

# **Beyond fear of child welfare services**

An ethnographic study among  
Norwegian-Somali parents

by

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## Summary

In many countries, migrants and ethnic minorities express fear of child welfare service (CWS). This is reflected in Norwegian research and media, where fear and mistrust surround the debate on migrants' relationship with the agency. This thesis explores Norwegian Somalis' fears of the Norwegian CWS in the context of their situation in Norway and their social world. While the relationship between the Norwegian CWS and several migrant groups is strained, we know little about how fears are constructed and perpetuated within migrant communities. Throughout my dissertation, I emphasise that migrants' relations to CWS – whether fear factors into it or not – must be understood in light of processes and dynamics far beyond CWS. We must pay attention to tight-knit ethnic communities, social networks, marginalised positions and transnational relations. My inquiry is guided by two core questions: How is the fear of CWS constructed among Norwegian-Somali parents, and how does the fear of CWS impact their everyday lives?

These questions were explored through nine months of ethnography, seven months in Oslo and two months in Somalia among returnees from Norway. Fieldwork consisted of, *inter alia*, observations in cafés and shops, participation in seminars and mosques, participant observation in a transnational school in Somalia, informal conversations, formally organised focus groups and in-depth interviews with parents.

The three articles comprising the empirical part of the dissertation cover the following topics. The first article explores how CWS fears among

Norwegian-Somali parents are embedded in social networks and transmitted via stories of child removals. This paper provides extensive insight into the construction and perpetuation of fear. The analysis suggests a particular social process underlying Somali parents' fears, which we coin ABCD, pertaining to (a) their socioeconomic *adversities*; (b) coping through *bonding* social capital; (c) *children* as a "lifeline"; and (d) (disproportionate) *diffusion* of child removal stories. The results demonstrate the importance of child removal stories that are transmitted through tight-knit social networks as well as why and how these stories spread.

Paper 2 is about how second-generation Somali parents portray middle-class identity when interacting with school and kindergarten personnel to avoid racial scrutiny and referrals to CWS. The paper examines how CWS scepticism and fear extend far beyond direct interactions between caseworkers and clients. We show how scepticism and fear influence parents' encounters with institutions like schools and kindergartens, as these are institutions that have the power and obligation to potentially report to CWS.

The third paper addresses Norwegian-Somali returnees' struggle for a sense of belonging in Norway and their worries regarding their children's future. It highlights the complexity of being a marginalised migrant in Norway and the consequences thereof. I show that parents utilise temporary return as a tool to strengthen their dual belonging to both Somalia and Norway by reconstituting *belonging to both countries*

*through parenting in Somalia.* The results reveal that parents cultivate and reproduce Norwegian cultural repertoires when in Somalia in order to maintain a belonging to Norway and to prepare for their future return to Norway, while concurrently encouraging their children to be proud of their Somaliness.

In sum, the findings from my thesis imply that Somali parents' fears of CWS are drawn not only from their perceptions of that single institution but also from their experiences as Somali parents in Norwegian society as a whole. I therefore argue that, if we are to understand CWS fears among migrant parents in general and Somali parents in particular, we must adopt a broader approach that understands parents' everyday lives and whether and how their experiences relate to socioeconomic marginalisation, racism, coping and networking. I also argue that, to understand CWS fears, we need a bottom-up methodological approach. The in-depth ethnographic account of the Norwegian Somalis' CWS fears, investigated bottom-up, remains this study's main contribution.

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## **1 Introduction**

The relationship between migrants in Norway and the child welfare service (CWS) is strained. Both research and the media report that many migrants fear the CWS (Berg et al., 2017; Fylkesnes, Iversen, Bjørknes & Nygren, 2015; Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019). This fear and distrust among migrants is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, research has yet to pay close attention to how fears are constructed and perpetuated within migrant communities. Somalis in Norway are one of the largest and most marginalised ethnic groups (Engebriksen & Farstad, 2004; Fangen, 2006; Statistics Norway, 2019), and the Norwegian and Somali media have used phrases like “scared to death”, “fighting against the CWS” and “stolen children” to describe the fear of the agency (Adresseavisen, 2013; Aftenposten, 2018; Calanka, 2012; Dagsavisen, 2011; NRK, 2011). This thesis is an ethnography of Somalis in Norway and their relation to the CWS.

I began my fieldwork in the summer of 2016 in Oslo, Grønland, where my initial interest was in Somalis’ reported fear of the CWS. However, it soon became apparent that, to understand their fear, I had to understand participants’ social world from a bottom-up perspective. This thesis unpacks the complex connections of understanding Somalis’ situation in Norway, their social world and their fear of the CWS. At the beginning of the fieldwork, Somali parents were talking about how other Somali parents did not understand the system or that their reasons for fearing the CWS, including language barriers and their different culture. Yet, when

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sharing these thoughts, I felt that they were not talking about themselves but rather why other Somalis were afraid of the CWS. The distance in the stories being told interested me, and I asked myself why the parents referred to *dadka* (the others) when talking about the CWS, as illustrated by my field note:

I wonder why people are talking about *dadka* [the others] when we talk about the CWS. The fear is there; it seems irrational yet so rational. Some days, I hear people saying that Somali children are taken by the CWS because the Norwegian society wants to assimilate and strip Somali culture and religion from the Somali population in Norway and Western society, or that we [Somalis] have such a different culture and that we don't have *barnevernet* [CWS] in Somalia. But everyone is talking about *dadka*. I wonder if I am I asking the wrong questions. Am I not engaging with the community and not understanding them? Language barriers, systemic misunderstanding and cultural differences are mentioned again and again. But it doesn't seem right; it's like this is a rehearsed mantra being retold. Of course, these factors play an important role, but I feel they are telling me what they deem as the "correct" answer or stories. A mother told me in a conversation, "Maybe I'm taught to think like this. Maybe we [Somalis] are just afraid." And I thought to myself, "I think so too." (Oslo, August 2016)

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These initial stories are important, as they give us insight into how the CWS is talked about within the community – at least on the surface. In the early stages of the fieldwork, I also heard many stories of how Somali parents' fears of the CWS spurred them to flee the country and move back to Somalia. For that reason, I went to Somalia and did two months of fieldwork. However, I did not encounter such stories (for further elaborations on this matter, see Paper 3), though I do not dismiss that parents may leave Norway because of fear of the CWS. Nevertheless, the narratives that the community presented to me at the beginning of the fieldwork made me reflect on the fact that these stories offer more than we as researchers need to understand. To get in-depth knowledge of how fears are constructed and perpetuated within migrant communities, we need to understand the social world of the community and unpack this beyond what seems just sensible fear statements. The existing knowledge in the Scandinavian context tends to focus on migrant parents' language barriers, systemic misunderstanding and so forth (Fylkesnes et al., 2015; Paulsen, Thorshaug & Berg, 2014) – factors one cannot expect from second-generation migrants. Therefore, including the second generation in the research did not make sense at first, as I thought these issues did not affect them because they, by being raised in Norway, know the language, system and so forth. However, entering the field and gradually gaining insight into the social world of my participants led me to include this group.

As researchers, we do not enter the research field as blank slates. We are not independent of our own social world, and we carry our academic and

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personal luggage. Our (researchers') world is not separate from that of our participants, and when utilising ethnographic methods, we also become a tool, in the sense that we utilise our academic background, but more importantly, we utilise ourselves – our individuality and personality traits. For the readers, I need to set the record straight: I have a Somali background; I was eight months old when my family and I came to Norway. I speak Somali and Norwegian, and although my home is Norway, I also have a transnational life. I somewhat have a life situated in different contexts. Becoming a part of the Somali community in Oslo as both a researcher and an individual has been a journey, and I will elaborate more on this in the methodology chapter. (I had not much previous involvement with the Oslo Somali milieu.)

I was inspired by the Chicago School's interactionist sociology and social work pioneer Jane Addams' perspective on commitment and closeness to the people she worked on behalf of, as well as her efforts to learn to avoid mistakes and misunderstanding because of distance and to understand the totality of the problem (Franklin, 1986). My confusion and desire to understand the fear of the CWS within the Somali community prompted a journey of listening more carefully, to let my participants lead the way and to enter their social world. I cannot claim that my dissertation unpacks "the totality of the problem" or phenomenon. However, I do believe that, by utilising ethnographic methods and immersing myself in the community, I have been able to observe, listen to and learn about Somali parents' thoughts of not only the CWS but also their lives in Norway more broadly, including their

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previous lives in Somalia and their transnational lives with multiple countries today. As a result, I was given the opportunity to understand their lives through the prism of fear of the CWS, which enabled me to see other dimensions of CWS fears than had been previously documented.

I argue that CWS fears should be understood in light of processes and dynamics beyond their perceptions of that single institution. I do so by exploring Somali parents' everyday lives and whether and how their experiences and perceptions of the CWS are related to socioeconomic marginalisation, racism, coping and networking. This allowed me to explore how parents' repeated events and interactions in life produce views of the world and affect communication with others. Within this context, I investigate the following overarching question: **How is the fear of the CWS constructed among Norwegian-Somali parents, and how does this fear impact their everyday lives?**

The findings from this study are presented in three papers, presented in Table 1.

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Table 1: Overview of the three research papers

	<i>Paper 1</i>	<i>Paper 2</i>	<i>Paper 3</i>
<i>Title</i>	Disadvantaged Parents' Fears of Child Protective Services: Transmission of Child Removal Stories Among Norwegian-Somalis	“The Art of Kindergarten Drop Off”: How Young Norwegian-Somali Parents Perform Ethnicity to Avoid Reports to Child Welfare Services	Little Norway in Somalia – Understanding Complex Belongings of Transnational Somali Families
<i>Journal</i>	<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>	<i>European Journal of Social Work</i>	<i>Nordic Journal of Migration Research</i>
<i>Status</i>	Under review	Published 2020	Accepted 2021
<i>Author(s)</i>	Handulle, A., & Vassenden, A.	Handulle, A., & Vassenden, A.	Handulle, A.

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Across these three empirical articles, I pose the following research questions:

Paper 1:

How and why are stories of child removals transmitted within social networks? How can marginalisation reinforce parents' experiences of control and surveillance and foster fears of the CWS?

Paper 2:

How do parents relate their caution of the CWS at kindergarten and school? What are the strategies that Norwegian-Somali parents develop and employ to exercise this caution?

Paper 3:

What are the motivations for temporary return to Somalia? How and why do parents cultivate Norwegian cultural repertoires in Somalia?

In sum, these questions enabled me to investigate how fear is constructed and how this fear impacts their everyday lives. While Paper 1 gives extensive insight into the construction and perpetuation of fear within the community, Paper 2 investigates more specifically beyond the fear of the CWS and provides insight into how scepticism and fear influence parents' encounters with institutions like schools and kindergartens. In Paper 3, I address how temporary return to the country of origin is perceived among parents as self-empowering for their parenthood and as

a way to strengthen their children's Norwegian-Somali identity through increasing their belonging to Somalia and Norway.

### **1.1 Clarification of concepts**

The terms *child welfare service* and *child protection* are sometimes used synonymously, although in theory, there is a difference. Throughout this dissertation, I use the term *child welfare service (CWS)*, except when I refer to research that uses the term *child protection service (CPS)*, such as in the context of the United Kingdom and United States. I also use *child protective services* in Paper 1 when referring to both the Norwegian and US services.

The term *first generation* is used to refer to Somali migrants who immigrated to Norway as adults, while *second generation* is used in a broader sense to refer to descendants of Norwegian-Somali migrants who were born or raised in Norway. Although those who are not born in Norway typically are referred to as first generation, I have chosen to refer to those who are raised in Norway and had their social formation in Norway as second generation.

### **1.2 Structure of the dissertation**

The thesis will next move on to Chapter 2, which presents a contextual backdrop for the dissertation topic. Chapter 3 presents the theoretical foundation used to discuss the findings of this research. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology and research design of this project, and Chapter 5 provides a summary of the research findings. Chapter 6

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discusses the findings of this research project and highlights the study's contributions and implications.

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## **2 Context**

In this section, I briefly outline characteristics of Somali history and migration to Norway. This is followed by an outline of cultural facets that make up a central backdrop for the dissertation's focus on fear and scepticism of child welfare.

### **2.1 *Somalia and history of migration***

Somalia is considered one of the poorest nations in the world, with a high infant mortality rate and short life expectancy. In the eyes of the world, Somalia has been one of the most profound cases of state collapse during “the modern historical era with its social complicity” (Osman et al., 2007, p. xi). The Somali population is homogeneous in the sense of sharing a language, religion and culture. Somalis speak the Somali language, and due to their connection to the Middle East and religious affiliation (99% Sunni Muslims), Arabic is one of the official languages of the country. Due to its colonial history, Italian and English are also spoken in Somalia (Nasiru, 2015). Somali migration history is often referred to as occurring in three chronological waves: during colonialism, after independence, and during and after the civil war (Kleist, 2004). These waves can also be referred to as those of the “nomads, sailors and refugees” (Kleist, 2004). Migration during colonialism occurred because of colonial ties. The European “power” created an opportunity for numerous travels starting in the early 20th century, when division of the Somali territories took place by the French,

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Italian and British colonialists (Koshen, 2007). A large number of Somalis travelled back and forth between the colonial states. This entailed Somalis serving in the British and Italian armies and later as seafarers to the United Kingdom as sailors or traders, which led to some establishment of Somali communities in the United Kingdom as women and children followed their husbands in the early 1960s. Somalis also migrated to Italy as traders and students, but no Somali community was established there. In 1960, southern Somalia and northern Somalia, now Somaliland, gained independence from Italy and Great Britain, which led to new methods of migration as labour migrants to the Gulf and Saudi Arabia as oil workers. This short backdrop shows that Somalis have travelled and migrated for many years. Moreover, it is important to note that the main livelihoods of precolonial Somalis included nomadic pastoralism and trade, meaning that mobility and moving around has long played an important role in the Somali culture and discourses of Somaliness.

When Somalia gained independence, the first president and parliamentarian were elected. After eight years under a democratic system, the president was assassinated in 1969 by the military-led general Mohammed Siad Barre (Nasiru, 2015; Hesse, 2010). Siad Barre then ruled the country for 21 years. Following the collapse of Siad Barre's government in 1991, Somalia did not have structured authority. Consequently, former dictatorial rules forced the issue of establishing authority, politics and the safety of the country to the clan system, whereby the society "appeared to be a sum of total of self-defining, self-

acting, self-ruling clans” (Muchie, 2007, p. viii). The civil war escalated to clan-based conflict and caused many lives to be lost and millions to leave the country. Approximately two million Somalis fled the country and settled around the world. Hundreds of thousands of Somalis now live in European countries, such as Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway (Fagioli-Ndlovu, 2015). Seeking asylum in European countries was made available through the European governments’ joint efforts to create a common legal framework on migration in the early 1990s (Fagioli-Ndlovu, 2015). In Norway, Somalis are one of the largest migrant groups, with approximately 43,000 (Statistics Norway, 2019).

## **2.2 *Clan, culture and family kinship.***

Within Somali genealogy, most Somalis are born into one of six “main” clans. Dir, Isaq, Darod and Hawiye are known as Samaale. These clans constitute approximately 75% of all ethnic Somalis (Hesse, 2010). The Digil and Mirifle are both known as Rahanweyn and constitute approximately 20% of ethnic Somalis known as Sab. Each of these main clan families can be divided further into subclans (Deforche, 2013). Somali genealogy presents “individuals with a seemingly infinite number of ways to affiliate with, or disassociate from, fellow Somalis” (Hesse, 2010, p. 249). Lewis (2004) argues that clanship is an ongoing component of social cohesion in which the clan and lineage genealogies provide a system for personal identification utilised by the Somali diaspora around the world, for example, to send remittance. The clan

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affiliation is also attached to relationship, rights and obligations. In other words, the clan identity forms a social structure whereby the clan and extended family provide protection, rights, emotional support and economic support and identity (Koshen, 2007, pp. 74–75). This tradition is sustained by teaching children to memorise their genealogy along the male line. The patrilineal society is an important factor in Somali culture/clans. Identifying with patrilineal lineage provides support and protection but also demands loyalty and alliance (Koshen, 2007). As the clan affiliation follows patrilineal lineage, the male dominates the hierarchy. The woman does not change her clan affiliation after marriage, which means that the legal rights (i.e. protection, support) stay with her agnatic group. This structure is viewed as an important institution that protects their interests and welfare. The clan affiliation has a range of purposes that entail clan members' physical security, social welfare, safety net and law designed to reduce and manage conflict (Koshen, 2007).

Although men were traditionally breadwinners in Somalia, the family dynamic changed during and after the civil war, as male family members were absent and women took on the role of income earners. Further, due to urbanisation and transnationalism, the tight-knit family structure and communal openness have seemed to change in Somalia, especially among Somalis living abroad. Koshen (2007) refers to these family dynamic changes as a *generation gap* and argues that the younger generation are more protective of their privacy and share less with their Somali community. Despite these changes, Somalis still value the tight-

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knit traditions, and clan divisions have been significant during struggles in Somalia and are still highly politicised issues today for Somalis in Somalia and diasporas. Studies show that, while Somalis claim that clan affiliation and tight bonds within the clan are less important today compared to the mid-1990s, the impact of the clan system is present in the everyday lives of Somalis abroad (Bjork, 2007). However, in this study, it is important to underline that, although clan is highly relevant in the diaspora and certainly sheds light on traditions and culture, clan affiliation seemed to matter less among the participants in my study. Rather, they felt a greater collective feeling of being Somalis as a migrant group due to experiences of racialisation, in the sense that they are protective of each other emotionally and provide support for each other across clan affiliations. However, within the community, and as shown in Paper 1, parents seek familial advice within the family and extended family, which entails clan affiliation. Also, within the *hagbad* system (money lending), trust worthiness involves implicit knowledge of clan affiliations' protection and liabilities. In other words, if a specific clan member does not pay within the allotted time, the members in the *hagbad* system can involve affiliated clan members to put pressure on another to pay or take accountability. As Bjork (2007) points out, clan affiliation is socially embedded in the interactions of Somalis in Somalia and abroad. Furthermore, the tight-knit bonds and shared information are also connected to the strong oral traditions in Somalia. As a result of a high illiteracy rate due to conflicts, limited infrastructure, few official schools, lack of stability, and the fact that Somalia did not have a written language

until the 1970s, Somalis have a strong oral tradition with poetry, songs, rituals and stories that were orally transferred to the younger generation (Nasiru, 2015; Farid, 2004). This oral tradition is still very important today and might contribute to why stories of child welfare travel rapidly among the first-generation participants in the study.

### **2.3 Somalis' marginalised position in Norway**

According to Statistics Norway (2019), Somalis are one of the largest non-Western and youngest immigrant groups in Norway. They migrated to Norway in the mid-1980s to flee the civil war. The first wave of Somali refugees consisted of resourceful elites who managed to leave the country in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Næss, 2020). The second wave, and the largest group of immigrants from Somalia to Norway, arrived in the 2000s and later. This group had long stays in refugee camps before arriving in Norway, and many experienced stressors related to separation from family, distress and trauma. (Horst, 2007; Jorgenson & Nilsson, 2021). Although the Somali population in Norway is highly diverse in terms of residency, migration experience and education, they are often described as a challenging group with regard to societal integration in general and integration in the labour market in particular (Fuglerud & Engebriksen, 2006; Hammond, 2013). The common narrative of challenges with societal integration is related to short residence time, language difficulties and lack of schooling from the home country. Furthermore, with few formal qualifications upon arrival in Norway and increased educational and linguistic demands for

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employment in Norway, the employment rates among Somalis in Norway are low (Næss, 2019; Statistics Norway, 2020). Additionally, many Somalis are often employed in low-income jobs with a high frequency of part-time and temporary employment (Vrålstad & Wiggen, 2017). Consequently, financial constraints have contributed to vulnerability to poverty among families with children. Somali children are the largest group in number among immigrant children living in poverty and low-income families, with over 11,000 Somali children in the low-income group (Epland & Kirkeberg, 2016; Statistics Norway, 2021). Despite their parents' socioeconomic resources, studies show that children of immigrants, including Somali descendants, proceed to higher education and move up the social ladder (Bakken & Hyggen, 2018; Hermansen, 2016; Kindt, 2017; Orupabo, Drange & Abrahamsen, 2020).

Moreover, Somalis report a lack of a sense of belonging and experiences of discrimination and racism from mainstream society and the labour market (Henriksen, 2008; Næss, 2020; Vrålstad & Wiggen, 2017). They report being viewed by public employees as difficult, demanding and unwilling to adapt to the new context, which contributes to experiences of humiliation in these encounters (Fangen, 2006; Friberg & Elgvin, 2016; Næss, 2020; Vrålstad & Wiggen, 2017). Experiences of stigmatisation based on religious markers, race and ethnicity (see Fangen, 2010b; Moret, 2016; Valentine, Sporton & Nielsen, 2009) lead to marginalised positions, which contribute to a disadvantaged position in society (Chuang & Le Bail, 2020). For instance, Somalis in Scandinavia reside vastly disproportionately in either public social

housing or private rentals, in which a very high proportion are renters rather than homeowners (Skovgaard Nielsen, Holmqvist, Dhalmann & Søholt, 2015). Despite this, Norway is characterised as a homeownership country, with approximately 80% of the population owning their houses (Statistics Norway, 2017).

## **2.4 Characteristics of the Norwegian welfare system and child welfare system**

In Esping-Andersen's (1990) classic book *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, he differentiates among the three welfare state logics: the social democratic, the liberal and the corporatist. Norway is characterised as a social democratic state with a highly developed welfare system, institutionalised social rights, universal access, egalitarianism and generous benefits (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hantrais, 2004; Nygren, White & Ellingsen, 2018). Angell (2004) argues that the idea behind the Norwegian welfare system is to protect the members of the system against social risks. In other words, the ideal typical perspective of this model is for the government to take responsibility for the "individual from cradle to death" (Aspalter, 2011, p. 732) by facilitating and redistributing income to ensure that all citizens can attain a minimum standard of living. Underpinning a redistributive ideology, the welfare state emphasises egalitarian values (Bendixsen, Bringslid & Vike, 2018). The institutionalisation of egalitarianism is a strong force in the construction of cultural and social values in Norwegian society and

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is upheld through state policy (Bendixsen et al., 2018; Ljunggren, 2017; Østerud, 2005).

The Norwegian welfare system has established a highly developed welfare apparatus to reduce private organised service provision. The Norwegian model has been associated with a defamilialised welfare regime (Hantrais, 2004; Nygren et al., 2018) due to the shared responsibility between state and families and, moreover, through family policy and a wide range of measures consisting of public child care, unemployment benefits, sick benefits, health services, care services and child protection services, which are partially or fully subsidised by the tax system (Angell, 2004; Sollund, 2010). The state facilitates a high participation rate in the labour market, which reflects extensive public services for children and the elderly (Follesø & Mevik, 2010; Kroger & Forsberg, 2010). For example, kindergartens are state funded and approximately 91% of Norwegian children aged 1–5 years attend kindergarten (Statistics Norway, 2017, 2018), and most children in Norway attend public school. The state's task of protecting children is done along the various dimensions and mandates of different welfare institutions. Friberg and Bjørnset (2020) argue that the Norwegian welfare state can be viewed as an invasive state compared to other countries, as the state has a high ambition of regulating social relations through public kindergarten, the education process and a comprehensive socialisation through these institutions. Although it is the CWS as an institution that has the authority to intervene, it is society as a whole and

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the state's responsibility to ensure children's good welfare and safety (Storhaug & Kojan, 2017; Studsrød et al., 2014)

The Norwegian CWS reflects the values of the welfare system based on justice, equality, solidarity and safe conditions for growing up and tolerance. The main goal of the CWS is to ensure that children at risk receive help. The CWS relies on three main principles: the best interest of the child inscribed in the Child Welfare Act (1992, §4–1), the biological principle and the least intrusive form of intervention (NOU, 2000, p. 12). Guided by these principles, the CWS focuses on early intervention, equality of opportunities and preventions. The CWS is characterised as a “family service” system, which emphasises supportive measures and collaboration between social workers and families. Their mandate is to support families at an early stage to pre-empt harm to children and further includes investigating reports of maltreatment, evaluating whether child abuse/neglect has occurred and offering in-home services and out-of-home care to ensure a safe environment for the child (Gilbert, Parton & Skivenes, 2011; Pösö, Skivenes & Hestbæk, 2014; Skivenes, Barn, Kriz & Poso, 2015). An increased focus on children as subjects in the Nordic welfare countries, and especially in the Norwegian CWS, has contributed to the Norwegian CWS being referred to as “child-centric”, as it considers children to be independent carriers of rights (Skivenes et al., 2015). This approach is in line with modern childhood sociology, which considers children as “beings” and entails that the state should address children's needs directly and not only indirectly through their parents (Pösö et al. 2014, p. 485)

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As previously addressed, it is the role of society as a whole to ensure children's well-being and safety. This entails that public authorities, such as professionals who work with children (e.g. teachers, doctors, nurses), have mandatory reporting to the municipal CWS "when there is reason to believe that a child is being mistreated at home or subjected to other forms of serious neglect" (Child Welfare Act, §6–4). Furthermore, since teachers who work in schools and kindergartens have daily contact with children, they are required by law to be aware of conditions that may lead to measures from the CWS (Education Act, 1998, §15–3; Kindergarten Act, 2005, §46).

