

# To be Danish or to not be Danish?



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**Abstract**

The focus of this project is young people with a non-western background from the ghetto area Gellerupparken in Aarhus. I will look into how they perceive themselves in relation Danes and Danishness. The project takes basis on relevant theorists in order to analyse the interviews. This is to achieve a more insightful understanding of how the mentioned target group perceive themselves in relation to Danes and Danishness.

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## Introduction

To be or not to be Danish and the definition of what danishness include and exclude has been a hot topic not only in the media, but also in politics the past decades. When confronted with differences in culture, norms, values and in life perspectives, we are forced to take a stand in, who we are as humans.

The ghettos in Denmark are being considered as a central part of the problems related to integration. This is because the ghettos get viewed as a result of failed integration and as a counterpoint to the Danish society, where the residents also get stigmatized. I will in this project therefor investigate how young people – with a non-western background – from the ghetto environment perceive themselves in relation to Danes? Identity crises among young people with a non-western background from the ghetto environments are a reality in Denmark and I will therefor look further into the mentioned topic.

I will be interviewing two young people with a non-western background from the ghetto areas in Aarhus. My participants will primarily be from Gellerupparken, which is an area there is considered a ghetto according to the Danish governments list<sup>1</sup> over ghettos in Denmark. The purpose of the interviews is to investigate how the participants perceive themselves in relation to Danes, while touching different themes: The participant in relation to identity formation and affiliation, the participant in relation to danishness and Danes and the participants view on othering and the “us and them” discourse.

I will be using multiple theorists; I will be presenting a point of view of Richard Jenkins identity theory, which will be used as a theoretical direction to analysing what kind of challenges the interviews participants are facing. I will moreover be including Erving Goffman's theory about stigma and Alex Honneths recognition theory to establish an insight of the consequences of being excluded from the society. This will assure a deeper insight and understanding of the challenges the interview participants are facing.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/ghetto-listen-2017-to-nye-omraader-tilfoejet>

## Definitions & context

I will first give a definition of a ghetto in a Danish perspective, because the definitions in an internal perspective vary. According to the Danish government a ghetto area is understood as a residential area with a minimum of 1.000 residents, where the proportion of immigrants and descendants from non-western countries exceeds 50 percent and moreover include at least two of the following four criteria<sup>2</sup>:

1. The proportion of residents in the age group: 18 to 64, who are not connected to either the labor market or the education system, exceeds 40 percent. Calculated as the average over the last 2 years.
2. The proportion of residents convicted of violating the Penal Code, the Firearms Act or the Narcotic Drugs Act, is at least 3 times the national average calculated as an average over the past 2 years.
3. The proportion of residents in the age group: 30-59, who only have a basic education exceeds 60 percent of all residents in the same age group.
4. The average gross income for taxpayers in the age group: 15 to 64, in the area (excluding education seekers) are less than 55 percent of the average gross income for the same group in the region.

Gellerupparken is included on the list over ghettos in Denmark<sup>2</sup>, where the area meets the criteria for the government's definition of a ghetto. Moreover, the participants in the interviews will all be from Gellerupparken.

## Terms used about children of immigrants

Moreover, the terms used about people with a non-western background are many, despite of the fact that they are born and raised here, and often have a Danish citizenship. This is also a factor that amplifies the “*us and them*” discourse, because the politicians and the media normalize the division of people. The terms used are many; “new Danes”, “2end. Generation immigrants” or just “immigrants”. Another factor there is worth noticing regarding to this; is when immigrants are successful, they are a Dane without question asked, but when you are troubled, then they have failed to become a civilized Dane. We also have politicians as Pernille Vermund, who

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.regeringen.dk/nyheder/ghetto-listen-2017-to-nye-omraader-tilfoejet-fem-fjernet/>

wants to normalize the terms “nigga” and “perker/paki”, which are deeply offensive terms. I will be using the term “people with a non-western background” or “immigrants” in this paper, because I see it as the most neutral description.

Whether we look at politics, the media or just in general at the society the negative outlook at people with a non-western background has been increasing. This is reflected in the legislation, in the public debates and the harsh rhetoric against immigrants there has been normalized. The examples are many; We have the Danish prime minister Mette Frederiksen, who on the day of the Islamic holiday congratulated the Muslims in Denmark and in the next sentence talks about how to fight against Islamic extremism. The comment track on the social media, when immigrant related news is presented, can easily be described as hateful and racist. The pattern is clear and that's why I want to look into how young people with a non-western background perceive themselves regarding to Danishness. Has the mentioned pattern affected their view on themselves and how if that's the case?

