

## Research articles

# Majority rights and minority responsibilities: young people's negotiations with human rights

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## Abstract

This paper is a case study of student discussions of rights and responsibilities, which contributes to filling the existing knowledge gap on the topic. Tenth grade majority students who participated in three group discussions on inclusive citizenship spoke of rights as belonging to the majority or to the minoritised Other. In line with earlier research findings, students referenced human rights as national rights or values, while making explicit connections between majority rights and minority responsibilities and implicit references to the responsibility of the majority to protect minority rights. This analysis indicates a need in human rights education (HRE) for both legal literacy and a deeper discussion of human rights. This can, for example, be achieved through a focus on the local context so that young people may better understand minority barriers to rights, as well as the role of the majority in issues of social justice.

## Keywords

Human rights, responsibilities, human rights education, young people, citizenship, Norway

## **Introduction**

Human rights and citizenship education are important aspects of global school curricula, particularly in the social sciences (Schulz et al., 2016). However, research shows that, in school, minority students are more likely to face discrimination than other types of bullying (Durkin et al., 2012). The #BlackLivesMatter movement focuses on one important minoritised category; yet this is just one example of a minoritised Other, a group whose lived experience often contradicts democratic ideals (Banks, 2009). Local public debate shows that this also holds true in Scandinavia (Hansen, 2020; A. D. Johansen, 2020). This was demonstrated at Norwegian #BlackLivesMatter protests, where younger speakers spoke of racist incidents they had witnessed at school or their own experiences of racism. Human rights were invoked both explicitly and implicitly, and it was stressed that it is the responsibility of everyone to combat discrimination (Bjørheim, 2020; Hansen, 2020).

While much has been written about human rights, children's rights, and children's and young people's perspectives on rights (for example, Ruck & Tenenbaum, 2014; Barton, 2020), relatively little research explores student perspectives on the relationship between human rights and responsibilities. This article therefore contributes towards filling this knowledge gap with a case study consisting of three group interviews with 10th grade students in a Norwegian school. The main aim is to explore how majority students view the minority in terms of citizenship and rights, with a focus on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] (United Nations [UN], 1948). The paper begins with a contextualisation of the topic and the national setting. This is followed by a theoretical section on citizenship and human rights education (HRE), and then a methodology section. The paper concludes by showing that while the interview guide focuses on inclusive citizenship (Kabeer, 2005), rights and responsibilities emerge as recurring themes in student discussions. The findings highlight how students' negotiations enable them to explore the relationship between rights and responsibilities locally, as well as gain a deeper understanding of minority (in)access to rights, and majority responsibility. These negotiated discussions with young people are a form of consultative participation (Lansdown, 2009) which can contribute to HRE scholars' and educators' research and praxis.

## **Literature review and background**

HRE provides a framework for understanding what is necessary for human dignity (Osler & Starkey, 2010) and raises awareness of universal rights (Lile, 2019; Osler & Solhaug, 2018). Additionally, extensive research has been carried out on HRE models and their implementation, as shown by for example Bajaj (2011) and Barton (2020). HRE shares some common goals with citizenship education (Osler & Starkey, 2010), and both fields seek to address the gap between 'democratic ideals and societal realities —and the existence of

discrimination and racism' (Banks, 2009, p. 104). Two examples of this gap are the public debate on immigrants taking 'our' jobs (Bell, Heggebø, Tolgensbakk, & Seeberg, 2019; Landro, 2019) and the 'go back to where you came from' narrative that targets refugees (Internet Movie Database [IMDb] 2015; Polakow-Suransky, 2017). Such public debate narratives are symptomatic of political and policy issues, such as the framing of citizens with different skin colour as the Other, and the overlooking of barriers to rights access faced by minorities, as well as migrant populations—work migrants and refugees—who do not have national citizenship (Osler & Starkey, 2010). Isin and Turner (2007) show that one of the discrepancies between citizenship and human rights is that while national citizenship has intrinsic accompanying responsibilities, such as paying taxes, human rights does not. Thus, while there are international conventions providing a basis for human rights law, responsibilities connected to human rights are ethical obligations connected to social justice.