Furthermore, the CWS is two-sided, as it offers support and exercises control and discipline. The CWS focuses on prevention and early intervention, offering support to vulnerable children and families with a low threshold (Juhasz, 2020). Interventions from the CWS can be voluntary or compulsory, although interventions such as use of force and out-of-home placement are the last solution in serious cases and must be decided by a court (Skivenes, 2011). Norwegian legislation opens up the possibility of removal based on "high probability", which entails not factual neglect but the probability that the parents will not be able to provide sufficient care in the future (Juhasz, 2020, p. 2). The CWS has a decentralised structure, whereby municipalities have the autonomy to execute the work and organise the service (Olsvik & Saus, 2020). In 2020, approximately 53,000 children received help from the CWS (Bufdir, 2020). The majority of these children who were in contact with various CWS offices got help in terms of in-home measures. Few

children are placed out of home, and yearly, approximately 3% of cases result in out-of-home care (Statistics Norway, 2020).

Concerning immigrant children and descendants of immigrants, the CWS is involved more often compared to cases with native families. This specifically entails that children with immigrant backgrounds are overrepresented regarding investigations and in-home support, but not care orders (Staer & Bjørknes, 2015; Statistics Norway, 2020; Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019). The overrepresentation in supportive measures is partially due to unaccompanied minors being registered in the child welfare system (Berg et al., 2017)

## **2.5 *Fear of child welfare service among immigrants and disadvantaged groups***

A growing body of literature shows that fear and distrust of the CWS are widespread among certain disadvantaged groups and especially among migrant groups (Berg et al., 2017; Dalikeni, 2021; Fylkesnes, et.al 2018; Ipsos, 2018; Korzeniewska, Erdal, Kosakowska-Berezecka & Żadkowska, 2019; Paulsen et al., 2014; Rasmussen, Akinsulure-Smith, Chu & Keatley, 2012). Scholars have focused on different perspectives and viewpoints on this topic when trying to understand and explain the causes of this fear. Studies from the United States and England, to a great extent, have focused on immigrants, ethnic minorities and disadvantaged groups in marginalised positions, discrimination and structural power relations. Such scholars have noted the importance of examining the

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relationship between poverty and social problems (Barn, 2007; Dean, 2001; Dalikeni, 2021; Lee, 2016b; Pringle, 2010; Roberts 2002). In the United States, for example, Fong's (2017) study emphasises that decades of research has found that marginalisation, such as poverty and disadvantaged neighbourhoods, is the most consistent and strongest predictor of CPS involvement. Robert's (2002) study shows how race/ethnicity is a strong factor for contact with the CWS/CPS, which increases African-Americans' fear and distrust of the system. The fear of the CWS has also been documented in Australia (Sawrikar & Katz, 2014) and Canada (Kikulwe, 2021; Swift, 2011).

A similarity among studies across nations is the intersecting issue of parents' experiences of racialisation on one side and poverty on the other side. For instance, Okpokiri's (2021) study shows that Nigerian parents in Britain exercise their parenthood in fear. This fear entails that parents perceive that their parenting is viewed as "not good enough" because of their Nigerian heritage, which leads to feelings of disempowerment in their parental role. They further experience that their exercise of parenthood is perceived from a racialised lens by the authorities. Similar findings were also documented in the United States by Fong (2017), who showed how economically disadvantaged families' parental practice involves parental stress and family conflict, as they are aware that this may increase contact with CPS. The fact that CWS fears generate distrust in adjacent institutions among migrant and disadvantaged parents has been documented in both American and Nordic studies (Fong, 2020; Osman et al., 2017; Tembo, Studsrød & Young, 2020). For instance,

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Aure and Dauksas (2020) show that Lithuanian parents in Norway fear being reported to the CWS, which leads to insecurity and mistrust when interacting with schools and kindergartens. This has also been found in the United States (see Asad, 2020; Fong, 2019, 2020; Lee, 2016a). Even though the US and Nordic contexts are quite different, the similarities of fear being reported across the nations are striking. These differences pertain to the high poverty rate and more punitive focus in the United States compared to Nordic countries, with the Nordic welfare regime being less punitive and offering more generous welfare provisions. This entails that the CWS is more focused on a partnership between social workers and families, whereas CPS works towards prevention and risk factors (Gilbert et al., 2011; Wilson, Hean, Abebe & Heaslip, 2020). Moreover, while fear is often associated with losing custody of children in the Nordic context, in the United States, parents also fear deportation, especially in cases of undocumented immigrants (Ayón, Aisenberg & Erera, 2010; Earner, 2007; Slayter & Križ, 2015).

In the Nordic context, studies on the encounters between immigrant families and the CWS have identified several challenges, such as cultural gaps, communication barriers and distrust (Berg et al., 2017; Križ & Skivenes, 2010). Further, several studies have addressed social workers' lack of cultural competence and migrants' settlement challenges in a new country as substantial challenges in working with immigrants (Anis, 2005; Eliassi, 2015; Križ & Skivenes, 2010). These challenges, as addressed in the studies, are often portrayed as the reasons that migrants fear the CWS, even though this phenomenon is often studied from the

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social worker perspective and the studies that have highlighted the migrants' perspectives are small scale (Fylkesnes, et al., 2015; Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Herrero-Arias, Hollekim & Haukanes, 2020; Kabatanya & Vagli, 2019; Tembo & Studsrød, 2020).

Previous research has also shown that class difference matters when families are in contact with the CWS (Fauske, Lichtwark, Marthinsen, Willumsen, Clifford & Kojan, 2009). For instance, Kojan (2011) found that, within the cases of resourceful families, CWS officers tend to focus on children's behavioural problems rather than on parents' maltreatment. The resourceful parents are more likely to negotiate in the process, and often, if the child is placed in foster care, this is done with the parents' consent, or the case is severe and the CWS executes an acute placement in a foster home (Kojan, 2011). In other words, disadvantaged families are more likely to not be included in the same way in the CWS decision-making process (Fauske, Kojan & Skårstad Storhaug, 2018; Kojan, 2011). Furthermore, higher-class families tend to have a broad social network, which works to their advantage when interacting with the CWS, as their network often includes resourceful individuals who can make accessing information difficult for the CWS (Aadnanes, 2017; Kojan, 2011). Moreover, parents with financial and social resources are more likely to be recognised and acknowledged compared with disadvantaged and marginalised groups. The experience among disadvantaged and immigrant groups of not being recognised or acknowledged, in the sense of not being heard as parents when meeting with CWS professionals, seems to contrast with the power imbalance seen between the CWS

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professional interacting with resourceful parents, who have high social status and can affect decision making, compared to the disadvantaged/immigrant groups, who have low social status and have less power (Fauske et al., 2018). Although these Norwegian studies do not directly investigate immigrant families, considering the barriers they face in achieving socioeconomic standing compared to their native peers (Statistics Norway, 2020), these studies demonstrate that immigrants are disadvantaged in several areas, such as being economically disadvantaged and immigrants, which may entail struggling for acceptance due to their race/ethnicity and religion. Therefore, the contribution of this study lies in enriching the limited body of knowledge of the phenomenon “fear of child welfare” in Norway by investigating through in-depth ethnography of Norwegian-Somalis’ CWS fears and by unpacking their social world.

### **3 Theoretical framework**

In this chapter, I outline the theoretical concept and consideration essential to the three articles in this dissertation. I also situate my scientific position by building on Blumer's (1986) perspectives on symbolic interactionism as an overarching theoretical umbrella. I suggest that the social world, through meaning exchanges, symbols and talks about institutions, is crucial to the discussion of how Norwegian-Somali parents come to perceive, experience and fear the CWS. Symbolic interactionism seeks to capture how the social world is a dynamic process where acts, objects and people are not static entities but are rather evolving and intertwined (Rock, 2001). This study deals with the social world of Norwegian-Somali parents – how the CWS is talked about, and how perceptions of the CWS impact their everyday life. Blumer (1986) provides a perspective showing how the social world is seen and may be grasped from within the community's points of view. I begin with a brief discussion on the connections between social work and symbolic interactionism.

#### **3.1 *Symbolic interactionism and social work***

Symbolic interactionism as a school of thought can be traced back to between 1890 and 1910 by philosophers, sociologists and social workers aligned with the University of Chicago (Deegan, 2001; Forte, 2004a, 2004b). The term symbolic interactionism was coined by Blumer (1986) in his book *Symbolic Interactionism: Perspective and Method*.

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According to Blumer (1986: 3), symbolic interactionism rests on three premises. The first premise is that human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the thing has for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived or arises from the social interaction one has with one's fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in and modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. According to Forte (2004a), many social workers utilised symbolic interactionism as a theoretical approach to describe social work education and social processes. Interactionism was inspired by the philosophy of pragmatism, which, according to Forte (2004a), led to a commitment to social reform that produced knowledge for practical use. An interactionist conceptual framework, therefore, directs the gaze to how people interact and how the social context affects the interaction (Järvinen, 2005). With reference to social work reforms at the Hull-House, a community-orientated settlement house established by female sociologists and social workers who worked directly with poor city residents, the symbolic interactionist perspective provided the conceptual framework for the Chicago social workers involved in the Hull-House. Although differences between social work and sociology were acknowledged, it was a mutual understanding that interdisciplinary collaboration would better the understanding of social problems. Hence, the women of the Hull-House had an important theoretical and methodological impact on the empirical research in sociology (Deegan, 1988; Seltzer & Haldar, 2015).

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Social work pioneer Jane Addams' devotion to practice-based knowledge building was, as Forte (2004a) describes it, "the ideological offspring of the marriage between social work and sociology-symbolic interactionism" (p. 392). Even though it has been debated how the two disciplines influence each other, they have in common the wish to understand social problems and improve human welfare (Forte, 2004b). Scholars (Kusow, 1998; Valenta, 2008) have argued that the characteristic of the symbolic interactionist tradition is an emphasis on interpersonal and intrapersonal processes. According to Denzin (2004), the concepts of action and agency are relevant to symbolic interactionism. Action refers to experiences which are instinctively meaningful to a person, while agency refers to the position of the action – in the person, in the language or in the structure or the process. In other words, the guiding principle in symbolic interactionism lies in understanding that society and the self must be treated as a process rather than a structure. This entails that social relations and structure are not viewed as only fixed and stable but also as open and can adjust to situations through interaction and negation (Denzin, 2004, 2008).

Scholars (Allen, 2008; Forte, 2004b; Hegar, 2008) have argued that the social work profession is a legacy of Jane Addams, who contributed to the transatlantic diffusion of social work knowledge (Hegar, 2008). Addams' interests included, among other things, social equality and economically disadvantaged groups, including Blacks, the poor, immigrants and women. Aligned with interactionist perspectives, Addams, as a social work pioneer, was occupied with tuning in and

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understanding the behaviour of vulnerable groups. Additionally, social equality and communication are central to both interactionists and social workers. Hence, this dissertation embraces a theoretical framework which combines scholarship from both social work and sociology.

Building on this theoretical umbrella of symbolic interactionism, I present and discuss how I operationalised the theories employed in this dissertation. Each of the three papers includes a somewhat large part of the theoretical consideration, which does not need repetition. However, I do recapitulate key theoretical standpoints in a broader understanding. Furthermore, broadly speaking, although sociologists such as Erving Goffman would not call himself an interactionist, his work is read as interactionist, and moreover, Robert Putnam would not call himself an interactionist. Yet, I believe symbolic interactionism as an overarching framework is informative, and utilising different analytical tools allows for understanding complex stories in the social world of Norwegian-Somali parents.

### **3.2 Stigma**

A Goffmanian approach has been utilised in the articles with a special emphasis on stigma. Goffman's stigma theory has been an important framework in analysing the findings of this dissertation. When analysing how parents perceive the CWS, the interaction with broader welfare institutions was central. Therefore, directing the gaze to how parents interact and share information within their community and how the social

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context impacts the perceptions was important. My objective was not to investigate whether the CWS or other welfare institutions stigmatise Somali parents, although this might occur. My purpose was to understand how the parents feel stigmatised. Stigma is understood as psychological and social elements that impact individuals and, thus, set the premises of how meanings are constructed and how they act towards things on the basis of these meanings (Blumer, 1986).

In *Stigma*, Goffman (1963/1990) describes the difference between people who are discredited, whose stigma is known or visible, and people who are discreditable, whose stigma is unknown. He emphasises that stigma is a deeply discrediting attribute which can be associated with negative stereotypes. The stigma concept involves a disagreement between the apparent social identity and the actual social identity. He further argues that stigma consists of a relationship between a trait and a stereotype classification of people. Goffman describes three forms of stigma. The first is related to bodily disparity as a visible deformity. The second, as he puts it, is a “blemish of individual character” (Goffman, 1963/1990, p. 4), which he exemplifies by, for example, pointing to mental illness, crime and unemployment. The third type is tribal/ethnic stigma, which is linked to race or religion. He describes how visible disparities, such as bodily deformation or ethnicity, are perceived differently from society to society and discusses whether the visible difference is categorised as stigma or not and whether it has consequences for the individual’s self-understanding. The distinction between those who are discredited (or revealed), where the stigma is

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visible, and those who are potentially discredited (revealable) teaches the stigmatised to handle and adapt to the stigma in relation to other people (Goffman, 1963/1990). He further describes how individuals use impression control to protect themselves and the impressions that others get from the interaction by employing the acts of *passing* and *covering*. Passing refers to strategies that the discreditable use to be perceived as “normal”. Covering includes attempts by the discredited to cover visible traits (e.g. racial markers). When covering, an individual does not reject their identity but rather downplays it by employing techniques to reduce their interactional obtrusiveness (Goffman, 1963/1990).

These elements are explored to understand how parents perceive that their visible stigma impacts interactions with welfare institutions and society at large. In Paper 2, we particularly engage with covering and impression control and show that, in order to counter ethnic stigma and avoid racial scrutiny, the parents emphasise Norwegian middle-class identity when they interact with public institutions, such as schools and kindergartens. As shown in the article, the parents do not believe that they have the same interactional freedom as their native peers. Thus, the individual self-understanding of carrying a stigma has consequences for how social interactions are performed. Furthermore, perceiving or experiencing stigma activates fear, and consequently, individuals act on the fear caused by the stigma. For example, Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik & Jun (2016) and Arai, Bursell & Nekby (2016) noted that visible minorities “whitewash” their curriculum vitae by, for example, changing their name, leaving out experience that might be associated with minority

attributes and emphasising experiences that signal “whiteness”. Other studies (e.g. Kindt, 2017) show that highly educated children of immigrants in Norway do not necessarily view their accomplishment as a positive attribute because of fear of suspicions that their success came through “immigrant culture”, which might imply negative connotations. These studies show that minorities’ and immigrants’ embedded stigma and fear of discrimination is derived not from power exercised but from someone’s capacity to exercise power (cf. Lukes, 2013). Goffman’s apparatus helps us examine and understand how visible migrants’ experiences of their ethnicity, colour and religious symbols are perceived as a signal of parental competency when they interact with welfare institutions. Moreover, this apparatus also detects the stigma associated with CWS involvement (Morriss, 2018), which, in this case, entails that child removals/care orders are revealed within the community, while in-home support is kept covered and not known, as the parents can choose to disclose the information and pass as normal within the community. These perspectives are addressed in Paper 1 through a focus on recognition and bonding capital among Somalis.

### ***3.3 Double consciousness, belonging and recognition***

To understand Norwegian-Somalis’ fears of the Norwegian CWS, exploring processes and dynamics far beyond the CWS is crucial. In this context, to sort out and better understand the processes that lead to fear, I have utilised frameworks that allow for capturing how experiences in

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everyday lives construct meanings. W. E. B. Du Bois posed the rhetorical question “How does it feel to be a problem?” that confronts all Black people in the United States, as they are seen by American society as a problematic group. As he points out, “being a problem is a strange experience – peculiar even for one who has never been anything else” (Du Bois, 1903/2008 p.3). He explains the concept of double consciousness as a

peculiar sensation, a sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others. . . . One ever feels his twoness, – an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body. . . . The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, – this longing . . . to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. (p. 3)

Du Bois described the African-American experience of double consciousness over 100 years ago. He managed to capture how the internalisation of alienation and racial categorisation leads people to develop reflexivity, in which they view themselves as both inferiors and as national citizens. The double consciousness for the parents in this thesis, as shown in Papers 1 and 2, is double layered: (i) the Norwegian welfare state/CWS and (ii) majority Norwegians. First, when interacting with welfare institutions, the parents fear racial ascription, as shown in Paper 2 and mentioned in Paper 1. The other self looks through the perspective of Norwegian welfare institutions/CWS, in the sense that

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they view themselves through the eyes of (white) kindergarten and school personnel, performing self-checks in hopes of ensuring that their parenting and their child's behaviour is not measured through their ethnicity. Second, in relation to the wider society, the participants perform self-checks to ensure that their behaviour is not viewed through their race/ethnicity or that they avoid or minimise interaction with "white" Norwegians in order to reduce the number of the self-checks. The constant pull to belong to two distinct worlds' cultural identities, each corresponding to different social roles, is problematic (Rawls, 2000). This is shown in Papers 1 and 2, where the parents struggle to pinpoint if, where and to what extent their ethnicity becomes relevant in their interactions in everyday life, which leads to monitoring their interactions.

To comprehend Somali parents' fear of the CWS, we must understand the social world of the participants and the role that skin colour and religious affiliation may play in their everyday lives. Each article touches upon how Norwegian-Somali parents make meaning of their everyday lives when meeting welfare institutions and society. Papers 2 and 3 show that second-generation parents particularly struggle with their twoness in manoeuvring and negotiating with welfare institutions and society. This does not mean that the first generation does not struggle with their double consciousness, but because the second generation is more socially mobile and attains cultural knowledge, they expect to be and require being treated equally to their native peers. Research shows that educational attainment, higher levels of labour participation and negative

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media reports on immigrants heightens the level of perceived discrimination (Alanya et al., 2015; André & Dronkers, 2017). This may be a possible explanation for the greater struggles with twoness among the second generation.

Moreover, the constant “war” of the sense of twoness (Du Bois, 1903/2008) between the two worlds is shown in Paper 3 and exemplified through the notion of struggles for belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 2011). To understand these struggles and examine how the parents create meanings and thereafter act on them, I have utilised Honneth’s (1995) recognition framework. I have mainly focused on the core argument of Honneth’s recognition, which is the argument that humans’ desire for recognition is vital to individual self-realisation and that a lack of recognition triggers emotions of shame. He identifies three levels at which well-being is achieved. First, at the individual level is self-confidence, where recognition is derived from emotional support, care and love. The second level relates to legal relations, which concerns social and political rights that allow individuals to be involved in decision making and, hence, accorded respect. The third level consists of appraising individual skills and talents among the community and social life, which can strengthen social esteem. In this sense, esteem relates to experiences of love, care and legal recognition that allow individuals to link their traits and abilities in positive ways. In other words, esteem is particularly important for the moral development of society, as it enhances the concept that every individual should be viewed as valuable in society. While Honneth notes that every individual might not

realistically be equally “esteemed”, he also highlights that no individual should be disrespected as a result of their identity (Frost, 2016; Mendonça, 2011; Munford & Sanders, 2020). Honneth’s (1995) framework is fruitful for the reason that it allows for a critical investigation that highlights the basic premise for a social life in which every individual always struggles for recognition from other people. As we show in Paper 1, Somalis struggle for recognition, and the first generation specifically hopes to achieve this through their children.

### **3.4 Bridging and bonding social capital**

Social capital is broadly defined as consisting of resources embedded in social networks (Lin, 2002). I have solely utilised Putnam’s (2000) concept of social capital and specifically his distinction between bridging and bonding capital. Putnam’s perspectives on social capital revolve around features of social organisation, such as networks, norms and social trust. The value of social networking is emphasised by the social trust between citizens, as it has value for both members and society as a whole. Putnam distinguishes between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital. Bonding is connected to the members of a network being equal in terms of ethnicity, religion, social class or gender. Networking within bonding capital consists of strong links where members often have little contact with other people and groups outside the network. Migrants in a new context will often seek networks among others in the same situation who speak the same language and have the same challenges. Migrants often seek out other migrants for social and emotional support. This kind

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of social capital is, in Putnam's terms, "good for getting by". Bridging is the opposite of bonding and pertains to forming networks with people who are different from each other. Anthias and Cederberg (2009) show how the use of ethnic bonds as social capital can improve migrants' social and economic position in society at large by using ethnic resources in the context of entrepreneurship. Anthias (2007) argues that social capital is not a "thing and never fixed" (p. 801) and suggests that social capital needs to be understood as different from advantaged and disadvantaged positions. From the disadvantaged position, Anthias (2007) suggests that the notion of ethnic-specific social networks is not always positive for migrants because, while they can construct boundaries of trust and solidarity within the social networks, this can lead to being excluded from mainstream society. Furthermore, minority ethnic social capital can be viewed as compensating for the deficiency of what Anthias (2007) calls mainstream social, cultural and economic resources.

Employing the distinction between Putnam's (2000) bonding and bridging social capital and Anthias' suggestion on ethnic-specific social networks in this project has allowed for the identification of various mechanisms that impact Norwegian-Somali parents' fear of the CWS. Analysing how the social world in terms of social networks within the Somali community and perceived lack of access to other forms of social capital, such as access to the labour market, housing and extensive contact with the majority population, has been important for

understanding Norwegian-Somali parents' perceptions, experiences and fear of the CWS.

### **3.5 Transnationalism**

Thomas and Znaniecki's (1918/1996) book *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* is viewed as one of the most important contributions to today's understanding of transnationalism. Their book offers an understanding of how relations across national borders were maintained even before the technology we have today. A transnational perspective on migrants' lives is often described as families separated by distance and national borders, which forces them to negotiate and maintain family relations with multiple societies across borders (Lietaert, Broekaert & Derluyn, 2017; Skrbiš, 2008). The transnational perspective in this PhD project has been twofold. First, I engage with the concept of transnationalism in Paper 3, in which I address how parents perceive a temporary return to the country of origin as self-empowering for their parenthood and a way to strengthen their children's Norwegian-Somali identity by increasing their belonging to Somalia and Norway. Second, taking the transnational perspective into account throughout the dissertation has been important, as the participants' family lives and impulses are not only situated in Norway. Therefore, having transnationalism as a backdrop, even though this perspective is only explicitly written in Paper 3, has been important. In Paper 1, the findings suggest that stories of the CWS are transnationalised. As argued by Baldassar (2014), transnational connections are easier to maintain today

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by using technology, and these technologies contribute to CWS stories travelling internationally and, hence, manifesting fear of the CWS beyond Norwegian borders (cf. Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019).

## **4 Methodology**

In this chapter, I account for my methods. I show how an explorative and interpretive approach, inspired by the Chicago School of Ethnography (Deegan, 2001; Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007; Ocejo, 2012), is suitable for attaining a deeper and broader understanding of Norwegian-Somali parents' social world and their CWS fears.

### **4.1 *The Chicago School of Ethnography***

In ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher both collects data and is at the same time involved in the origin of the data. The data are obtained from various sources, such as participatory observation, informal conversations and interviews. The research is exploratory and emphasises creating a space for following phenomena in different contexts, where the researcher is part of the world being studied. An overriding goal is to be able to describe what people say and do in contexts that are not structured by the researcher (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

The Chicago School scholars' main interest was everyday life, how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals (Carter & Fuller, 2015). The term ethnography is borrowed from traditional anthropological fieldwork (Deegan, 2001). Park and Burgess (1925/2019) used methods from anthropology, but they were also inspired by urban reporting in big cities. In this tradition, fieldwork

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was often conducted in an informal and unsystematic way. In many cases, fieldworkers do not have a clear idea about what they are going to study before entering the field site; however, by embedding themselves in an environment and forming relationships with people, ethnographers explore the opportunity to learn new phenomena and expand existing knowledge (Ocejo, 2012). I was inspired by the Chicago School tradition of ethnography and particularly inspired by Whyte's (1943/2002) classic book *Street Corner Society*. Whyte used an ethnographic approach influenced by the immersive fieldwork of anthropologists to study marginalised Italian "corner boys". He mapped the complex social world of street gangs and corner boys by studying their social interaction, networking and everyday life. I was inspired by Whyte's reading and urban ethnographers' desire to understand the importance of face-to-face interactions and the lived experiences of marginalised groups in their social world.