## Theory

### Jenkins – identity

Richard Jenkins is a sociologist and the author of the book “Social identity”, where he discusses how identities get created in the interaction between humans. According to Jenkins all human identities are social identities: *“One of the first thing we do on meeting a stranger is attempt to identify them, to locate them on our “mindscapes”.* (Jenkins, 2006, s. 203)

As humans when defining others, and ourselves we look at different factors; we look for both similarities and differences between the group and ourselves. The factors that we look after are such as: embodiment, clothing, language, answers to questions, incidental or accidental disclosures of information and information from third parties according to Jenkins.

The nonverbal and verbal signs being read lays the basis of, where one identifies similarities as well as differences, density and distance in order to locate oneself, but also others on a social map of relationships and communities. This can also be seen as an imagined classification process that creates meaning in the social world. Though, a process that has real consequences, which are anything, but imagined.

The explanation for this; is when the imagined is viewed as a reality, then the mentioned belief will have an impact on one's behaviour and therefore also have real consequences, which makes the imagined to an actual reality. (Jenkins, 2006, s. 9)

Jenkins also talks about how the construction of ethnic identities is controlled by others recognition and validation. Identification in relation to ethnicity is moreover defined with the division of people in communities, all depending on the culture, language, lifestyle, knowledge, beliefs, norms and other resembled factors. If the mentioned factors are being considered different, then we will, as humans not consider the mentioned person or group as part of our community. Moreover, a central part of Jenkins theory about identity formation is the establishment of a counter image that define what you are not. It is easier to tell whom you are, when taking distance to what you are not as a human. (Jenkins, 2006, s. 46)

This tendency is also reflected in the general rhetoric in the Danish society; this is the case both in the medias and in politics. The identification process is moreover an inseparable part of humans, where the inner self-identification will happen under all circumstances. It is therefore a necessity to talk about, when talking about what Danish is and when defining our selves.

In order to answer the problem thesis and understand the interview participants' position, it is necessary to include how the Danish society view people with a non-western background from the ghettos. To do this, I will look at how the rhetoric in politics and in the media takes part in the targeted groups identity formation. I will use Jenkins's theory about the construction of identities to look at how the Danish society is reflecting in our interview participant's identity formation. Jenkins points out that all humans' identities are a continuous formation, because of the constant interaction with other people and confrontation with other perspectives on life. (Jenkins, 2006, s. 203)

### **Stereotyping and labelling**

Stereotyping can be described as simplified descriptions of assumed cultural features of specific types of people, where the cultural features work as boundaries for them,

with other words stereotyping is a type of socially effective prejudices. (Guldager, Jens & Zeebejrg, Birgitte, 2015, s. 186)

Stereotyping can lead to stamping, which is a process, where a person is attributed specific negative characteristics on the basis of the person's random actions, appearance, ethnic background, social position and likewise features. Characteristics and traits that will stick to the person through the environment's focus on traits that can confirm the given label. The person is completely and utterly identified by this particular stigma. In other words, a stamp risks transforming a mere partial identity as an immigrant from Turkey into a total identity as the Turk or the Muslim. The core of stigmatization is always some degree of misunderstood deprivation of personal status and discrimination. (Guldager, Jens & Zeeberg, Birgitte, 2015, s. 187)

According to the socionom Marianne Skytte; it is impossible to say something general about the stereotype's relationship to actual facts. It is possible that there is a form of a truth in the stereotypes, but in the most cases they are one-sided, exaggerated and tendentious descriptions of all individuals inside of a specific category, where the stereotypes in the reality are far from the assumed. Stereotyping is especially made in the meeting with new people, who are strangers to each other. Instead of relating to the person facing us, we relate to the expectations we have of the category of people we associate them with. (Guldager, Jens & Zeeberg, Birgitte, 2015, s. 186)

When ethnic Danes meet people with a minority background, it can lead to an assumed conception about the mentioned group. This is because of how the media and the public debates ranks and presents immigrants especially people with a non-western background, all depending on their geographical country of emigration. A ranking, where people from the Middle east and Africa are view as underdeveloped or traditional and labelled as "others", where "we" is associated with the modern and the well-developed. The stereotypes can often also rest on a religious categorization; where the upper layer of the hierarchy is the Protestants of Northern and Western Europe, imitated by the southern European Catholics, since the Orthodox Christians and then the really foreign, the non-European or non-western