International research into children's perspectives on rights shows that in children's analyses of who deserves rights and which rights to prioritise, there can sometimes be a conflict between reasoning based on morality and reasoning based on social conventions (Helwig, 1995; Ruck, Abramovitch, & Keating 1998; Ruck, Keating, Abramovitch & Koegl 1998; Ruck & Tenenbaum, 2014; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2012; Barton, 2020). The research shows that human rights are often understood by young people as mainly individualistic values, and they lack an understanding of human rights's juridical institutions. Furthermore, while Bjerke's research shows that for young people 'there is an interwoven relation between participation rights and responsibilities' (2011, p. 76), and there are numerous examples of research exploring children's views of citizen responsibility (Covell, Howe & McNeil, 2008; Osler, 2000; Thakaso & Preece, 2018), research on the connection between human rights and responsibility is limited. This could be partially explained by the lack of explicit mention of responsibilities in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR] (UN, 1948). Conversely, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which also applies to children, articulates duties as well as rights (African Union, 1981), such as duties towards family and society.

Moving to the context of this case study, Norway has an immigrant population of 14.8 %, out of which 4.5 % have a refugee background (Statistics Norway, 2021a). An additional 3.6% of the total population are born in Norway to foreign-born parents (Statistics Norway, 2021b).

Norway suffered a national tragedy at Utøya in July 2011, when 77 people were murdered by a white Norwegian home-grown terrorist who supports an extremist right-wing political discourse, specifically anti-immigrant and Islamophobic ideologies (Eriksen, 2011). In the early hours after the tragedy, prior to the release of information about the perpetrator, non-white Norwegians were targeted and harassed due to assumptions that Muslim terrorists were responsible (Eriksen, 2011). However, the memorialisation of the Utøya terror attack has re-

framed the perpetrator as a different Other (Hakvåg, 2015), thus lessening concerns regarding racism and Islamophobia within Norwegian society. Additionally, Lile (2019) shows that while HRE is enshrined in the Norwegian constitution, its articulation within national curricula is subsumed under Christian and humanistic values. This is compounded by Norway's public image as a global champion of human rights, which results in framing human rights violations as distant phenomena (Vesterdal, 2019), thus 'reproduc(e)[ing] stereotypes and moral superiority' narratives (Hahn, 2020, p. 12). HRE is therefore weak and often conflated with democratic values (Hahn, 2020; Osler & Solhaug, 2018), while an emphasis is placed on helping non-Western immigrants adopt Norwegian values (Osler & Solhaug, 2018).

The present study should also be seen in light of the Nordic ethos of egalitarian individualism (Gullestad, 2002), which was visible in informant discussions. Kjørholt defines it as follows: 'Egalitarian individualism indicates a close relation between an emphasis on the individual's right to self-realization and self-determination on the one hand, and on equality and collectiveness on the other' (2002, p. 68). Let us now consider the theoretical perspective.

### **Theoretical framework**

The term 'minority' is defined in the light of my informants' references to 'them' or the Other, where they used the term 'immigrant' (*innvandrere*) to cover a wide range of residential and citizenship statuses: work immigrants, refugees, international students, and non-white Norwegians. As Gullestad (2002) explains, 'immigrant' in Norway has a double meaning: it is a lexical description of everyone born outside the country, and it also signals racialised minorities (Gans, 2017). I therefore use 'minority' in a broad sense to encompass both meanings of 'immigrant'. However, neither the minority or the majority are homogeneous groups, and my majority informants at times acknowledged hybridity (Bhabha, 2015). Yet, the minoritised Other—or immigrants generally—were often framed by majority interviewees as subaltern, with constrained agency (Balibar & Spivak, 2016).

This research project was focused on citizenship and thus HRE will be discussed using a citizenship framework which offers four dimensions: *legal status*, *rights*, *membership* and *participation* (Stokke, 2017). Beginning with *legal status* and *rights*, the UDHR (UN, 1948) is not legally binding in itself, although the international conventions derived from the UDHR are part of international human rights law. Norway has incorporated five of these conventions into national law (Norwegian National Human Rights Institution [NHRI], 2020), thus creating an overlap between human rights and citizen rights. In some respects this is positive, as human rights apply to both Norwegian citizens and foreigners. However, HRE research shows that young people tend to frame human rights in individualistic and moral terms, and they overlook juridical institutions. Thus, scholars argue that for HRE to become truly transformative, legal

