

# **“THEY DON’T LAUGH WITH US, THEY LAUGH AT US”**

*A qualitative study on how young adults with an ethnic minority background  
experience representation in movies and TV-shows*

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Master's thesis in Sociology

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## Summary

This thesis explores how Norwegian young adults with an ethnic minority background experience minority representation in movies and TV-shows. Based on 13 interviews with participants with a background from Pakistan, Somalia and Vietnam I explore their understanding of representation and which meaning they ascribe representation on screen. The participants in this study happen to be in an intercultural position where they are raised by parents with a different cultural background, at the same time they are growing up with a Norwegian culture living in a Norwegian society. Inspired by Stuart Hall's understanding of representation I too look at the participants' experience of representation in relation to the meaning it conveys. The focus in this study is ethnic representation on screen, however religious representation will also be touched upon as several of the participants highlighted religion as an important aspect of their identity and were cautious of how religion was portrayed on screen.

I have used photo-elicitation as a methodological tool to understand how the participants view movies and TV-shows starring ethnic minorities. By combining questions and a physical example of a TV-show with actors with an ethnic minority background my goal was to question and compare what the participants had previously mentioned during the interviews to their reaction when presented with an example that illustrates minority representation on screen. This led to an interesting finding as the majority of the participant reacted strongly, both positively and negatively, towards the clip that was shown. This proved to be an interesting take on representation and the role the sender plays in how a media production is perceived by the viewer.

My findings suggest that there is a general agreement between the participants that even though visibility of ethnic minority portrayals on screen is important, the type of representation is something that needs to be focused on. They highlighted the roles actors of a minority background play and which stories get told as something that also should be considered when discussing representation. A recurring theme during the interviews was the feeling of otherness stereotypical portrayals seemed to evoke. The participants mentioned intersectionality as a welcomed approach to combat such portrayals. The thesis also touches upon how entertainment in the form of movies and TV-shows can be understood as a soft power push by global exporters of mass media, shaping certain narratives of minorities. By looking at representation through the lens of power there seems to be a connection between

images presented on screen and the public opinion of the subjects and issues presented. This was evident both by the participants saying they have experienced prejudice based on representation on screen as well as themselves saying they get affected by such portrayals in relation to how they view others.

## **Acknowledgements**

Writing this thesis has been a long journey I am happy to now have completed. My love for movies and TV-shows has led me to wanting to explore this topic further. Thus, I wanted to research how young adults with an ethnic minority background perceive representation on screen. This is a topic that interest me personally, and I find it fascinating how living in a rather globalized world makes the distance between each other seem smaller, even though there are clear cultural differences between groups as well as within nations.

First, I would like to thank my supervisors Sabina Tica and Aaron Ponce for great help and guidance throughout the process of writing this thesis. Thank you for your patience, encouragement and constructive comments. It has helped shape my thesis and encouraged me to continue writing when I lacked motivation to do so.

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Oslo, June 2023

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# 1. Introduction

There is something magical about movies and TV-shows as they are able to transform you and introduce you to an imaginary world. These portrayals on screen tell stories that can also shape our opinions. There is a connection between power and portrayals on screen as the power of the media is reflected in how the dominant racial ideology is able to shape our common sense assumptions about minorities and present them as inferior to the majority (Omi, 2017, p. 466-467). Many of the stories shown on screen in Norway have been imported from Hollywood. As a super producer the United States stands in a leading position when it comes to a great power exporting its influence in the form of popular culture (Crane, 2014, s.5). Popular culture has a central role in our society shaping daily life, either relating to topics discussed during lunchbreak at work, introducing clothing, hair and make-up trends or structuring our schedule to make time to watch the latest episode of a popular TV-show to not risk being spoiled the ending (Gerbner, 1998, p.183). This makes movies and TV-shows a great channel for culture expressions and export of meaning, but what happens when some people see this imaginary world as an example of how people are?

Identity and representation is a broad subject in sociology. How we view others is shaped by the information about them we have accessible. The media plays a huge role in the way we might view people from a different background or a cultural understanding than what we are familiar with (Gerbner, 1998, p.180; Omi, 2017, p. 466-467; Burr, 2015, p.210). The others might be looked down upon, questioned or portrayed as “the bad guy” based on a collective understandings in the media and in society. This othering can lead to people being perceived to be alike by an assumed group affiliation based on visible bodily traits (Andersson, 2022a, p.41-42). Studies have shown that there exists prejudice against minorities that is linked to hate crime, fewer job-offers and stigmatization (Birkelund, Heggebø and Rogstad (2017), Andersson, Jacobsen, Rogstad and Vestel (2012) and Rosten (2017)). Seeing this in relation to how minorities are portrayed on screen my thesis looks at how culture productions, mainly movies and TV-shows, contribute to shape an image of minorities. Thus, this study looks at representation in film and TV-shows in connection to my participants’ experience of how they believe representation affects their daily lives as well as their thoughts on ethnic minority portrayals on screen. Therefore, this thesis looks at answering the following question: *How do young adults with an ethnic minority background experience representation in movies and TV-shows?* I will look at representation in movies and TV-shows, with a focus on ethnic minority representation. Based on the data produced in the interviews this thesis will look into

how the participants understand the term representation and how they believe representation plays a part in how others view them.

This thesis sets out to explore the relationship between representation on screen and how people with an ethnic minority background view such representations. By interviewing Norwegian young adults with a background from Vietnam, Somalia and Pakistan my aim is to bring light to this topic from a Norwegian point of view. I have asked the participants questions about what they watch, why they watch it and what they would like to see in the future. By researching what young adults with an ethnic minority background think about the portrayal of people who might look like them, I can contribute to research on this field by illustrating why representation is important, with an added focus on the type of representation produced. This may help identify shortcomings that have a negative effect on minorities due to lack of varied portrayals, and illustrate why a focus on the type of representation produced is beneficial for research on this topic from a Norwegian point of view. By identifying such shortcomings I aim to create more knowledge of how popular culture portrayals might be harmful to ethnic minorities, and how a change in minority portrayals might both benefit them and the society they are a part of as it presents minorities to be diverse rather than constrained by common stereotypical portrayals alluding to a homogeneity (Fiske, 2000, p.304).

The reason why representation and knowledge on the effects of representation is important is because movies and TV-shows may influence the way we think about others (Gerbner, 1998, p.181; Omi, 2017, p. 467). This especially applies if a person lives in a homogenous society without people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds that can offput the media's portrayal of certain groups. This can be exemplified by a viewer believing there is a common denominator in relation to fictional character's bad actions and certain areas where people with a similar ethnic background have settled (Yuen, 2016, p.7). Skin colour and crime do not need to be causal, however it might be perceived like it is if the news and popular media portrayals show people of a certain ethnic backgrounds as the ones doing more crime than the majority population. Such repetitive portrayals of certain groups might make it difficult for the viewer to distinguish between a character and people with a particular ethnic background (Yuen, 2016, p.7) Especially if the viewer does not know anybody of that particular ethnic background themselves. However, research suggests that the more contact you have with members of other groups the more inclined you are to accept them and see them as individuals (Allport in Andersson, 2022a, p. 79).



Movies and TV-series may also influence the way we think about ourselves. Research shows that young African-Americans are more influenced by films with actors who look similar to themselves rather than by films with actors of Western European origin (Bleakley et.al., 2017, p.135). Films including actors with similar appearance and cultural background as the studied youth group influenced the interviewees to actions similar to the ones portrayed on screen as opposed to actors of a different background (Bleakley et al., 2017, p. 135). This suggests that films with a positive message are important because they can encourage positive action and figure as an example of a positive role model, both for people with same features and cultural background as the characters but also for other viewers that view a film or a TV-show from an outside perspective.

There has generally been little research addressing representation of people with an ethnic minority background in film and TV-shows within Norwegian research literature. I consider this an important field of research and will with this thesis add to this field from a Norwegian perspective. I will therefore lean on foreign literature, with the main focus being on American and British contributions to the field (Such as: Stuart Hall (2021: 2013;1997;1992) & Gerbner (1998), Omi, M. (2017) ). As well as Fiske (2000) and Andersson (2022a) in questions relating to group-affiliation, prejudice and stereotypes. The findings of this study might be interesting in social research in general as the study looks at the connection between representation, identity and belonging based on popular cultural expressions. In addition, the study might also be interesting for people working in film and TV as a means of understanding how to reach a wider audience and fill a possible void existing on the screens. Findings suggest that the participants believe there is a focus on negative representations, highlighting otherness as one of the main points for their disapproval of existing portrayals of minorities in western media. Another finding suggests there to be certain expectations of what representation should be, and that these expectations are currently not met.

## 1.1 Thesis Structure

In Chapter 2 I present the theoretical framework used to contextualize my work. By looking at representation, stereotypes and soft power I aim to give an overview of the relationship between these terms, and how they work in shaping an opinion of others.

Chapter 3 will discuss the methodological choices I have made and the tools I have used to conduct my interviews, and how these have impacted the study. I also look at the time the study was conducted in and how this might have affected the outcome.

Chapter 4 discusses how the participants understand the term representation and what they believe is important in relation to representation on screen. The aim of this chapter is to form an understanding of the different participants views on this topic, and show a connection between how they experience portrayals of minorities on screen and how they believe it should be.

Chapter 5 illustrates the connection between how portrayals on screen can convey feelings of enjoyment, distaste and scepticism depending on group affiliation. I first present how portrayals on screen can be understood to create a sense of belonging for the participants. Second, this chapter explores how the participants understand representation when presented with an example of a minority focused TV-show. I present the participants reaction to TV-show *We Are Lady Parts* (2021-) and discuss the participants' opinions of this show in relation to representation.

Chapter 6 discusses the participants' views on representation in relation to the Norwegian society and their lived experience as Norwegian citizens with a multicultural background. This chapter sets out to connect representation on screen and the participants' experience of such representations by looking at themes of prejudice, both experienced by the participants as well as projected by them. The chapter ends with a discussion of what types of movies or TV-shows the participants would make if they had the opportunity to do so.

Finally, in Chapter 7 I discuss my main findings and offer a conclusion for my thesis.