Muslims. This image is particularly prominent in the media, where the immigrant is presented as bound to traditional cultural perceptions. (Guldager, Jens & Zeeberg, Birgitte, 2015, s. 186)

The immigrant, especially immigrants with a non-western background is often described as cliché-liked, simplified and stereotypical by emphasizing cultural traits that are perceived as static, inherited and tradition-driven. Through these stereotypical descriptions, a picture is drawn of a societal polarization between "us Danes" and "them" or the "us and them" discourse. (Guldager, Jens & Zeeberg, Birgitte, 2015, s. 187)

### **Alex Honneths theory of recognition**

The consequences of the lack of recognition from our surroundings are fatal and, in many cases, the direct reason to many social problems in the Danish society. According to the sociologist Alex Honneth; humans cannot realize ourselves and develop a sense of belonging if we do not receive recognition. There are three ways, where one can receive recognition, called: The private sphere, the legal sphere and the sphere of solidarity. (Systime, 2021)

The private sphere is defined as; the space where a person gets a close emotional recognition, which can be through the persons close relations, which typically are the family and close friends. The legal sphere is defined as the sphere where; the individual is recognized. Moreover, he or she has the same rights as all other citizens in society, and feel that that they are an equal part of society. If you as an individual get discriminated because of your ethnicity, religion or gender, it can be detrimental to your self-esteem and likewise if you do not have the same rights as everyone else in the society. (Systime, 2021)

The third sphere Honneth talks about; is the sphere of solidarity, which include schools, workplaces and other social institutions, where one can be recognized for positive qualities, achievements and accomplishments, which contributes positively to the community. This type of recognition builds and develops the individual's self-esteem. (Systime, 2021)

The consequences of not being meet with recognition and accept in the society can lead to what is called invisibility. This lack of emotional support can also result in that

the person or group will distance themselves from the surrounding society or the people, which they are interacting with. This also means that as a consequence of this they will seek other communities in order to feel a part of something; moreover, to get accepted and get the recognition that they need. This can for some people be dedicating their time to sport activities and other beneficial activities, but in many other cases, there is a tendency that young people get drawn to subcultures, such as; criminal youth gangs or fundamentalist religious movements, which rebel against the society they live within. (Systime, 2021)

### **Method**

I have chosen a social constructivist approach in order to answer the problem formulation of this project. The reason why I have chosen this approach; is that the mentioned approach is based on the idea, that human knowledge and learning is constructed through social interaction. This is also reflected in the identity formation process, where all human identities are social identities, where the identity is formed through the interaction with other humans. The two central ideas in the social constructivist approach are that people rationalize their experience by creating a model of the social world and the way that it functions, where both is adapted to their beliefs. The other idea is based on the belief that it is through language that humans construct the reality.

Knowledge is according to the social constructivist approach socially and culturally constructed and is viewed as a human product; where the reality is constructed through human interaction. The meaning gets created through the environment of people and their interactions with each other. With other words social constructivist show how our reality is created through the beliefs of humans. Social constructivism is also based on the foundation that the social reality is an ongoing performance of social actors instead of something firm. This can be explained by the fact that people interact with each other constantly and therefor they also get confronted with new information, knowledge and experiences that can result in a change outlook on the social reality. (Amineh & Hanieh, 2015, p. 13)

In this project I have been focusing on how immigrants with a non-western background from the ghettos, specifically in the 15 and 18, perceive themselves in

relation to Danishness and to being Danish. The rhetoric in the media, the public debates and in politics has had a big influence on how the targeted group perceive and identify themselves. This because of how the rhetoric in the last decades has become harsher, where immigrants constantly get presented in a negative light and as the main problem in the Danish society, whether the topic is economy, criminality, welfare or values like freedom of speech. This is one of the main points in the social constructivist approach; the language, which creates the reality and that is why I have chosen the mentioned approach.

Moreover, I have been using a hermeneutically narrative working method. This working method is characterized by an interpretive point of view. This means that the chosen material is interpreted from a historical, cultural or societal context in which it appears, where by it is possible for the interpreter to form an impression of for example the authors thought process. In regarding to the narrative approach; it is used in order to interpreting the interviews to analyze how the targeted group from the ghetto environment perceive themselves by using different theorists that I have mentioned earlier. (Lynn McAlpine, 2016, p. 35).

