselves and each other. Ways of being are regulated through what prevails as common in discourses.

An example from paper I can be used to illustrate this point further. It is common for the girls who participated in the study at a certain point to encounter discourses of hetero-femininity that embed different intersections of gender, age and sexuality. These discourses embed knowledge claims that frame girls as ‘keepers’ and ‘protectors’ of female sexuality which, depending on how this sexuality is attended to through ways of performing the body, constitute girls as ‘cheap’, ‘decent’ and so on. For instance, some discourses of hetero-femininity assert progression in hetero-sexual intimacy as ‘usual’ and ‘natural’ in adolescence. This knowledge claim regulates which practices girls and boys may deploy, and which practices people in their surroundings such as parents, siblings and teachers expect them to deploy. It creates processes through which some girls are included and others are excluded. Although the practices that are considered ‘proper’ to maintain a subjectivity as an untroubled girl differ, however, the becoming as an adolescent nevertheless forces girls to negotiate the knowledge claims as embedded in discourses of hetero-femininity. Power can thus be seen as embedded in such processes through the bodily practices of subjectivation which young people adopt or refrain from adopting.

6.3 What about agency?

While conventional developmental psychology has a tradition of positing the child as developing through processes in which s/he holds no agency, the approach outlined in this thesis posits children as far more active in the processes through which they become adolescents. Young people are considered basically social and competent in the present, thus not only as potentially competent in their future. At the same time, all the papers

acknowledge the constitutive force as embedded in the discourses that prevail in the many contexts in which the young people interact.

To claim subjectivity as discursively or performatively constituted is central to the work of Foucault and Butler. As Søndergaard (1996, p. 240) points out, however, there is a duality embedded in processes of subjectivation; it is through discursive practices and culture that the subject becomes intelligible and acknowledged as a subject, but it is also through these very same processes that embed the subject's own creative and agentic force. When investigating subject agency in Butler's writing, Davies suggests an agency in which 'they [subjects] can reflexively and *critically examine their conditions of possibility* and in which they can both subvert and eclipse the powers that act on them and which they enact' (Davies, 2006, p. 426, italics added). The inextricable duality in these processes is important to emphasise since young people *constitute* themselves as subject at the same time as they are *constituted* as subjects. They *develop* and are *developed*. They *do* and *become*. The processes through which young people acquire a sense of themselves and through which they become who they are are thus far more complex than either an active or a passive notion of agency and power may suggest. Davies and colleagues (2006, p. 16) elaborate this aspect further when they write:

The process of transformation, then, is not so much the result of a rational choice to be someone or something else in particular, but a movement, a 'decomposition', an engagement in a messy process in which one 'scrapes and catches and drags' in a complex process of

reinscription, of rubbing out the unthinkable; a decomposition,
and a fractured, messy recomposition, of thought and of body.

Thus, the processes by which children constitute themselves and are constituted as adolescents can be viewed as involving ways of conducting body, which children and adolescents may not perform with any reflection other than these as usual practices owing to their age and gender.

7 Implications of study and concluding remarks

7.1 Bringing the body back in psychology

One of the main implications emerging from this thesis is an urge to rethink the significance of the body when we try to understand how young people become their age. Instead of seeing the body as an entity that is ‘already there’, the papers in the thesis all demonstrate the importance of attending to how children and adolescents use and deploy their bodies as part of their everyday interactions. As argued in all three papers, ways of conducting the body are constitutive in the sense that it is not arbitrary which bodily practices young people deploy and in which contexts they perform them. Instead, the practices young people deploy on and with their bodies should be seen as attempts and insurances on being and becoming particular girls and boys across the many contexts in which they interact. Therefore the papers focus on the becoming of age by attending to the bodily practices and the many discourses young people encounter during a time when categories of age are particularly salient.

7.2 Longitudinal methodology in study of processes in time

The conceptual and analytical frameworks suggested in the papers have implications for the fields of childhood studies and education in general and developmental psychology in particular. First of all, as regards conducting interviews with the same participants over the course of several years, the papers in the thesis demonstrate the importance of using a methodology that includes time when we study how children and adolescents constitute themselves within and against complex and multifaceted meanings-systems that are

embedded in discourses. The papers attend to how young people negotiate such discourses and how these negotiations affect possible ways of becoming. It is important to note that the exploration of such ongoing negotiations would not have been possible without following the participants for an extensive period of time. It is research designs such as the one chosen for the study on which this thesis is based, which enable us to explore questions such as: Which notions of possible ways of being and becoming do each girl and boy negotiate, resist and subvert when becoming who they are? How do they deal over time with the tensions that arise between how they experience themselves and expectations they encounter across the life course?

While much research that addresses children and adolescents take a critical stance as regards developmental psychology, most of these studies fail to acknowledge the significance of time in the study of processes (which do not necessarily concern time in a linear and progressive manner so much as circular and recursive composition of the present, the future and the previous). On the contrary, the field of development psychology needs to acknowledge methodologies and theoretical framework that may disentangle the rather solid, impermeable substance the discipline has come to represent.

7.3 Processes of subjectivation as development

Another concern in this thesis has been to explore and detail the processes through which children become adolescents. That is, the thesis is based on young people's descriptions of themselves, which discourses they make relevant, how they comprehend themselves and what they do or refrain from doing, when becoming who they are across time. Thus, while conventional developmental psychology measures the changes and transformations

of children and adolescents by the use of standardised tests, this thesis offers an understanding of how children become adolescents that starts from *their* descriptions of their everyday lives. In focusing on ‘those who are developed’ and their own descriptions of how they ‘develop themselves’; how they deploy their bodies and how they negotiate discourses - the papers see such negotiations as processes of subjectivation. These are the processes through which young people become who they are. The thesis thus offers a conceptual and analytical framework which provides a way of understanding some of the processes that within conventional psychology is referred to as *development*. However, while Foucault draws attention to how psychology produces discourses of the child that normalize and thus regulate what are considered ‘normal’ ways for children to develop (McNaughton, 2005), neither Foucault nor Butler attempted to theorize the processes through which young people constitute themselves, and are constituted within categories of age. Thus, although feminist post-structuralist writings are concerned with how the subject comes into being, i.e., the processes through which the subject is constituted as a subject, such processes are not referred to as development. One aim of the thesis has been to rework these theoretical frameworks and point out their potentials, thus offering knowledge of the processes through which children become adolescents.

The question is then how the papers in this thesis enter into the field of developmental psychology. Rather than rejecting the concept of *development* because of the often rigid notion of change and transformation it encompasses, I think it is vital to insist on expanding theoretical frameworks and methodologies, and insist on the usefulness and importance of expanding developmental psychological frameworks. Ongoing exploration of possible combinations of theoretical perspectives and

methodologies enriches any research field. It is also through such openness to the many possible ways of producing knowledge that we escape some knowledge manifesting itself as regimes of truth. This is important, not only for the discipline of developmental psychology itself but for the provision of multifaceted knowledge that challenges and destabilises universal truths of age categories through which young people may interpret them selves. It is my opinion that research on children and adolescents, no matter which professional discipline it evolves from, will benefit from an increased openness to the exploration of methodologies and theoretical frameworks. If we acknowledge the processes through which young people become who they are as representing some of the most intriguing issues within disciplines such as developmental psychology, childhood studies and educational research, methodological and theoretical expansion is a presupposition for furthering knowledge.

8 References

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