## **2. Theoretical Perspectives**

Media representations are said to be twofold; to help define a society's culture, reflecting and reinforcing dominant cultures and status hierarchies while also shaping our belief of who we are in relation to ourselves and others (Said, 2003; Entman, 2015; Hall, 1992; Alghasi, 2019). As this study is focusing on young adults with an ethnic minority background and their view on representation this chapter presents the theoretical framework I have found to be of importance in understanding these topics. First, I present relevant theories on race, ethnic background and racialization. Second, I discuss the term representation in relation to meaning and power. Third, I discuss stereotypes and how group-membership may play a part in the understanding of self and others. I end this chapter with a presentation of the relation between entertainment and soft power.

### **2.1 Race, Ethnic background and Racialization**

Culturally Norway is a rather homogenous country characterised by a late immigration wave in the 1960s and 70s (Brochmann, 2016, p.130-131). The participants in this study all have a visible minority background being not White, which relates to their skin colour, hair type or facial features (Andersson, 2022a, p.74, Eide, 2010, p. 64). The majority grew up in Oslo, however some participants also grew up in smaller towns being only one of few people that visibly differed from their classmates and neighbours. Throughout this thesis I have used the term phenotype along with external traits to refer to how someone looks. This is because the visual aspect of representation on screen is of importance in understanding the participants' thoughts on this topic. Phenotypes refer to visible physical attributes that differentiate people from each other, such as having brown hair, thick lips or a small nose (Døving, 2022, p. 15; Andersson, 2022b, p. 61). As this thesis explores the participants' views on representation, I find it necessary to present a contextualization of ethnic background, race and racialization.

There are different opinions regarding which words one should use to categorize people based on looks and background (Andersson, 2022a, p.76). Some use the word race, while others use ethnic background or nationality to do so (Andersson, 2022a, p.76). Following the Norwegian tradition I have decided on using the word ethnic background to describe people based on their looks and cultural affiliation, as opposed to racial categories or the term visible minority (Massao, 2022, p.108; Mathisen, 2020, p. 127). This is because I am also interested in the social and cultural aspects of their background as well as their position as visible minorities in Norway (Osler & Lindquist, 2018, p.28). The concept of ethnicity refers to common cultural

attributes, such as a shared language, food and traditions, and forms “a socially reproduced system of classification” (Andersson, 2022a, p.58; Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013,p. 62). However, this doesn’t mean that people sharing the same ethnicity all have the same opinions or beliefs. I am therefore looking at the participants answers as representative for the person I am interviewing rather than due to group-affiliation. This is because I acknowledge that people are different and being categorized to belong to a group doesn’t necessarily mean that one agrees on everything or that they can’t relate to multiple identity categories (Andersson, 2022a, p.60). Nevertheless, that is not to say that there can’t be any likenesses between my participants’ answers as they do share similarities in the sense of a shared experience of being a minority in a majority White society. It is however to do with not wanting their group-belonging to be seen as the only reason for their shared opinions or actions. A reason for this approach is inspired by Paul Gilroy and Stuart Hall, who believe that when one looks at people as members of a group rather than as individuals one risk leaning on prejudice and stereotypes based on the idea that members of a group possess a shared likeness due to group affiliation (Andersson, 2022a, p.60-61).

Describing people based on their looks is also known as categorizing based on a social race, which says something about group affiliation based on visible bodily traits (Andersson, 2022a, p.41-42). The idea of a social race is used to group people of similar background in politics, public debates and everyday interactions, illustrating a sense of similarity based on appearance (Andersson, 2022a, p.41). This makes room for assumptions of how a person should think or behave based on visible traits alluding to the individual being seen as a member of a group rather than a stand-alone person capable of making their own choices. An example of this is when one uses sayings such as all Somalis are dependent on social welfare or that Muslims are not open minded. This is also known as racialization, which is a term referring to a process where a person is ascribed characteristics based on an assumption of groupness (Andersson, 2022a, p.48-49; Garner & Selod, 2015, p. 14). Racialization also refers to being homogenized and othered by those in power positions able to shape the narratives existing in society, such as politicians or mass media (Garner & Selod, 2015, p. 17; Li, & Nicholson, 2021, p. 7, Andersson, 2022a, p. 49). Thus, racialization says something about which traits groups are ascribed by influential others which may influence the way the racialized are treated by some due to assumptions based on racialized rhetoric.

The use of the term race is not as widespread within the Norwegian social science tradition as for example in the United States or Great Britain, however race is still understood to differentiate people based on bodily differences (Andersson, 2022b, p.61; Massao, 2022, p.108). At the same time, terms such as Black and White were used by the participants to illustrate group affiliation and belonging. I will therefore also use the racial term White to refer to people who have a background from or originate from Western European countries. While Norwegian-ness and whiteness are sometimes seen as synonyms, there is a widespread discussion about who is considered to be Norwegian by others as well as who can describe themselves as Norwegian (Eide, 2010, p. 64; Erdal, 2022, p. 199; Massao; 2022; p. 117). In this thesis I use the word ethnic Norwegian to refer to people who have lived over several generations in Norway and possess the traditional Norwegian phenotypic traits such as blonde hair, light skin and blue eyes (Erdal, 2022, p. 197). This does not mean that I consider it non-Norwegian to have brown hair, brown skin and brown eyes, as appearance is not the only identifier for belonging. However, this distinction is made in order to be able to compare the participants' experience of being minorities in a majority society that has different external features than what they themselves possess.

## **2.2 Representation**

To understand how young adults with an ethnic minority background experience representation in film and TV-shows one must define what representation is. Stuart Hall defines it as:

“Representation is the production of meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the “real” world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people or events.” (Hall, 1997, p.17)

Hall connects representation and meaning. He looks at how meaning is constructed through representation and distinguishes between the real and imaginary world. By highlighting how meaning produces representations he connects how a viewer puts meaning to what he sees, and creates a context around what is presented in front of him. This can be exemplified by how black clothing can signal different meaning based on the receiver's interpretation of the wearer and the context the clothing is worn. Is there a group of people with sombre faces wearing black in a church or is there a woman wearing a black coat talking excitedly next to

her friend at a café? Both people are wearing the colour black, but it represents something completely differently based on the context it is used. The people at the church might be wearing black as a cultural custom during funerals while the woman at the café might have worn a black coat as to seem fashionable. Therefore, how someone or something is understood is based on what we as viewers perceive is the meaning, which is built on the sum of our impressions of said topic (Hall, 2013, p. 17). As such the receivers' interpretation may vary based on the receivers' previous knowledge and experiences. Thus, an intended message by the sender might be understood differently based on who the receiver is.

Going back to the previous example, as I am familiar with the use of black clothing at funerals I interpreted the funeral procession clothes to be appropriate attire for a funeral and is a way of showing respect for the deceased, however someone not familiar with the practises might be surprised everyone wears the same coloured clothing. In this thesis I use the term representation in line with Stuart Halls understanding of the term, with a focus on the meaning connected to what someone or something represents. Hall writes that “members of the same culture must share sets of concepts, images and ideas which enable them to think and feel about the world, and thus interpret the world, in roughly similar ways.” (Hall, 2013, p.xx). So, who defines how something is supposed to be understood?

Communication scholar Georg Gerbner researched the impact TV-shows had on how one perceived the world and each other by developing a cultivation theory (1998). His theory looks at the relationship between the medium and its audience, where he believes that television doesn't necessarily reflect or create images and opinions, but rather work in a dynamic process influencing and influenced by “the creation and distribution of mass-produced messages” (Gerbner, 1998, p.180). In other words, the media help shape opinion in society, and society help shape portrayals in the media. Gerbner believed that repetitive exposure to similar patterns, such as stereotypes, cultivate common understandings of images of life and society among viewers (Gerbner, 1998, p.181). He connects mass media, representation and meaning to a repetitive pattern of similar portrayals creating a belief of reality through exposure of set ideologies and values that reflect those of the producers of these messages (Gerbner, 1998, p.180). His findings suggest that there is a connection between the levels of television consumption and opinions one has regarding different topics, such as violence, gender-roles and politics, and that these opinions seem to correspond to what is shown on screen (Gerbner,1998; Luther, Lepre &Clark, 2018, p. 17).This relationship

between mass media and its audience relates to representation as it shows the connection between portrayals on screen and opinions constructed by what one watches.

Cultivation theory focuses on the consequences of the repetitive portrayals on screen, (Gerbner, 1998, p.191). Even though there seems to be a relationship between what one watches and one's opinion on the topic, a criticism of cultivation theory has been that one can not be sure that the viewers opinions in fact stem from being influenced by what they watch, or from other factors such as socialization in real life (Potter, 2014, p. 1026-1027,1029). This does not mean that there is no connection between portrayals on screen and how one is affected by what one sees, but rather there being other factors that may play into a person's ability to form opinions.

Edward Said's famous book *Orientalism* explores power-relations stating that there is an "idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures" (Said, 2003, p.7). By viewing one part of the world as better than the rest the people in power positions are able to produce discourses that highlight their beliefs as "more right" than those of "the Orient" resulting in an ethnocentric view on society and thus reinforcing existing stereotypes. Said's *Orientalism* also discusses postcolonialism and how power produces discourses and shapes beliefs, inspired by Foucault's understanding of power and Gramsci's understanding of hegemony, he emphasises that the belief of European hegemony spreads a false image of the Middle East (2003). Colonialism is not just about colonising a place, namely taking control of land and its people, but also contribute to how the narratives about this place and its people is understood by others. Stereotypical biases created for political, economic and military reasons by people in the west become "common sense" as they are narratives people have grown up with within their social realities, thus highlighting the importance of a diverse form of representation to illustrate how people of a similar background not necessarily are the same.

Going back to Halls understanding of representation, he highlights how people in society are the ones that bring meaning to representations by interpreting what the language used means (Hall, 2013, p. 45). "Language" is here used as an umbrella term for any sign or image that stand for or represent something (Hall, 2013, p.1). He uses the terms encoding and decoding to illustrate his point, stating that encoding means putting things into code while decoding means interpreting the meaning of the used codes (Hall, 2021, p. 250). Hall believes that a code first must be perceived as meaningful for it to have an effect and be decoded (Hall, 2021, p. 250). This can be understood to mean that the codes are not fixed, as Hall believes meaning

is ever-changing and depending on the context and the culture they are used in (Hall, 2013, p. 45). Thus, how one interprets representation on screen will depend on several factors, such as where one lives, the cultural knowledge of the people portrayed on screen you possess, as well as your position in relation to them.