The purpose with my project is thus; to get an understanding about how young people with a non-western background from the ghettos in Denmark, identify themselves in relation to being Danish and how the surrounding society has affected the mentioned group's identity formation process.

### **The interview process and my approach**

In order to answer the problem formulation, I have chosen a qualitative method in regarding to the empirical data. The mentioned method allows me as a researcher for a closer and more personal contact with the different participants, which will assure a more honest and a deeper insight in the participant's experiences. Moreover, this method allows for a more nuanced and detailed understanding of how it is to be an immigrant with a nonwestern background from the ghettos in Denmark. The interviews can serve as a representative picture of how the reality is for the mentioned group.

Moreover, I will shed light on the interview form and the process of initiate contact with the participants and which considerations I made during this process. I have

chosen to interview two people; both participants there live in the ghetto Gellerupparken and have been living there, their whole life. I have chosen to limit the interviews to two participants, because it allows for a more in-depth interview with each one. The participants have roots in separate countries, but both are descendants of migrants from non-western countries.

I have transcribed both the interviews, where I moreover have anonymized the participant's names. Anonymity and confidentiality were to things I assured the participants in order to make them feel comfortable, which also means that I have used different names in their actual names. (Kvale , 2015, p. 166).

I have chosen to work with a semi structured interview guide, which both allows for the researcher to touch specific topics, but also gives room for a flexible and open conversation if other relevant information asserts to be important. The participants I have chosen for then interviews are people I know, but do not have a personal relationship with. I know the participants through my time as a boxing coach in a club in Brabrand.

The process began with me as a researcher reaching out to the participants through Facebook, where I explained why I was interested in interviewing them. I then arranged a call through WhatsApp with each of them, where all the interviews took place. The interviews were not made face to face, because of precautions in regarding to the corona guidelines. I was direct and honest from the beginning about the reason for contacting them. I had an advantage of already knowing them superficially and it was therefore easier to ask personal questions, because we already had established trust and a mutual respect.

I also had an advantage of having the same background as them, with the exception of that I did not live in what there is defined as Ghetto in a Danish perspective. This also resulted in much more personal and open interviews, which gave access to a deeper understanding of the participant's experiences. Moreover, the fear of being judged or to prove oneself got eliminated, because it was not a discussion about why they did or did not feel Danish, but rather a conversation, where the aim was to understand, which reflected back on me as a researcher with the same non-western background as them. If the researcher for example had been an ethnic Dane, it is possible that, the participants could have been in a defensive position, which have

created distance between participants and interviewer, which had not been optimal if the aim is to understand. My ability to swift my way of talking Danish; using slang and including Arabic words came naturally, which also gave a sense of familiarity and made the interview more fluent. I have moreover chosen to include both male and females in the interviews.

The first interview was with 18-year-old Abdi, who has a Somali background, but was born and raised in Denmark and moreover, has a Danish citizenship. I used to be his boxing coach and he therefor already knew me and the interview with him progressed fluently. 15-year-old Dunia was the second interview participant and from a Palestinian background. Dunia has not a Danish citizenship yet, even though she is born and raised in Denmark. I also used to be Dunia's boxing coach, which also made the interview progress fluently because we already knew each other. Both mentioned participants are from Gellerupparken. Both the interviews were conducted in Danish, where I used slang and sometimes included Arabic words in order to create a bond with each of them.

The narrative approach I have chosen is expressed through the interviews I have made; the approach is based on telling stories and seeks to account how individuals make sense of events, experiences and actions in their lives. The approach also has an interpretive element and is ideal to understand and learn more about others culture, historical experiences, identity and lifestyle. (Lynn McAlpine, 2016, p. 35).

The element of understanding others perspectives, lives and in this case how they identify and perceive themselves is something that the narrative approach gives access to. Therefore, I find the mentioned approach appropriate for my research project. Moreover, I have been using semi-structured interviews to derive narratives. The purpose with the interviews is to investigate how the participants perceive themselves in relation to Danes, while touching different themes: The participant in relation to identity formation and affiliation, the participant in relation to danishness and Danes and the participants view on othering and the "us and them" discourse. The interview form I have chosen allows new topics to come up, if the participant finds it necessary.