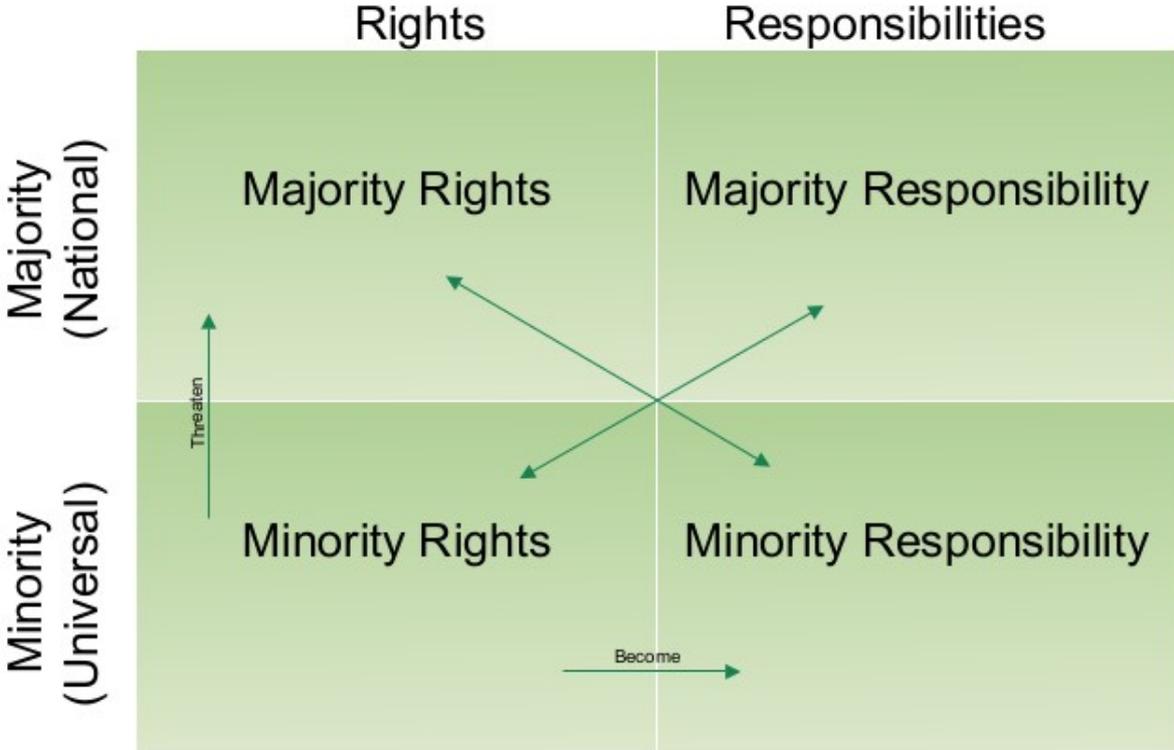
literacy is needed (Barton, 2020; Lundy & Martínez Sainz, 2018).

Secondly, *membership* can be framed juridically as national citizenship or as belonging, and community participation can grant access to membership. However, minority inclusion, or access, is not a given. The decolonial scholar Mbembe compellingly argues that access is 'the right to belong' (2015, p. 5). He explains that access-as-belonging is not a matter of tolerance and charity and does not require assimilation into the majority culture. Access is about not being ignored and feeling comfortable enough to figuratively take up space. Mbembe further argues that decolonial pluriversity gives room not only to ethnic and cultural diversity, but also to epistemic diversity (Mbembe, 2015). This echoes Bajaj, Canlas and Argenal's (2018) discussion of the humanising imperative of HRE and could be argued to be at the heart of the UDHR (UN, 1948) and its principles of human dignity and equality (Toivanen, 2004).

Thirdly, *participation* is connected to responsibility (Stokke, 2017) and is important in both HRE and citizenship education (Osler & Solhaug, 2018). However, a distinction should be made between participation as an imperative and as an invitation. Participation as an imperative is politically desirable, as Mouritsen and Jaeger (2018, p. 4) explain: 'Active citizenship is seen as a kind of panacea for all sorts of social and political ills, such as political apathy, strains on welfare spending, crime, and social unrest'. However, this framing can overlook both the barriers to participation faced by minorities as well as assimilationist notions, such as those highlighted by Mbembe; these issues were visible in my informants' discussion on the responsibility to participate. On the other hand, children's participation could be described as a facilitated invitation. For example, Lansdown (2009) argues that the first level of children's participation rights is consultative participation. Thus, while a longer theoretical discussion could be had on participation as an imperative versus an invitation, this article begins the conversation by providing a participatory space for young people's concerns about human rights issues.

The relationships between rights and responsibilities which emerged from the analysis of the young people's discussions can be visualised in Figure 1. Majority students used the terms 'our' and 'their' to distinguish between the majority and the minority Other. Explicit correlations were made between majority rights and minority responsibility, while implicit correlations were also acknowledged between minority rights and majority responsibility. Additional intersections visualised in Figure 1 are minority rights seen as a threat to majority rights, as well as minority rights becoming minority responsibility.