Looking at Hall's view in relation to Said's exploration of power one can say that people in power positions are able to shape existing representations by constructing narratives that align with their view, and by broadcasting these views as culture productions they relay coded messages that may shape the opinion of the viewer (Omi, 2017, p. 466-467). Seeing this in relation to how for example Muslims are portrayed in stereotypical roles, such as being oppressed or as terrorists, one might think that these representations relay on a form of cultural racism, which plays on a differentiation based on notions that separate "us" from "the others" (Hawkins, Coles, Saleem, Moorman & Aqel, 2022, p. 10; Ponce, 2022, p.84). This separation is grounded in "them" possessing traits that goes against "our" values, and highlights how group affiliation can work as a mechanism illustrating belonging based on an understanding of meaning through messages relayed in popular culture.

### **2.3 Stereotypes and Group Affiliation**

Stereotypes are commonly known as beliefs of characteristics or traits members of a group hold in society. Mette Andersson explains stereotypes as generalised perceptions of certain groups of people, highlighting traits or attributes others believe members of a group have in common, often in relation to nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion or occupation (Andersson, 2022a, p.85). These understandings are often in relation to visible traits such as skin colour, religious symbols or gender, making stereotypes in relation to how someone looks harmful as a person can be judged and ascribed characteristics one does not hold, but is presumed to do so, based on appearance rather than ones actions or beliefs (Andersson, 2022a, p.85). Michael Omi writes that our "common sense" assumption about race and racial minorities are both generated and reflected in the stereotypes presented by the visual media, thus connecting how representation, especially stereotypical representation, may influence the viewer to believe such portrayals to be rooted in the truth (Omi, 2017, p. 467). Stereotypes are thus connected to representation in the sense that repeated portrayals in the media seem real in the minds of audiences, therefore if the portrayals are stereotypical to begin with, these stereotypical portrayals become the point of reference the viewers get of minorities. This also generates



what Vivien Burr explains as social realities, highlighting how beliefs become norms, which might cement stereotypes as truth when they can be exaggerations or based in falsehood (Burr, 2015, p.210).

There are both positive and negative stereotypes, such as being smart or being a bad driver, but why do stereotypes exist? A reason is that “humans naturally want to predict the behaviours of others” (Luther, Lepre & Clark, 2018, p. 11). This is in line with a social psychologist understanding of a stereotype where it is believed that cognitive schemas, which “are interrelated conceptual units of information”, help individuals organize information by letting the individual figuratively plot in the information they have of a person (Luther, Lepre & Clark, 2018, p. 11). An example is one looking at someone’s phenotypic traits, the clothes they are wearing, the way they talk etc. and then make an assumption based on the information in front of them. However, a stereotype is not factual as it generalizes a whole group based on certain traits some seem to think are common within the group. “Groups become real entities, instead of social constructions, the more people see them as homogenous and stereotype-matching” (Fiske, 2000, p.304). The more people are portrayed as a stereotype the harder it is to break away from it. By generalising a whole ethnic group based on a previous experience of someone with the same or similar background as them, one might believe members of the group will act a certain way before they have shown any sign to do so, except being part of a group that has gotten a label put on it. Thus, even though stereotypes can be understood as a natural part of a human’s categorization process, they are harmful as they put certain expectations on members of a group (Luther, Lepre & Clark, 2018, p. 12; Fiske, 2000, p.300,306-307).

Cultural theorists on the other side define stereotypes as a set of representational practices where Stuart Hall believes that when we stereotype we reduce people to a few and simple characteristics that are presented as though they are fixed by nature (Hall, 2013, p. 247). He distinguishes between typing and stereotyping, where typing is seen as categorizing a person based on the roles they perform (ex: a parent, a sibling, a student, a boss), their membership of different groups (ex: gender, age group, nationality, class, ethnic background) and their personality type (ex: happy, stressed, witty), similar to a social psychologist approach (Hall, 2013, p. 247). Stereotyping on the other hand exaggerates these characteristics and reduces everything about the person to be about those traits (Hall, 2013, p. 247). An example of such stereotypes in American media are how people of African American background are associated with drugs and urban crimes while Latinos are associated with “illegal”

immigration (Omi, 2017, p. 469). Hall adds that stereotyping also creates a boundary between in- and out-groups by deploying a strategy of splitting, dividing who belongs in which group by categorizing what is seen as normal and acceptable and what is not (Hall, 2013, p. 247). People accentuate differences between out-groups and minimize differences between in-groups, and view these groups as homogenous (Fiske, 2000, p.304; Andersson, 2022a, p.61). An example of this is xenophobic approaches to Muslims resulting in Islamophobia rooted in perceived differences rather than a focus on existing similarities (Andersson, 2022a, p.47,92). By understanding Muslims to only fit one category one dismisses the diversity existing within this particular group, resulting in a homogeneous depiction of all Muslims rather than an approach focusing on Islam being only one of many parts of a person's identity.

I believe a combination of both understandings is relevant as the cultural theorist tradition plays more on the meaning of these stereotypes in comparison to the social psychologist way which talks about categorization in the human mind. However, as previously mentioned representation and meaning is linked, and while categorization is necessary for stereotypes to be made it is the meaning behind them that influence a persons' perception of someone else. Stereotypes are a "part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order" and sets up a frontier between "us" and "them" (Hall, 2013, p. 248). This is especially present when one discusses power dynamics on screen and in the media. Omi writes that the power of the media is reflected in how the dominant racial ideology is able to shape our common sense assumptions about minorities and present them as inferior to the majority (Omi, 2017, p. 466-467). This establishes a clear in-group/out-group divide highlighting group affiliation as important for how one perceives stereotypical portrayals on screen.

As Susan Fiske studied stereotyping and prejudice, and how such attitudes could lead to actions, she states that group affiliation plays a part in how and whom one identifies with (Fiske, 2000, p. 306). Throughout the interviews the words "White" and "Whiteness" were used by my participants to mark a distance between "us" and "them" in relation to who they identified with and whom they believed was the out-group. Whiteness can be said to refer to a social category that is marked by "the skin colour" of those that get certain advantages in life due to structural racism (Bang Svendsen, 2022, p. 48). Whiteness also refers to "white privilege", a term coined by scholar and activist Peggy McIntosh who explains the term as an invisible knapsack giving White people unearned advantages due to them being White (Bang Svendsen, 2022, p. 48-49). This can be exemplified by having an easier time getting a job or housing because of their name or appearance (Birkelund, Heggebø and Rogstad (2017); Pager

& Shepherd, (2008)). Whiteness however does not explicitly only refer to how someone looks, as there is a cultural aspect and understanding to this boundary (Lamont, Pendergrass, Pachucki, 2015, p. 850; Garner, 2014, p. 409). In this thesis I therefore understand the terms “Whiteness” and “White” to not only refer to how someone looks, but also which values one holds and what cultural practices one takes part in (Said, 2003, p.227-228).

## **2.4 Entertainment as Soft Power**

Understanding the relationship between representation, entertainment and power can be explained by the term soft power, which refers to how entertainment can be used as a tool of influence. Power can be understood as “the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes you want” (Nye, 2019, p.7). Using a soft power approach to achieve the goal of “changing other’s behaviour through attraction and persuasion” is a form of indirect power play (Jo, 2021, p. 208). This form of power “rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others”, thus influencing the viewers thoughts through what they see on screen (Nye, 2019, p.8). Gerbner explains the connection between the symbolic relationship of state and television as media being the “cultural arm” of the state and other private establishments reaching out to the public with their messages (Gerbner, 1998, p.176).

The United States and Hollywood have traditionally dominated which movies and TV-shows Norway have imported and broadcasted on screen. As a super producer the United States is a large exporter of popular culture across nations (Crane, 2014, p.365). One of the reasons why the American film industry has dominated globally might be because of the international language English, which is spoken and understood by many people in the world (Crane, 2014, p.368). Another explanation of the domination of the American film industry that Crane presents is that this industry has become less culturally specific (Crane,2014, p.375). This relates to how American movies have become “delocalized” to “not correspond to real places” as well as the viewer being more accustomed to American geography and culture through schooling and other influences such as from previously watched films and TV-shows (Crane,2014, p.375). This may contribute to a film being more accepted by the viewer because it does not rely on preconceived notions of American geography and culture-specific norms due to familiarity. However, this does not mean that American produced films are not set in American cities, it means that the films have gotten less culturally specific, and more international. This especially applies to sci-fi films, such as the blockbuster hits: *Star Wars*:

*The Force Awakens* (2015), *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) and *Avatar* (2009) (Crane, 2014, p.367 & IMDb, n.d.).

Looking at South Korea as an example to illustrate the connection between soft power and entertainment, there seems to be a rise in the export of Korean popular culture. A reason for the rise of the global Korean culture industry is connected to the Korean government's investment in Korean culture export in line with other countries' investments in other areas such as electronics and cars (Kim, 2022, p.5). Developed as a national project, the Korean culture industry has since the late 1990s been seen as a new economic initiative bringing in revenue and using globalization to its advantage (Kim, 2013, p.4). This has led to Korea having the fifth largest film industry in the world, after the USA, China, Japan and the UK in terms of box office sales (Kim, 2022, p.5). A testament to that is the international acclaim for *Parasite*, a Korean language movie that has gotten great popularity and success in Europe and the US (Kim, 2022, p.8). One of the reasons for the well reception of Korean culture productions is the emergence of easily accessible streaming services such as Netflix and its role as an international distributor of media productions. The combination of the viewers of such platforms having grown up in a global digital era "that routinely incorporate subtitles" as well as also being open to transnational cultural expressions, creates a more accepting atmosphere and interest in foreign cultures (Kim, 2022, p.11). This is a contrast to how previous generations often grew up with watching the same shows and movies, while now there is a large and international offer of culture products available making it easier to explore new and foreign productions, as well as be influenced by them.