### **Presentation of interview participants:**

The following; is a presentation of our empirical data that consists of three interviews participants in the age group; 15-18 from Aarhus. Both participants have a non-western background in common and live in what there is defined as a ghetto in a Danish perspective.

### **Schematic presentation of our informants**

Name	Age	Ethnic Origin	Citizens Ship	Resident in
<b>Abdi</b>	18	Somalia	Danish	Gellerupparken
<b>Dunia</b>	15	Palestine	Palestinian	Gellerupparken

### ***More information about the participants:***

**Abdi** is born and raised in Denmark, where he has lived in the ghetto; Gellerupparken in Aarhus his whole life with his family. He is a high school student on his second year at Viby Gymnasium and has a part job as a pizza driver. Moreover, in his spare time he trains in the local gym. His religious status is Muslim, where he tries to practice his religion to the extend, he is able to. He is the type, who prays his five daily prayers, wherever he is; whether he is in school, at the job or in the gym. In addition to this; he has a beard because it is Islamic custom, according to Abdi the prophet Muhammed used to have a beard. Abdi also expresses how he tries to engage in the different debates about Muslims on the social media, where he tries to break with the different prejudices that flourish about Muslims.

**Dunia** is also born and raised in Denmark, and has lived in Gelleruppaken with her family, her whole life. She goes to primary school; she used to go in the local school in Brabrand, but has changed to a school placed in Centrum in Aarhus. This because her parents wanted her to go in a school, where the majority of students are ethnic Danes. In the weekends Dunia goes to Arabic school, where she learns how to memorize and read the Quran. Moreover, Dunia wears the scarf, even though her parents at first were against it. According to them Dunia was still too young to make such a big decision and take that form of responsibility upon herself. Dunia wants to seek for a Danish citizenship, but is against some of the new rules there is a part of the process of obtaining Danish citizenship.

### Analysis of the interviews:

I will in this section make an analysis of the interviews, where I will look deeper into different themes and take them to account in relation to relevant theorist.

I will begin with the interview with 18-year-old Abdi; where I started out to ask him about how he identified himself and moreover who and to what he felt attached to as a person, to what he answered:

*"...Wallah, it is actually a good question. I view myself as Abdi with a foot in both cultures, the Danish culture and in the Somali culture. And of course, as a Muslim. That's how I view myself. But the thing is when I walk outside on the streets people... Danes will never recognize me as Dane, no matter what I do. I can remember I used to work as a salesman for a Telemarket company and all the times I introduced myself as Abdi, then I will never sell, when I introduce myself as Mark or Bo or Jens, hahahaha..... I will sell. And that's just because of my name, the customers could not even see that I was black....."*

I then asked him about what he thought the reason for this was and what his view on othering was, to what he answered: *".. hmm. I do not think it is because they are racist, it is just how it is. You will everyday choose your brother there looks like yourself, instead of a stranger and that's what I am according to many, when they see me... It is also difficult to see yourself as a Dane, when you don't feel that people, ethnic Danes ever will see you as one. I don't look Danish, I'm black, I have a beard, and my name is Abdi... also just the way the politicians are talking about us, as we are the root to everything evil. Even the corona crisis was the Somalis fault, where the media was talking about that Somalis was the reason for the high corona infection number... It is crazy how people just talk shit like that... they put an entire minority group in a bad light..."*

In the end of the interview, I asked Abdi more directly about; if he considered himself as Danish, to what he answered: *"..Honestly. It depends. There are times where I don't feel Danish at all. When I look at the media, the public debates or when an old lady take an extra firm grip on her purse and crosses the street, so she doesn't walk by me... Then I feel like a stranger, as someone who isn't welcome, even though Denmark is all that I know. I speak better Danish than Somali.. But I feel accepted and respected in Brabrand, there is room for everybody there, whether you are Arab,*

*Turkish, Somali. We don't exclude anyone; we are brothers and sisters in Islam.. That's beautiful."*

The interview with Abdi shows how important it is to be recognized and accepted by your surroundings in order to feel, that you are a part of the society or community. According to Alex Honneth's recognition theory; we see how Abdi do not receive the necessary recognition in the legal sphere. (Systime, 2021) This is reflected in how Abdi do not feel that he is an equal part of the Danish society. In addition to this, Abdi is likewise being met with challenges, when he was working as a salesman for a Telemarket company. Only because of his name, which also means that he also has been lacking recognition in the solidarity sphere according to Honneth's; where one receives recognition through positive qualities, achievements and accomplishments in the workplace, at the school or other social contexts. (Systime, 2021)