### **4.2 Fieldwork in Norway**

The first fieldwork was conducted in Oslo, more specifically, the district of "Old Oslo", with a particular focus on Grønland. In the late 1960s, with the arrivals of Pakistani, Turkish and Moroccan labour migrants, Grønland was an affordable housing area. Gradually, this area became a neighbourhood with a high concentration of non-Western immigrants (Bangstad, 2011). Today, Grønland is not Oslo's main migrant residential district. However, four of Oslo's five purpose-built mosques are located there, as are many ethnically diverse cafés and shops. In

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recent years, Grønland has been referred to as “Little Pakistan” and “Little Mogadishu” (Næss, 2020). In the latter, Somalis are the largest immigrant group in the district of “Old Oslo” (Høydahl, 2014) and perhaps a more visible migrant group within the cityscape. Therefore, this district became my research site. To conduct this study, I had to move to Oslo and familiarise myself with this district, as I am not from Oslo. I spent seven months in Oslo, from June 2016 to December 2017. Within this timeframe, I gained access and developed relationships, which allowed me to gain an understanding of the participants’ lives.

Many ethnographers live in the same neighbourhood as their participants, but I did not live in Grønland while doing the research. The reason for this was because of convenience; as mentioned before, I moved to Oslo from another municipality to conduct the fieldwork and borrowed an apartment outside the cityscape. However, I did spend 5–6 days a week there, “hanging” with Somali parents in different contexts, such as in Somali shops, cafés, restaurants, a mosque, attending social events for Somalis, female sewing circles, a Sunday club for children and parents, and International Child Development Program groups for parents, which entails parental training to build confidence and skills for caregivers. On certain occasions, I met people at their homes, workplace or ordinary cafés (this was especially the case for the second generation). I employed multiple methods, such as chatting with owners and customers in shops and restaurants, talking one on one, talking to them on the phone, interviewing them, interacting with them, observing them, dancing, praying alongside them and playing with their children.

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As frequently described in the literature on ethnography, the methodological road is paved while walking on it (Ocejo, 2012; Fangen, 2010a; Hammersly & Atkinson, 2007; Whyte, 1943/2002), whereby the analytical questions grow forth throughout the research. This was also the case with this study. At the beginning of this study, I had no intention of including second-generation Somali parents. However, throughout the fieldwork and by combing my reading of theory and my analysis of material collected while gathering more material, I realised that including the second generation in the study would be important. In ethnography, it is typical for fieldwork to go back and forth between data collection, theory reading and, importantly, reflecting on and analysing the fieldworker's own experiences of the field (Ocejo, 2012). According to Denzin (2007), much has been discussed about how scientific knowledge is produced on the basis of participatory observation and how the researcher can legitimise and validate the text that is produced when the researcher himself is involved in the environment being observed. Legitimation also questions the generalisability and reliability of research, and for this reason, it is important to give an account of the researcher's background and preconceptions (Fangen, 2010a). Therefore, before I go in depth into how I got access to the field in Norway and Somalia and how I conducted the research, it is important to give an account of who I am.

### **4.3 Self-situating and access**

Throughout my career as a social worker within welfare institutions, such as the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), an introduction programme for migrants, a crisis shelter for young adults with a migrant background and unaccompanied asylum seekers, I have been in contact with the CWS. I also had several clients who were in contact with CWS and expressed scepticism towards the agency. These experiences with the CWS and my knowledge of the CWS cannot be separated from the research process. The assumption of migrants' fears of the CWS was not new for me because, in a former study I conducted among CWS workers and migrants' parents, fear also emerged. Even though I am familiar with the CWS through former work-related experiences, it has been challenging to grasp the depth of fear towards this institution. Consequently, this spurred me to seek more knowledge about the CWS. After I ended my fieldwork, I applied to work as a translator to understand the CWS behind the scenes. During the interview for this position, I specified that I am a researcher and was open about my desire to learn more about the CWS, but I also believed I had valuable knowledge that I could contribute as a translator. Furthermore, I saw it as a useful opportunity to go "behind the scenes" and increase my knowledge about the CWS. It is important to underline that my work as an interpreter was strictly about interpretation and that it was in a different municipality than the fieldwork. This work allowed me to experience the atmosphere in CWS locations and meet caseworkers, parents and children in scenarios, such as observation and

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visitations. It showed me the complexity of cases that social workers must deal with and the difficulty of balancing being a helper and controller when interacting with parents and children. I believe that this behind-the-scenes experience allowed me to increase my understanding of the CWS and parents' perceptions.

As a female Norwegian-Somali researcher, I probably had an easier entrance into the Somali community than I would have if I had not been Somali and female. In research, the ideal is to be aware of one's own pitfalls, to be reflexive and acknowledge how researchers influence the research process. Reflexivity is important in ethnographic research due to its foundation in symbolic interactionism, as it influences how we think about how ourselves and how our social worlds are formed through the meanings we give to them (Deegan, 2001; Aase & Fossekåret, 2014). Thus, I chose to elaborate on this part because identifying and understanding the impact of class position, age, gender, choice of clothing and family heritage is important for this study. First, I have an impression that being, then, a 26-year-old female, unmarried, without children and Muslim made it easier to gain access in the community. Wadel (1991) points out that the roles assigned to the researcher activate statuses in different social contexts. Typically, in Somali culture, young females, particularly unmarried females, are viewed as "daughters", and hence, this status gave me easier access to female gatherings, such as sewing circles or female clubs. Many of the participants would share their child-rearing tips and tricks and would often say, "Wait until you become a mother", while others would warn me about the stress and fears

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that come with being a mother and share stories about worries of the CWS watching them. Furthermore, in Somali culture, the clan has relevance. The social structure in Somalia has been rooted in the clan system, which is a social organisation and a cultural identity (Lewis, 2002). Although I did not have the intention or desire to share my clan affiliation, it was challenging to avoid because it is implicit in my name. Clan affiliation is family based and follows paternal lineage. My name, Ayan Abdi Mahamoud Handulle, implies “daughter of Abdi Mahmoud Handulle”. By virtue of my name, some participants could trace it back to my father and, hence, point out that I am a daughter of the Isaaq clan from northern Somalia. It was important for me to reflect on how this could affect my interactions with the participants because the civil war in Somalia was, in short, a clan conflict (Lewis, 2002). However, when clan became relevant in the field, I was “playing” a role or doing impression management when participants asked or knew about my clan affiliation. I suppressed my natural responses of questioning why they were asking and relied on a “front” (Goffman, 1963/1990; cf. Purdy & Jones, 2013). Another significant family heritage which may have impacted the study, especially during the fieldwork in Somalia, was my mother’s family heritage. Even though I do not carry my mother’s name, her family had an important role in the government in north Somalia.

#### **4.4 Insider/outsider: The discomfort with double consciousness**

The insider versus outsider perspective is an ongoing debate, particularly in migration research, as the discussion entails an increased number of scholars who study their own immigrant communities (Carling, 2014; Kusow, 2003; Zulfikar, 2014). Abu-Lughod (2008) points out that researchers' "in-between" status requires that they be more accountable to how they have researched and written about the people with whom they affiliate and encourages researchers to face the issues of positionality. As I mentioned above, my Somali background and my family's heritages no doubt gave me an insider position. However, in line with Kusow (2003), I do not view the insider/outsider dichotomy as methodologically divergent categories. I rather understand it as research statuses that are continuously negotiated in the field between participant and researcher. For instance, I have been an insider in situations and an outsider in others. My insider status derives from the fact that I am a Norwegian-Somali and have been exposed to Islamic values and Somali culture through parental guidance, visiting Somalia several times in my childhood and speaking Somali at home. This has been significant in the construction of my Norwegian-Somali identity. I have gained advantages by being an insider when I have interacted with participants by using cultural, religious and linguistic knowledge that has allowed me access. In one of my first conversations with a potential participant over the phone, I had to activate my Somaliness in order to get access, and the conversation unfolded in such a way:

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*Ayan:* Hello, my name is Ayan Handulle, and I am a PhD candidate at UiS. I am doing a research project on how Somali parents perceive and experience the child welfare service. I got your number from [...] and I was wondering if you have time to talk or maybe meet next week.

*Participant:* You know what, I'm sooo tired of research on Somalis all the time! Why not research something else or someone else? There is nothing special about Somalis. I do not understand it and especially when you talk about child welfare service. Most immigrants are probably sceptical of child welfare. So why Somalis?

*Ayan:* I understand what you mean. There is a lot of research on Somalis. But I believe it is important to get their opinions on CWS and understand it from their point of view.

*Participant:* My God, I still do not understand what it is with researchers and Somalis, seriously. I don't bother to contribute to more of that.

*Ayan:* I am Somali myself [I start to speak Somali].

*Participant:* Oh, what did you say your name was again?

*Ayan:* Ayan Handulle.

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*Participant:* But then the tone is different. Sorry for previous, I am just so tired of white blonde ladies researching Somalis. It's kind of the same all the time.

We ended this conversation by scheduling a time to meet. It is clear in this situation that my insider position was beneficial, as the participant changed both his way of talking and agreed to meet me once I identified myself as Somali and started to speak Somali. Since this went well, I assumed that I was an insider and would not have problems entering the field. However, when I began my fieldwork in “Old Oslo” Grønland, I understood that I was in fact less an insider than I thought, and I had to negotiate to gain trust in the community. During my first experience entering a Somali shop as a researcher, I got a daunting feeling of not belonging there and not knowing how to approach, how to act and what to say. One of the reasons I felt this way was due to my own insecurities and fears of being prejudged due to my choice of clothing. I am not what might be characterised as a visible Muslim, as I do not carry the hijab and I wear typical “Western clothing”. Furthermore, I was 26 years old and walking around this area in the middle of the day entering shops, which was not a “typical” sight for the shop and restaurant owners. In other words, I had to learn the social cues for manoeuvring in the field. Additionally, in the Somali culture, social activities are mostly segregated across gender lines, meaning, while in some of the boutiques/cafés I entered, the majority were females, in other cafés/restaurants, it was only male. In the only-male cafés, I did not enter because the insider status was determined by the social organisation of

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gender (see also Kusow, 2003), and because I am a Somali female, it would have been viewed as inappropriate for me to enter. In fact, I believe a native Norwegian female ethnographer would have had better access in those contexts than I would have. For example, Fangen (1999) elaborates on how she had easier access as a female in a subculture dominated by men in which her gender allowed her to experience less testing from the male participants. In my case, I believe it would have been the opposite.

Ethnicity/race and being a visible migrant have been important topics in this dissertation. This visibility of ethnicity when meeting the society as a whole, and particularly experiences and perceptions of welfare institutions, is at the core of this study. My own point of entry in experiencing Norwegian society as a Norwegian-Somali-visible migrant cannot be entirely separated from this study. My experiences of otherness and feelings of exclusion had to be faced throughout the entire research process, particularly during the fieldwork and in the analysis. The frequent reminders of being “different” and not “good enough” for society attached to ethnicity was sometimes painful for me, as I could relate to some of the experiences being shared, especially by the second-generation participants. During the fieldwork, I sometimes became emotionally exhausted. I was worried about how this focus on otherness was affecting me as an individual and particularly as a researcher. At some moments, I thought to myself, “I am no different from my participants in the eyes of the ‘white society’. I am Black, Somali and Muslim.” These were also the moments when I had to face my own

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discomfort with my own “double consciousness” (Du Bois, 1903/2008). Maxwell (2013) encourages researchers to write memos, which can help researchers reflect on how their personal goals, values and identity can affect the study. He argues that researchers cannot take a totally objective role and distance themselves from their own values and personal motivation. The search for truth is the scientific ideal, but this requires honesty in research, and therefore, it becomes important for the researcher to reflect on how their own attitudes and values can affect their encounter with the field and interpretation of data (National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities [NESH], 2016). The consequence of not reflecting on one’s own attitudes and values can damage the research (Maxwell, 2013). In order to monitor my own subjectivity, I wrote memos throughout the research project. Below, I present multiple memos, merged:

I noticed that I began looking for negative reviews about Somalis in the media and social media. I understand what they express when they share their stories of feeling excluded. I have been relatively confident in my identity and place in society. But it takes me back to the 16-year-old me who struggled with “What am I?” Somali, Norwegian or both? Being in the field makes me reflect on the time when well-meaning advice from school staff was given on the grounds that my parents have a Somali background. For example, when I was advised to apply to the health programme in high school, even though I was an active football player and wanted to apply to the sports programme. Or

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when my other classmates and I with immigrant backgrounds were taken out of ordinary Norwegian language teaching and were placed in a “Norwegian 2” group [Norwegian as a second language is an alternative to Norwegian as a mother tongue and is used by minority language pupils until they have mastered the language well enough to participate in the regular Norwegian language teaching] despite the fact that we had grown up in Norway or been born in Norway. Other incidents – it makes me think about when my science teacher thought I did not understand Norwegian sufficiently, and the horrible feeling I had when he began to explain what the words meant in front of the class. I also reflected on when I was 18 years old and worked as a telephone saleslady and changed my name to a more Norwegian-sounding name to sell as much as my colleagues. It has made me reflect on many situations I have encountered in various work contexts as well. I have also reflected on the injustice my parents face. The scepticism they describe, the looks they describe and the difference it makes if I make a phone call for them, where the person on the other end does not hear an accent. This fieldwork made me reflect on my own events and to develop a compassion for my participants. I know what it feels to experience prejudices and discrimination even if it’s not intentional. But those experiences do something to you. My Somali background and skin colour are activated in the face of society, and sometimes I am afraid that my thoughts and feelings get in the way and disrupt

my data by being biased. I know that my identity as Norwegian-Somali has among other things, contributed to a unique approach in the Somali community. I just do not know how to deal with it sometimes, when I recognise myself in their descriptions. It worries me that my thoughts and feelings may affect how I understand and interpret the data material. (Memo, June 2016; October 2016; March 2017)

Writing these memos helped me reflect on the impact that my background can have both professionally and personally on the research project. My background contributed to me gaining unique access to the field. The benefits of my own experiences in relation to being in a minority position, language skills and cultural understanding contributed to me gaining access to rich data. Nevertheless, these factors also created challenges. Writing these memos helped throughout the research, and, in Maxwell's (2013) words, it helped me "avoid the trap of perceiving just what my own untamed sentiments have sought out and serve up as data" (p. 28).

#### ***4.5 Trust and access versus scepticism and fear***

This section focuses on the obstacles and challenges that I experienced when attempting to gain acceptance and trust among the participants. Before I entered the field, I made flyers and contacted a Somali-Norwegian newspaper that wrote a short story about the research project. This spurred many to contact me and want to share their opinions about

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or experiences with the CWS. I also contacted one leading figure in the Somali-Norwegian community and had several conversations with this “leader” before I entered the field. This “gatekeeper” seemed to trust me and shared information about the Somali community and insights about which of the Somali shops have many costumers and so on. These positive experiences made me believe, as mentioned previously, that I was going to have easy access in the field. However, the process of gaining trust in the field, and later losing the trust within the community, became a long one.

As is commonly described in the literature on qualitative methods generally, and in fieldwork in particular (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Wadel, 1991,2014), negotiating access and trust is a crucial part of the research process. In my case, I was often tested on my abilities, including my cultural knowledge and Somali language skills. I too frequently had to “prove” that I had knowledge about the Somali culture. The following is a portion of the many field notes I wrote related to cultural testing:

I walk into a local store. The females are sitting in a kind of ring with a set of chairs arranged in a circle while the men are sitting on a corner. I greet and walk around a bit. I try to look for the store manager but get a little confused because there are many people in the store. I approach a lady who seems to be close to a cashier counter. I say, “*Assalamu alaikum*. My name is Ayan Handulle. I am a doctoral student, and I am doing a research project.” Before I get the chance to say more about the project,

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one of the men in the shop gets up and comes towards me. He says, “I hear you speak good Somali. Are you not born here [Norway]?” I answer, “No no. I was born in Somalia.” “Well, OK”, he replies. He then points to his neck and asks what Adam’s apple is named in Somali. I get a little stressed, but I know what it’s called. I answer it, and he smiles. The others in the store say, “Oh, she knew.” The man continues the testing. He says a Somali proverb and looks at me questioningly. He probably thinks I do not know this. But I answer correctly again. The people in the shop laugh and some of the women say, “Do not listen to him”, and say, “Leave the girl alone.” I laugh nervously and feel that everyone in the shop is watching me. A woman comes towards me and touches my shoulder and says, “What can we help you with?” (Field note, July 2016)

These experiences were quite common, and by “passing” the test and being welcomed several times, I gradually gained access. However, while I thought different shop/café owners were welcoming me and letting me stay, what I saw as a sign of trust was in fact not the case, as they were privately curious about my intentions. As previously written, I carried out the fieldwork in various places, such as Somali shops, cafés and a mosque. When I did the fieldwork in the mosque, I wore long skirts, hijab, and prayed the various prayers with the participants. The fact that I had been to the mosque often and several of the participants had seen me in more “traditional Muslim clothes” in the mosque but not outside the mosque contributed to rumours within the community that I

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was a “new *khadra* case” (Norwegian-Somali woman who became known through a documentary where she used a hidden camera and microphone to reveal some imams in Norway who encouraged female circumcision).

The rumours entailed that I was sent to “spy” on behalf of the authorities and the CWS. I was confronted by one of the shop owners, who took me to the side and asked, “Honest, do you work for the CWS or has the government sent you to investigate our community?” I replied, aghast, “No, I do research!” Even though confirming this several times, many in the community were sceptical about my intentions. As also described by Tota (2004), being viewed as a “spy” is both exhausting and can lead to the feeling of losing control of the project. I was able to gain the trust back when a known figure in the Somali diaspora visited Norway and was holding a conference/social gathering. I asked one of my key informants if this known figure could vouch for me as a researcher. At this event, I did three things which I believe helped me regain the trust. First, the public figure spoke about my research (this event was also live streamed, so it reached a large audience). Second, he introduced me as a young Somali researcher, and then, I spoke about the study. Third, I invited my parents to come to this event. The reason for this was to get more credibility within the community. The endorsement of this leading figure was important for me in gaining back the trust of the community. The usefulness of a leading figure’s acceptance is also described by Whyte (1943/2002). His key informant, “Doc”, said that, as long as Whyte told others that he was a friend of his, nobody would bother him.

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In my case, the combination of public endorsement and people seeing me with my parents allowed me to regain the trust of the community, and my “status” (Aase & Fossaskaret (2014) shifted from “spy” back to “daughter”.

Spending several times a week and choosing to be there up and close in the lives of the participants was crucial for gathering rich data about them. By regaining their trust and getting close with the participants, I was invited to what Goffman (1963/1990) calls the “backstage areas”. One of the shop owners told me that, after opening hours, they would meet at the shop to have social gatherings. She told me to “just knock on the door”, as the shop would seem to be closed from the outside. I went to the shop several times after opening hours, and it was like its own social club. The store owner served tea and sweets, and the females were dressed nicely. It reminded me of a regular café or night club; it was kind of a new backstage world. Attending the afterhours gatherings led me to be invited to private dinner parties, even weddings and Somali discussion forums I did not know existed. It was at these events and moments that I experienced their tremendous knowledge about the CWS. By being at these events, listening to people talk, learning how they interacted, I gained much information that I believe I would not have been privy to if I had just asked questions. Whyte’s (1943/2002) key informant said that asking why, when, what and where too much would make people suspicious. “You learn the answers to those questions by just hanging around” (Whyte, 1943/2002, p. 302), and that was certainly the experience I also had in this study. However, the longer I spent in the

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field, the more I experienced the flipside of developing connections with the participants. This was particularly connected to the status of “one of our daughters”, as this “daughter” status became challenging to manoeuvre in the field and in one-on-one conversation. As Aase and Fossekaret (2014) describe, trust in fieldwork is built on the mutual testing of role expectations. In my study, there was one particular situation where the role expectation changed and it took some time to understand that there was an absence of a mutual situational understanding (Buvik & Baklien, 2017) that contributed to this change in expectations from one participant. This involved a woman I had encountered during the fieldwork. She shared her story about her experiences with the CWS on several occasions at one of the Somali shops. I asked this woman if I could interview her, and she replied yes and invited me to her home.

The woman, “Asha”, had set the table and made dinner. I started asking questions, and the interview went well. Yet, when I was about to leave, she told me that she was receiving a home visit in two days from caseworkers with the CWS and said that I could come if I wanted to. I thought this was a great opportunity to observe the interaction between the CWS and the mother, if the caseworkers would allow it. Asha then asked if I could look at her case documents and explain to her in Somali. I said yes and sat down to read the document to her in Somali. I left and did not think much about the fact that, the moment I went into her case and read the document, my role changed. The day before the meeting with the CWS, Asha called me and told me that she was nervous. She

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further said, “I am glad you can attend the meeting. You are like a daughter to me, a daughter who understands the system and knows the language. I’m glad that you are helping me in this meeting.” It was in this moment that I understood that I had now entered a more active role (Fangen, 2010a) and experienced a shift from the role of researcher to “daughter and helper”. I found it uncomfortable when I first understood the roles I had entered. I became very unsure whether I had not been clear enough about my role as a researcher and if Asha understood that she was a part of a study. I chose not to attend the meeting with the CWS; however, I asked if I could see her another time. I met Asha one week later, and I explained my role. She replied that she understood my role as a researcher and experienced that our conversation was warm-hearted, even though she had shared a story that I would describe as a very tough event in her life. She underlined that I was a “daughter” of the community, and even though my help with her case would have made her happy, she thought that just sharing her story could lead to helping other Somali mothers not experience what she had. This situation of unclear roles is a classic issue of balancing degrees of immersion and closeness with participants (Ocejo, 2012). It was an uncomfortable situation, yet an important decision must be made to take a step back in order to create the critical distance necessary for fieldworkers (Aase & Fossåskaret, 2014; Hagen & Skorpen, 2016).

#### **4.6 Access and fieldwork in Somalia**

Gaining access to the Norwegian-Somali community in Somalia was derived from the trust that I gained from the fieldwork in Norway. Before I travelled to Somalia, I established connections with returnees through participants in Norway (see Paper 3). The gatekeeper in Somalia introduced me to several diaspora cafés and shopping malls, which became observational spots. My mother joined me on this trip to Somalia. The choice to do accompanied fieldwork (Cupples & Kindon, 2003) was twofold. First, my mother could help me navigate Somalia, and second, as mentioned before, my mother's class position and her family involvement in the government in Somalia gave me more credibility within the Norwegian-Somalia returnees' community. Furthermore, since I had already established trustworthiness within the community in Norway and participants in Norway had vouched for me prior to travelling to Somalia, gaining access was not difficult. I did not face difficulties in terms of closeness or navigating different statuses. This might be due to the length of the fieldwork (two months) and the fact that I had already established relationships with the participants before I did participant observation in the transnational school and playground.

The dichotomy of insider versus outsider (Abu-Lughod, 2008) in Somalia was somewhat different in this context compared to the fieldwork in Norway. Being an outsider in Somalia as a diaspora is common for many. Locals notice that you are from the "outside".

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Although I dressed “traditionally” in terms of long dresses and hijab, local Somalis say, for example, that they notice the diasporas on the basis of how they talk and walk. Moreover, within the Norwegian-Somali community in Somalia, I was considered an insider because we shared being from Norway and shared a common perception of not being fully accepted by the locals.

Other factors that impacted my ability to gain access and may have strengthened the insider status were external factors. I conducted the fieldwork in Somalia from January 2017 to March 2017, and in this timeframe, Somalia experienced one of worst droughts and famines in decades. Although the region where I did the fieldwork was not one of the worst affected, it did see effects, economically and emotionally, for many. Additionally, at the time, it was the official presidential election in the capital of Somalia. Even though some regions in Somalia had declared independence (e.g. Republic of Somaliland, Republic of Puntland, Republic of Ogadenia) and did not participate in the voting, the region where I conducted fieldwork had enforced police and military control of the borders as well as officials’ buildings and hotels where nongovernmental employers, diaspora and/or politicians resided and visited in case of disruptions caused by the presidential election. I believe these external factors may have led the Norwegian-Somali community to search for each other more, and this may have made it easier for me to come into contact with the community and be accepted, as we shared worries and fears about the drought and tensions about the military and police controlling these locations.