## **2.5 Summary of the Theoretical Framework**

This chapter has presented the theoretical framework used to understand the relationship between representation on screen and the participants views on representation. Inspired by Hall's understanding of representation I have looked at the term in relation to how meaning is constructed based on what is represented and the context it is portrayed in (Hall, 2013, p. 17). Looking at the relationship between power and representation, Said's reflections on an European hegemony and Gerbner's reflections on media portrayals illustrate how repetitive depictions on screen may allude to a perceived group-affiliation based on exterior traits (2003; 1998). Seeing this in relation to how entertainment can be understood as a tool of influence the portrayals on screen have an added meaning, thus illustrating the relationship between portrayals on screen and the meaning one applies to them.

### **3. Data and method**

The choice of method is important in the data collection process as it most likely will impact the results of the research. I believe conducting interviews was the best suitable method choice to answer my thesis question as I am interested in the participants' point of view and personal opinion concerning this topic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.22). Therefore I have conducted 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews with young adults living in Norway with an ethnic minority background from Vietnam, Pakistan and Somalia. The analysis will be based on these interviews. I have been interested in this field of study from a popcultural standpoint for some time, and have previously written a term paper on a similar topic where I also conducted three interviews. These interviews laid the foundation for which topics I wanted to explore and which questions I wanted to ask the participants for this project.

This chapter starts with an explanation of my research strategy, how I recruited the participants as well as an overview of who they are. The chapter then continues with a presentation of the interviews as well as my use of "photo-elicitation" as a methodological tool as I believe it may evoke memories and lead to interesting conversations in relation to what they already discussed previously in the interviews (Harper, 2002, p.23). I then go on to talk about challenges faced as well as my analytical approach. I end this chapter with a discussion of the ethical implications of this study as well as reflecting on the generalizability, validity and reliability of this study.

#### **3.1 Fieldwork**

Representation in the media is a hot topic with news articles, panels and ongoing discussions highlighting this issue. I started the process of data collection by doing fieldwork to gain more knowledge on the field from a Norwegian point of view, as well as get in contact with possible participants and gatekeepers that helped me during the recruitment process. I attended film screenings, panel discussions and lectures highlighting this topic. Most physically, but some digitally due to the pandemic. After the events took place, I sent an e-mail with more information to the people I talked to during my fieldwork, in hopes of recruiting participants. This proved to be beneficial as I was able to get in touch with some of the participants this way. To conduct a study in an ever-changing environment due to the ongoing pandemic has not been easy and has impacted the study to some degree. More on that later.

## 3.2 Research Strategy

This study is based on interviews conducted between October and December 2021 in Oslo and surrounding areas. I decided to limit my research group to people with an ethnic background from three different countries based on the top five countries with the highest number of inhabitants that are born in Norway with parents that have immigrated (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2021)<sup>1</sup>. By using country of origin as a criterion I aim to include a diverse group of participants highlighting cultural and linguistic differences.

I reached out to SSB, which is the national statistical institute of Norway and the main producer of official statistics, and requested data on Norwegians with an immigration background for people aged 18-30 years old as my target group are young adults. These statistics included both people that immigrated themselves (first generation) as well as people that were born in Norway with parents that immigrated (second generation), however I based my choice on who to interview on the latter as well as the geographical location the country of origin was in (Andersson, Jacobsen, Rogstad, & Vestel, 2012, p. 11-12). The data showed that the top five countries that Norwegian born inhabitants of parents that immigrated had a background from Pakistan, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Somalia (descending order).

Another deciding factor for my selection was that I wanted to include participants with a diverse background as well as different phenotypical traits. This is because I believe it is an important factor in how actors of different ethnic origin might be portrayed on screen or interpreted differently in films and TV-shows as through my own experience there are often phenotypic traits that are remarked during racist commentary, such as eye-shape, skin colour or nose size. I have therefore decided to base my study on participants with an ethnic background from Vietnam, Pakistan and Somalia.

I did for example not include both Sri Lanka and Pakistan in my sample as I wanted to include participants from an East Asian country as well as an African country, which limits how many South Asian countries I can include in this study. As well as I would get a broader view into a wider Asian representation if I interviewed people with a Vietnamese background. Even though I do acknowledge that there are both phenotypical, religious and cultural differences between Pakistan and Sri Lanka, I believe by including Vietnam I am gaining insight to an East Asian point of view that is not just interesting due to the scope of the study,

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<sup>1</sup> Appendix A shows the table I got sent by SSB

but also due to the rise in East Asian popular culture consumption globally (Kim, 2022, p.2). I specifically wanted to include participants with an African descent in this study as my previous term paper did not include participants from any African countries. My previous informants did not extensively talk about issues concerning race and racism, which I believe are topics worth investigating in a study concerning representation and media. By including people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds my goal is to explore their point of view and compare looking for similarities and differences.

Originally I wanted to include more participants of different ethnic origin as I believe this study excludes many viewpoints such as those from people with a background from Latin-America, the Middle East, Southeast Europe, the Caribbean and the majority of Africa, as well as many indigenous groups. However, the study would be too big, and I would not have grounds of comparison if I had interviewed “one person from each country”. Another interesting point of view would have been to look at visible vs. non-visible ethnic minorities and their view on representation in film and TV-shows (Rogstad, 2001, p.27). In future research I would like to continue this study and interview more people with a broader interview group, as well as interviewing people from the majority population in comparison to people with a minority background.

### **3.3 Recruitment Strategies and Access**

The participants got recruited through different arenas such as at several film screenings, through participants I had already interviewed, at events I attended through my fieldwork, in Facebook groups focusing on ethnic minorities of certain backgrounds, through my own social network, where I posted on my personal Facebook page that got shared by my Facebook friends, and on the story function on my Instagram account that got reshared on some of my friends' accounts as well. I also contacted several people that were leaders in the student division of specific minority group organizations where some then referred me to their mother group which did not answer, even though I sent several messages. When recruiting through friends or participants it seemed as if some thought that I specifically wanted to interview people working in the entertainment industry and tipped me of directly contacting actors with a minority background, which was not my intention. My main criteria were age and ethnic background, even though occupation certainly can add an interesting perspective, it was not a goal of mine to specifically research actors or actresses' point of view on representation, but rather the viewer of their work.

I did have an instance with a participant where I during the interview found out he had acting experience and therefore decided to ask him a couple of questions regarding how he chooses the roles he plays as well as his experience of the Norwegian entertainment industry from within. His answer was similar to Yuens finding of actors having to balance stereotypical roles with characters that were not marked by their ethnic background, stating that the films he had been a part of had been alternative (Yuen, 2016). The films didn't really focus on diversity, and he played parts that were not defined by his religious affiliation or ethnic background, but rather defined by his relation to his occupation or other characters in the productions he was a part of. Explaining further on how he approaches new roles he says: “(...) *I could be the baker, I could be the train driver, like I don't care as long as I don't have to be train driver Ali that is Black and Muslim, like I don't need those titles to be a train driver in a film*”. This finding gave an insight to his way of approaching acting projects as well as an actor's consciousness of how the roles they take might influence other people's view of themselves and others. This participant was very conscious of what he watched and had a strong view on representation stating that he purposely never watched films or TV-shows that only included White people, as well as being mindful of stereotypical portrayals of minorities. How he approaches work opportunities could therefore be understood as a way of practicing what he preaches by only agreeing to join productions that align with his view on representation.

I did struggle to get in contact with participants, especially men from Somalia and Vietnam. I therefore tried to use different strategies to reach people that fit the study's criteria. During a casual conversation with a friend he mentioned that many Norwegian-Somalis he had talked to were interested in watching a new Somali film as it was rare to be shown in Norway. This inspired me to attend two movie screenings of a Somali-Finnish movie called *Guled & Nasra (The Gravedigger's Wife)*, which premiered in Norway during Films from the South film festival. By doing so my hope was to get in contact with potential participants and gatekeepers. After the screenings I got in touch with some gatekeepers that put me in contact with others that were willing to participate in this study. There is reason to believe that participants recruited through my fieldwork are more interested in diversity than those recruited by friends etc. as they were attending or recruited by people attending events focusing on culture, representation, diversity or entertainment. However, this was not something I experienced was evident in the participants answers as the majority were



interested in movies and TV-shows with a varied degree of investment regardless of how they got recruited.

Writing a thesis during a pandemic has its own challenges. I had a couple of cancellations and reschedules of the interviews due to the participants being in quarantine, isolation or sick with covid or had flue like symptoms. These cancellations happened a couple of times and as late as the day of the scheduled interviews and delayed the data collection process. As I did face some difficulties in the recruitment process I believe I might have been able to reach more participants if there were more physical events, as some events I wanted to physically attend as part of my fieldwork and recruiting process ended up becoming digital, so I lost some recruiting opportunities there. However, at the events I did manage to attend I got in contact with gatekeepers that could help me get the word out that I was looking for participants for my master's thesis as well as contacting people on my behalf to gauge interest and willingness to be interviewed (Sandberg & Copes, 2013, p.180). These gatekeepers proved to be helpful, especially in getting in touch with participants with a Somali background, as I did have difficulties getting in touch with them on my own. In the end it was rather random that I ended up interviewing three men with a Somali background as I had a confirmation to interview a woman for weeks, however as she kept cancelling due to being in covid-19 quarantine because of her job, I had to find a new informant. I luckily ended up getting in touch with and interviewing two men the following days after the final cancellation.

### **3.4 Who Did I interview?**

The participants in the study identify as male, female or other with the youngest participant being 19 years old and the oldest being 31 years old. I interviewed 4 people with a background from Pakistan, 5 people with a background from Somalia and 4 people with a background from Vietnam. As my target group were 18-30 years old, the majority were students or had previously studied, with only two not having higher education, one having dropped out of high school while the other retaking high school classes to better their GPA to get into a highly competitive field of study. Others were either students (bachelor's, master's and PhD) and/or working in the field of technology, as a teacher, as a social worker, with communication, journalism, as an accountant, as a translator and as a machine operator.

I also asked if they had grown up in a multicultural environment, with the majority (11/13) answering yes, and if they had multicultural friends, with everyone answering yes. The purpose these questions had was to look at if environment and friends might impact their view

on other ethnic minority groups, their familiarity with other cultures, as well as their portrayal in film and TV-shows.