**Figure 1**  
*Relationships and intersections between majority and minority rights and responsibilities*



**Methodology**

This article is based on data from a larger research project where group interviews with 10<sup>th</sup> graders (aged 15) were conducted at three schools in Norway. The data subset is drawn from one school, where a total of 12 students participated. Earlier in the school year, the class had covered human rights more generally, as part of their social studies curriculum. This included the history of human rights, international organisations and NGOs working with human rights issues, and an examination of some specific articles, although without a specific focus on the Norwegian context. This school was singled out from the data because its students had described incidents involving minorities (specifically refugees) that had caused them concern and discomfort. The predominant discourse of students at other schools in the larger data set lent heavily towards inclusivity; thus, the more vociferous stance taken by some students in this case study school was striking. Additionally, the teacher had not been able to secure written parental permission for minority students to participate, due to language barriers. This meant that group participants were white majority students, predominantly female. I recruited a master’s student in education that I know well to act as co-interviewer. She lives in the school’s catchment area and is fluent in the local dialect (unlike myself), but had no previous connection with the school. Both of us are white women. She assisted with taking notes, explaining the dialect to me when needed and spontaneously asked students clarifying

questions.

The interview guide for this study includes questions on the meaning of the words citizen (*statsborger*) and co-citizen (*medborger*), and on the concepts of ‘minority citizens’ and ‘dual citizenship’. Additionally, students were asked to give their perspectives on new citizens and residents—as part of the landscape of co-citizenship. Some way into the interviews, I showed a two-minute national television clip to exemplify the public debate on issues of citizenship and diversity. In the clip, Faten Al-Hussaini, a non-white Norwegian television host with a hijab, interviews Siv Jensen, a white Norwegian politician from the populist right-wing Progress Party. The discussion centres on citizenship, belonging, and participation, with Jensen circumventing acknowledgement of Al-Hussaini as Norwegian, and insinuating minorities themselves are responsible for their marginalisation. For example, in response to Al-Hussaini’s query as to whether she can be Norwegian with a hijab, Jensen says that the question is rather whether one wants to be part of Norwegian society, as one can be a Norwegian passport holder but isolate oneself in a minority environment. The clip concludes with Al-Hussaini’s commentary, where she expresses frustration with the lack of recognition and being in an in-between space (Al-Hussaini, 2017; Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation [NRK] P3, 2017). This clip played a role in informing the discussion, as seen later in the analysis.

I conducted analysis on the original fully transcribed interview texts, after which I translated the relevant excerpts, which are included in this article. A native Norwegian speaker proofread the translated excerpts. I employed thematic analysis (Nowell, Norris, White & Moules, 2017), focusing specifically on the 30 articles of the UDHR (UN, 1948). Building on Banks’ (2009, p. 101) argument that HRE in school should address young people’s personal experiences, my analysis employs the feminist and postmodern methodology of polyphony (Liamputtong, 2007). This analytical method gives greater space to participant voices; there is less editing of dialogue segments, which allows participants’ negotiated and at times conflicting voices to take centre stage. This methodology contributes to young people’s engagement in consultative participation (Lansdown, 2009). It also ensures greater analytical transparency.

While the data for this case study consisted of only three group interviews of 45 minutes to one hour each, the thematic analysis yielded extensive discussion material, relevant to human rights. The next section offers an analysis of the three main groups of rights singled out in the interviews; freedom of religion and freedom of expression [articles 18 and 19]; equality and freedom from discrimination [article 2], and the right to participate in democratic processes [article 21] (UN, 1948).

### **Polyphonic discussion of rights and responsibilities**

The young people in these group discussions touched on diverse rights covered in the UDHR

(UN, 1948). Some of these were framed as rights and others as responsibilities. Some were framed as national citizenship rights, while others were framed as universal rights—with some tension between the two, as the following section demonstrates. (Code key: Students are coded by group and gender; for example, G3MII stands for group three, male two.)

### ***Negotiating minority rights versus majority rights***

This segment makes visible negotiations between minority and majority rights, with students acknowledging the lived experience of the minoritised Other and their desire for stability and safety. However, this segment also shows that some students experience an underlying frustration, and they argue that minority rights ought not to interfere with or threaten majority stability and norms. The oscillating negotiated opinions in this segment focus on the rights of refugees and work migrants:

G1FI: No, I think it's good that they come, but like...

G1FIV: I think they must follow Norwegian rules, in a way, because they have, they follow the rules from their country. And when they come to Norway then it's that... they have difficulty, in a way, with the Norwegian rules. But they have to... they live here so they have to follow them, in a way. You are not an exception just because you come from another country, other rules, so that you can break the rules, like many do.