#### **4.7 Field conversations and interviews**

By its nature, ethnographic research may offer encounters with many people throughout different stages of the fieldwork. In my case, I interacted with several hundred people throughout the nine months of fieldwork, and naturally, the extent of the conversations and the content varied in both lengths and topics. I conducted observations in cafés and shops and participant observation in a transnational school in Somalia; participated in seminars (especially in mosques); and conducted informal conversations, formally organised focus groups and in-depth interviews with parents. I also read and summarised samples of online discussion threads among Somalis about the CWS and/or child rearing in Norway. The platforms included were Facebook, YouTube channels and Somali chat forums. The data (field conversations and interviews) can roughly be divided into four types: i) individual interviews, ii) group interviews about the CWS, iii) informal individual and group conversations about the CWS and iv) short talks. Table 2 provides an overview of the data.

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Table 2: Overview of data material

Type	Participants		% 1st generation		% Gender	
	Somalia	Norway	Somalia	Norway	Somalia	Norway
Individual interviews	13	18	40%	60%	60%F+ 40%M	50%F+ 50%M
Group interviews about CWS	-	48	-	60%	-	50%M+ 50% F
Informal individual and group conversations about CWS	10	60	40 %	80%	60%F+ 40%M	70%F+ 30 %M
Short talks	Around 20	Hundreds	40%	80%	60%F+4 0%M	70%F+ 30 %M

Abbreviations: F= female, M= male

The formal interviews in Norway consisted of nine individual interviews and nine focus group interviews with 48 people. The data from Somalia comprise observations in diaspora cafés and 13 formal individual interviews. Participants were both first and second generation (see Table 2). While the formal interviews were gender balanced, parts of the fieldwork were not. For example, in shops and cafés, I mostly interacted with females. Among the people I interacted with, approximately 60 participated in informal talks that entailed conversations about the CWS.

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Participants' ages, occupational statuses and years lived in Norway were diverse. Many of the first-generation participants with whom I did the fieldwork in Oslo were unemployed or in an employment programme through the NAV. Others were taxi/bus drivers, shop owners, assistants in nursing homes, nurses and teachers. Their ages were from 40s to 60s, and their time living in Norway was very diverse. Some had been living in Norway for 30 years, while others had lived in the country for 5–10 years. The median time for living in Norway was approximately 12 years for the first-generation parents.

The second-generation parents had been born in Norway or grown up in Norway. The ages of these participants ranged from 20s to mid-30s. Their occupations and education statuses included nurses, dentists, engineers, social workers, teachers, financial adviser, lawyers and university students.

All the interviews were conducted face to face. For the second-generation parents, the interviews were conducted in a mixture of Norwegian and Somali, while for the first generation, they were conducted in Somali with some Norwegian phrases. I prepared the interview guide before entering the field, which included questions about perceptions and experiences of the CWS, views on Norwegian parenthood, their social network, transnationalism, connections and information flows. This interview guide became more of a guiding principle for me, rather than my following the guide precisely and asking them the questions directly. On many occasions, I did not have the guide

with me. I believe in an approach of facilitating the direction of the interviews rather than following the questionnaire, which leads participants to share their stories without restrictions.

The individual interviews lasted between 50 and 130 minutes. Participants were not given any gifts for participating. However, on some occasions, when the participant would allow me, I bought coffee and snacks.

#### **4.8 Translation issues**

This dissertation is written in English, yet the interviews were conducted in Somali and Norwegian. The triangulation of the three languages involved some difficulties. Maneesriwongul and Dixon (2004) underline that quality in translation is fundamental to ensuring that the findings portrayed are not due to translation mistakes. In this project, I transcribed the interviews into Norwegian and some parts into Somali. When writing the individual articles in English, efforts were made to retain the meaning. Nevertheless, languages are contextual and one may strive for correct translation; however, language is not merely a matter of synonym and syntax (Larkin, Dierckx de Casterlé & Schotsmans, 2007; Nikander, 2008; Picot, 2016; Pösö et al., 2014). For instance, Somalia has been characterised as “a nation of poets” (Hultman, 1993; Webersik, 2021), and as Andrzejewski (1989) describes it, poetry is everywhere in the Somali language – “it is the vehicle of reflective thought” (p. 157). Many of the participants used poetry, metaphors and proverbs to express

themselves. Translating this to Norwegian or English was difficult, and translating them directly would have been inaccurate and lost its meaning. Reflecting on the meaning of the poetic statement and in which context they have been expressed was key to the interpretation process. Discussing some segments of the data material many times with my father, who is a bilingual teacher, helped me minimise the potential of the meaning getting lost in translation. Furthermore, I sent participants earlier drafts of manuscripts, and they did not comment on being misrepresented in terms of translation. Although differences in language may contribute to limitations in this study, I will, with humbleness, say that these measures and my knowledge of the significance of the poetry in the Somali language have contributed to the trustworthiness of the translation.

#### **4.9 Data analysis**

In qualitative methods in general and in ethnography in particular, the analysis of the data is not a separate stage of the research (Fangen, 2010a; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In other words, the process of analysis starts as soon as the first data are collected through the embodied field experiences, ideas and hunches that begin early and then move towards more systematic clarifications. Inspired by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Braun, Clarke and Terry (2012), the flexible thematic analytic tool allows for grasping and understanding the magnitude of the empirical data. The process of analysis in this dissertation consisted of a constant dialogue among the empirical data, analytic memo writing, transcription,

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analytic contemplations and theoretical enquires. My analysis can roughly be divided into three interconnected stages. The first stage consisted of writing the ethnographic field notes after each meeting/gathering. This step was important not only for capturing and documenting the meetings but also for making sense of the observations and conservations. I then transcribed the interviews. This was also key in the initial analytical process, as I wrote thoughts and questions that emerged from this process and discussed my preliminary thoughts and understanding with the Somali milieu in Oslo to get their feedback and adjust my notes depending on their evaluation of my interpretation. I then carefully and repeatedly read the transcripts, organised the data through several rounds of initial coding in NVivo and sorted the data into themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun et al., 2012; Maxwell, 2013; Saldaña, 2016). Second, I reviewed the themes and identified sections and statements involving discussions about Norwegianess, social mobility, parenthood, childhood, recognition, networks, belonging/identification, marginalisation and transnationalism in the material. In this process, I also wrote short fieldwork reports and summaries of the interview transcripts for my supervisors. These reports and summaries contributed to reassessing my direction, discussing my blind spots and highlighting what emerged as more important. Third, by extracting the emerging concepts in the data and discussing this with the co-author of the articles, we developed categories. The concepts were then generated to a more abstract level informed by abductive analysis and the cultivation of anomalies (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014; Vassenden, 2018). Through

familiarisation with surprising empirical concepts confronted in the existing literature and various theoretical frameworks throughout the research process, the results of this study were finally developed into the three articles presented in this thesis. The results of these articles will be discussed in Chapter 5.

#### **4.10 Ethical considerations**

Reflecting upon ethical dilemmas was an important part of the entire research process. As researchers, we have the responsibility to ensure respect and treat those whom we study with dignity (Alver, Fjell & Øyen, 2007). The important principles to ensure our responsibilities as researchers include receiving informed consent, avoiding harmful consequences to the participants, providing confidentiality and anonymity and ensuring voluntary participation (NESH, 2016). The following discusses some of the ethical dilemmas that were necessary to reflect upon in order to ensure these ethical standards.

A challenge with the fieldwork was that my project did not have a specifically defined area. The challenge was to ensure informed consent for all people that I met in the various cafés and the mosque. The National Research Ethics Committee is quite clear that researchers must go to great lengths to ensure that the consideration of consent is taken into account (NESH, 2016). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) argue that ethnographers must have the consent of their participants, but there is no unilateral agreement on what consent means in this context. In several

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cases, a lot would happen at once. Several people would enter the shop, café or mosque and participate in the conversation or give their opinion about child welfare. I experienced several times when it became difficult to interrupt the discussions. However, I made sure to say that I was a researcher and explain the reason why we were discussing the CWS. Other measures I took included making brochures with my picture on them and information about the research project in Somali and Norwegian. The café and shop owners allowed the flyers to be attached in front of the shop/door to inform about the research project.

Other challenges included providing sufficient information and ensuring that everyone actually understood what it meant to participate in the project in such a fluid field. Fangen (2010a) describes different strategies that can be used to ensure that participants understand what participation in a research project entails. For her project, she used a resource person from the Somali community to gain access and to ensure that the participant understood what the research was about (Fangen, 2010a). To ensure this, I did a live stream in Somali at an event aimed towards the community talking about what it entails to participate in the project, with an emphasis on voluntary participation and anonymity and that one can withdraw from the project. In the formal interview, participants were given all information about the study in writing in both Norwegian and Somali. A draft of this information was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Service.

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In addition, ensuring anonymity was challenging throughout the fieldwork. As also discussed in Paper 1, the community was tight knit, especially concerning the parents who had experienced custody takeovers. The community knew who had experienced “dramatic” custody takeovers. In light of the few numbers of these parents who had experienced this, I chose not to include their specific stories/interviews in the articles in order to ensure their anonymity. Other measures taken to ensure anonymity when presenting the data in the articles included changing the occupational status of some of the participants due to the fact that few in Norway with Somali backgrounds attain those specific education qualifications. Moreover, I chose not to name the city or region of the fieldwork in Somalia. The reason for this was twofold. First, although research shows that many Somalis from the Nordic countries do return to Somalia, to my knowledge, there are no statistics on how many from Norway have returned to Somalia and to which region in Somalia they have returned. Second, I identified a Norwegian school in my articles. I assume there are only a few Norwegian schools in Somalia, and I believe specifying the region would lead to jeopardising my participants’ right to anonymity.

Lastly, as I have previously given an account of my background and family heritage, one might argue that accompanied fieldwork and clan affiliation might raise ethical dilemmas. While I was worried about the impact that clan affiliation would have on the study, I did not experience ethically challenging dilemmas that could directly affect me in the fieldwork. However, some participants did find out about my clan

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affiliation, hence my family heritage, and they contacted my parents and reveal that they had participated in the study. The ethical dilemmas here and with the fieldwork in Somalia involved ensuring the anonymity of the participants within my own family.

## **5 Summary of findings**

In the following section, I present the three articles upon which this study is based. The first paper provides an extensive insight into how fear is constructed and reinforced among the participants by dissecting the significance of ethnic tight-knit community, social networks and being in a marginalised position. While Paper 1 gives insight into the broader perspective, Papers 2 and 3 look beyond the fear of the CWS and give insight into behind the scenes. Papers 2 and 3 show how negative perceptions and scepticism towards the CWS among second-generation Norwegian-Somali parents activates struggles in their interaction with adjacent welfare situations (Paper 2) and how scepticism of the CWS impacts decisions to temporarily return to Somalia (Paper 3). Below is a summary of each of the three papers and their findings.

### **5.1 Paper 1: “Disadvantaged Parents’ Fears of Child Protective Services: Transmission of Child Removal Stories Among Norwegian-Somalis”**

This paper investigates how fears of the CWS among Norwegian-Somali parents are embedded in social networks and transmitted via stories of child removals. Data for this paper are comprised of nine months of fieldwork, seven in Oslo and two in Somalia, with returnees from Norway. The data consist of interactions with several hundred people, and of these, approximately 60 participated in informal conversations

### *Summary of findings*

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about the CWS. In addition to these interactions, conversations and observations, the sample consists of nine individual interviews and nine focus group interviews with 48 people in Norway, and 13 individual interviews in Somalia. The aim of this paper is to provide a sociological explanation of CWS fears, which is also a novel contribution in terms of theory construction. We identify a social process underlying Somali parents' fears, which we coin ABCD, pertaining to their socioeconomic *adversities*; coping through *bonding* social capital; *children* as a "lifeline"; and (disproportionate) *diffusion* of child removal stories. We achieve this by working with certain anomalies, or "puzzles", that we extracted from the data. One puzzle is that Somali parents' fears are so pervasive even though Somali children in Norway are not disproportionately taken into care. Relying on abductive analysis, we make such puzzles comprehensible by engaging with theories on (bonding) social capital (Putnam, 2000), recognition (Honneth, 1995) and stigma (Goffman, 1963/1990). By unpacking the themes and the connections between them, we show how fear is established and perpetuated through the transmission of stories of child removals within tight-knit social networks as well as why and how these stories spread. We suggest that, among Somalis in Norway, the following four elements constitute fear of the CWS:

(A) *Adversities*. Somalis are socioeconomically marginalised. They face stigmatisation, otherisation and discrimination, and they feel excluded from white Norwegian society.

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*(B) Bonding social capital.* In the face of these adversities, Somalis gravitate to each other and rely on tight-knit ethnic networks. This produces strong in-group solidarity.

*(C) Children as a “lifeline”.* Parents see their children as the key to recognition and social mobility. This concerns parents’ relations to other Somalis and society at large.

*(D) Diffusion of stories of child removals.* In Somalis’ tight-knit social networks, stories of child removals proliferate, but there are few stories of other types of CWS contact.

After substantiating this social process in stages and demonstrating the interlinked aspects in understanding Somali parents’ fear of the CWS, we discuss how our analytical models can inform other communities with extensive fears of the CWS, such as with other migrant groups in Norway.

## **5.2 Paper 2: “The Art of Kindergarten Drop-Off’: How Young Norwegian-Somali Parents Perform Ethnicity to Avoid Reports to Child Welfare Services**

This article is about the performance of Norwegian middle-class identity among young Norwegian-Somali parents when they interact with public institutions, such as schools and kindergartens. The data on which the paper relies were obtained from two group interviews and 13 individual in-depth interviews in Norway and Somalia. Although the data from first-generation parents serve as an important background, we chose not to include that data to provide a clearer focus in one paper. In addition, second-generation Somali parents were a particularly interesting case to analyse because the literature review showed that most studies from the immigrant or migrant perspective focused on “newcomers”. Focusing on the second generation in this article showed that, although being born or raised in Norway is associated with knowing the Norwegian culture and the system and, thus, minimises aspects like not understanding the system or language difficulties that could lead to fear of the CWS, our findings revealed that second-generation parents still have an underlying fear of the CWS. Our analysis and discussion of findings were inspired by Erving Goffman’s theories of social interaction, which were central to understanding the parents’ underlying fear of the CWS. Through the analysis, the article demonstrates that young socially mobile Norwegian-Somalis have an embedded fear of the CWS, which is demonstrated in encounters with school and kindergarten personnel. The findings show

that fear of the CWS is expressed through encounters with institutions that have the power and obligation to potentially report to the CWS. The article also emphasises that ethnicity certainly affects how the second-generation Norwegian-Somali parents relate to educational institutions and the CWS. As the title indicates, “the art of kindergarten drop-off” becomes an “art form”, as the participants meticulously prepare for encounters with school and kindergarten personnel in order to avoid ethnic stigma, racial scrutiny and, importantly, referrals to the CWS.

### **5.3 Paper 3: Little Norway in Somalia – Understanding Complex Belongings of Transnational Somali Families**

In this paper, I explore Norwegian-Somali parents’ motivations for returning to Somalia, how life has unfolded in the face of their return and how they prepare for their return to Norway. The paper draws on two months of fieldwork in Somalia with parents who returned from Norway and consists of 13 individual in-depth interviews. The paper highlights temporary return migration for middle-class Norwegian-Somali families and addresses contested return practices that have been discussed in the media by politicians and among researchers. Theoretically, the paper addresses the complexity of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2006) and demonstrates that the motivation to return to Somalia is influenced by Norwegian-Somali parents’ struggles for a sense of belonging and their worries regarding their children’s future. The analysis reveals that the desire to avoid Norwegian government surveillance of families served as

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an important backdrop for their return to Somalia, as the parents in this study perceived that their child-rearing practices in Norway were racialised and they feared being prejudged by Norwegian welfare institutions. Furthermore, their struggle to belong also seems to be derived from experiences of exclusion and stigmatisation in Norway. The findings suggest that parents work towards strengthening their belonging to both Somalia and Norway by reconstituting *belonging* to both countries through parenting in Somalia. The parents have cultivated and reproduced Norwegian cultural repertoires in Somalia to maintain a belongingness to Norway in preparation for their future return to Norway, while simultaneously encouraging their children to be proud of their Somaliness and bond with family members in Somalia. The study highlights what Norwegian-Somali parents perceive as the best interest for their children from a parental perspective, which, in this study, is utilising a temporary return as a tool to cope with being a parent in light of stigmatising experiences as minorities in Norway.

## **6 Discussion**

Broadly, this thesis presents a bottom-up analysis of how Norwegian-Somali parents navigate Norwegian society as parents. The dissertation has been guided by two core questions: how fear of the CWS is constructed among Norwegian-Somali parents and how fear of the CWS impacts the everyday lives of Norwegian-Somalis. While each paper of this dissertation addresses subquestions, some recurring themes can be identified across the three papers, as they all revolve around how Norwegian-Somali parents perceive how Norwegian welfare institutions and society as a whole interpret their ethnic background and then act upon those perceptions. The thesis suggests that, for these parents, their ethnicity plays a significant role in their life – more than they would like it to. In this final chapter, I discuss some of the central findings generated from the three papers. Finally, I highlight the dissertations' contributions to the research field and social work practice.

### **6.1 *Socioeconomically disadvantaged: Reinforcement of marginalised position***

In general, Somalis in Norway and Scandinavia have a difficult socioeconomic situation, and they are perceived as difficult to collaborate with when meeting with various institutions, according to scholars (Fangen, 2006; Friberg & Elgvin, 2016). From an outside perspective, it can be logical to draw conclusions based on what statistics show us in regard to Somali's difficulties regarding societal integration.

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To a certain extent, my thesis also shows that these disadvantages play a role in the construction of fear and upholding the fear of the CWS. Being socioeconomically inferior and having little external social capital in society – what Putnam (2000) calls “bridging capital” – are some of the reasons for the fear. The results in this dissertation, as demonstrated in Paper 2, show that the second generation is vigilant in this, in the sense that they, for example, avoid settling in areas where there are many immigrants because they perceive that the existence of geographical inequality alongside great social inequality can contribute to influencing a child’s future regarding networking and social capital. Research has documented that living conditions within a particular area have an impact on the quality of access to children’s activities (Umblis et al., 2019) and that marginalised residential areas may reduce the ability to achieve acceptance and recognition as an individual (Rosten, 2017).

The parents in the study perceived that the host society – including both the majority population and the public institutions – holds negative preconceived ideas about who they are and what type of parents they are before they interact with them. This perception of being trapped in a marginalised position or being otherised plays a crucial role in making the bonds stronger within the Somali community. Cederberg (2012) argues that collective marginalised positions could lead to mobilising recourses to gain advantages for the members. However, for the parents in this study, the feeling of marginalisation seems to contribute to a perceived lack of opportunities to participate in the majority’s social arenas. Thus, the parents construct ethnic social capital, which is

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supportive and offers the recognition they are in dire need of. Nevertheless, while such social capital can be considered good, I agree with Raghuram, Henry and Bornat (2010) that migrants' ability to convert such social networks into a beneficial broader social capital is limited. In other words, the parents lack the opportunity to reproduce the privileges that individuals can gain from social capital because they do not manage to convert the bonding social capital into economic capital through, for example, networking that could lead to employment like nonmigrants would be able to. However, the ethnic capital of the Norwegian-Somali community may well prove beneficial in promoting education and social mobility in the longer run (cf. Lee and Zhou, 2015) as the parents invest in their children's future social mobility.

The findings show that the Norwegian-Somali community is a resourceful milieu, where the interaction between the members of the milieu is central. The members of the community help each other; however, how they help one another and recognise each other's strengths is not visible to the broader society. For example, as shown in Paper 1 with the *hagbad* system, an exclusively trust-based money loan, instead of going to the bank and borrowing money, they borrow from each other. For some, this is a matter of them not wanting to take out a loan from the bank due to interest, which, according to religious practices in Islam, is not allowed. However, for others, they may not have the opportunity to borrow from a bank because, for example, they do not have enough income for the bank to secure the loan, and for some, it may simply be easier to access money through the *hagbad* system than through the

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public sector, such as by applying for financial assistance through NAV. This latter example was mentioned several times in the field when a family was urgently in need of things like new appliances and it was easier to access money through their network and *hagbad* and then afterwards they could apply for financial assistance. Many scholars (Cresse, 2019; Imoagene, 2012) have argued that experiences with marginalisation and exclusion due to race, ethnicity and religion are crucial for identity constructions among immigrants, which may lead to the construction of a collective identity. Within the Norwegian- Somali milieu, it could be perceived that they are not engaged in the local community or in the public debate, but the results of this study show that “behind closed doors”, many events are arranged where local milieu issues are discussed and how these issues can be improved. However, these activities are not very visible to the outside world – society at large – which might contribute to a kind of negative spiral or even self-fulfilling prophecy, in the sense that tight communal interactions could potentially lead to self-marginalisation.

The results suggest that the members of the Norwegian-Somali milieu experience that they are not recognised by society at large and that they experience racism and feel they are seen as difficult. The members of the milieu try to disprove this image by discussing these topics among themselves. The problem is that, when this is not shown externally in society or there is, for example, little or no inclusion of the large society in these arenas and discussions, the milieu seems to contribute to maintaining limited bridging social capital, and might, in the worst case,

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contribute to preserving the external image of integration deficiency. Therefore, it risks becoming a form of self-fulfilling prophecy where, on the one hand, it helps maintain the “problematic” image of Somalis and, on the other, generates an unfruitful perspective inside the milieu, as they feel they are deemed to be not accepted by society.

The marginalised position influences the perceptions that they have of the CWS, and consequently, this causes parents to avoid public institutions where they might be reported to the CWS in order to safeguard themselves and their children. Findings also show that these close ties in the milieu help maintain and construct the fear of child welfare. Although cultural and religious affiliations play a role, they are not the most significant factors. The fear is created in the host country (Norway) and is maintained via tight bonds and by being socioeconomically disadvantaged.

### ***6.2 Having cultural know-how yet being culturally stereotyped***

The parents I encountered struggled interactionally when meeting with welfare institutions and with society in general. These struggles were related to experiences of exclusion that were attached to racial/ethnic, symbolic stereotypes (e.g. religious markers) in relation to what others believe about their cultural heritage. In other words, what they think institutional contexts, such as schools and kindergarten, attach to their cultural heritage constrains these parents’ interactional freedom. There

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is a generation gap, in the sense that the struggles these parents encounter are expressed in different ways, as shown in Papers 1 and 2. It is surprising that those who are born and raised in Norway, feel a strong sense of belonging in society, are socialised in society's norms and values and even struggle to some extent to convey their Somaliness to their descendants because they consider themselves Norwegian still have an internalised picture of being culturally stereotyped. My aim was to understand the phenomenon of fear of child welfare; however, the findings extend far beyond the fear of child welfare. The results show, among other things, vulnerabilities in being a parent in general in society. Parenting in today's society can be challenging due to rapid societal changes, whereby, in some way, parenting can be measured on the basis of external factors, such as what type of leisure activities children are signed up for. Although scholars (Jacobsen, Andersen, Nordø, Sletten & Arnesen, 2021; Sletten, Strandbu & Gilje, 2015) note that children should largely participate in organised leisure activities, as it is good for the child's well-being and may even prepare the child to become a participating adult in the future, the participation in leisure activities is one way of measuring parenthood. Another measurement of parenthood is having digital technology available for everyday life to work, but also for the child to be able to fit into today's society. In general, most parents want their children to grow up in a safe environment and with good conditions. This means, among other things, fulfilling these socially constructed conditions to avoid the child being excluded or falling out of society.

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My analysis shed light on the idea that these parents have the same challenges as nonmigrant parents. However, on top of this, these parents experience that they need to prove more. The findings, from an overall perspective, show that this entails interlinked dimensions, whereby the ultimate goal is about doing what one thinks is best for one's child. In order to do this, they must convince society and institutions that they are well integrated and resourceful and tone down their ethnic background but not dismiss it, while at the same time contesting cultural stereotypes. The task of downplaying their cultural heritage at the front stage while cultivating it backstage can lead to a tiresome struggle within themselves as individuals because, behind the scenes of the institutional context, these parents want their children to be proud of their ethnic background and because maintaining Somaliness for their children is challenging in various ways, as shown in Paper 3. The fear of the CWS is closely related to an intertwined experience of dealing with the double consciousness (Du Bois, 1903/2008) related to the two worlds in their everyday lives, and this twoness corresponds to two different social roles of being a citizen and a minority. Du Bois (1903/2008) notes that people of colour live behind a veil, which impacts the development of self-consciousness. In this study context, the "veil" entails (Du Bois, 1903/2008; Rawls, 2000) the intertwined complexity of self-internalised otherness, with the experienced otherness on one side and the feeling of belonging on the other side, which involves the experiences of belonging in the society which you are a part of – the country you view as home, the society in which you raise your children, and yet are disconnect from in some way.