As I went through the statistics for this project I realised that 9/13 of the informants identify as Muslim regardless of the level of religiousness. This was not intentional and I did not recruit based on religious background or belief. I do think that the participants' religious background has impacted their answer as they use examples from their own lives and therefore might notice more injustice towards Muslim characters as they themselves identify as such, however I also believe this could be interesting to look more into as Muslim representation in popular culture is underrepresented and to have a take on representation by Muslim participants will add to this research (Khan et al, 2021, p.1). Even though I did not set out to interview this amount of people that identify with certain religions, this outcome is not unwanted as religious background can add an interesting dimension to questions regarding representation. I also interviewed some identifying as agnostics and Buddhists as well two participants without any religious affiliation. In future research I believe a focus on religious background and religious representation in the media might be beneficial and an interesting project to research further.

The reason why I included three men with a Somali background instead of two is because I was not sure if I should include my first interview with the male participant with a Somali background. This was because during the interview I found out he migrated at 13 years old while he was 27 at the time of the interviews. This means that he has only lived half of his life in Norway, and not been a part of Norwegian society during a large part of his childhood. This seemed to have a huge impact on his views on TV and film as well as on the Norwegian society. The second man with a Somali background I interviewed was also slightly above the age recruitment being 31 years old and immigrating at 10 years old. I have decided to include them both in the study as I did struggle to get in contact with men with a Somali background, and since they have experienced Norwegian culture, the education system and the labour market I decided it was better to include these interviews rather than to include fewer men with a Somali background in this study.

While I ended up interviewing 3 men with a Somali background, the participant that emigrated at 13 as opposed to the age limit of 6 years old seemed to have a different experience of and relation to TV shows and films in his childhood compared to the other participants, and I found his answers to clearly deviate from the other participants'. This made me more sure in my decision as to restrict my sample to only include people with an ethnic

minority background that either were born in Norway or had immigrated no later than at 6 years old, which is the age children start primary school in Norway. The reason why this is important in this study is because I believe by having lived their childhood in Norway, the participants are more familiar with western media as well as Norwegian culture and film and TV-shows from a young age. Thus, they can reflect on their childhood experience and influences of the Norwegian society as well as their own position in said society. I also wanted the participants to be of different genders and was aiming for a 50/50 statistic as I believe men and women often get portrayed differently in films and TV-shows, but it was not an absolute requirement as their ethnic background and age are the two main requirements to participate in this study.

In the end I interviewed 6 men, 6 women and 1 identifying as other.

Table 1: Overview of the participants

Ethnic background	Female	Male	Other	Religion
Pakistan	2 (Saira, Zara)	2 (Zaid, Haroon)		Islam (4)
Somalia	2 (Jannah, Malaika)	3 (Jamal, Bashir, Omar)		Islam (5)
Vietnam	2 (Linh, Chloe)	1 (Alex)	1 (Kim) <sup>2</sup>	Buddhism (1), Agnostic (1), No religious affiliation (2)
Total	6	6	1	I (9), B (1), A (1), NRA (2)

### 3.5 The Interviews

The focus of this study is to understand how young adults with an ethnic minority background experience representation in film and TV-shows. As I had previously conducted a similar study at a smaller scale I knew which topics I wanted to explore further, such as their view on representation and stereotypes, Norwegian vs. international productions, and if representation in the media affected their daily lives in some way. My interview guide<sup>3</sup> is quite long and

<sup>2</sup> I will refer to Kim as they in this thesis as Kim identifies as other.

<sup>3</sup> Appendix B Interview guide

detailed, which resulted in interesting conversations with the participants. As I had chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews, I ended up modifying the questions based on the participants' answers while also making sure I went through similar questions for all participants to keep a common thread and be able to compare the answers in the analysis (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.162). However, this did result in some interviews being longer than the others. The length of the interviews varied from 1 to 3 hours. This is understandable considering some expressed they only viewed films and TV-shows as "plain entertainment" as opposed to others who emphasized the impact it had on society. However, it is important to mention that my goal was not to explicitly interview people that were interested in the field. That was not a requirement. At the same time, I do acknowledge that people that are more interested in this topic might be more willing to participate in the study by agreeing to participate when contacted or themselves contacting me when seeing my ad, rather than the ones I got in touch with through friends, gatekeepers and former classmates. An example is from one of my shortest interviews where after the interview was done a participant mentioned he would never have participated in an interview had it not been a friend asking him to do so.

I wanted to conduct two trial interviews to check the length of the interview and if the flow was okay. By doing so I gained knowledge about which questions to exclude and which that seemed to encourage the participant to talk more, as well as which questions appeared to be confusing. One of the participants in the trial interview ended up not showing because they forgot about it. Based on this I sent the participants a reminder that the interview was taking place the following day if we had not communicated the day prior to the interview. The reminder also included a task asking them to think about films and TV-shows they liked and disliked, and their reasoning for that. The task was intended for them to start thinking about their preferences and their reasoning for what they decided to watch, as to not forget a memorable film/TV-show during the interview. I did question if my choice of asking the participants to think about their film and TV-preferences before the interview was correct as some seemed to have forgotten about what they liked to watch due to them maybe thinking about it previously. On the other hand it might have been fruitful for others as they seemed more prepared about which topics to talk about and had thought about the names of actors and movies prior to the interviews. Some participants even brought notes of which movies and actors they liked as to not forget them, while others looked up their "liked" movies or TV-shows on their preferred streaming platform during the interviews.

I do stand by my choice as I believe it helped the participants reflect on their taste in popular culture, as well as remembering what they enjoyed watching both now and in their childhood, as it is easy to forget what you have watched if you regularly consume entertainment. After the interviews the participants filled out a questionnaire<sup>4</sup> regarding some background information for statistical purposes. The purpose of the questionnaire was to have a common overview of relevant data about their background such as occupation, level of education, religious affiliation, if they have grown up in a multicultural environment and how many hours a week approximately they watch film and TV shows, as this information could potentially play a part in how their answers are understood. By including a questionnaire that everyone had to answer I made sure that the data collected regarding the participants' background information was similar because it was a possibility the participants would highlight different aspects of their background during the interviews, and I wanted to have the same type of information to be able to compare.

As mentioned earlier I based the interview guide on a previous term paper that inspired this study. This was very helpful and influenced the interview guide I am basing this study on. For instance, I decided to include questions about the participants' religious background and how religion might influence film and TV choices, which I previously had not really paid attention to. This was because a previous participant mentioned that she actively did not watch Norwegian movies because she felt that they had rather graphic sexual content as opposed to Eastern portrayals of romance, and she did not want to be startled by such scenes as they do not align with her religious views. By including questions about religion I gained more knowledge of how the participants identified themselves and how religion played a part influencing which films and TV-shows they decided to spend time on, and what they did during scenes with a sexual or blasphemous context. This proved to be rather interesting as there seemed to be a clear difference in how some participants favoured eastern productions due to the emotional rather than physical connection in portrayals of romance, while others highlighted a cultural or political influence as a deciding factor for what they watched, especially with their parents.

Silence can be uncomfortable, however I did use it to my advantage during the interviews. During my method courses my professor taught us to use silence as a tool to get the participants to elaborate. This thought has stuck with me since and proved to be very useful. I

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<sup>4</sup> APPENDIX C: Questionnaire. The questionnaire is inspired by Sabina Tica's master thesis (2018)

used silence as a tool to get the participants to speak more about a topic. Sometimes I pretended to write in my notebook or take a sip of water while seemingly waiting for them to talk more, if they wanted to. Sometimes they did not say anything while other times they did in fact elaborate. Had I just jumped to the next question without waiting I could have missed interesting information. For example one participant mentioned he gets worried when there is an actor of ethnic minority background on screen. Elaborating that it is not necessarily actors who looks like him, but rather ethnic minorities in general, and that he worries they might get negatively portrayed, thus leading him to be extra observant of their portrayal. Had I just moved on after his initial answer I would have missed this critical information as it explicitly relates to my thesis question.

### **3.6 Photo Elicitation**

At the end of the interviews I showed a short clip from a British TV-series called *We are Lady Parts* (2021) available on NRKTV, the free streaming platform by the public service broadcaster in Norway. I showed a clip from the first episode (0:00-03:17) as I believe the clip is rather fitting in regard to this study, and may lead to interesting discussions due to it evoking feelings and memories, especially in relation to what the participants previously talked about in the interviews (Harper, 2002, p.13).

It was an active choice to show the clip at the end of the interviews as I did not want the clip to influence their answers, because the clip plays with stereotypical portrayals of ethnic minorities quite directly. It turned out that 3 participants had seen the episode previously as well as 3 participants had heard about the TV-show, but not yet watched it. 7 participants had neither heard of nor watched the TV-show. The clip led to interesting reactions, both for and against the topics presented in the clip, which was my goal by using «photo-elicitation» as a methodological tool in this study (Harper, 2002, p.23). I will discuss the content of the clip as well as the reactions it led to in more detail in Chapter 5.

By combining questions and a physical example of a TV-show with actors with an ethnic minority background towards the end of the interviews my goal was to question and compare what the participants had previously mentioned during the interview. Additionally, I could go deeper into what the participants thought about productions that portray people who might be similar to them and their multicultural upbringing, based on what they have seen before and at the same time look at this in connection to recent film and TV productions. This is because I believe there is a difference in the way ethnic minorities are portrayed depending on who the

sender is as well as when the film or TV-series was produced, which is something that also got highlighted by the participants when it was revealed to them who the creator of *We Are Lady Parts* was. Several of the participants changed their mind when they were told that the creator had minority background suggesting context to be a contributing factor altering their interpretation of the clip. This illustrates how additional information can change one's opinion to view something as to have a different meaning than what one perceived before receiving such information.

Photo-elicitation is not a magical method that automatically provides rich interview material, however my experience is that it certainly did evoke strong feelings as the majority of the participant reacted either very positively or very negatively towards the clip that was shown (Vassenden & Andersson, 2010, p.151). This was especially present for the Muslim participants, which seemed more eager to voice their view both during and after the clip ended. Such as Zaid stating that he would have turned off the clip if he was watching it at home when the band were playing while Malaika on the other hand excitedly exclaimed "haha they are just like my parents" when the scene of the parents embarrassing the main character played. I even had an instance with a participant continuing talking about the clip after ending the interview and packing our stuff, which resulted in us resuming the interview and me turning on the tape recorder for a continued conversation for around 10 more minutes discussing the clip that was shown. This illustrates that the clip shown evoked emotions, which was especially prominent for the Muslim participants.