G1FI: And there are so many excuses given about them that they have gone through a lot and such, but it affects us that live here if, like... what has affected them maybe if they have fled from another country, and not like... that they can't manage to follow the rules here, so then it's, like, we feel unsafe and... if something happens.

G1FI: But at the same time it's good that they get to come here because it could have been us who fled from another country.

G1FIV: And Norway is a very safe and stable country to live in, and it's nice to live here. That's probably why... uh, maybe more than where they came from.

G1FI: And there is, also there are some who come for work and such. And I think that's good because... but as long as it doesn't become, like, that those in Norway don't get enough work then.

This dialogue segment touches specifically on three human rights: the right to seek asylum [article 14], the right to life, liberty and security of person [article 3], and the right to work [article 23] (UN, 1948). However, it demonstrates a tension between rights and responsibilities where, while the minority right to seek asylum is acknowledged, the majority right to security of person presupposes the responsibility of the minority to follow majority rules. Thus,

assimilation into majority culture is understood as a precondition for access to rights, while diversity of norms is not welcomed (Mbembe, 2015).

The one student's comment about excuses made regarding what 'they' (refugees) have gone through demonstrates a frustration with refugees' hardship taking up space. This signals the students' understanding that the majority must offer tolerance and charity to refugees, rather than offering them access-as-belonging (Mbembe, 2015).

The comment that 'we' (majority) would also want to be able to seek asylum, if necessary, denotes a politically correct conscience. However, again, conditionality is visible in the reference to narratives of immigrants taking 'our' jobs (Bell et al., 2019; Landro, 2019). This frames minority rights as problematic if they appear to threaten majority rights. Interestingly, another group (G2) framed the right to work [article 23] (UN, 1948) as a responsibility, a form of societal participation. Overall, this segment shows a juxtaposition of minority rights and responsibilities against the perceived threat they can pose to majority rights, as well as the responsibility of the minority to assimilate into majority society.

### ***Freedom of religion and freedom of expression [articles 18 and 19]***

The rights to freedom of religion and freedom of expression (UN, 1948) came up in the discussion of the television clip. Students acknowledged it was probably Al-Hussaini's hijab which caused Jensen to avoid acknowledging her as fully Norwegian, and they pointed out that rights to freedom of religion and freedom of expression invalidate this type of prejudice. The following segment demonstrates the negotiation of prejudice and rights:

G3FII: Hmm. And... yes. She [Al-Hussaini] had a strong opinion that she herself felt she was Norwegian, but it was... I didn't really understand why Jensen didn't want to say... because she asked her, 'do you think I'm Norwegian even though... that, if I have a hijab?' Then she [Jensen] didn't, like, answer the question.

G3FI: It has to do with if she...

G3FII: It has to do with religion, and she can have the religion she wants, even though she lives in Norway. In Norway, people have the right to have whatever religion they want. Also, we have freedom of expression, you have the right to say exactly what you mean. But she didn't dare say... no, it's not like you have to come from Syria to use the hijab, and like, there are many who are 100% Norwegian who also use the hijab in Norway.

G3FI: You can, of course, convert to a different religion, even if you are Norwegian and were Christian.

G3FII: Yes, that about which religion... I could have used the hijab because I had changed religion, and still been Norwegian. Like, it has nothing... country or co-citizenship, citizenship, whatever [in English], has nothing to do with your religion. It only has to do with, in Norway everyone is... uh, the biggest percentage is Christian, or nothing. Uh... also there are a lot of different kinds of Christians, like Jehovahs and all that. But, it's mainly Christians that are the biggest percentage, and then you have a lot of different ones from here. But the reason I think she sees her as majority in another religion is because those with a different religion are often maybe immigrants.

G3FI: She has characteristics that show she's not 100% from Norway, and that she uses the hijab can be a reason. But like, when she has a hijab and has a little darker skin tone, then the connection is made, then you understand that, like, she doesn't have a totally Norwegian background. And I think the reason she [Jensen] had trouble saying it is because, like, people know that she's from [a certain political party] and [that party] is against, they're against taking in so many immigrants... and then when Jensen is a public figure against taking in immigrants, then you understand that... maybe it's not necessary to say, but they have a bit, like, racist ideas and look down on them.

G3FII: But I understand that maybe they are a bit sceptical about taking in [refugees] because so many incidents have happened with immigrants, in a way. Uh, but there's a kind of label, the multicultural Norway... in Norway, we're multicultural and many have different cultures also, as she probably has.