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As the analysis shows, cultural stereotyping leads to the challenges for these parents to be recognised parents who are equal to their native peers. The Somali parents I talked to believe that they have to construct strategies and calculate their responses when they interact with welfare institutions. The strategies they deploy are not only stressful in their lives but might also have adverse effects if they are understood as lacking in parenting skills. School and kindergarten employees need to be aware that nonwhite migrant parents may struggle with uncertainties and insecurities associated with their racial markers, as the interactional dilemmas entail that the parents do not believe they have the same interactional freedom as their peers. The welfare institutions where children have their arenas is an important context because they entail a power imbalance. As noted by Tembo et al. (2020), welfare institutions, such as the CWS, social welfare services and health services, are powerful and are enforced by the state, which may contribute to making parents feel powerless and controlled. It is important to understand the vulnerability that these Norwegian-Somali parents carry in their everyday lives. Although the parents report that these interactions with natives in other arenas may be difficult, the stakes of not being understood or of giving a bad impression is much higher, as it affects the core of human existence – their parenthood.

### **6.3 *The mismatch between a system offering support and a system experienced as racially prejudiced***

The findings suggest that being a parent in a dark body and being a Muslim today is challenging. Scholars (Midtbøen, 2016; Orupabo et al., 2020) note that, in the labour market, employers utilise ethnicity, skin colour and whether the candidate's Norwegianness is sufficient when they choose between applicants they want to hire. In other words, ethnicity becomes an important signal of the skills and competence that the employer is looking for. Research within child welfare also shows that immigrant children and families are disproportionately represented compared to nonimmigrants in the child welfare system, although this does not apply much to care orders (Berg et al., 2017; Staer & Bjørknes, 2015). Immigrants further perceive that they are more controlled by the system (Tembo et al., 2020).

This thesis suggests that the parents' experiences with multiple institutions are marked by a certain degree of hopelessness. When life as a parent becomes difficult or when the child needs extra support that the parent may not be able to provide for, a large welfare apparatus, in theory, is available for the parents to lean on. However, the parents are hesitant to ask for help from welfare institutions. The Norwegian welfare state is concerned with equal services, as it is ambitious and generous (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hantrais, 2004; Nygren et al., 2018). Children's welfare and upbringing conditions are fronted, which is

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largely successful, as the system is built upon early prevention, where, for example, schools and kindergartens can facilitate for children who have extra needs. It is a system where parents can seek help through a CWS that is, in principle, concerned with offering help in the form of measures and even financial help. Despite these available measures, the parents in these studies have difficulty asking for help – even parents who are employed in these same services that offer these measures, who have first-hand experience in providing help to vulnerable families or families who have ended up in a crisis and need temporary help. This leads us to question why these parents avoid the same institutions they themselves work in and believe work.

The analysis points to the issue of being racialised – a deeply internalised fear of being treated differently from ethnic Norwegians. This involves a fear that is difficult to put into words and that is difficult for nonracialised people to understand. This fear is carried first and foremost by a single individual in their everyday life where the individual has accumulated the luggage of undesirable events related to his/her ethnicity and religious markers and then has built a defence mechanism. This defence mechanism triggers a fear of important authorities with power. This fear runs deep and involves embedded feelings of not being seen as good enough because you carry a colour, a religion and the name of a country that, over time, has received a stigmatising connotation. The unpleasant feelings associated with this fear are reproduced from the first to the second generation and, to some extent, even the third generation. Although I do not have data on third-generation Somalis in Norway, the

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analysis of the parents' perceptions indicates that, as shown in Paper 3, although it might be viewed as counterintuitive to move to Somalia, which is still troubled and without a functioning state apparatus, the parents still chose to temporarily return because, among other reasons, they felt it would lessen the unpleasant feelings of being racialised. A large body of research has aimed to explain the reasons for return migration (cf. Carling & Erdal, 2014; Liden, et.al , 2011; Oraellana et al., 2001; Reisel, Bredal & Lidén, 2018; Sommerville, 2008), and in the Nordic context, it is often discussed as an issue related to children being *forced* to move (Johnsdotter, 2015; Oslo Economics, 2020; Thomas, 2016). My analysis demonstrates that parents work hard to minimise or try to prevent the stigma associated with being racialised by executing different measures, such as moving temporarily to Somalia, overcompensating in their interactions with the systems (as shown in Paper 2) or by implicitly teaching children to overcompensate or explicitly encouraging and working towards prestigious educations. As Paper 1 points out, they do this not only because they themselves will benefit from their children's success but also because they believe that a high status title will minimise the exclusion and help reduce the stigma.

The fear of welfare systems is largely connected to experiences of racism and deep-seated fear of being discriminated against. The consequences are the *expectations* of racism and discrimination when meeting these institutions. Rawls' (2000) study of race as an interaction order phenomenon points out that "differences in interactional expectations, persons are not able to recognize one another's conversational moves . . .

because one side might as well be playing chess, while the other plays checkers, and a serious misunderstanding results” (p. 241). The parents in the study perceive that they cannot afford to make the wrong move in the interactions or have the privilege to dissect misunderstandings, as the institutions the children are a part of in everyday life have the capacity to send a note of concern to the CWS, who have the ultimate power to actually enforce a custody takeover.

#### **6.4 Concluding remarks**

The main research questions guiding this work were addressed through subquestions in each paper. In addition to expanding our insights into fear and perception of the CWS, my work serves to expand and further develop academic discourses across multiple research fields. The dissertation provides empirical, contextual and theoretical insight. First, it provides a contextual contribution to migration studies by expanding the notion of transnational living. It contributes to the specific literature on the debate between returned migration and transnationalism by highlighting the discussion of transnational families’ temporary return. In terms of empirical contributions, it draws on extensive fieldwork among Somalis, which generated insight into their social world, and to my knowledge, this is one of few studies that apply this methodological approach to study Somalis in Norway. With regard to theoretical anchoring, I bridge and combine a range of studies within social work, sociology and migration. By drawing on a range of studies within these fields, I was able to expand my analytical process, and this may

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encourage future studies, especially in social work and sociology, to overlap more in such a way as pioneered by the women of the Hull-House and the Chicago School's empirical identification and their links to structural arrangements of the society (cf. Seltzer & Haldar, 2015). In terms of theoretical contribution, Paper 1 offers a theoretical model. This model responded to the analytical tools needed in the paper but also may contribute a roadmap for future research on how we can understand migrants' fears in other institutional contexts.

The included studies suggest the need for research to focus more on interactions within the broader welfare system that affect the perceptions of the CWS. Research is needed to explore what happens at the level of interaction whenever migrants and white majority welfare institution personnel interact, and when they interact in everyday life. To reduce fear, the present study suggest that one must contribute to equal services. When equivalent services are discussed, it is often pointed out that, for example, services should be equally accessible, even perhaps tailored, to a diverse population. But if the diverse population does not seek it out, this cannot succeed. We must reduce the deep-seated fears of people in order to achieve equal services. To do this, we must dare to ask ourselves the uncomfortable questions of racism and discrimination, as even in a country with an egalitarian and equality ideology, racism does indeed occur. Although I have not studied experiences of racism and discrimination, my data shed light on the consequences of parents' fear of being stigmatised and racialised. We therefore need research that can dissect race and racism and address a specific context, such as in the

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broader welfare system, where the aim is not to pinpoint racist systems or people but rather to understand what happens in these social interactions, what triggers the deep-seated fear in immigrants and *how* we can avoid misunderstanding unintentional and intentional discriminatory interactions. The dissertation's work started before the Black Lives Matter commitment we see today, and much of the writing of the articles had already been completed before the large demonstrations. However, the fact that racism issues are more on the agenda all over the world, whereby the digital world allows stories to reach across nations, shows us the need for in-depth research.

In terms of the thesis suggestions for social work practice with migrants/immigrants in different welfare institutions, the study suggests a more holistic approach whereby the field acknowledges the challenges *beyond* cultural difference while not dismissing it. Perhaps most importantly, we must acknowledge that the user of the service is actually afraid of being discriminated against even if the individual in the service has neither the intention nor the desire to discriminate.

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## **Articles & Appendices**

### ***Paper 1:***

*Articles & Appendices*

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Disadvantaged parents' fears of Child Protection Services:  
Transmission of child removal stories among Norwegian Somalis

Submitted manuscript.

**Paper 1 is not included in the online version due to copyright.**

**Paper 2:**



## 'The art of kindergarten drop off': how young Norwegian-Somali parents perform ethnicity to avoid reports to Child Welfare Services

Ayan Handulle & Anders Vassenden

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## 'The art of kindergarten drop off': how young Norwegian-Somali parents perform ethnicity to avoid reports to Child Welfare Services

## 'Kunsten å levere i barnehagen': Hvordan unge norsk-somaliske foreldre fremfører etnisitet for å unngå meldinger til barnevernet

Ayan Handulle and Anders Vassenden

### ABSTRACT

This paper departs from an ethnography of Somali parents in Oslo, Norway, which examined perceptions of the Child Welfare Services (CWS). We explore how young second-generation parents portray middle class identities when they interact with school and kindergarten personnel. These are institutions under legal obligation to report to the CWS if they suspect neglect of children. Drawing on Goffman, we analyse how parents conduct and meticulously prepare for encounters with school and kindergarten personnel. These preparations pertain to countering ethnic stigma and avoiding racial scrutiny, in large part to avoid referrals to the CWS. Our paper makes the following contributions. In the study of child welfare and ethnicity, we stress the importance of visible ethnicity – or 'race' – and show how scepticism of CWS derives from suspicions of racial prejudice; strained relations between migrants and the CWS extend far beyond interactions between caseworkers and clients as they also stem from interactions with adjacent institutions. Regarding the study of ethnic relations, we argue that understanding performance of ethnicity requires inclusion of institutional contexts, such as the schools, kindergartens and the CWS.

### ABSTRAKT

Denne artikkelen bygger på en etnografisk studie av somaliske foreldre i Oslo, om deres syn på det norske barnevernet. I denne artikkelen utforsker vi hvordan unge andregenerasjons foreldre fremstiller en norsk middelklasseidentitet i interaksjonen med skole- og barnehagepersonell. Skoler og barnehager er juridisk forpliktet til å rapportere til barnevernet hvis de mistenker omsorgssvikt. Vi bygger på Goffman, og analyserer hvordan foreldre utfører disse møtene, og de nitide forberedelser. Disse forberedelsene handler om å motarbeide etniske stigma, og mye om å unngå meldinger til barnevernet. Arbeidet vårt gir bidrag til flere forskningsfelt. Til studier av barnevern og etnisitet, viser vi at skepsisen til barnevernet er knyttet til mistanke om fordommer basert på synlig etnisitet eller rase. For å forstå anstrengte forhold mellom migranter og barnevernet, viser vi videre hvordan problemer strekker seg langt utover møtet mellom saksbehandlere og brukere, da de også stammer fra samhandling med tilstøtende institusjoner. Til forskning om etniske relasjoner mer generelt, argumenterer vi for at studiet av 'performance' av etnisitet må innlemme institusjonelle kontekster, slik som skoler, barnehager og barnevern.

### KEYWORDS

Child welfare; ethnicity; second-generation; stigma; performance

### NØKKELOD

barnevernet; etnisitet; andregenerasjonen; stigma; 'performance'

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## Introduction

Abdi is a 34-year old married Norwegian-Somali father, and is an engineer. He has two children in kindergarten, and one in primary school. When Abdi refers to the drop off and pick up of his children, he says: *'Each day I prepare myself before I walk in [kindergarten]. I have to put on a smile and speak with caution'*.

We interviewed Abdi for a study of Somali parents in Norway, and their perceptions of the Child Welfare Services (CWS). Abdi's experience is typical for how second-generation parents interact with school and kindergarten personnel: Dropping off one's child in the morning, especially in kindergartens, becomes almost an art form. The 'art' involves meticulous preparation of both children's appearance (e.g. clothing, food) and their own behaviour vis-à-vis teachers and other personnel. It also involves choosing weekend and leisure activities that portray middle-class identity.

Our paper examines this predominant concern of these parents. Importantly, it relates not mainly to kindergarten/schools as such, but to the Child Welfare Services (CWS). All professionals in Norway who work with children are legally obliged to report any worries about the well-being of children to the CWS. This requirement, along with scepticism towards the CWS, underlies parents' distress and their performance. Data consist of in-depth qualitative interviews and ethnography among first and second-generation Somalis in Oslo and Somalia (returnees). This paper primarily investigates the perspectives of participants who grew up in Norway, and are either graduates or in university. We focus, in other words, on parents who are both socially mobile and 'nationals' (in terms of citizenship and cultural 'know-how'; cf. Vassenden, 2010). We analyse the following research questions: (i) *Why do parents feel the need to exercise caution in their interactions with school and kindergarten personnel?* (ii) *How do parents relate their caution to the Child Welfare Services?* (iii) *What are the strategies that these parents develop and employ to exercise this caution?* We adopt a Goffmanian ([1959]1987, [1963]1990) approach to understanding these strategies. In so doing, we contribute to the scholarship on *performing ethnicity* (Clammer, 2015) by stressing the significance of institutional contexts – in our case the Nordic child welfare system. Scholarship on migrants and child welfare often highlights the issue of cultural differences when trying to understand the relationship between migrants and welfare institutions. Such perspectives fail to capture the nature of cases like ours, which, we claim, have more to do with visible ethnicity – or 'race' – and stigma in institutional encounters.

The article has the following structure. First, we discuss the relevant background and review existing research on Somalis, child welfare and ethnicity. Next, we present the theoretical framework. After presenting findings and analyses, we discuss their implications.

## Background and previous research

### *Somalis in Norway*

Of Norway's population of 5.3 million, some 940,000 – almost 18% – are immigrants or children to immigrants (2019, Statistics Norway). Somalis are among the largest groups, almost 43,000 people. Most Somalis came to Norway as refugees following more than 20 years of civil war. Norwegian and European studies typically describe Somalis as disadvantaged, in the labour market and in society in general (Fuglerud & Engebretsen, 2006). Norway is a homeownership country with more than 80% owning their dwellings. However, for Somalis, this figure is below 20%, which shows socio-economic problems (Statistics Norway, 2017<sup>1</sup>). Somalis often have few formal qualifications from their home country. Furthermore, they frequently report experiencing discrimination and racism (Vrålstad & Wiggen, 2017). Being Somali is a stigmatised identity. Stereotypes pertain to not working, having (too) many children, being welfare-dependent and not speaking the Norwegian language well. Despite these problems, children of Somali immigrants fare better in the educational system than their parents' socio-economic resources would suggest. Several studies show that descendants of immigrants to Norway (including Somalis) have higher likelihood of pursuing higher education than native children with similar socioeconomic backgrounds (Hermansen, 2016).

### **Child welfare and migrants**

In numerous countries, ethnic minority and migrant children are disproportionately engaged by the CWS (cf. Barn, 2007). In Norway too, the CWS engages with immigrant families more than native families. It is however noteworthy, that overrepresentation in Norway concerns investigations and in-home support, *not* care-orders (Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019). Somali children align with this pattern.

Nevertheless, the relationships between the Norwegian CWS and several migrant groups are strained. Media accounts and a growing body of research (Berg et al., 2017; Fylkesnes, Nygren, Bjørknes, & Iversen, 2015; Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019) provide evidence that many migrants fear the agency, with Somalis sometimes reported to be particularly distrustful. Although researchers have reported such fear in other countries too (Earner, 2007), deficiencies in existing knowledge are striking. Fear of the CWS is an under-theorized phenomenon and its causes are poorly understood. It may reflect cultural backgrounds, socio-economic marginalisation, or lack of intercultural knowledge, even ethnic discrimination in the services, but current knowledge precludes conclusions.

Besides mistrust, research on child welfare and ethnic/migrant issues abounds internationally. Identified problems include cultural gaps and language issues (Dalikeni, 2019; Earner, 2007; Fylkesnes, Iversen, & Nygren, 2018; Križ & Skivenes, 2010), and lack of cultural competence among CWS officers (Nordic examples are Anis, 2005; Willis, Pathak, Khambhaita, & Evandrou, 2017). Although some authors are critical of the emphasis on cultural sensitivity, arguing that social work should be more sensitive to how social problems relate to poverty (Barn, 2007; Dean, 2001), cultural sensitivity is a dominant theme in the existing research, and in professional practice.

Most studies on child welfare and migration issues depart from the perspectives of CWS officers (e.g. Križ & Skivenes, 2010). Although the number is growing, there are fewer studies on migrant or ethnic minority groups, and on how they perceive the CWS. Not pertaining to Norway alone, Fylkesnes et al. note that '(p)arents' perspectives only partially inform the current knowledge base' (2018, p. 197; cf. Vassenden, 2010). The studies of migrant parents that do exist tend to focus on those who are engaged with the CWS, i.e. 'users' (Dalikeni, 2019). Knowledge gaps pertain in particular to social processes within the wider migrant milieu.

Our study helps bridging these gaps, on several accounts: We have not seen previous *ethnographic studies*. Further, few authors comment that scepticism towards the CWS affects how parents relate to adjacent welfare institutions, or parent-teacher interaction. Importantly, most studies on the CWS and migration focus on *newcomers*. We show that scepticism can also apply to the second generation, but for reasons not yet identified. We highlight how people who are nationals/insiders in some aspects (citizenship, cultural knowledge) struggle for acceptance in other aspects, like race/ethnicity and religion (Vassenden, 2010). Visible ethnicity (or 'race') and visible religion are essential themes. Our article gives important insight into behind the scenes and beyond face-to-face interaction with CWS employees.

For adequate understanding of our case, we must recognise the 'child-centric' and defamilialised Nordic welfare model. The state takes extensive responsibility regarding children and families (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hantrais, 2004). Norwegian children begin school when they turn six. In compulsory schooling – primary and secondary school (grades 1–10) – 96% of pupils attend public school. Kindergartens are state-funded and affordable. Enrolment is optional, yet crucial to families such as those in this paper, who were both employed full-time (some were part-time students). More than 91% of Norwegian children aged 1–5 years attend kindergarten (Statistics Norway, 2017, 2018). Essential to our analyses is the before-mentioned legal obligation for professionals who work with children – school/kindergarten teachers, community nurses etc. – to report their concerns regarding a child's wellbeing to CWS. The threshold for reporting concerns to CWS is low (Studsrod, Ellingsen, & Willumsen, 2016). Regarding children aged from 3 to 5 years, kindergartens are the public institution that report the most concern notes to CWS (Statistics Norway, 2018<sup>2</sup>).

### Theoretical framework

In exploring how parents construct strategies and enact encounters with school and kindergarten personnel, we adopted a Goffmanian framework ([1959]1987, [1963]1990). Goffman ([1963]1990) distinguishes between visible (or known about) stigma that leads to a person being discredited (or revealed), and invisible (or not-known-about) stigma of the discreditable. He employs the terms 'passing' and 'covering' as strategies that individuals use to control impressions and protect themselves. Passing refers to strategies that the discreditable use to be perceived as 'normal'. Covering are attempts by the discredited to cover visible traits (e.g. racial markers). When covering, individuals do not reject their identities, but downplay them by employing techniques to reduce their interactional obtrusiveness (Goffman [1963]1990, pp. 102–103). Valenta (2009) shows how immigrants to Norway from Bosnia, Croatia and Iraq negotiate their identity in everyday life by activating both covering and passing strategies that reduce the importance of ethnic markers. Becker (2015) explores similar strategies among Albanian Kosovars in little Italy, New York. She suggests the concept of *assumed ethnicity*: They neither reject nor validate Albanian ethnicity (Becker, 2015, p. 110). In these studies, *whiteness* allows participants to pass as 'non-ethnic' Vassenden and Andersson (2011) highlights the same phenomenon about religion and whiteness/non-whiteness in Norway; whereas whiteness hides religious affiliation, or signals secularity, non-whiteness positions people as religious (e.g. Muslim). Parents in our study express a wish to be perceived as equal to natives, but emphasise that their non-whiteness, and to some extent religious symbols (hijabs), do not allow it. In short, they do not have the interactional freedom of whites. In Goffman's terms, they are already discredited; their ethnic identity is evident on the spot.

In *The Souls of Black Folk*, W. E. B. Du Bois ([1903]2008) introduces the *double consciousness* concept. He poses a rhetorical question: 'how does it feel to be a problem?' (p. 1) and defines 'double consciousness' as '... the sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul' (Du Bois, [1903]2008, p. 3). Our participants repeatedly emphasised being viewed 'differently' and expressed the burden of carrying a stigma. Double consciousness is a concept frequently used in relation to the second-generation experience. Andersson (2010), for instance, argues that visible second-generation immigrants in Europe are often subtly exposed to exclusion and discrimination in various societal arenas, due particularly to a negative picture of immigrants in the media, which emphasises topics like crime and forced marriages. Ethnic discrimination is also well-documented, as shown by, for example, Midtbøen (2014): the children of immigrants tend to be overlooked in the labour market because employees make use of race and ethnicity as social cues when hiring, and educational and linguistic qualifications are rendered invisible in comparison. To understand the phenomena in question, we further engage with Essed's (2002) notion of 'everyday racism', which she describes as a process and not a singular act – a multidimensional experience involving 'unconscious exercises of power predicated in taken for granted privileges of whiteness' (Essed, 2002, pp. 204–207). She emphasises the importance of examining when, where, and how racism operates and argues that, in order to minimise racial inequalities in society at large, one must look at everyday incidents.

Through conducting Goffmanian analyses of how young Norwegian-Somali parents experience and navigate such everyday incidents, our study also answers a call from Clammer (2015) for studies on *performing ethnicity*. Clammer suggests that ethnic studies should borrow from performance theory (Goffman, [1959]1987), ritual theory, and dramaturgical perspectives as well as the sociology of the body. He defines performance as '(...) the creation, presentation or affirmation of an identity (real or assumed) through action' (p. 2160). Clammer suggests studies on, e.g. religious conversion and its bodily performance, the intersection of gender and religion, and consumerist performance of beauty, including how beauty relates to ethnicity. Ours is, in contrast, a case of *'inescapable performance'*, with people who deliberately highlight certain 'national' and 'middle-class' identities to debunk negative portrayals of ethnic identity. They 'have to' take such action, for matters of the most

existential nature – the ultimate fear being loss of children. Their performances involve both their own and their children’s bodies, e.g. by way of clothing (see later).

We also engage with Vassenden’s (2010) analytical scheme for the study of national and ethnic identities. Vassenden suggests that, when studying such identities (both lived and ascribed), researchers should distinguish between *citizenship*, *race*, *ethnicity*, and *culture* (ways of acting, being, and thinking) – analytically. For our participants, presenting themselves as resourceful, middle-class, and *Norwegian* parents is essential.

### Methods and data

The overall aim of our study was to understand how perceptions of the CWS form within migrant communities. We collected data from June to December 2016 in Oslo and from January to March 2017 in Somalia. In addition to observations, participation at seminars (etc.), numerous informal conversations, and focus-group discussions, data consist of approximately 32 h of in-depth interviews. The location for the first fieldwork was the District of ‘Old Oslo’ (Gamle Oslo), particularly the Grønland area. Although no longer the main residential area of migrants in Oslo, Old Oslo still has a large migrant population: Among 46,290 residents (2013), 38% are immigrants or their children (Høydahl, 2014). Moreover, Grønland is an institutional centre for many minorities; four of Oslo’s five purpose-built mosques are located there, and smaller mosques and ethnic/migrant associations abound, as do Somali cafés and shops. Somalis are the largest immigrant group in the district, with 2670 people (ibid.).

Although an important fieldwork location, collection of data was far from restricted to Grønland. Several interviews, especially with second-generation parents, were undertaken outside the area. Access to the milieu and to interviewees was facilitated by Handulle being born in Somalia and raised in Norway. Her insider status provided access in ways that outsiders would not have. Participants typically assumed that she shared their experiences of marginalisation, lack of belonging/acceptance in Norwegian society. Some even warned her about how life will change when she becomes a parent.

In Oslo, Handulle initially spent time at Somali cafes and shops. She contacted a Somali newspaper, which published a request for participation. Information was also shared on social media. Moreover, Handulle attended events held by Somali organisations, which included international child development programme courses for fathers, a women’s social club, gatherings at the mosque, debates about elections in Somalia and themed evenings about Somalis’ situation in Oslo. Several events had the CWS as its topic.

During the Oslo fieldwork, Handulle heard numerous stories about people who returned to Somalia because of fears of losing their children to the CWS. She thus decided to extend fieldwork to one region in Somalia, the name of which is undisclosed to ensure anonymity. Contrary to expectations, the returnees whom she interviewed did not report such fears as motivation for moving back. However, they presented the exact same narratives about encounters with institutions such as school and kindergartens as the parents who live in Norway. We present further details on this in a forthcoming article.