### **3.7 Challenges**

As mentioned earlier some of the challenges I faced were due to difficulties recruiting participants during the pandemic. I can imagine fear of getting sick played a role in my difficulty with the recruitment of participants, as potential participants may not have wanted to meet anyone outside their circle of close friends and family members to limit potential contamination. I did take some precautions to try and prevent the spread of Covid-19 if unfortunately I or them were sick, and made sure to disinfect the table used during the interview and limit physical contact.

I also faced the challenge of having to quickly adjust my interviews to become digital due to not knowing which restrictions would be made by the government when planning the interviews. To interview digitally was an option that I considered due to the pandemic, however as I had previously interviewed digitally, I did only see it as a last option as I prefer

physical interviews a lot more. This is because by experience I believe the quality of the interviews to be better when we meet in person. I can easier register their body language, they see me take notes which signals that they might need to speak slower, and I also can have eye contact which signals that I am listening and interested in their answers. I also believe there to be lack of long answers during video interviews as well as miscommunication that is easier to clear up during physical interviews. I based my choice of having physical interviews by previous experience, and I am glad I did as I am happy with the interview quality.

As I do not have extensive interview experience, I miscalculated how long the interviews would be. Originally I thought that the interviews would take 1,5 hours. Averagely I spent 2h excluding the papers they had to fill in. I experienced that it was a clear difference between the interviews that were longer and the interviews that took a little over 1h as it seemed the participants with the longer interviews talked more about their experiences without me explicitly asking them to. However, that is not to say the participants with shorter interviews did not get into sensitive topics, I just had to ask them more directly to get the answers. Even though I experienced the longer interviews to be more detailed, they ended up being tiring both for me and for the participants. As well as resulting in more material needing to be transcribed. I did sometimes struggle to get back on track to the questions I needed answered when the participants answered in too much detail, for example about their background or youth, as not everything they said was relevant to my thesis. However I did not want to be rude and stop them in the middle of their sentence, so I waited until there was a natural break and tried to get them back to answer the question I originally asked. I had one instance where I had to meet up with a participant at a later date because we did not get finished with the interviews in the 2 hours they were available and finished the interview at a later date the same week the interviews took place.

### **3.8 Analytical Approach**

The steps of analysing data started directly after the interviews took place. After saying goodbye to the participants I wrote down if something extraordinary had happened during the interview, which topics they talked about, if they had mentioned something novel or an obvious contrast to what had previously been mentioned by other participants. I also noted if there were any obvious quotes that could be interesting to highlight. I then transcribed the interviews as I had consensually used a tape recorder to record our conversation.



It was important to transcribe the interviews as soon as possible as to not forget the body language and intonation used in the interviews. This is because the body language and intonation used by the participants could add a new level of meaning to their sentences (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.205). Weighed words are written in cursive, while expressions and body language, exemplified by facial expressions such as a disgusted grimace or mimicking locking their mouth and throwing the key away, are written in a parenthesis. An example is when a participant said that “Norwegian TV-shows were *very* diverse (laughs)” in a sarcastic way, which ultimately means that Norwegian TV-shows are not diverse at all based on the way the participant said the sentence, which words were stressed and the context the sentence was said in. These distinctions are important as they alter the transcribed meaning of what the participants were saying and could change how a quote is understood (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.205).

I used transcription program f4 to transcribe the interviews. It was interesting to listen back to the interviews, the answers and realising I should have asked more questions regarding certain topics, such as the use of movie makeup to play other ethnicities. Even though some mentioned it in their answers I could have included it as its own question rather than a follow up question if it got mentioned by the participants. I also did start noticing some common threads during the transcription process, and started to code the answers based on what I believed to be clear similarities or differences such as their view on representation or stereotypes.

With 13 interviews, I had produced a lot of data that needed to be organized to be able to result in an analysis. To create an understanding of the similarities and differences between the participants I coded and categorized the transcribed interviews using the software programme NVivo. The codes were textually close to what the participants actually said and consisted of words, phrases or sentences from the transcribed interviews (Tjora, 2012, p.179). Examples of some of my codes were “this is completely wrong”, “portrayals of East Asians”, “just like a regular person” and “the Norwegian society”. This form of coding emphasizes what the participants actually say as opposed to being developed from existing theories on this field, thus giving a deeper insight into the participants’ views as well as ensuring that the participants’ statements during the interviews are preserved (Tjora, 2012, p.179-184). I then categorized the codes to be able to better understand if there were similarities or differences in how the participants talked about the mentioned topics, such as: “portrayals of East Asians” – “k-drama”, “stereotypes”, “racism” and “identity”.

During the coding process I noticed there were similarities between how the participants with a Muslim religious affiliation vs. the participants without such affiliation spoke about representation. This occurred despite the participants having different ethnic backgrounds. I did not expect that the participants with a Muslim affiliation would focus on religion to this degree, and expected external traits such as skin tone, facial features and gender to be the main characteristics mentioned. This illustrates that as a researcher one should be mindful to not let ones preconceived assumptions lead to premature conclusions based on own expectations of findings, but rather lead with the actual data collected (Tjora, 2021, p. 217). This discovery has led me to pay attention to how the participants experience the portrayal of Muslims, as well as the portrayal of ethnic minorities.

As I am writing this thesis in English I had to translate the transcriptions from Norwegian to English as the interviews were conducted in Norwegian. The translation started already during the transcription process as I transcribed in Norwegian but included English transcriptions in a parenthesis if I noticed a word or a phrase would have a different meaning if I translated it literally from Norwegian to English. This was to make sure I preserved as much of the meaning I could. An example is translating “(...) jeg vil helst ikke stikke, jeg vil helst ikke være synlig liksom (...)” which literally translated means “(...) I'd rather not stab, I'd rather not be visible like (...)” which is not what the participant meant, she meant “(...) I'd rather not stand out, like I'd rather not be visible (...)”. Changing the word “stab” to “stand out” completely alters the meaning of the quote and by including a parenthesis of the intended meaning of the word in English my goal was to preserve the correct meaning after the tape recordings were deleted and all I had left were the transcriptions. As I have translated the quotes used in this thesis myself, my aim has been to preserve as much of the meaning as possible, though it is not to be avoided that changes to language occur during the translation process (Squires, 2009, p. 278). However, it has been my aim to translate the quotes as close to what was actually said by the participants, while also taking to consideration the context the quote was said in.

### **3.9 Ethical Reflections and Considerations**

It is important to be mindful of the ethical implications of your research as it may impact the quality as well as the knowledge produced in the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.108). This research project is registered and approved by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (NSD). As I am processing personal data I had to get this

approval before recruiting and interviewing the participants. The participants were informed about the study's overall theme, purpose and had the opportunity to ask me questions if something was unclear or they were curious about the study during recruiting, briefing and debriefing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.104). The participants were also informed about their right to pull out of the interviews at any time, both during and after the interviews took place, if they decided that they did not want to be a part of the study anymore (NESH, 2021, p.18). I made sure to be as transparent as possible with the participants without compromising the goal of the interviews or lead them on to answering what they thought I wanted to hear when I described the study for them (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.105). I was very clear about their rights as participants in this study and sent them an informed consent form<sup>5</sup> detailing the study, their rights, and how their data would be processed prior to the interviews as well as bringing it with me during the interviews for them to sign as a proof of their informed consent (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.104). This was to make sure the legalities was in place, as well as providing the participants with necessary information about their rights as participants in a research project.

The participants were assured the information they provided would be treated confidentially so that it would not be possible for others to identify them (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.106). I anonymised the participants by giving them pseudonyms to maintain their anonymity as well as anonymising them by leaving out characteristics, locations and study programs or place of work that could make them known during the transcription process. I have also not mentioned the participants' specific ages as all participants are between 19-31. The pseudonyms were given based on looking up typical and popular names from Pakistan, Somalia and Vietnam. This can be exemplified by participant Kim who identify as other. To choose their name I searched unisex Vietnamese names and chose the name Kim.

It is important to be mindful of the relation between the participants and the researcher as it can impact the researcher's questions and the participant's answers (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.108). I believe my role as a woman with an ethnic minority background in the same age group as my informants may have made them more comfortable during the interviews as several seemed to have a laid-back attitude occasionally laughing and joking while answering my questions. This especially applied when they were saying something they believed could be perceived as controversial exemplified by one participant saying "this is unpopular to say

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<sup>5</sup> APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form

but I will say it anyway as everything said in this room will be anonymised (laughs) so I'm not the toughest really but I will say it here".

Several people questioned my ethnic background and religious affiliation either during or after the interviews, which to be honest I did not mind as I was asking them questions regarding their background as well. However, I did find that some that asked during the interview tried to see how much I would agree in the way they spoke about how they were treated by people from the majority in the Norwegian society. Others seemed to just want to know as my name is not Norwegian. I did answer when questioned, but often answered that I did not have an ethnic Norwegian background during the interviews or said no if they asked if I spoke certain languages that I did not speak, without going into too much detail of my ethnic origin. I was more willing to answer about my background after the interviews as I did not want my ethnic background to influence their answer by their perceived notions of people with a similar ethnic background as me. I cannot measure if this has influenced the participants answers in some way, but I can assume that they might have felt more comfortable and thus shared more as we do share some similarities of being a part of an ethnic minority (Parker & Song, 1995, p.250). I don't believe a White man or woman would have been asked the same questions regarding their background as I did. I also believe I got asked these questions because the participants were comfortable with me and wanted to know if I had any similarities with them. I did not experience the questions to be rude, but they made me think about my role and how they perceived me and the questions I asked.