This type of recognition builds and develops the individual's self-esteem, but when Abdi is almost forced to change his name in order to sell, then it can affect his self-esteem. In addition to this, the lack of recognition can have consequences such as the individual seek out to subcultures there for example go against or directly rebel against the surrounding society. In the interviews this takes form in how Abdi feel that his home is in the ghetto among people with a non-western background, where he does not get judged by his appearance, faith or background. Abdi refer to the people in Brabrand as brothers and sisters in Islam, which means that the rest of the society must be the opposite of family.

Moreover, according to Jenkins the identifications process is about looking for similarities and differences, so meaningful relationships and attachments can get established (Jenkins, 2011, p. 12). In relation to this; Abdi talks and points out that he knows that do not look like a Dane with his dark skin and beard and that because of his appearance he gets judged. Abdi for example mention the old lady, who crosses the street, so she can avoid passing him. This also has an effect on how Abdi view himself, because even though he maybe feels Danish, he knows that he will never get accepted as one. He also mentions how the media try to put Somalis in a bad light, because of a high corona infection number, where people associated Somalis with corona and for not being able to comply the hygiene guidelines.



Goffman also talks about this form of stereotyping; where a person is attributed specific negative characteristics on the basis of the person's random actions, appearance, ethnic background or social position. Characteristics and traits that; will stick to the person through the environment's focus on traits that can confirm the given label. The person is completely and utterly identified by this particular stigma. This is what happened to Abdi, when the old lady according to Abdi crossed the street, she associated to and stamped his appearance as a criminal from the ghetto. (Guldager, Jens & Zeebejrg, Birgitte, 2015, s. 186)

In the second interview with 15-year-old Dunia; I also started out to ask her about how she identified herself and who and to what she felt attached to as a person. She answered: *"... I have not known any other country than Denmark, but most of the time I don't feel Danish. I don't have a Danish citizenship either... But before I changed school, I didn't think about it, because almost all my classmates and friends were from the same background as me and I was happy. I was just Dunia, but when I changed school, I was confronted with how different I am from my classmates. It is not only my appearance and my hijab, but also the way we talk, which kind of music we listen to. My nickname in my new class is "the gangster" and I know it is meant as a joke, but.... yeah. Where I come from it is normal to listen to rappers as Gilli and Branco and everyone understand their songs, but here in this new class, nobody does. It is like we are from two worlds."*

I then asked her if she felt that she got treated different, to which she answered: *"..I'm always the last one to get picked for anything and I don't get invited to anything. Haha, it is not like I would come either, but it wouldn't hurt to get an invitation. And it is not only me, I have a classmate, Ali he feels the same way, but he is never there, half of the time he is out with his other Palestinian friends from the other classes, but when he is here, we do everything together..."*

I then asked her about the "us and them" discourse in the media, to which she answered: *"....The media has brainwashed people to think every immigrant is a criminal and people from the ghettos are thieves or dangerous people. We are the reason why there is so many problems. They talk about us and never to us, I have never done anything criminal in my life and the same applies for my family. Of course, there are problems in Gellerupparken, but in the media we are presented as*

*criminals and that's not the reality. But people believe it, that's why they call me gangster even as a joke, because my classmates see me in the light the media has put me in... It is like we are two teams against each other..."*

The interview with Dunia confirms again how important it is to be accepted and recognized for who you are. The way she directly gets excluded from the class community is a directly effect of the othering phenomena. Jenkins also talks about the fact that human identify themselves by taking distance from what they are not. Dunia is a great example of that, because the other members of the class exclude her. This is because of her appearance, her scarf and her background. She is different from the rest of the class, which makes her to "the other" and the rest of the class to "us". According to Jenkins; when we meet and interact with people, we look for similarities and differences between the group and ourselves. We look after factors as: embodiment, clothing, language, answers to questions, incidental or accidental disclosures of information and information from third parties, for example the media. This process is a so called; imagined classification process that creates meaning in the social world. A process that has real consequences, this is because, when the imagined is viewed as a reality, then the mentioned belief will have an impact on one's behaviour and therefore also have real consequences, which makes the imagined to an actual reality. (Jenkins, 2006, s. 203) This can be seen when Dunia does not get invited to the different arrangements and that she never gets picked in the class.