G3FI: I feel that there is, that it is a part of society in Norway also to not be totally Norwegian. That we are used to having people from other countries, because a lot of people want to move to Norway because things are so good here, and if Norway had been a country with only, like, Norwegians, it wouldn't be the same as it is now.

This dialogue demonstrates an understanding of the rights to freedom of expression and religion [articles 18 & 19] (UN, 1948), although they are framed as Norwegian rights rather than human rights. This supports research showing human rights being framed as national values rather than universal rights (Hahn, 2020). The segment also highlights normative understandings of religious prejudice and discrimination as being racist and unacceptable, again pointing to Norway's image as a human rights champion (Vesterdal, 2019). It could be argued that the extended discussion of freedom of religion and expression is an implicit understanding that the minority right to freedom of religion invokes the responsibility of the majority to uphold that right. On the other hand, it could also be argued that the reference to public debate on criminal incidents involving immigrants (Ø.D Johansen, 2019; Moore, 2019) made by one of the students demonstrates the ongoing negotiation of majority rights versus the responsibility of the minority to follow the rules as a precondition for being tolerated, following Mbembe (2015). The final comment that part of 'Norwegianness' is not being

Norwegian indicates an appreciation for pluriversity or hybridity (Bhabha, 2015; Mbembe, 2015). Thus, this discussion signifies students' understanding of rights and access-as-belonging, where even the hijab as a religious symbol is provided legitimate space; at the same time, they are also conscious of conflicts in the public sphere.

### ***Equality and freedom from discrimination [article 2]***

Related to this discussion of freedom of religion is the right to freedom from discrimination (UN, 1948). In some dialogue segments, students demonstrated an awareness of prejudice and discrimination, while in other instances they seemed unaware of the discrepancies in their arguments. For example, in one of the interview groups, the students discussed the indigenous minority group, the Sami. Students outlined the historical oppression foisted on the Sami as well as the special rights currently in place, granted to the Sami by the Norwegian government in reparation (International Labour Organization [ILO], 1989). The students framed this differentiated treatment protecting Sami culture and language as a good thing, while one added:

G3FI: It's, like, their culture and their way of life.

This comment was made in a relaxed, laissez-faire manner and contrasts with the rather strong opinions of some students about the importance of immigrants and refugees following the rules. Regarding the Sami, it was implicitly understood that it is the majority's responsibility to protect their rights—including their cultural and linguistic rights. Thus, it could be argued that to some degree the Sami are granted access-as-belonging (Mbembe, 2015) while other minoritised groups are expected to assimilate.

Students in interview group three seemed more reflective on the challenges faced by minoritised 'immigrants', as well as minority right to equal access. However, they still implied that Norwegian norms and behaviour were the correct ones:

G3FII: Yes. So those who come from other countries should, like, have the same opportunities as us, regardless of how old they are, ... and it's a very good offer, but they can often behave a little differently, because they don't know how to act.

G3FII: They don't know the Norwegian rules.

This again implies that the relationship between the rights of minorities to equality and equal access [article 2] (UN, 1948) is correlated to their responsibility to learn Norwegian rules and norms—again demonstrating Mbembe's (2015) notion of assimilation as a precondition for minority access-as-belonging.

Group three also confirmed previous research showing that human rights violations, such as

discrimination, are often understood as something that happens somewhere else (Osler & Solhaug, 2018; Vesterdal, 2019). For example, while some students were clearly aware of the existence of prejudice and discrimination against non-white minorities, they initially framed it as happening elsewhere:

G3FI: It depends on how far out it is, if a person came here who had two Norwegian parents, or one parent who is foreign, then I feel you'd be seen as totally normal. But when you come here... if you come from abroad and have dark parents especially, then racism can easily come into the environment. I feel that you'd be, like... I feel that in some places if you're dark then you won't be seen as Norwegian even if you have, like, lived in Norway your whole life. So especially that can be a problem at least now, there is more racism and abuse

Here there is an initial acknowledgement of hybridity (Bhabha, 2015), through the mention of those with one Norwegian parent and one 'foreign'. However, this hybridity is legitimised through parentage, and thus those with two foreign parents are more likely to face discrimination, especially if they have a darker skin. When asked about discrimination in their own school environment, the students said that they did not think it was much of a problem, and asserted that where a person is from did not matter to them, as long as they can speak Norwegian:

G3FII: Or, like, we don't care if someone has other parents, in a way and all that. We think that they... it doesn't affect us any if someone... so long as they, in a way, speak Norwegian.

This comment could be understood as a legitimisation of hybridity through language. On the other hand, one student later said:

G3FI: It's not like, that, if you come here and can speak Norwegian 100% that you won't get, like, racist comments flung at you because you have dark skin.