My role as a researcher with an ethnic minority background might have made it easier for the informants to talk about their struggles with racism as they might have believed that I have faced similar issues or at least knew how it felt going to school or partaking in a Norwegian society because we share the experience of being a part of an ethnic minority (Parker & Song, 1995, p.250). This was a common thread for all the participants and, I did not experience the questions regarding racism or prejudice were hesitantly answered. I felt that the participants seemed comfortable during the interviews and talked freely about themselves and their experiences, and often mentioned "we", "me" included in the "we" while explaining certain issues they had faced due to their looks, name or other ethnic markers. Some participants directly asked "you are a foreigner, right?" or answered with an underlying tone of "you know how it is" implying that based on my ethnic background I might relate to the examples they were bringing up. Some used "you understand" or "we foreigners" as a means to insinuate

“me” and “them” are foreigners (“utlending”)<sup>6</sup> or that *you* might understand where I come from as we are both ethnic minorities, as opposed to others that do not share this characteristic. This echoes Song and Parkers experience of interviewees claiming points of commonality in relation to the researcher based on shared or presumably shared experiences (Song & Parker, 1995, p.247). While my background and position in society gives me certain advantages in the sense of understanding my informants based on our shared experiences, it is important that I analyse their answers critically while also understanding where their reasonings come from (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.108). There needs to be a certain distance between the researcher and the participants as to not cloud one’s critical thinking as similarities might make one more inclined to overlook certain findings one is used to seeing by being part of a group (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.108). This was something I was mindful of and have therefore been careful to base findings on the data collected during the interviews, rather than my personal opinion on the field.

Topics of racism, stereotypes and microaggressions might not be easy to talk about as it can bring up traumatic experiences, such as one instance where a participant visibly got upset when detailing a racist incident at their workplace. As I myself have experienced forms of racism and microaggressions, some of their examples did resonate with me, which made me ask more questions regarding this topic in a way that showed that I understood where they came from as well as wanting to understand how they handled these situations. I had several experiences with some of the participants detailing racist experiences they had endured which were tough to listen to as they were detailing how others had treated them badly. It is hard being on the receiving end of an interview relating to traumatic experiences due to racism in school and the workplace, however as a researcher it is not my role to be a therapist and I am not certified in giving psychological advice which I needed to be mindful of, at the same time I did not want to seem unemphatic in the way I questioned their responses or how they handled the situations (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.107). This was something I was mindful of during the interviews.

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<sup>6</sup> The Norwegian term “utlending” does not directly translate to immigrant, as it means foreigner, however in the context it is used in the interviews it might translate better with how the word immigrant is used in the English language as well as in American popular culture, such as in the musical Hamilton’s famous line “Immigrants-we get the job done”.

### **3. 10 Generalizability, Validity and Reliability**

Generalizability, validity and reliability are terms used to describe how strong a study is (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.272). As a researcher one strives to work within the utmost ethical guidelines to ensure that a study can fit these qualifications. As I have interviewed 13 people there is a limit to how representative one could say this study is. However, this study can give an insight to how some Norwegian young adults, with an ethnic minority background, do think about representation and questions in relation to that. Even though the participants often had similar opinions on the matter, one cannot say that this study represents every single young adult with an ethnic minority background's view on the matter discussed (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.289). As such this study does have its limitations on how generalizing it can be. As a researcher it is important to be mindful of the role one has as to avoid generalizing as it can lead to stigmatization of minority groups (NESH, 2021, p.30). Even though I am researching a topic concerning ethnic minorities, I am looking for the participants' personal opinion regarding representation, thus one cannot generalize the participants' view and expect everyone fitting in these categories to have the same opinions. In future studies one might not necessarily get the exact same answers as they are personal and thus be difficult to reproduce, however one could get similar sounding answers regarding this topic (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.276). As I am looking at their personal opinion and relation to film and TV-shows in relation to their ethnic background and the society they live in I am focusing on their individuality. By generalizing from a small sample I expect others of a similar background to act and feel the same, which reduces their individual lived experience.

This is not to say that this study's findings are not valid. Validity asks the question of the accuracy of the measure used, in other words do the results represent what they were going to measure? (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.272). I will argue that it does. I was very careful during the recruitment as well as during the interviews as to not let my personal opinions influence the participants' answers as well as ask them to clarify if something was unclear. As I had written about this topic in the media before I can not guarantee that the participants haven't read my article, however no one mentioned it to me during the interviews (Hadi, 2021). Sometimes I also repeated their answers before I asked them the next question to make sure I had heard correctly and let them make corrections if there had been a misunderstanding. Such as one instance where I perceived one informant's negative attitude towards horror movies was due to religious reasons, however he clarified it was due to him being traumatized

by being made to watch them by his older cousins rather than his parents' religious beliefs. By giving the participants an opportunity to confirm or deny my interpretation they were able to correct my misunderstandings, which strengthens the validity of the study.

Reliability says something about how reliable or trustworthy the results of the research project is (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p.137). Reliability also measures if other researchers would be able to reproduce the same results at another point in time by following the same steps I did (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 276). Therefore it has been important to be as transparent as possible in detailing the steps taken in gathering and analysing data for this project as the method choices made by me would have an impact on the results produced. An interview is shaped by the time it was conducted in. The majority of the participants used recent examples to illustrate their points, referencing fairly new films and TV-shows (at the time), such as *Shang-Chi and the legend of the ten rings* (2021) and *Squid Game* (2021). Had these interviews been conducted 10 years ago I believe the participants examples would have been different as there have been a change in film and TV-productions in regard to ethnic representation and ethnic minorities on screen. 10 years from now the answers might also differ due to the change in the mediasphere. However, that is not to say the results are not reliable, but they would rather reflect the time the study was conducted in.

## **4. Representation and its Several Meanings**

The focus in this study is how young adults with an ethnic minority background experience representation on screen. The participants happen to be in an intercultural position where they are raised by parents from other countries and a different cultural background, at the same time they are growing up in Norway with a Norwegian culture. Their experience of personal identity is constructed by several factors and might influence their perception of films and TV-shows. How they ascribe meaning to culture productions might then vary based on their upbringing, cultural and religious experience as well as emotions associated with such portrayals (Hall, 2013, p. xix). The aim of this chapter is to understand the participants' views on representation. First I will present a short description of the participants' viewing habits to better understand where the participants seek out entertainment and what their reference points are. I will then explore how the participants understand the term representation and how they view film and TV-shows in relation to representation by looking at it in relation to intersectionality and otherness. Then I present a contrasting opinion to the rest of the participants. I end the chapter with a presentation of an understanding of representation that relates to what some believe the purpose of representation is.

### **4.1 Viewing Habits**

The majority of the participants watched movies and/or TV-shows a couple of times a week, the most avid watched every day while some just on the weekends. They watched productions from different countries highlighting Norway, The United States of America, The United Kingdom and South Korea. Some also mentioned watching productions from India, Spain, France, Turkey, Japan, Pakistan and Sweden, as well as other but more infrequently mentioned countries. The language spoken was often the original language of the movie/TV-show, with Norwegian or English subtitles. The participants watched a variety of genres, highlighting action, drama, thrillers, comedies, documentaries, and romantic comedies as the most preferred. The participants watched both alone, or with family and friends as a social activity. The ones watching alone mentioned they would binge<sup>7</sup> TV-shows, consuming more TV-hours, while the ones mentioning they only watched with others often watched fewer times a week. However, this was not mutually exclusive as several participants both watched

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<sup>7</sup> To binge watch a TV-show refers to watching more than 3 episodes in one sitting, often in reference to watching TV-shows on streaming platforms such as Netflix where original content traditionally have been uploaded all at once, thus letting the viewer self-schedule when they want to watch an episode rather than follow traditional scheduled programming on linear TV (Jenner, 2016).



alone and with others. Asked if they watched traditional linear TV the participants answered they rarely or never do this anymore as the majority watched online on streaming platforms such as Netflix, Disney+, HBO Max, YouTube, NRKTV, Viaplay and Mubi, as well as at the cinema. Granted, NRKTV is an extension of the public service broadcaster NRKs channel catalogue made available online. By watching culture productions from a variety of countries, in a variety of languages, already tells us that the participants have a global view on movies and TV-shows, not restricted by a preference of only watching Norwegian productions.

To decide what to watch the majority of the participants relied on recommendations by friends, colleagues or family, IMDb or Rotten Tomato ratings, recommendations or ads on social media, film reviews in both Norwegian and International papers and by watching movie trailers. As well as using the “recommended for you” feature on streaming platforms such as on Netflix where it also shows you a percentage of how much the Netflix algorithm believes you would like a TV-show based on previous watched programs. Some participants also specifically looked at niche cinemas and their programs as well as the Norwegian Films from the South film festival showings as they felt such forums provided a more varied alternative to traditional cinemas. Some participants also mentioned choosing what to watch based on the language spoken in the film, highlighting the “watch by language feature” on Netflix. Thus, how the participants decided what to watch was based on several factors and often a combination of those.

## **4.2 Intersectionality and otherness**

Portrayals in film and TV-shows represent an insight in to how some view society.

Representation does not have a single fixed meaning as a viewer decodes a message in a way that makes sense to themselves, based on a lived experience (Hall, 2021, p. 250). Portrayals thus may be understood differently as how a person views certain topics is influenced by their upbringing, schooling, friends, family, ethnic background as well as other factors. This results in a broader explanation of the term “representation” by applying each participant’s individual understanding of representation as an idea rather than a single fixed meaning of what representation means and how people should be represented. Studying how ethnic minorities view representation might therefore be beneficial to understand how they experience representation in general, as well as how they believe they are represented by looking at what words they use to describe this topic and themselves in relation to it.

The majority of the participants associated representation to media portrayals. Connecting representation and identity was also a common thread as the participants defined representation in varied ways. When asked about what representation means to her, Saira, a woman of Pakistani origin says:

“If I think about my identity, like I know there are a lot of people that have opinions on Pakistanis and immigrants generally. So when I hear the word representation I think alright now I will represent myself in the best way possible and be proud of my culture, and put forward the good things about my culture, and if there is someone asking me about the negative aspects of my culture<sup>8</sup>, then I will be clear on the fact that it is not culture it is the negative aspects of the culture. I think representation means a lot. (pauses to think) It really depends on what one thinks of, but I just thought about identity”.