In addition to informal conversations, observations, and field notes from both locations, Handulle conducted nine individual interviews and nine group conversations in Oslo, and 13 individual interviews in Somalia. While our sample covers both first- and second-generation parents, this paper focus on the latter, who were born or raised in Norway. (Data from first-generation parents form important background.) This paper thus focus on two group interviews (two participants in each), and seven individual interviews in Norway, plus six individual interviews in Somalia. The sample of 17 parents is gender-balanced (nine mothers). Occupations and educations include social workers, lawyers, dentists, engineers, and university students. Participants are between 26 and 35 years old, and have on average three children, in kindergarten and/or primary school.

Handulle conducted all interviews face-to-face. Interviews with the parents for this paper were typically conducted in a mixture of Norwegian and Somali, reflecting the bilingualism of both the researcher and the interviewees. Open-ended questions guided the interviews, which centred on e.g. perceptions and experiences of the CWS; views on Norwegian parenthood; social networks; transnational connections and information flows. Questions about the CWS typically spurred participants to talk about schools/kindergarten, and in detail.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. The analysis consisted of careful reading of field notes and transcriptions to identify dominant themes. We coded for themes such as parenthood, childhood, belonging/identification, social class, notions of 'Norwegianness', and social mobility.

### Findings

The second-generation parents emphasise strongly that the Somali ethnic/racial stigma is a heavy one, and 'inescapable'. The data is homogenous, in the sense that all participants emphasised the importance of showing competence within Norwegian middle-class culture. They all typically utilised the same performative strategies in their encounters. Although we have no reason to doubt the parents' sincerity, we must underline that we do not have corresponding data from school/kindergarten personnel, which means that we cannot be conclusive about whether the parents' claims about discrimination reflect factual events or just suspicions of discrimination. However, the 'truth' of stories is to some extent irrelevant. 'True' or not, their experiences or suspicions of prejudice guide their choices in several domains of life, such as where to reside. They typically want to avoid areas with a high number of migrant or Somali families. They are highly attentive to the potential consequences of such choices. Knowing that Somalis (and Muslims) are subject to special scrutiny in Norwegian society, they suspect that such scrutiny will pertain to them too, despite their being socially mobile, resourceful parents. All these deliberations form an important backdrop to their encounters with kindergartens/schools.

Below, we identify three stages in parents' engagement with school and kindergarten personnel. These stages include: (i) preparation of the child(ren) and of self, (ii) actual face-to-face encounters, and (iii) debriefing the encounter, where parents reflect on their encounter and take measures to prevent (future) misconceptions.

#### Preparation of the child

Participants commonly highlighted the importance of their children having all the 'correct' things needed to make a good impression, including clean backpacks, expensive 'enough' clothes, and well prepared food. This involves a process of carefully preparing what parents believe will be deemed 'correct' in the eyes of school/kindergarten employees. Huda's statements are illustrative:

Huda: I worry about the food my kids take to kindergarten and what the staff will think. I worry whether they think it is not good or varied or nutritious enough. For instance, my daughter is very picky when it comes to food. I know that I could give her two slices of bread with mackerel in tomato sauce and one with something else, so it could be varied. But I know she won't eat it. She likes cheese and especially melted cheese. Even though I know what's best for my child that doesn't matter. I have to make sure I never send her [to kindergarten] with the same thing [i.e. same food as the day before]. I am afraid of how they [staff] will perceive me. I feel we [Somalis] cannot make any mistakes.

Huda knows how Norwegian society and childhood welfare institutions work. Still, she is anxious. We would expect such distress from newly arrived immigrant parents, because of language barriers and expectations that may be hard to understand. During fieldwork, Handulle heard numerous stories of first-generation parents who failed to understand information given by teachers. Those not proficient in the Norwegian language often misunderstood information about, e.g. school trips and need for extra clothes or an extra lunch packet from home. (Providing extra clothing is paramount in Norwegian kindergartens and primary schools, because of the amount of outdoor time). When told to pack

extra clothes or food for a school trip, many newcomers did not understand the oral or written information given them. Other misconceptions pertained to how ones prepares a 'Norwegian' lunch packet rather than traditional Somali food, which (according to our interviewees) teachers do not consider nutritious enough. Furthermore, the need for proper clothing in relation to weather changes is easily misunderstood. Whereas these are things that newcomers are often interested in *learning* about, the parents in this paper, who all grew up in Norway, know them by heart. Still, they often express the same distress as Huda.

What concerned them was thus not a lack of knowledge of 'Norwegian' parenting, but rather their suspicions that teachers or other personnel would interpret the behaviour, appearances, clothes, etc. of their children, *as if they did not have the knowledge*. Khadra, a 34-year-old dentist, compares herself to native parents.

Khadra: You observe the composition of parents [in school]. For example, you see two [white Norwegian] parents – maybe the dad owns a business and the mom is working somewhere. They are well educated and have good finances. Their children look healthy, and happy. I automatically think that never in a million years would they have received a note of concern from the CWS. I feel that appearance carries a lot of weight.

Parents described feelings of anxiety and distress, which lead them to carefully prepare their children for school. Participants typically emphasised the importance of making a good impression through, for example, buying expensive clothes. Clothing seems to be especially important in relation to school (Norwegian children do not wear school uniforms), perhaps because parents do not interact with grade school staff as much as with kindergarten staff. Whereas parents accompany children to kindergarten, most children walk to grade school themselves. Regardless of institution, clothing is a visible sign of good ('Norwegian') parenting which parents hope will detach them from the racial marker of 'Somaliness'; expensive clothing is used as a sign to counter ethnic stigma. Crucially, second-generation parents typically believe they are more likely than native parents to be reported to CWS. To prevent any bad impression, nutritious food, clean backpacks and nice, expensive clothing are used as signs.

### **Preparation of self**

After ensuring that their children will make a good impression when they go off to school, or when dropped off at kindergarten – wearing 'correct' clothing and bringing 'correct' lunch – parents prepare themselves, psychologically. They carefully plan how they will act, speak and behave when meeting teachers and assistants. These preparations, apparently quite exhaustive, pertain to both institutions, but are most acute in relation to kindergarten.

A day in a Norwegian kindergarten starts and ends with a specific situation – the drop-off/pick-up procedure. Parents and personnel typically greet each other; the personnel may sit down and welcome the child, and chitchat with the parent about all sorts of things, but especially about the child. In the morning, parents inform the staff about how the child is doing, and if there is anything special – did s/he sleep well, eat well, is s/he being picked up at an unusual time, etc. In the afternoons, information goes the other way, and the staff informs parents about how the day unfolded: the day's activities, whom did the child play with, how did s/he eat, etc., and for the youngest children, how long was his/her nap. Although parents in general will want to make a good impression in these encounters, they ideally contain trust and intimacy, from the perspectives of both parents and staff. Some parents, migrants and others, may find them distressful, but these moments can also make a relaxing couple of minutes before one rushes to work. For the parents in this paper, these encounters are anything but relaxing. On the contrary, they entail mustering up strength and bracing oneself in advance. When they park the car or step off the bus, they go through the impending situation in their minds, and try to plan and envision how the interaction will unfold.

- Naima: There is generally a lot of negative focus on Somalis, and you cannot take the liberty of having a bad day. You have to be on the ball, the kids have to look good, you have to look good and it goes like that.
- Interviewer: What do you mean?
- Naima: Well, if my kids come one day with uncombed hair or bad clothes, they [personnel] would probably have a bad image of me, and as Somalis, we cannot afford that. Because if there is something wrong, it is so easy for them to say, 'oh, it's so typical immigrant', or 'it's so typical Somalis'. I have worked in a kindergarten and heard such comments. And it's like that, the one day you might have a bad day, you do not get the same excuse as the others (...). So you would prefer to be on guard as much as possible. Although sometimes you just want to breathe ... I usually say that Norwegians should know that I am really a Norwegian under this hijab. [32-year-old teacher]

Interviewees repeatedly expressed frustration about how draining it is constantly to think about how kindergarten employees perceive them. Naima talks about being downgraded and prejudged. By taking precautions, she hopes that the kindergarten personnel will not pay much attention to her being Somali. Other interactional strategies include remembering to smile, putting their mobile phone in silent mode, and thinking through how they talk, e.g. not loudly, to avoid substantiating ethnic stereotypes. It is of course common for parents to put their mobile phones in silent mode before they pick up their children in kindergarten, and considered common courtesy. However, these parents do so out of suspicion that personnel will interpret any breach of conduct in light of ethnic/racial stigma.

### The encounter

Although interviewees seldom expressed having faced racism or overt discrimination, all agreed that Somali identity is associated with stereotypes. It is, in short, a stigma. They often referred to media discourses on immigration and Somalis and their low socioeconomic status. Negative narratives about immigrants and Somalis in particular is backdrop to parents' suspicion that teachers and kindergarten personnel undermine them as parents.

- Hassan: I think many [school, kindergarten, health clinic, etc.] personnel expect less of me because I am Somali (...). That I just send my kids to kindergarten or school, without expecting anything from them [staff] (...). Because apparently, all Somalis have six or eight children and do not have time to follow up their children.

One way to cope is by 'overcompensating' in ordinary activities, as Nasir shows us below. As mentioned above, small talk is important between parents and kindergarten personnel. It may be something that most parents simply do. Nasir, in contrast, carefully plans it, to give a good impression:

- Nasir: I must have a good relationship and communication with them [staff] I must even get to know them to figure out how they think [...] When they get to know you, it is easier to relate to you as a human being. Therefore, it is a conscious choice. I seek to get to know them and every day I do small talk, and that is very important.
- Interviewer: Why is it important in a kindergarten?
- Nasir: After talking to someone for a period, almost every single day, you will become more familiar and it may lead to longer conversations. ... I know that kindergarten employees wonder a lot about what kind of parent I am. (Nasir, male social worker).

Practically every interviewee stated that they want to be perceived as 'just a normal parent', one who is in command of everyday language and chitchat. Participants believed they had to work for it, by frequently engaging with the staff and hoping that thereby their ethnicity would matter less. In so doing, they emphasise their 'cultural Norwegianness' (cf. Vassenden, 2010), in order to make the ethnic and racial Somaliness (or 'non-Norwegianness') matter less.

A related strategy is to draw attention to occupational and educational statuses. Hodan recalls from her time as a kindergarten parent: *'I had several cards in my hand. I was self-employed, educated,*

*active in politics, active in the local community and to top it off I did not wear the hijab*. Several interviewees told us how they deliberately talk about their education and their jobs to teachers/assistants. Doing so yield discomfort – a feeling they share with most Norwegians; highlighting social status collides with the moral and social requirements of egalitarianism (Vassenden & Jonvik, 2019). However, they felt they had no choice. Alternatively, perhaps middle-class status is such an effective counter-move to the stereotype of lower-class, not well integrated Somalis, that the temptation to talk about their social position is too great to resist.

This does not guarantee a stop to one's worries, though. Some parents claimed that it is not 'enough', and described a supplementary strategy; they would sometimes deliberately complain about matters in school/kindergarten, even to some extent be confrontational towards employees. This too is something they do to appear resourceful, even though they know there is a risk that teachers will interpret it as reflecting not an engaged parent, but a troublesome one. *'I try to have a dialogue with the teachers all the time. I know it can be perceived as nagging, but I feel I must in some way appear resourceful'* (Hodan). Furthermore, concerns about self-presentation as a resourceful parent also influences the leisure activities in which they enrol their children. Some were preoccupied with sending their children to activities such as ballet and horse riding. These activities were selected not merely because of the child's interests, but also because of the impression, they would make on school and kindergarten employees: middle-class.

Parents apply these strategies vis-à-vis not only staff members, but also the others parents.

### **Debriefing the encounter**

After drop-off/pick-up, parents reflect back on the interaction with the employees. Some spend a lot of time and resources on this. What was said during the conversation, and why?

Debriefing occurs especially after situations where the parents felt that their parenting skills had been pinned to ethnicity or religion. Even though teachers or other personnel had not said anything explicitly, it could be unspoken acts. *'You notice by how people talk to you, how they behave towards you, all these little things ...'* (Hassan). Many participants referred to subtle snubs, which made them uneasy. Hassan refers to unspoken acts. Others dwell on spoken words: *'(...) Some of the questions they ask, you think like "what do you want ..." "Why is she [kindergarten employee] asking me that question?" You get a bit insecure'* (Hannah). Parents related these experiences to 'Somaliness' and Muslim identity. Carrying these markers in their everyday lives is clearly a burden, which they also connect to their past experiences of stigmatisation and discrimination. This makes them unsure about how they are perceived as parents. Hence, they evaluate the encounter, which includes figuring out how to act the next time, how to repair mishaps and miscommunications, and prevent future ones. Others take another step, by deliberately choosing written communication, with the aim of 'collecting evidence'.

Asha: Sometimes I feel I get challenged because I have a different skin colour (...) and I do everything in writing. I do everything by email or text message. I write everything because I do not want anything to be used against me.

The backdrop to Asha collecting evidence is the legal obligations of kindergartens and schools to report to the CWS. There is power involved: not primarily power exercised, but someone's *capacity* to exercise power (cf. Lukes, 2013). In the end, this is what makes these parents anxious, and the hidden threat underlying the preceding findings – coupled with lack of emotional/interactional freedom to be just an 'ordinary parent'. Unlike recent newcomers from Somalia, the parents in this paper are not outright afraid of the CWS to the extent of fearing easily losing custody of their children. Knowing the legislation and their rights, they stated clearly that they would be able to deal with a note of concern. What seems to distress them is the possibility of *intrusion* and of being questioned. There is also stigma attached to CWS engagement; a different stigma to the ones discussed so far, yet one that seriously threatens a parent's face and selfhood. The discomfort of potential intrusion, and

thus threat to parenthood, makes parents take what they believe are necessary measures, like evaluating the encounters and 'collecting evidence'.

Matters extend beyond evaluation. On the weekend, families intentionally do 'Norwegian' (middle-class) activities. During fieldwork, Handulle heard stories about the 'teddy bear activity', which is common in (Norwegian) primary schools. The class shares a stuffed toy, which the children take turns borrowing home over the weekend, together with a notebook that is the teddy bear's diary. Typically, families will be expected to write a page or two about the teddy bear's weekend. The intention is to build a communal class environment. The flip side is that all families will have one of their weekends on display for teachers, children and other families in the class (all of whom are free to skim or study the texts). When the child returns to school, the teachers may also ask what the teddy bear did during the weekend. Although the parents did not refer to the notebook specifically, the activity caused anxiety among both first and second-generation parents. Some said they felt they had to do a 'Norwegian activity', such as hiking in the mountains, to portray a good image for the family. They were, with Goffman's words ([1959]1987), conscious about the backstage as a preparation stage for front-stage encounters.

### Discussion and conclusion

These second-generation Somali parents struggle in school/kindergarten situations, where they construct performative strategies to counter racial scrutiny. Dealing with embodied stigma – Somaliness – is crucial prior to, during and after drop-off/pick-up. It becomes an 'art form', which parents cultivate. When successfully performed, it provides cues that shows the family's 'Norwegianness', and resourcefulness. Making a good impression might be considered normal parenting behaviour when engaging with schools and kindergartens. For these parents, it entails planning and thought far beyond what is common. Whereas many parents display ordinariness in these encounters without reflecting much upon it, to the parents in this study, these encounters involve considerable deliberations, even distress. The meticulousness with which they plan their behaviour, carry out the interaction, and reflect on it afterwards is striking. Performance of Norwegian middle-class identity becomes a matter of great concern.

Goffman provides a useful theoretical lens for understanding these issues. As he states ([1963]1990), the point of *covering* is not so much to reject one's stigma, as it is to make it less noticeable. Parents never seem to reject their Somali identity, but then again, they lack the option of hiding ethnic markers in the way that white migrants may do (Becker, 2015; Valenta, 2009). They cannot pass as non-Somali. To make the Somali stigma less intrusive, parents emphasise a Norwegian middle-class identity strongly. Such impression management resembles what Du Bois (1903) characterises as 'double consciousness', as this performance entails acknowledging their visible markers while simultaneously performing self-checks, in order to prevent potential racial prejudice and ensure that (white) school/kindergarten personnel do not measure their parenting skills and the child's behaviour through 'ethnic lenses'.

Beyond the frontstage encounters, parents continue their performance in weekend activities, for instance, doing 'Norwegian activities' like hiking. They believe that such activities, even though they are outside the school/kindergarten, and thus not witnessed, will help them portray a Norwegian middle-class image. In Clammer's (2015) analogy of performing ethnicity, some engage in performance to the point where it becomes an obsession and a distressing factor in their everyday lives. The intentional and careful choices of 'correct activities' for their children was a striking finding. Parents put their cultural capital on display in order to be on equal footing with native Norwegian parents, and deliberately break with egalitarian norms (Vassenden & Jonvik, 2019) when they draw attention to their occupational/educational achievements. Our interviewees seem to believe that native parents have an unspoken privilege, due to whiteness; their 'white' peers can engage in the drop-off/pick-up situations without having to reflect much upon how they are perceived. This feeds into

the established insight that whiteness bears the hallmarks of invisibility and transparency (Garner, 2006).

Our data preclude conclusions about whether employees actually hold prejudice against Somali parents. Possibly, they exercise unconscious bias, but, largely, that is beside the point. For these parents, it is enough to *suspect* that employees hold prejudices. Knowing that professionals have the power and obligation to *potentially* report to CWS (capacity, rather than exercise) and knowing the content of the Somali stigma, parents may not allow themselves the risk of acting *as if* teachers do *not* hold racial prejudice (cf. Essed, 2002).

In line with previous research on migrants in Norway (Berg et al., 2017; Fylkesnes et al., 2015) and the media attention given to the topic (Vassenden & Vedøy, 2019), our participants are sceptical of the CWS. However, the reasons are not fear of custody takeover, lack of knowledge, or a product of their cultural backgrounds – issues that are common among newcomers. Rather, this pertains to perceived stigma of ethnicity/race. Previous research (Andersson, 2010; Midtbøen, 2014) shows that children of immigrants may be subjected to exclusion and discrimination even though they, being brought up in Norway, have all the relevant cultural knowledge. This is demonstrated in our study as parents perceiving that the possibility of being reported to CWS is due to prejudice, which is the main reason why parents meticulously plan encounters with schools/kindergartens. They try to impress the employees in order to pre-empt notes of concern. Their performative strategies are not only stressful in their lives but might also have an adverse effect if teachers interpret them as mirroring a lack of parenting skills, especially if parents deploy critical strategies. Whether and how the ethnic/racial marker actually influences the work of teachers is a question that is impossible to determine and on which more research is needed – that is, whether and how the ethnic backgrounds of children influence kindergarten teachers' considerations and decisions to submit a note of concern. However, regardless of how teachers actually view these parents, the result of perceived stigma, by way of parents' actions, may be the same. Future research should address these questions, possibly by doing observational studies in kindergartens.

### Notes

1. <https://www.ssb.no/bygg-bolig-og-eiendom/artikler-og-publikasjoner/lavere-eierandel-blant-innvandrerne>.
2. <https://www.ssb.no/statbank/list/barneverng>.

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### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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*Articles & Appendices*

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*Articles & Appendices*

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**Paper 3:**



**NJMR** NORDIC JOURNAL OF  
MIGRATION RESEARCH

# Little Norway in Somalia– Understanding Complex Belongings of Transnational Somali Families

RESEARCH

AYAN HANDULLE

**HUP** HELSINKI  
UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

## ABSTRACT

This article explores Norwegian-Somali parents' motivation for returning to Somalia, how life has unfolded in the face of their return and how they are preparing for their future return to Norway. The article is a result of an ethnographic study of Norwegian-Somali returnees in Somalia. The analysis reveals that the desire to avoid Norwegian government surveillance of families served as an important backdrop for their return to Somalia. The motivations for returning to Somalia were also related to experiences of stigmatisation in Norway and the complexity of *belongings* to Norway and Somalia. The study suggests that parents work towards strengthening their belonging to both Somalia and Norway. The study further highlights that, by moving, the parents perceive that their children will be proud of their Somaliness and bond with family members in Somalia. To maintain a belongingness to Norway, parents actively work towards cultivating their children's Norwegianness by creating a Norwegian school, celebrating Norwegian Constitution Day and emphasising Norwegian cultural repertoires in their everyday lives.

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## KEYWORDS:

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## INTRODUCTION

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*It is 07:40 am when I arrive at the Norwegian school in a region in Somalia. I first notice children playing ludo and jumping on a trampoline. I also observe an older ethnic Norwegian man standing by the trampoline. I greet him, and he welcomes me. Trond looks at his watch and says, 'Now is the time to ring the bell' (08:00). All the children stand in line and shake hands with Trond and say good morning. On the wall, the plan for today is written: / reading time / recess / Norwegian / social science / lunch / arts and crafts / recess / English. I catch myself looking at all the drawings, toys and books. It is a picture of the Norwegian landscape and Viking history. As I listen to the children speak, they all speak Norwegian. I think to myself that it is very strange that I am in Somalia because it feels like I am in a primary school in Norway. It feels like a day in June in Norway, and for a few moments, I forget that I am in Somalia and that it is February. Trond looks at his watch again and says it is time for recess. The children run out and sing, dance, play ball and jump on a trampoline. The children are as occupied with Markus and Martinus [Norway's most popular pop duo] here as they are in Norway. They are listening to 'Girls' by Markus and Martinus, and they seem to know all the lyrics. A student comes to me and proudly says that she is the class monitor for the week. She tells me that her job is to sweep, hand out books, hand out toys and put away the toys. Trond rings the bell, and it is time for social sciences.*

Fieldnote, Somalia, 28 February 2017

This fieldnote is from an ethnographic study of Norwegian-Somalis conducted in Somalia among returnees. During the fieldwork, I was inspired by the numerous stories I heard among Norwegian-Somalis in Norway concerning Somali parents who had returned to Somalia because of fear of involvement with child welfare services (CWS). Many migrant scholars (Baldassar et al. 2014; Bryceson 2019; Skrbiš 2008) have argued that the transnational family is not a new phenomenon and that the first systematic study was conducted by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918). Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) paved the way for ideas that are now central to transnational approaches, including the view of the migration experience as stretching across national spaces. However, migrant scholars have argued that the form of the transnational family is changing through the development of accessible travel and communication (Baldassar et al. 2014). An important issue in the discussion of transnational family involves how migrants temporarily return to their country of origin. This article explores the stories of Norwegian-Somali families who have temporarily moved to Somalia, with particular emphasis on creating a sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011) in their children through parenting in Somalia. As the previous extract illustrates, I found several families who had moved with their children back to Somalia and made deliberate choices to strengthen their children's Somaliness while simultaneously cultivating and sustaining their own Norwegianness and that of their children (cf. Vassenden 2010). They did so through, for example, the construction of a Norwegian school and the reproduction of Norwegian cultural repertoires (Swidler 1986).

Research on transnational families and social work tends to highlight how transitional families' connections to their countries of origin impact child rearing in the Western countries (Salami et al. 2020). In the Nordic context, scholars have emphasised immigrants' experiences with racism and state intervention into families, particularly

through CWS, which might lead to families returning to their home countries (Johnsdotter 2015; Lidén, Bredal & Reisel 2014). Although the parents in this study experienced stigmatisation in Norway and feared being prejudged by CWS as insufficient parents, they emphasised the importance of sustaining Norwegian cultural repertoires and actively worked towards creating and reproducing them. Data for this study emerged from an ethnography study that consisted of in-depth qualitative interviews and participant observation among the first- and second-generation Norwegian-Somali returnees. In this article, the first-generation Norwegian-Somali returnees entail Somali migrants who immigrated to Norway as adults and later returned to Somalia, whereas the second generation refers to descendants of Norwegian-Somali migrants who were born or raised in Norway but now reside in Somalia. I have set out to answer the following research questions: (i) What motivates the move to Somalia? (ii) How do parents cultivate Norwegian cultural repertoires?

The article is structured as follows. First, I discuss transnational families and return migration. I then give a brief account of the general background of Somalis. Next, I outline the study's theoretical and analytical framework, which draws on concepts of belonging and 'cultural repertoire'. Then, I describe the study's methods, followed by the analysis, which is divided into three sections. The first section explores Norwegian-Somali parents' motivation for returning and addresses the reasons for the return. The second part examines participants' experiences of parenting and how life has unfolded in the face of their return. The third part investigates the preparation for returning to Norway and the cultivation of Norwegian cultural repertoires. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings.

## CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

### TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES AND RETURN MIGRATION

Over the past decade, research on immigrants' transnational ties has grown. The notion of transnationalism as a field of study in international migration has been heavily influenced by American sociologists and anthropologists of the late 1990s (Al-Ali, Black & Koser 2001). Among these, in particular, were Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc-Szanton (1992: 1), who stressed the importance of understanding the migrants' social process of maintaining multiple relations with their home country as well as 'establishing social fields that cross geographic, cultural and political borders'. In the past few years, the concept of transnationalism has been connected to return migration, which has challenged how migration scholars view transnational families (Baldassar et al. 2016). Although the debate on return migration and transnationalism is not touched upon in this article, it is important to underline that most families in this study planned only temporary returns to Somalia. Therefore, by using the term 'return' in this context, I follow King and Christou's (2011) understanding of return migration, as they stress the importance of understanding it from the perspective of migrants themselves. Although there is a large body of research on transnational families and return migration, the scope of this section can only cover some of the features of this vast and complex subject area.

Research on transnational families and return migration in different contexts, ranging from Latin Americans in the United States (Orellana et al. 2001; Weeks & Weeks 2015) to Turks, Polish and Pakistani migrants in Europe, tends to focus on the impacts of traveling back and forth between countries of origin and host societies

(Engbersen et al. 2013; Erdal 2013; Klok et al. 2017). These studies differ in approach and scope, ranging across social, economic and political practices. However, considerable research among transnational returnees has tended to emphasise the first-generation labour migrants (Al-Ali, Black & Koser 2001). As the literature on transnationalism and return migration has expanded, several studies from the second-generation perspective have emerged. This literature has tended to focus on the second generation's desires to connect with their country of origin (Carling & Pettersen 2014; King & Christou 2014). Other studies on the second-generation migrants have highlighted the impacts of children's visits or returns to their parents' home countries and transnational schooling (Haikkola 2011; Mason 2004; Reisel, Bredal & Lidén 2018). In a European context, studies on return migration and visits by the second generation have been connected to forced visits/return. For example, Bolognani's (2014) study of the second-generation British-Pakistanis emphasised that studies have tended to highlight visits as problematic habits that could lead to forced marriages and school disruption. These problematic approaches have also emerged in the Nordic context, especially among Swedish-Somalis and Norwegian-Somalis. Media reports (NRK 2018, 2020) and studies have highlighted parents' sending their children to Somalia to escape Nordic welfare institutions (Lidén, Bredal & Reisel 2014; Oslo Economics 2020; Thomas 2016) or sending children to strict Quranic schools. Nevertheless, I argue that the social problems highlighted in these studies partially inform the current knowledge base, as they tend to depart from viewing the issue from the perspective of before or after the return to the origin country.

### **SOMALI IMMIGRANTS IN THE CONTEXT OF WELFARE INSTITUTIONS**

Somalis are one of the largest non-Western immigrant groups in Norway (Statistics Norway 2019). Most Somalis in Norway came as refugees following the fall of President Siyad Barre in 1991, which resulted in more than 20 years of civil war. Research among Somalis in Norway and other European societies has shown that Somalis score poorly in terms of employment, education and societal integration (Fuglerud & Engebrigtsen 2006; Hammond 2013). These challenges reflect the few formal qualifications from their home country. Moreover, Somali immigrants have reported being exposed to discrimination and racism in the labour market and when meeting professionals (Henriksen 2010; Vrålstad & Wiggen 2017). In recent years, an increasing number of scholars (Friberg & Elgvin 2016; Haga 2019) and media have given attention to Somalis' distrust of welfare institutions, particularly the school system (Thomas 2016) and CWS. The relationship between CWS and several migrant groups is currently marked by mistrust in Norway (Vassenden & Vedøy 2019). In a Swedish study, Osman et al. (2016) argued that Somali parents in Sweden feel alienated and that parents experience racism and discrimination in school and kindergarten, which contributes to their avoiding health institutions. In a recent paper, I showed similar findings regarding how the fear of being prejudged leads young resourceful Norwegian-Somali parents to engage in selective behaviours vis-à-vis public institutions (health, schools, etc.) to prevent reports to CWS (see Handulle & Vassenden 2020). Somalis have been the subject of a rich body of scholarly work; nonetheless, ethnographic studies on returns to Somalia have been marginal in the literature.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### BELONGING

In exploring what motivates Norwegian-Somali parents to move to Somalia and how they cope with their return, I found Yuval-Davis's (2006, 2011) understanding of belonging to be a relevant framework. Yuval-Davis (2006) discussed the notion of belonging as a 'dynamic process and not a reified fixity' (2006: 199) that makes people belong in various ways and to many different objects of attachment. She further argued that, to understand the notion of belonging thoroughly, we need to distinguish between three analytical levels on which belonging is constructed. The first level concerns 'social locations', which is an abstract concept about grids of power relations in society influenced by specific group affiliations, such as gender, race, social class and professional affiliation, that affect the power one holds when navigating society. These social locations are fluid and constructed in different historical contexts. The second level relates to individuals' identification and emotional attachments to various individuals and groups. As Yuval-Davis (2006) argued, identity is not just personal, and collective identity narratives provide a collective sense of belonging.

The third level relates to ethical and political values and concerns how social locations, construction of individuals and collective attachment are assessed and valued by the self and others. This relates to the notion of what Yuval-Davis (2006, 2011) called 'politics of belonging' and Crowley (1999) defined as 'the dirty work of boundary maintenance'. Yuval-Davis argued that we need to understand politics of belonging from the perspective of constructions of belonging. In other words, we should view politics of belonging from the perspective of what is required for a specific person to belong to the collective. This may include common decency, common culture, religion, loyalty or solidarity based on common values or projected common values. Erel's (2011) study on racialisation and migration in a small English city found that ethnic minorities' and migrants' social locations and individual identifications intersect in complex ways, which leads to negotiations over normative criteria to belong in the community. These normative categories are in line with Lamont and Molnár's (2002: 168) understanding of symbolic boundaries as 'conceptual categories constructed by social actors'. According to Crowley (1999), these symbolic boundaries, or categories, are also what separate the world population into 'us and them'.

I also engage with Swidler's (1986: 273) concept of 'cultural repertoire', which she defined as a "tool kit" of habits, skills, and styles from which people construct "strategies of action". Repertoires are composed of rituals, ideas, practices, habits and worldviews that are utilised as everyday guidelines to construct a meaningful life. Cultural repertoire, in this sense, differs from the classic anthropological culture concept, as cultural sociologists focus on traditions and narratives embedded in the society that individuals have access to and which form meaningful patterns in their everyday lives (Lamont & Molnár 2002). In this study, cultural repertoire as a concept is well suited to bringing out the cultural tools people create, and it allows us to understand how parents cultivate cultural tool kits.

### DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This article draws from two months of fieldwork in one region of Somalia with parents who had returned from Norway. The fieldwork lasted from January to March 2017. Data collected from June to December 2016 in Norway form the important

backdrop for this study. The fieldwork in Norway allowed me to gain access to the participants in Somalia. Although I grew up in Norway with Somali parents and speak both languages fluently, I experienced challenges accessing the Somali-Norwegian community in Norway. People assumed that I worked for the Norwegian government and was sent by CWS to infiltrate the community. After spending approximately a month in Somali cafés, shops and a mosque praying alongside the participants and being exposed to numerous tests of cultural knowledge, I started gaining the trust of the Somali-Norwegian community as a researcher rather than someone sent from the government. The gatekeepers in Norway were essential to establishing preliminary access in Somalia, and they introduced me to a gatekeeper in Somalia. This gatekeeper in Somalia introduced me to the Norwegian-Somali community there and to several diaspora cafés and shopping malls. The region in which I conducted the research has been anonymised to protect the participants' identities.

Fieldwork in Somalia consisted of observations in diaspora cafés and participant observations in the Norwegian school and playground. The school was a primary school for grades 1–4. The teaching language was Norwegian, and the teachers were both ethnic Norwegians and the second-generation Norwegian-Somali returnees. In addition, I conducted 13 individual in-depth interviews in Somalia with parents from different families and 18 formal interviews in Norway. This article highlights the 13 interviews in Somalia. In 12 of the families, both parents had returned to Somalia, but in one family, only the mother returned to Somalia with children while the father stayed in Norway. The samples for the formal interviews consist of eight females and five males. Parents' ages ranged from 30s to 50s, and they had three to six children ranging in age from 2 to 14 years. Participants were both first generation (Somali migrants who immigrated to Norway as adults) and second generation (descendants of Norwegian-Somali migrants who were born or raised in Norway). Their occupations included engineers, nurses, teachers and business owners. Most parents were employed in Norway and took one-year leave without pay to move to Somalia. Those who stayed longer than one year in Somalia resigned their job in Norway. Most of the families stayed in Somalia between 6 months and 2 years. In all the families, one or both parents established a business or were employed in Somalia in work similar to what they had in Norway. The intended duration of their stay in Somalia was unclear for many.

Most conversations and interviews were in Somali or a mixture of Norwegian and Somali. The interviews took place in their homes, workplace or a café. The interviews lasted approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. I transcribed all interviews verbatim. I sought in-depth familiarity with data through repeated readings of fieldnotes and transcripts. Dominant themes that were coded during data collection and analysis included parenthood, childhood, recognition, networks, belonging/identification, marginalisation, financial situation, otherness, Norwegianness and social mobility.

The study was approved by the Norwegian Social Science Data Services. Participants were given information about the study in Somali and Norwegian and were provided consent forms to sign before the interviews began. Participation was voluntary.

## RECONSTITUTING BELONGING THROUGH PARENTING IN SOMALIA

In this section, I will first unpack how parents' motivation to return to Somalia was influenced by their struggle for a sense of belonging in Norway and their worries

regarding their children's future. Their struggle to belong appeared to be derived from experiences of exclusion and stigmatisation in Norway and to also be connected to their fear of being prejudged by Norwegian welfare institutions. Second, I will describe experiences of parenting and how life has unfolded in the face of their return. The parents narrated their return life through a sense of relief, acceptance and adapting to the new social context. Lastly, I will suggest in what ways the parents have cultivated and reproduced Norwegian cultural repertoires in Somalia in preparation for their future return to Norway.

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### MOTIVATION FOR RETURN

The parents expressed that a motivational factor for moving to Somalia was the desire to strengthen their children's Somali culture, linguistic and religious identity by bonding with their family in Somalia. Parents emphasised that they were worried about the development of their children's self-image as Norwegian-Somalis based on their own experiences of stigmatisation involving negative encounters in their everyday lives in Norway. Common accounts included experiences of being stared at in public transportation or in shops and of feeling mistreated or suspected by school or kindergarten employees (cf. Handulle & Vassenden 2020). Even social gatherings that were supposed to be communal and inclusive, such as the Norwegian *dugnad* (voluntary work conducted within local communities), were experienced as draining because parents constantly wondered if their ethnicity or religion would be pointed out by native Norwegians. Muna, a 30-year-old second generation, articulated it as follows: 'I stopped going to dugnader because it got uncomfortable and awkward. People [native Norwegians] stare at you and ask many uncomfortable questions.'

Many participants referred to social encounters as difficult and often connected this to their ethnicity and religion (Islam). The feelings of exclusion in Norway were related to concerns for their children's future with regard to being Muslim and Somali in Norway. Hence, the parents believed that living for a period of time in a society where their children could identify with others in terms of colour and religion would strengthen their self-image as Norwegian-Somalis for their return to Norway.

Basra, a 43-year-old first-generation mother of three, explained her motivation for moving to Somalia:

It is important to me that I give them [my children] strength or tools to do well... My children feel that they are Norwegians. They tell me, 'I'm a Norwegian, mom, because I was born there.' And it's sad to say this, but what they do not know yet is that, even if you feel like a Norwegian, everyone in the society will look at you as a foreigner, and the older you get, the more it gets pointed out and you are reminded that you are a foreigner.

This was a common reflection among parents. They simultaneously emphasised the importance of their children connecting with their family in Somalia based on the belief that it would make their attachment to Somalia and their Somali identity stronger. Mason (2004) has argued that children of immigrants gain attachment through establishing meaningful relationships and getting virtual images of places of origin; this, in turn, contributes to belonging. However, what seemed to most concern parents in this study, and what was a primary motivational factor for moving, was the importance of teaching their children to be aware of their own Somaliness and that being Somali and Muslim in Norway may come with struggles. Some parents

would tell their children that they must always do better than their native peers in school, work and even leisure activities. Hamze, a 45-year-old first-generation father, explained:

They [children] must know one thing, and that is that they [Somali children] and 'Ola' [Norwegian name] cannot be on the same level. If you are just as good, then Ola will always be chosen first. Because the world is like that, the world is unfair. You must do twice as good to be considered on the same level as Ola. Because that's how discrimination and racism work, and it is not going away.

This seems to reflect power grids in society (Yuval-Davis 2011) in which the participants felt they were viewed as a lower social category than native Norwegians. The parents described a lack of belonging in Norway, and they believed they had to teach their children to work twice as hard as their native peers. Moving to Somalia gave parents an opportunity to show their children a country that has advanced since its time of war and poverty. In addition, parents gained recognition and respectability in Somalia by being in a higher social category than they were in Norway. They wanted their children to establish a good self-image as Norwegian-Somalis and as children of Somali descendants and, thus, laid the grounds for being viewed as resourceful parents and for their children to see Somalia differently.

#### EVERYDAY LIFE AS A PARENT IN SOMALIA

Participants described less stress and noted that they felt seen and valued in Somalia. In particular, they mentioned that it is less burdensome when they do not constantly have to convince others that they are good parents as they did when meeting Norwegian welfare institutions, such as school and kindergarten staff. They also narrated a sense of relief regarding being employees. For example, many parents utilised their higher education or other forms of knowledge attained from work relations in Norway. They described being respected and valued and just 'doing' their job without frequently thinking about the need to do extra work to be on the same level as other employees (i.e., native Norwegians). As one mother, Amina, a 30-year-old second generation, said:

In Norway, people measure you depending on how you look [ethnicity], what you wear, what your children wear, where you live. And I will never be accepted as a hundred percent part of the society, and when you feel inferior in a society, it does something to you, and you try to think, 'OK, how can I change it?' But then, you realise you can't. But here [Somalia], you don't have that, and I'm just happy here.

Almost every participant talked about the burden of being measured in Norway by native Norwegians, particularly by welfare institutions. This contrasts with their experiences in Somalia, where they have felt recognition and even admiration from locals. This phenomenon of migrants returning because of experiences of misrecognition or marginalisation in an exile country is not an uncommon finding in migration studies. Kleist (2008) called it 'recognition return', which refers to the diaspora returning to the home country and gaining political power, as 'identifying as diaspora' provides a sense of legitimacy and power.

Although many parents emphasised that they have felt appreciated in Somalia and recognised as good parents and employees, they also stated that they had to adapt to a new 'everyday' in a new social context. Despite speaking fluent Somali, many participants have had to get used to the small talk and everyday interactions with locals. Ismail, a 32-year-old second-generation father, said:

I can't stay here [Somalia] forever. My family and I have had to adjust to things because it is different, and it's mainly the small things that make it big things. Like how people talk, walk- small things like that. It is funny, but sometimes I miss the little isolated life in Norway.

This statement was common among participants and suggests the complexity of belongings. Participants consider both Norway and Somalia as their home countries. In Somalia, they have experienced well-being in terms of psychological affirmation and being perceived as good parents. In addition, they have escaped the negative public discourses about Somalis and worries about being prejudged by welfare institutions (e.g., CWS and kindergarten). The temporary return seems to become a matter of recharging and rebuilding themselves as parents and preparing their children to be confident in their Somaliness. Nonetheless, parenting in Somalia also entails safeguarding their children's Norwegianness.

### **PREPARATION FOR RETURN TO NORWAY: CULTIVATING NORWEGIAN REPERTORIES**

Despite being sceptical of the Norwegian institutions' intentions, especially the feeling of being watched by child welfare institutions, the parents have attempted to construct the same institutions, such as a school and kindergarten, in Somalia, and they underlined the importance of embedding Norwegian cultural *repertoire* and sustaining their children's Norwegianness in terms of citizenship and cultural know-how (cf. Swidler 1986; Vassenden 2010). The participants emphasised that it was crucial to establish a Norwegian school. Yosuf, a 34-year-old second-generation father of three, explained:

We worked hard to start this [Norwegian school] and continue to work hard to sustain it. We developed a Norwegian-Somali organisation and linked the Norwegian school to the authorities. We also have good contact with the Norwegian embassy in Nairobi. But for now, it is really very expensive with the school because we [parents] pay for each student. But eventually, we want to get support and funding.

The parents of children attending this school described the importance of creating and following the Norwegian curriculum. They also underlined that their children must not forget the Norwegian language. Additionally, the participants believed that, by following Norwegian curricula and syllabi and working towards getting the school recognised in Norway, their children would not lose any schooling while in Somalia. They hoped this would ensure that their children could go straight back to ordinary school upon their return to Norway.

During my fieldwork, I frequently sat in a café that was described by locals as 'diaspora café', as diasporas, government officials and staff of nongovernmental organisations often visited there. Locals also labelled it diaspora café because of the expensive coffee and the Westernised interiors. In this café, the Norwegian school was known

by the customers as a 'good school'. The parents seemed to be proud of this school and worked towards creating good credibility within the diaspora community and the Norwegian embassy. Moreover, having their children attend the Norwegian school seemed to be a symbol of prestige. Daud, a 36-year-old second-generation father of three, talked proudly about how others view the school: 'The [returnee] parents from the USA, Canada and England are a little jealous of how we managed to establish this school'. Several of the parents also mentioned that parents in Somalia and in Norway frequently ask if the school has the capacity for more students, which it does not.

However, not everyone who has returned from abroad has been happy with the Norwegian school, and some stated they are worried about implementing too much, Norwegian/Westernised cultural repertoire (cf. Swidler 1986) in Somalia. For example, Saynab, a 42-year-old first-generation mother, stated:

We have a Norwegian-Somali club for the adults here where the parents meet once a month and just talk about everything, and often we talk about Norway and stuff. It's like, 'Did you read VG [Norwegian newspaper] today?' But not everybody is happy with us. Some parents [e.g. returnees from the United Kingdom] say that we are bringing the gaal [infidel] teaching here.

Additional cultural repertoires associated with parenting in Norway included the Norwegian matpakke (packed lunch), teaching through play, watching Norwegian cartoons/movies and incorporating these habits into their everyday lives. As one father said, 'We have Norwegian nights where we play games or I download Norwegian films and have movie nights'. Parents reported different habits or skills that they view important to cultivate as a preparation method for their children's return. This included celebrating 17 May (Norwegian Constitution Day), hiking or going to the established playground Leos Lekeland, a replica of the Norwegian playground. I was not in Somalia on 17 May; however, I received a video from one of the parents showing how the Norwegian school organised a children's parade during which they waved the Norwegian flag and played corps music in the background. The children's parade is a central element of Norwegian Constitution Day in Norway and appeared to be an important repertoire for the parents to recreate.

Another recurring topic mentioned was the importance of maintaining a form of children's play that they had experienced in Norway. Many of the parents described a 'right' way for children to play and were concerned with learning through playing.

You know how kids are: 'It's my toy. It's my book. Can I borrow?', etc. But here it is a lot of sharing and using each other's things without asking anything, and I had to say to the others [local parents], 'That's how my kids are, and I've taught them that [to ask and to be asked]. My wife and I have talked a lot about it and agreed that we must maintain the good cultures from there [Norway] and thought about, when they return, they must deal with it that way [asking] or else they have to start all over again. (Liban, 47-year-old first-generation father)

Deliberations on child rearing and everyday habits were recurring themes, especially as they pertain to the different forms of children's play in Somalia and Norway. The parents emphasised that it is important to continue teaching their children the importance of *participating* in games and not just winning, which some parents claimed is the focus for children who grow up in Somalia. This focus on participation may reflect the parents' values of cooperation and the egalitarianism characteristics

of Norwegian society (see Bendixsen, Bringslid & Vike 2017). Developing children's cognitive and social skills in the context of 'play' seems to be an important cultural skill (cf. Lareau 2002) within the Norwegian cultural repertoire they hoped would make the transition back to Norway as easy as possible.

The Norwegian *matpakke* (packed lunch) seemed to be another meaningful repertoire for parents to uphold in Somalia. As I noted in my fieldwork:

I joined the Norwegian school on a field trip to Leos Lekeland [playground]. The two teachers needed extra hands and eyes to watch the children, so some parents joined. I arrived quite early and observed that the parents who were attending the field trip had also picked up children whose parents were not joining. I was thinking to myself that this reminded me of when I was a child playing football and those times my parents couldn't join the game and I was picked up by teammates' parents. It reminded me of the Norwegian *dugnad* [voluntary work conducted within local communities] and giving your time to create a good experience for the children. I was sitting with the parents, and a mother offered me a cup of coffee she brought in a thermos bottle. She also offered me *mariekjeks* [cookies] and said, 'I took a lot of these with me [from Norway] because my children love them.' A conversation between the parents started about food. The parents had brought *matpakke* [packed lunch bag] for the children, and they were discussing and giving each other tips on how to bake good bread. Yeast became the main topic. They were talking about where to buy good enough yeast to bake bread for the *matpakke*. One mother said, 'I had to drive far to get that yeast. To my surprise, the Norwegian *matpakke* consisting of bread seemed to be very important for these parents. (Fieldnote, Somalia, 2 March 2017).

The playground, Leos Lekeland, was created by a Norwegian-Somali bringing the same ideas and name from the popular playground in Norway to Somalia. The playground is especially important because it has created a meeting place for children and parents. When I attended the school field trip to the playground, I asked the parents why *matpakke* was so important, and Fadumo, a 30-year-old second-generation mother of three, said, 'Matpakke, that's Norway. You can't get more Norwegian than bringing your two slices of bread with sweat cheese, and I kind of like it, and I don't want my children to get too used to the warm meals [served in Somalia].'

Several of the parents were concerned with maintaining the Norwegian *matpakke* and emphasised that it should consist of a bread meal. In Somalia, a typical lunch consists of a hot meal, in contrast to in Norway, where typically the only hot meal is at dinnertime. For me, having a hot meal for lunch was probably one of the main things I found beneficial during my fieldwork, and bringing my own *matpakke* did not cross my mind. However, for these parents, *matpakke* symbolises Norwegianness. This way of maintaining Norwegianness has similarities to practices by Norwegians living in Spain. Haug, Dann and Mehmetoglu (2007), who studied Norwegian seasonal migrants who settled in Spain, found that retired Norwegians preserve many traditions, such as making their own dinner and Norwegian breakfast. In the present study, the parents have cultivated *matpakke* as part of the repertoires that they believe their children need. For these parents, *matpakke* seems to be a symbol of Norwegianness, and embedding this Norwegian 'tool kit' has become essential to preparing their children for their return to Norway.

## CONCLUSION

This article has discussed how Norwegian-Somali parents' temporary return to Somalia with their children is heavily influenced by stigmatising experiences as minorities in Norway. Three aspects have been explored: (1) Norwegian-Somali parents' motivation for returning to Somalia, which consists of reconstituting belonging for their children and for themselves; (2) how life has unfolded in the face of their return; and (3) how they prepare for their return to Norway.

The notion of *belonging* (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011) helps us understand what motivates the move to Somalia. Belonging is viewed as *belongings* rather than belonging, as individuals may experience belonging in diverse and multiple ways and entails people belonging to many different objects of attachment (Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011). The politics of belonging may contribute to stigmatising already marginalised groups in society, as was experienced by the participants. As the findings show, the parents felt that moving to Somalia was necessary to escape feelings of stigmatisation, increase emotional attachments to Somalia and enhance their children's Somali linguistic and cultural skills. Tiilikainen (2017), in her exploration of the second-generation Canadian-Somalis, argued that visits to Somalia may be experienced with relief, as the migrants no longer feel like minorities. Similarly, parents reported the importance of belonging in terms of being viewed as resourceful individuals and good parents. This was also a crucial motivation for moving to Somalia. In this regard, a central part of feeling valued and a sense of belonging in a society is having access to resources and experiencing emotional belonging in everyday life (Anthias 2013). Despite having higher education and being socially mobile in Norway, the participants struggled with attaining acceptance in grids of power relations while in Norway (cf. Yuval-Davis 2006, 2011). They narrated that they had to negotiate acceptance in different arenas in their everyday lives in Norway. Nevertheless, they reported feelings of acceptance without negotiations in Somalia. From this perspective, because of race, socioeconomic differences and experiences of stigmatisation, the experiences of belonging among the participants may be viewed as that of a lower social category than held by native Norwegians.