Additionally, one commented that prejudice is often an automatic reaction:

G3FII: It's just something one automatically thinks, even if like, one doesn't want to discriminate against anyone... yes.

These successive comments confirm a pattern of framing human rights violations as happening far away. However, when students discuss and explore the issue more deeply, they may develop a more nuanced understanding of the lived reality of minorities' experiences of hybridity, as well as discrimination closer to home.

The following dialogue segment demonstrates this more nuanced understanding where some

students appeared to empathise more in depth with the minoritised Other, and were able to negotiate majority responsibilities in relation to the minority's right to not be discriminated against. In the following segment, participants are discussing minority students in the Norwegian language class at school—the introduction class comprised mostly of refugees—and these students' interactions with the rest of the student body:

G3FI: I think there are many that feel that, you have, like, at school those of us here, that... there are many that see the introduction class as a part that doesn't belong to the school because they're a group together... they don't, like, hang out with others at school. And they often keep to themselves even though... they don't need to.

G3FI: I think it has a bit to do with culture, like, and I think they can feel a bit like... I think they have that feeling themselves because they are... said themselves that when you come here you can probably get racist comments flung at you, and if you get comments then it goes very deep in you and you can pull away, like, and can get that feeling that you don't really belong, like the others do. And then you often pull away towards those that have a bit of the same culture, and like, have lived in the same situation.

G3FII: And like very... also feel vulnerable.

G3FI: Yes.

G3FII: Uhh, so it could be that it's a bit our fault and that maybe they have not been very good at being welcoming... we students. Maybe that's it.

G3FI: Yes, and they have, you know, none of us can feel what that person has if they came here on boats with forty people, on a little rubber boat in the Mediterranean, like. It's something that sits in their psyche, and it's like, it can affect them and how they are, how their behaviour looks. And its things that we can't imagine, and like, understand their situation. And then we can, like, think the way they are is strange.

This segment demonstrates students' reflections on the challenges faced by the Other, with implicit understanding of both the need for human rights, such as the right to seek asylum [article 14] and the right to freedom from discrimination [article 2] (UN, 1948), along with majority responsibility to not discriminate against the Other, regardless of their 'strange' behaviour. A change can thus be seen from earlier comments, where discrimination is viewed as a distant phenomenon, to an admission that they share responsibility.

The importance of connecting discrimination to the local context can also be seen in the light of Norwegian research which shows a lack of discussion in schools of the July 22<sup>nd</sup> Utøya terror attack (Anker & von der Lippe, 2015; Erdal, 2018), and Hakvåg's (2015) argument regarding

the discourse of July 22<sup>nd</sup> memorials that reinforce the Norwegian self-image of democratic equality and sameness. Post-Utøya public debate has moved further towards anti-immigrant and Islamophobic discourse with the establishment of a right-leaning coalition government (Fangen & Vaage, 2018), and the 2019 attack by another white Norwegian on a mosque and the murder of his non-white sister (NRK, 2019) raises further concerns. Public debate surrounding the 2019 tragedy (Stoksvik, 2020) demonstrates concern about the radicalisation of individuals who become racist terrorists, but there are also worries about family and friends who bear a responsibility to take action when such views become apparent. This demonstrates the need to help students explore issues related to discrimination and minority experiences within their local context.

### ***The right to participate in democratic processes [article 21]***

Another right frequently referred to in discussing citizenship is the right to participate in democratic processes (UN, 1948). The students at this school were especially keen to point out that voting and being part of the decision-making process was not reserved for elites:

G1FI: If we are part of the decision-making, like, all of us. It's not just the higher-ups.

G1FIV: That's it. Like, that they listen to us, you know. They should at least listen to us, if we have something to say or something we want to bring up, then they listen to us.

Voting was framed more generally as a responsibility, specifically a criterion for citizenship. As the dialogue shows, participation in elections was understood as part of one's responsibility for contributing to positive change in society:

G2FII: That you, for example, vote, because you have... if you participate in an election, for example, and that is... democracy is so that everyone can be part of the decision-making.

G2MIII: Yes, a bit, like, if you want change in your society, then you have to go and vote. If not, then there won't be change.

This comment implies that the right to vote is also a responsibility correlated to contributing to positive change in society. Thus, the right to participate in the democratic process [article 21] (UN, 1948) becomes the responsibility to participate—or more explicitly, the responsibility to vote. This can be seen as an internalisation of the participation narrative in the public debate (Bøe, 2019), where the onus is placed on individuals to make their voices heard and access their rights. However, the following example shows that more than voting may be necessary to effect change.