In addition to this, I find it relevant to include a post from Facebook by Inger Støjberg, the former Minister of Integration, this; to provide insight into how the prominent opinion makers contribute to the "us and them" discourse. Inger Støjberg made a post march 9th 2022 about the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in Denmark, where she expressed her strong will to help regugees from Ukraine and not from countries like Palestine or somalia; *"...We might as well be honest that we would rather help Ukrainian refugees than Somalis and Palestinians."* Inger Støjberg explain her statement with the following words; *"....This is because the Ukrainians are more like us and because they are primarily Christians...."* (Inger Støjberg, Facebook post)

## Discussion

In regarding to Abdi and how he perceives himself in relation to Danes; He feels it depends on his surrounding and which satiation he is in. In general, he feels that he has a foot in both cultures; the Danish and the Somali. Abdi expresses moreover, that he does not feel Danish, when he gets confronted with ethnic Dane's behavior towards him, where an example is the old lady, who crossed the street instead of passing by him and how he had to change his name when calling people over the phone when he worked as a salesman. Abdi also mentions that it is difficult to feel or view yourself as Danish, when you know that other ethnic Danes never will consider him as one; only because of his background, skin color and general appearance. So, to sum up, Abdi view himself as Danish, but when confronted with the lack of acceptance and recognition from ethnic Danes and the Danish society, it is harder for him to view and identify himself as a Dane.

In regarding to Dunia she does not perceive herself as Danish, despite of the fact that she does not know any other country than Denmark. Dunia explain that she first got confronted with the feeling of being different, when she changed school. Before the school change, she explains "...I was just Dunia." This mean that she felt normal up until she got confronted with other ethnic Danes in the same age group as her, where they saw her and treated her like she was different, which then become her reality. Throughout Dunia's interview it becomes clear that, it is the surrounding society and community that make her feel different, because of their exclusion of her. Dunia does not get invited to any of her classmates' arrangements and because of her different taste in music and the fact she is from a ghetto, her classmates nicknamed her "gangster" as a joke. This also creates more distance between ethnic Danes and people with a non-western background.

According to Alex Honneths theory about recognition; the Danish society's lack of acceptance and recognition towards immigrants with a non-western background is in many cases the direct reason to the formation of a parallel society and subcultures, which rebels against the surrounding society. When a prominent figure as Inger Støjberg chooses to come out with statements about how her wish to help people depends on peoples ethnicity and background it contributes to the "us and them" discourse.

This is also reflected, when we look at the laws regarding the refugees from Ukraine, who are getting treated way different than the refugees from the middle East or from a non-western background. There has been established special laws, because the laws applied to refugees from earlier are way harsher, because the laws were targeted refugees with a non-western background. For example the so-called jewelry law; a package with several laws, where asylum seekers, Syrian refugees primarily, who come to Denmark to seek asylum could get jewelry and other objects confiscated if they exceed a value corresponding to 10,000 Danish kroner. (Fakatalink, 2020) This law was later removed, when the refugees who came to Denmark was refugees from Ukraine.

### **Conclusion**

This research paper aimed to investigate how young people – with a non-western background – from the ghetto environment, perceive themselves in relation to Danes. Based on a qualitative analysis of the collected data; more specifically interviews made with two participants; Abdi and Dunia. The participants both lives in Gellerupparken, which is considered a Ghetto. Moreover, both participants have a non-western background. Abdi viewed himself as Danish, but when confronted with the lack of acceptance and recognition from ethnic Danes and the Danish society, it was harder for him to view and identify himself as a Dane.

Dunia on the other hand; does not perceive herself as Danish. Throughout Dunia's interview it also becomes clear that, it is the surrounding society and community that make her feel different, because of their exclusion of her, which makes her feel different and not Danish.

These two interviews cannot be considered as representative for young people with non-western background. It can rather serve as springboard for a deeper understanding of how stigmatization, stamping and othering can have fatal consequences for our society.

The lack of acceptance and recognition towards people with a non-western background is according to Alex Honneths theory about recognition; in many cases the direct reason to why people as Abdi and Dunia feels excluded. Subcultures and parallel societies get established, when we do not feel accepted and recognized in

the society, we already find us in, then we seek and reach out to other communities; where criminal gangs and religious extremist groups just are examples of where people can end up when they get excluded.

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