The current study also suggests that discussions of immigrants forcing their children to visit their country of origin or dumping their children in the home country (cf. Johnsdotter 2015) may involve a narrow understanding of the phenomenon. The findings of this study offer important insights in that respect. The participants' experiences of being viewed in a lower social category in Norway seemed to intensify the need to belong to an accepting community (Valentine, Sporton & Nielsen 2009). This spurred them to move to Somalia, which is objectively less safe, but the parents narrated the importance of experiencing safeness in terms of attachment and emotional affirmation for themselves as parents as well for their children. Despite experiencing recognition and emotional affirmation as good parents, they have still struggled with navigating in Somalia. The parents found adjusting to the new context to be challenging, as it entailed becoming familiar with their surroundings and starting a new job. Furthermore, many participants referred to challenges in 'the small things', such as food differences between Norway and Somalia and everyday interactions with locals.

Abdile's (2014) study distinguished the first- and second-generation Somali diaspora engagements and their connection to Somalia. He argued that the first generation may be more dedicated to returning because they feel a sense of loss and that their Somali

cultural values may be threatened by the host country. For the second generation, it is more complex to belong to their parents' home country and what they view as their own host country. In this study, divergencies in generational experiences are not as clear as in Abdile's study. Both the first and second generations emphasised struggles with belonging as parents in Norway in light of stigmatising experiences. In the Norwegian context, the state is active in child rearing (Follesø & Mevik 2010); hence, the analysis shows that avoiding government surveillance serves as an important backdrop for the return. The parents perceived that their child-rearing practices in Norway were under a magnifying glass because of their ethnicity and religion, as has also been noted by Tembo, Studsrød and Young (2020) regarding perceptions of state governance among immigrant parents. Concurrently, the parents deliberately work to equip their children with 'cultural tools' (Swidler 1986) that help them develop cultural repertoires for their future return to Norway. Cultivating Norwegian cultural repertoires, such as Norwegian *matpakke*, Norwegian Constitution Day and Norwegian movies, becomes highly important in their everyday lives in Somalia, as the parents are also working to uphold their children's and their own emotional belonging to Norway. Engaging with Swidler's concept in this way resembles Lareau's (2002) concept of concerted cultivation. Lareau argued that middle-class parents train their children to develop habits and cultural skills that help them develop cultural repertoires (cognitive and social skills). Although the class perspective is important (the parents in this study would fall under the middle-class category in Norway), their experiences of being middle class come with struggles as they negotiate for acceptance in Norway. The parents in this study use the same strategies outlined by Lareau (2002); nevertheless, the motives for cultivating the repertoires in this study are also connected to training their children to navigate and negotiate their racial markers when they return to Norway (see e.g. Manning 2019).

Previous research (Haikkola 2011; Mason 2004; Reisel, Bredal & Lidén 2018) has shown that transnational return for children of immigrants may contribute to establishing meaningful social relationships with extended family. Furthermore, Mohme (2014) noted that Somalis' transnational transitions can be explained through their cultural nomadic heritage. My study has shed light on the need for a deeper understanding of *why* a return occurs from a parental perspective and for unpacking *how* return impacts the lives of the parents and children. I do not have corresponding data from the children's perspectives and cannot draw any conclusions as to whether the child benefits from this return to Somalia. However, for the parents participating in this study, it is their *intention* of return that matters, that is, what is in the best interest of the child from a parental perspective. They believe that the temporary return will result in their children becoming more confident in their identity as Norwegian-Somalis for when they return as well as in the parents themselves becoming more confident in their parenthood.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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**Appendix A: Ethical approval (NSD):**



Ayan Handulle  
Institutt for sosialfag Universitetet i Stavanger  
Ullandhaug  
4036 STAVANGER

Vår dato: 15.06.2016

Vår ref: 48732 / 3 / AGH

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

#### TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 20.05.2016. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

48732 *Det norske barnevernets legitimitet i innvandremiljøer - en studie av sosial kapital og transnasjonal meningsdannelse blant somaliske innvandrere*  
Behandlingsansvarlig *Universitetet i Stavanger, ved institusjonens øverste leder*  
Daglig ansvarlig *Ayan Handulle*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.

Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, <http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html>. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, <http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt>.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 31.10.2019, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

Kjersti Haugstvedt

Agnete Hessevik

Kontaktperson: Agnete Hessevik tlf: 55 58 27 97

Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

## Personvernombudet for forskning



### Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

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Prosjektnr: 48732

#### FORMÅL

Formålet er å studere hvordan migrasjon kan utfordre velferdssystemene. Den konkrete casen er det norske barnevernets legitimitet og meningsdannelsesprosesser knyttet til barnevernet i somaliske miljøer i Norge. Prosjektet vil studere disse meningsdannelsesprosessene både i Norge og i Somalia ved feltarbeid i miljøene og ved å følge konkrete historier som fortelles om barnevernet. Prosjektets grunnhypoteser vil inkludere tradisjonell fokus på kultur, marginalisering, integrasjon, sosial ulikhet og mangel på kultursensitivitet i vertslandet. Formålet med prosjektet er å innhente kunnskap, som kan bidra til å styrke tilliten til barnevernet, samt styrke den flerkulturelle kompetansen i barnevernet.

#### INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE

Utvalget informeres skriftlig og muntlig om prosjektet og samtykker til deltakelse. Informasjonsskrivet er godt utformet. Vi ber imidlertid om at du endrer "Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig Datatjeneste" til "NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata", da vi har byttet navn.

Vi ber deg også vurdere om det er hensiktsmessig å love at du har taushetsplikt, dersom det er risiko for at du kan få innsyn i informasjon som du som forsker har varslingsplikt om. Se NESH' (Den nasjonale komité for samfunnsvitenskap og humaniora) nettsider om taushetsplikt:

<https://www.etikkom.no/FBIB/Tmacr/Personvern-og-ansvar-for-den-enkelte/Taushetsplikt/>.

Datainnnsamling foregår både i Norge og i Somalia. Vi legger til grunn at prosjektet også gjennomføres i tråd med retningslinjer/lover i Somalia.

Vi minner om at alle du behandler personopplysninger om, også i forbindelse med observasjon, skal ha informasjon og gi sitt samtykke til å delta i prosjektet.

#### SENSITIVE PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Det behandles sensitive personopplysninger om etnisk bakgrunn eller politisk/filosofisk/religiøs oppfatning.

#### TREDJEPERSONSOPPLYSNINGER

Det behandles opplysninger om tredjeperson.

Om informantens barn: Dersom barnet er over 18 år, skal forsker informere vedkommende om prosjektet og om hvilke personopplysninger om han/henne som innhentes, jf. personopplysningslovens §§ 19 og 20. Vi anbefaler også at barnet gis informasjon dersom barnet er over 16 år.

Om barnevernsansatte og andre (familie og andre i sosialt nettverk): Det skal kun registreres opplysninger som er nødvendig for formålet med prosjektet. Opplysningene skal være av mindre omfang og ikke sensitive, og skal

## *Articles & Appendices*

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anonymiseres i publikasjon. Så fremt personvernulempen for tredjeperson reduseres på denne måten, kan prosjektleder unntas fra informasjonsplikten overfor tredjeperson, fordi det anses uforholdsmessig vanskelig å informere.

### **DATASIKKERHET**

Personvernombudet legger til grunn at forsker etterfølger Universitetet i Stavanger sine interne rutiner for datasikkerhet. Dersom personopplysninger skal lagres på mobile enheter, bør opplysningene krypteres tilstrekkelig.

### **PROSJEKTSLUTT**

Forventet prosjektslutt er 31.10.2019. Ifølge prosjektmeldingen skal innsamlede opplysninger da anonymiseres. Anonymisering innebærer å bearbeide datamaterialet slik at ingen enkeltpersoner kan gjenkjennes. Det gjøres ved å:

- slette direkte personopplysninger (som navn/koblingsnøkkel)
- slette/omskrive indirekte personopplysninger (identifiserende sammenstilling av bakgrunnsopplysninger som f.eks. bosted/arbeidssted, alder og kjønn)
- slette digitale lydopptak

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Prosjekt 48732: Det norske barnevernets legitimitet i  
innvandremiljøer - en studie av sosial kapital og transnasjonal  
meningsdannelse blant somaliske innvandrere

Ayan Handulle | Universitetet i Stavanger

### Statusrapport

Datamaterialet er anonymisert.

Innsendt dato: 05.03.2020

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**Appendix B: Interview guide :**

## Intervjuguide

### Norge

#### **BAKGRUNN**

Fortell litt om deg selv.

Alder

Hvor mange barn har du?

Hvor gamle er barna dine?

Hvor lenge har du bodd i Norge/ hvor har du vokst opp

Hva er ditt utdanningsnivå?

Hva er din nåværende arbeidsstatus?

Hva er din sivilstatus?

Eier eller leier du?

#### **Barnevernet**

Kan du innledningsvis si noe om dine tanker generelt om barnevernstjenesten?

Hvem er barnevernet for deg?

Har du vært i kontakt med dem? Hvis, ja kan du si noe om din opplevelse?

Oppsøkte du dem selv?

Hvis nei til kontakt - kjenner du til noen familier som har vært i kontakt med barnevernet?

Hva sier de om barnevernet?

Hva gjør barnevernet for det norske samfunnet?

Snakker du om barnevernet med venner eller andre, hvis du gjør det hva snakker du om og hvem snakker du med?

Hva tror du andre du kjenner, tenker når de hørere ordet barnevernet?

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Hvis du skulle gi råd til andre familier før de møter barnevernet- hva ville det ha vært?

### **Nettverk**

Fortell meg om personer du er i kontakt med her i Norge.

Hvordan ser nettverket ditt ut- kan du tegne et nettverkskart: Familierelasjoner, venner, naboer osv.

Deltakelse i «minoritetsmiljøer/ majoritetsmiljøer»: Hvilke miljøer omgås du?

Kan du si noe om hvem du omgås med? (venner, kollegaer og familie)

Organisasjoner, trossamfunn, FAU/skole idrettslag

### **Familierelasjoner.**

Har du familie i flere land?

Hvordan holder dere kontakten?

### **Tillit //kommunikasjonskanaler**

Hvis det er noen fra det somaliske miljøet som kommer i kontakt med barnevernet, hvor får du vite om det?

Hvis det er noe som skjer i det somaliske miljøet hvor får du vite om det? (via bekjente, via media på SMS, sosiale medier (Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp osv.) somaliske medier?

Hvem oppsøker du dersom det oppstår utfordringer i familien?

Dersom du kjente til noen barn som ikke har det så greit- hva ville du ha gjort? ville du ha sagt ifra til noen?

Er det noen i det somaliske miljøet som har et spesielt ansvar?

Hva tenker du vil bidra til mer tillit til barnevernet?

Hvilken råd vil du gi barnevernsansatte?

## Somalia

### **BAKGRUNN**

Alder

Hvor mange barn har du?

Hvor gamle er barna dine?

Hva er ditt utdanningsnivå?

Hva er din nåværende arbeidsstatus?

Hva er din sivilstatus?

### **Livet i Somalia**

Kan du fortelle litt om hva som førte til at du valgte å flytte tilbake? Hvis det er på grunn av familie konflikter, eller barnets atferd som har bidratt til at du valgte å flytte- hva om du hadde tatt kontakt med barnevernet? tenker du at de kunne ha hjulpet deg?

Hva er motivasjonene for oppholdet i Somalia?

Hvor lenge skal dere bli værende i Somalia?

Hva tenker du om å oppdra barn i Somalia kontra Norge?

Er barnevernet et tema her i Somalia? hvis, ja hva snakker dere om?

Hva sier somaliere om barnevernet i Norge?

Har du noen råd? Hva vil du at ville du ha formidlet til barnevernet og myndighetene i Norge?

Hva tenker du om å returene til Norge?

**Kommunikasjonskanaler/nettverk**

Har du familie/venner i Norge? (etnisitet)

Har du kontakt med dem? Hvordan kommuniserer du med dem?

Følger du med på norsk medier?

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**Appendix C: Letter of invitation:**

## Ku: Waalidinta Soomaaliyeed

### Fikrad ma ka haysataa qaabka ay u shaqayso Hay'adda ilaalinta xuquuda caruurta (barnevernet)?

### Ma ka qaybqaadan kartaa cilmi baaris lagu samaynayo hab dhaqanka hay'adda?

## Macluumaadkaad na siisaa wax tar bay u tahay cilmi baaristani!

Cilmi baaristaydu waxay ku salaysantahay in aan ogaado fekerka ay waalidinta soomaaliyeed ka qabaan hay'adda ilaalinta xuquuqda caruurta (barnevernet) iyo haddii ay la xidhiidheen sida ay u arkeen. Macluumaadka aad na siisaa qiimo weyn buu noo leeyahay.

Yaa ka qaybqaadan kara cilmi baaristani?

- Waalidinta asal ahaant ka soo jeeda Somalida ee degan Norge iyo Somalida.

- Waa in uu deganaa ugu yaraan 2 sanno Norge.

Habkeebay u socoonsaa cilmi baaristii?

Ka qayb qaataayaasha 1-2-jeer ayaa wadahalal lala yeelan doonaa. Maxaan halkan idinku cadaynayaa in aan xafiido wadahalalka magacyadihuna aanay ka muuqan cilmi baarista. Waxa kale oon halkan idinku cadaynayaa in ay i saarantahay xilka waajib xog qarint (taushetsplikt).

Haddii aad danaynaysa in aad nagala qaybqaadato cilmi baaristaha fadlan la soo xiriir hogaamiyaha cilmi baarista: Ayan Abdi Handulle på telefon, sms eller mail:

	Ayan Abdi Handulle Hogaamiyaha cilmi baarista/Stipendiat Tel: 51831262 /92213637 Epost: ayan.handulle@uis.no
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## Til foreldre med somalisk bakgrunn:

**Hva tenker du om  
barnevernet?**

**Vil du delta i et  
forskingsprosjekt  
?**

## Din kunnskap er verdifull!

Jeg ønsker å vite mer om hvordan familier med somalisk bakgrunn opplever og oppfatter barnevernet i Norge. Din kunnskap er derfor verdifull.

Hvem kan delta?

- Foreldre med bakgrunn fra Somalia. Bosatt i Norge og i Somalia.
- Minimum toårs bolid i Norge.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?

Deltakerne vil bli intervjuet 1-2 ganger. Jeg har taushetsplikt, og alle personopplysninger vil bli anonymisert.

Vil du delta, eller har du spørsmål, ta kontakt med prosjektleder Ayan Abdi Handulle på telefon, sms eller mail:



Ayan Abdi Handulle  
Prosjektleder / stipendiat  
Tel: 51 83 12 62  
Mob: 92 21 36 37  
Epost: [ayan.handulle@uis.no](mailto:ayan.handulle@uis.no)

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**Appendix D: Informed consent**



### Warbixin ku saabsan ka qaybgalka mashruuc cilmi-baaris

Gacaliye iyo gacaliso , waxaanu wanaag iyo kalgacal kuugu haynaa ka qayb qaadashada mashruucan cilmi baariseed . Taageeridaada aad na siisa waa mid qiimo leh , waxaanay ii suuragalinaysaa in aan helo aqoon cusub oo muhiim ah oo ku saabsan dhaqanka hayadda ilaalinta xuquuqda caruurta ee ku aadan qoysaska dhaqamada badan

Magacayga wxaa la yidhaahdaa Ayan Abdi Xannulle waxaan ahay ardayad diyaarinaysa shahaadada PhD kana diyaarinaysa jamacadda University of Stavanger. Cilmi baaristaydu waxay ku salaysantahay in aan ogaado fekerka ay waalidiinta soomaaliyeed ka qabaan hay'adda ilaalinta xuquuqda caruurta(barnvernet) iyo haddii ay la xidhiidheen sida ay u arkeen.

#### Macluumaad ku saabsan mashruuca:

Waalidiin badan oo soo galooti ah ayaa sheegay in ay cabsi ka qaban hayadda ilaalinta xuquuqda caruurta. Sidaa si la mid ah waalidiin badan oo asal ahaan Soomaali ah ayaa u sheegay warbaahinta in aanay hay'add (barnvernet)aanay fahmin hab koritaanka caruurta ee soomaalida. Sidaas daraadeed ayaa cilmi baaristaydu isha ku hayasaa inaan ogaado macluumaad ku saabsan waxyaalaha ay waalidka Soomaaliyeed kala kulmaan hay'adda daryeelka caruurta ee Norway (barnvernet) , iyo wixii aqoon ah ee shaqaalaha hay'adda daryeelka caruurta u baahan tahay marka ay la kulanto qoysaska ajinebiga ah.

#### Maxay xambaarsantahay ka qaybqaadashada cilmi baaristan?

Cilmi baaristaydu waxay ku salaysantahay in aan ogaado fekerka ay waalidiinta soomaaliyeed ka qabaan hay'adda ilaalinta xuquuqda caruurta(barnvernet) iyo haddii ay la xidhiidheen sida ay u arkeen. Sidaa awgeed waxaa ay ii tahay faa'iido weyn in aan la kulmo waalidiinta Soomaalida goob kasta oo suuragal ah sida xafladaha ururada haweenka Soomaaliyeed, wada shaahayn iyo ku kulanka maqaayadaha. Kulamadeenaa iyo wada sheekaysi geenaa ayaan qoraalo ka samayn doonaa. Waxa kale oo aan idiin qeexi doonaa cilmi baaristayda iyo waxa ay ku salaysan tahay. Waxa kale oo aan wada hadal la yeelan doonaa Ka qayb qaatayaasha 1-2 jeer. Waalidka ayaana go'aamindoona goobta iyo wakhtiga aynu wadhadalka yeelan doono. Su'aaluhu waxa ay ku saabsanaan doona sida ay waalidiinta Soomaaliyeed u arkaan amma fikradda ay ka haystaan sida ay u shaqayso hay'adda ilaalinta xuquuqda caruurta (barnvernet) iyo halka ay ka ogaadeen macluumaadka. Waxa kale oo aan aad u danaynaya haddii aad la kulantay shaqaalaha (barnvernet) habka laguula dhaqmay iyo samaynta ay ku yeelatay qoyskaaga.

Afka wadhadalkeenaada daa dooranayaa haddii uu soomaali noqonayo iyo haddii uu noorwiji noqonayaba.

#### Ma ka noqon kartaa wadhadalka?

Jawaabtu waa haa. Mar allaale iyo marka aad doonto ayaad ka noqon kartaa, isla markaana macluumaadkaaga waa la tirtiri doonaa.

Macluumaadka aad na siisaa sidee baa loo xafidayaa?

Macluumaadka aad na siiso aniga ayuunbaa xaq u leh in aan akhriyo cidkalena ma arki karto. Aniguna cilmi baadha ahaan waxaan saxeexay xafidaada sirta (**taushetsplikt**) Macluumaadka aad na siinayso inta ay leeg yihiin adiga ayaa go'aankeeda leh. Waxaan balan ku qaadayaa in aan xafido macluumaadkaad na siiso. Waxa kale oon idin sheegayaa in aynu duubi doono wad hadalk haddii aad raali ka tihiin, ujeedada duubistuna waxa weeye in aan hadhow kalmad kalmad u qoro wada hadalkii ina dhex maray. Waxa kale oo aan halkan idiinku cadaynayaa in aanan magaciinu qarsoonaan doono oo aan lagu muujin doonin cilmi baarista. Sida uu qorshuhu yahay cilmi baarista waxaa la soo daabici doonaa 31.10.2019, isla markaa wixii cajalad ah ee la duubay waa la masaxi doonaa, wixii qoraal ahna waa la kaydin doona iyada oo aan la garan karin qofka la waraystay. Markaan dhameeyo ee aan shirarka iyo jaamacadaha aan ka akhriyayana magacyadda iyo da'da waan bedeli doonaa si aan cidna loo garan.

Macluumaadka aad na siisaan sideebaanu u isticmaali doonaa?

Natiijada ka soo baxda cilmi baaristayadan waxaa lagu soo daabicidoonaa buug aan qoridoono (doktoravhandling). Waxa kale oo aan kusoo bandhigi doonaa shirar iyo siminaaro loo qabandoono shaqaalaha hayadda ilaalinta xuquuqda caruurta (barnevernet) iyo cilmibaadhayaal iyo aqoonyahanno badan. Ujeedada ugu weyn ee cilmi baaristani waxa ay faa'iido u yeelandoonta amma ay is afgarad ka dhex abuuri doontaa waalidiinta iyo shaqaalaha hay'adda.

Cilmi baaristan waxaa la ogeysiya oo ansixiyay hay'adda Norway u qaabilsan cilmi baarista (Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata).

Waad mahadsantiin

Doktorgradsstipendiat Ayan Abdi Handulle

Tlf. 92213637/ 51831262. Epost [ayan.handulle@uis.no](mailto:ayan.handulle@uis.no)

**Ogolaansho:**

Waan akhriyay macluumaadka ku saabsan cilmi baaristan waanan aqbalay in aan ka qayn qaato.

Taariikh.....

Saxiix .....

Telefonnummer.....

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## Informasjon om deltagelse i forskningsprosjekt.

Kjære deltager, takk for at du deltar i forskningsprosjektet. Ditt bidrag er uvurderlig, og gir meg ny og viktig kunnskap om flerkulturelt barnevern. Som tidligere nevnt heter jeg Ayan Abdi Handulle, og er doktorgradsstipendiat ved Universitetet i Stavanger. Jeg jobber med et forskningsprosjekt om hvordan foreldre med somalisk bakgrunn oppfatter og erfarer barnevernet.

**Litt mer informasjon om prosjektet:** Mange foreldre med innvandrerbakgrunn har de senere årene sagt at de er redde for barnevernet, og flere foreldre med somalisk bakgrunn har fortalt gjennom media at barnevernet ikke forstår dem. Jeg er derfor opptatt av å vite mer om hvordan somaliske foreldre opplever det norske barnevernet, og hvilken kunnskap barnevernsarbeidere trenger i møte med innvandrerfamilier.

### Hva innebærer deltagelse i studien?

For at jeg skal forstå deres erfaringer og oppfatninger, er det viktig å være sammen med dere og delta på ulike arenaer, som for eksempel kvinnekvelder, somaliske arrangementer og kafeer. Jeg vil da snakke med dere, observere og ta notater av det jeg ser og hører. Jeg vil forsøke å være så tydelig som mulig, og fortelle om min rolle før jeg tar notater. Jeg ønsker også å gjennomføre intervjuer med somaliske foreldre. Hvis du ønsker å delta vil du bli intervjuet 1-2 ganger. Når og hvor vi skal snakke sammen, er opp til deg. Spørsmålene vil handle om dine oppfatninger og erfaringer; om hva du har hørt om det norske barnevernet, og fra hvem. Hva du tenker om barnevernets arbeid, hvordan du har blitt møtt av barnevernet hvis du har hatt kontakt med dem. Og hvordan kontakten med barnevernet kan påvirke familielivet i Norge og Somalia osv. Du velger selv om samtalen skjer på norsk eller somalisk.

### Kan du ombestemme deg?

Det er **frivillig** å delta. Selv om du sier ja nå, har du rett til å trekke deg når som helst, uten å gi noen forklaring. Da vil opplysningene du har gitt bli slettet.

### Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?

Det er kun jeg som vil ha tilgang til personopplysninger i prosjektet, og som forsker har jeg **taushetsplikt**. Du bestemmer selv hvor mye du ønsker å fortelle. Det du forteller vil bli oppbevart sikkert og konfidensielt. Intervjuene vil bli tatt opp på bånd hvis det er greit for deg, og deretter skrevet ned ord for ord. Navn vil ikke bli tatt med. Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 31.10.2019. Alle opptakene vil da bli slettet og datamaterialet vil bli anonymisert og lagret. Når jeg senere skriver og foreleser om prosjektet vil jeg forandre navn, alder og bakgrunn på en slik måte at ingen personer vil kunne gjenkjennes.

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### Hva vil informasjonen bli brukt til?

Resultatene fra undersøkelsen vil bli publisert som artikler og doktoravhandling. I tillegg vil jeg fortelle om resultatene på konferanser og seminarer til ansatte i barnevernet og forskere, med flere. Hensikten er at den kunnskapen jeg får skal komme til nytte for familier og barnevernet.

Prosjektet er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD (Norsk senter for forskningsdata).

Med beste hilsen,

Doktorgradsstipendiat Ayan Abdi Handulle

Tlf. 92213637/ 51831262. Epost [ayan.handulle@uis.no](mailto:ayan.handulle@uis.no)

### **Samtykkeerklæring:**

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien «Innvandrerforeldres oppfatninger og erfaringer av det norske barnevernet, og er villig til å delta.

Dato.....

Signatur .....

Telefonnummer.....