Political participation [article 21] on the part of the community was visible in the discussion of

a refugee whom the community rallied around. Due to his participation in the cultural life of the community [article 27] (UN, 1948), the community protested against his imminent deportation:

G3FII: It has to do with belonging, and like that many think they [certain refugees] belong here... uhm, maybe the state thinks...

G3FI: And it has to do with participation and that they took some initiative themselves, like one of them, he was a gymnastics trainer, he worked at the school there and was often, like, with young people for free time activities. And then the parents of the children know who he is and such. So, then he was very close in the community and, when you... many young people who are into music or sports and especially such activities asked... and he had so much to do with everything, so everyone knew who he was. And then, like, a big percent of the local community supported him against the government, so they wouldn't send him away.

G3FI: It has to do with that we have a democratic country and so we have the right to participate in deciding what we think is right.

G3FI: Like, that they stand for those who were to be sent out, they were... like, they were a part of [the community]. Then, we have the right to be heard.

While some students saw minority rights as a threat to majority rights, this example shows the right to democratic participation being utilised by the majority to protect the minority's right to security of person [article 3], the right to seek asylum [article 14], and the right to participate in the cultural life of the community [article 27] (UN, 1948). However, this segment also demonstrates an assimilation narrative, where the minority right to participate in the cultural life of the community [article 27] becomes the responsibility to participate—or integrate. And yet, it was not the refugee's cultural participation that granted him access to the right to asylum; this right was secured by the majority community's political participation. Thus, the conflation of rights and responsibilities can lend itself to naïve assumptions regarding access to rights as well as limited understanding of barriers. Such examples offer opportunities to clarify confluences, affirming what Todd (2007) shows in her discussion of HRE, that it is in dialogue with the Other where justice is fully understood and co-created.

## Conclusion

This analysis contributes to research on young people and human rights by focusing on majority students' implicit and explicit understandings of the relationship between rights and responsibilities, as Figure 1 (page six) visualises. The use of polyphony and extended dialogue segments allows HRE researchers and educators to gain deeper insight into young people's negotiated and oscillating perspectives on minority citizens and their rights. As shown, young

people demonstrate an awareness of both human rights ideals and public debate narratives, while they often conflate rights and responsibilities. Such misunderstandings may hinder students' comprehension of human rights in general, larger societal injustices—such as those related to #BlackLivesMatter—as well as their ability to recognise human rights violations within their own community.

HRE seen through the lens of citizenship dimensions *legal status, membership, participation, and rights* (Stokke, 2017) facilitates reflection on student discussions and concerns. For example, the *legal status* and *rights* dimensions highlight the importance of majority students recognising principles of equality before the law and *rights* as being universal regardless of *legal status*; this underscores HRE scholars' recommendations for the inclusion of legal literacy in transformative HRE (Barton, 2020; Lundy & Martínez Sainz, 2018). *Participation* as a right was facilitated through students' negotiated discussions, which gave voice to their concerns (Lansdown, 2009), and these concerns highlighted some problematic assumptions: namely, participation as minority responsibility to assimilate, along with a lack of comprehension of barriers to participation. Bajaj et al. (2018, p. 18) argue that 'teaching human rights begins with humanizing our students in order to build connections to human rights and to one another'. Therefore, it is vital for HRE to aid majority students in understanding that for minorities to *participate* and feel a sense of *membership*, they must first have access. Furthermore, related to the *membership* dimension, student discussions reveal a perceived dichotomy between majority and minority rights, indicating that minorities with Other or 'strange' behaviour are not viewed as full members, which highlights the importance of Mbembe's (2015) access-as-belonging and pluriversity.

In conclusion, a first step is for young people to recognise the minority's legal rights, both citizen rights and human rights. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, examining participation and membership through minorities' barriers to access in their local community may help students gain greater awareness of the rights and access which the majority take for granted, and the responsibility of the majority in helping to protect minority rights—such as freedom from discrimination [article 2] (UN, 1948). This discussion shows that exploring rights and responsibilities is important for deepening young people's understanding of the complexities and challenges of access-as-belonging, helping human rights questions evolve from the superficial: Do minorities have legal access to rights?, to deeper questions: Do minorities feel welcome and comfortable asserting their rights?. How do majority young people perceive minorities 'taking up space' in order to claim their rights, and how do they reflect on their own responsibilities in relation to minority rights? Asking such questions and engaging with young people's concerns therefore has the potential to aid, particularly the majority, to become stronger allies in the global fight for social justice and human rights.

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