Saira connects representation to her identity of being of Pakistani origin as well as how other people view Pakistanis or immigrants. To her, it seems like it is important to oppose the negative image she alludes Pakistanis or other immigrants have by herself being “a good representative” and being proud of her cultural background. She views representation in relation to being a representative others can look to, to explain or to oppose the negative presentations of immigrants already existing in society. Focusing on her perception of her role as a representative she takes an active part in the rejection of portrayals she doesn’t believe match how she experiences her cultural background. This could be an indication of wanting to be understood as a multifaceted individual rather than boxed by other’s preconceived notions of her or other’s that share a similar background to her. This could also be understood as a form of resistance work in the sense Saira is resisting prevailing notions existing in society by actively dismissing negative assumptions people have of her cultural background when she is met by such comments (Van Laer & Janssens, 2017, p.200-201). As a result she is constructing a narrative on her own terms of what it means to be of Pakistani decent by correcting misconceptions she doesn’t agree with (Van Laer & Janssens, 2017, p.205; Andersson, 2022a, p.172). This form of resistance work focuses on rejecting existing

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<sup>8</sup> In Norwegian the participant used the word “ukultur”. This word can be translated as “negative aspects of the culture” or “bad habits within a culture”. As there is no direct translation or equivalent word for “ukultur” in English I have decided to write “negative aspects of the culture” as a translation for what she meant by using the Norwegian word.

narratives and can be understood as trying to redefine what it means to belong to certain groups.

Bashir, a man of Somali origin, on the other hand understood representation as something more than in connection to his ethnic background:

SH: right, so what does representation mean to you?

BASHIR: (...) like representation based on my identity is important, but I don't feel like it has...that I have experienced it a lot.

SH: can you elaborate?

BASHIR: right, so we always talk about...we always talk about like representation based on identity, Norwegian-Somali and Norwegian-Pakistani and so on, but I try to think of it more like a... It is more varied, like more "intersectional", because I and some others from Somalia that live in Norway can have different experiences. We can have different interests and we can be at different stages in life. So based on this you can't say that "but since you are a Norwegian-Somali and I am a Norwegian-Somali you can represent me and we have the same type of representation". Maybe that person is like 20 years older than me, maybe that person has another gender than me, maybe that person has a different class background, and all these factors will play in, one way or another. So I try to think that often with like identity it gets used as a marker of representation and like I feel that it doesn't always hit the brief. It leads to more disappointment than that you feel represented.

Bashir's reflections on representation suggests that his understanding of the term is not in line with the view of representation only being based on phenotypical traits, as he believes there needs to be more to a character than their ethnic background. His example illustrates the difference in representation in relation to ethnic background versus representation based on other factors such as class background, gender, age etc. Namely he is talking about a diverse form of representation. A representation that is not just based on external traits but is intersectional focusing on other aspects of a person as well. This form of representation plays on social identities and how individuals are more inclined to accentuate shared qualities with members of their own group while highlighting the differences one has with people belonging to other groups (Fiske, 2000, p.303-304). Even though Bashir belongs to an ethnic minority group, he is focusing on other shared qualities, such as age, gender and class background in

the way he identifies himself, stating that representation is not just about ethnic background, but consists of multiple identities, that can intersect. Bashir then draws a comparison between South Korean film *Parasite* (2019) and Somali-Finnish film *Guled & Nasra (The Gravedigger's Wife)* (2021) stating that:

“(…) If we go back to the Parasite thing, I feel that *this* is representation, that someone is talking about....my existence, *not* because we somehow share the same religion or culture, but you try to talk somehow universal.”

Elaborating he says:

“(…) Here is someone from South-Korea, I don't have anything in common with this person but somehow he manages to make a film about a life that is much more similar to mine than if, for example, I don't know a Norwegian-Somali or a Finnish-Somali had tried to make a film, right? (…)”

Clearly, ethnic background is not the only marker of representation for Bashir, as he expresses that for him representation is intersectional; focusing on other aspects of a person as well as external traits, highlighting other identity markers. By using words such as “my existence” and “universal” to describe what he believes representation should be about he is connecting representation to something other than just his background as a Norwegian-Somali. By mentioning other aspects of his identity, such as class background, gender, age etc., he is focusing on a more intersectional approach to media portrayals, rather than just the inclusion of minorities, thus highlighting the importance of intentional inclusion of minorities in film and TV-portrayals. By mentioning the intersectional aspect of representation Bashir raises an important point of the difference between visibility on screen and representation on screen by including the factor of shared experiences and being “seen”. By questioning what type of representation exists, Bashir reflects on how he feels more connected to a film portraying a South-Korean family rather than a film portraying people of Somali descent, thus highlighting representation based on shared experiences as important in his identification process.

Understanding the difference between visibility on screen and representation on screen may seem paradoxical as they both refer to diverse portrayals on screen, however the main difference is how the portrayals are presented (Lidchi, 2013, p.167). While visibility on screen focuses on being seen, representation takes into account how the characters are displayed with an added importance on which characteristics are highlighted. When Bashir says he feels more connected to the South Korean portrayal, he is highlighting the characters’

characteristics and the movie's storyline rather than how the cast or director looks like. This can be understood as Bashir's idea of representation as something that not only needs to be connected to looks. Even though he mentions it to be of importance during the interview, he believes there should be more focus on which stories that get told as people are different. Despite having the same ethnic background, members of such groups are diverse, in the same way White people are not all alike. This relates to how people who share the same ethnic background can have different genders, ages, occupations and interests among other things.

Bashir is not alone in wanting a diverse representation as several other participants criticise already existing TV-shows for only portraying a certain type of "immigrant" on screen, often in relation to criminal activities or in other stereotypical roles, such as the submissive woman, the violent father or the youth going through an identity crisis trying to fit in. The most recurring examples were *I7* (2018) and *Norsk-ish* (2020), both by NRK and available online on NRKTV. Haroon, a participant of Pakistani background, expresses that ethnic minorities get portrayed as "non-regular" people in *Norsk-ish* by pointing out that there always is an "identity problem" or a "religious problem" such characters face:

"(...) I always notice that there is some form of identity problem or religious problem. Their problem in a lot of what is presented in films and TV series is not oriented around everyday things they experience (...) but it will be very focused on religion, crime, identity crisis. Like, it won't be focused on the same issues that I would see an ethnically white Norwegian actor would have with their character in a TV-show, and it is something I notice again and again, and it is something that also irritates me a lot."

Haroon is here explaining how he notices a difference in how ethnic minorities are portrayed on screen versus how White Norwegians are portrayed by mentioning how he experiences there to be a difference in which topics are explored by which groups. Here Haroon is highlighting in-group vs. out-group relations in line with Halls belief of stereotyping being used as a divisive force dividing what is seen as normal and abnormal (Hall, 2013, p. 247). By mentioning how TV-shows including minorities often focus on topics in relation to religion or identity he believes that minorities are not awarded the same diverse portrayals as White Norwegians have, thus accentuating the difference between the two groups. This results in a presentation of minorities as someone that often deal with such topics, when in reality that might not be the case.

Haroon is not the only one using the word “non-regular” or “regular/normal” in explaining how ethnic minorities are portrayed on screen. Zaid, a man of Pakistani background, suggests that there is a connection between stereotypical portrayals and abnormality, stating that he would change the TV-channel if he believed a show to be “*very stereotypical, very like prejudicial, very like as if people with a specific background are not normal people (...)*”. This indicates that he does notice how ethnic minorities are represented on screen and makes an active choice to not participate in watching these depictions if he believes a show deliberately portray a group of people a certain way, by turning it off or changing the channel. Taking an active stance against what he believed was wrong seemed to be important for Zaid as he also mentions stopping watching TV-shows when the representation is “*too stereotypical or it is like a bit racist, and I feel that it’s not so recognizable for maybe the group that gets portrayed. And that there is a focus on a specific point of view that other groups have about them (...)*”. This could perhaps be understood as a silent and hidden form of resistance against what he believed was wrong. Thus not taking part in watching something because it doesn’t align with his values, as well as his views on what representation should be is his way of saying this is wrong. This form of resistance might not have an immediate impact on the continuation of the production of such shows, as there needs to be a public unity for something to be cancelled. Nonetheless, this form of activism can be used as a resource for identity work purposes in the sense that he stands up for what he believes in by not continuing to watch something he believes is wrong (Ugelvik, 2011, p.55). What both Zaid and Haroon talk about could also be understood as a form of experienced othering, highlighting certain tropes as to apply to specific groups expressed through stereotypical representations.

Asked about what representation meant to her, Malaika, a woman of Somali origin, believes that universal questions do not need to just be presented by White characters:

SH: What does representation mean to you?

Malaika: To me it means that one is able to depict the world one is taking inspiration from so that one doesn’t make “Girls” or “Unge lovende”<sup>9</sup> type of mistakes. But also in a way, this is also connected to the depiction, that like it is so natural to have White characters in the centre when the things they talk about could be experienced by

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<sup>9</sup> HBO’s *Girls* (2012-2017) and NRK’s *Unge Lovende* (2015-2018) are two TV-shows that have been criticized for not including ethnic minorities in their casts even though they are both set in cities such as New York and Oslo where there is a diverse demographic.

anybody really. I think that it is important that more people, not because I am Black, but more people; gay people, other minorities, people with disabilities, that one can see more of that, because it is so important for those growing up and others that they can see that they are a part of this society. That I can see myself. It is important! And it was a really fun experience taking my little brother with me to see Black Panther for example, and I believe he was like ten years old when it came out, and he was like wow super excited to see a superhero. A superhero that looked like him! And then I'm thinking like it is so important for those that are younger, but also us our age too, that are just not that used to so much of us in these types of roles or whatever.

Malaika here describes two important aspects of representation; portrayals of a diverse group of people as well as how these types of portrayals emotionally affect the viewer of said productions. She raises the question of why universal subject matters get presented by White characters, when they could be represented by anybody. Are universal stories only reserved for White people while others do not have the same issues? This echoes Bashir's understanding of representation and plays on an intersectional aspect of portrayals on screen. Malaika is essentially asking why ethnic minorities are othered and not offered the same creative narratives people from the majority has had access to for years, and highlights the importance of such portrayals by mentioning the emotional reaction her brother had as a result of finally seeing a superhero that looked "just like him". Zara, a woman of Pakistani origin, seems to agree stating that for her:

"(...) (representation) has a lot to do with that you are not a prop and that you don't have to squeeze in everything you know about a minority into one character. (...) Like, something more than that you see a Muslim character or a Pakistani character. That there is more meat on the bone. That the character is something more than their background, if one could say that? Like something more than their non-whiteness, not that it necessarily has something to do with being Muslim, but yeah like if you see a Muslim as someone who is not White then yeah..."

Both Zara and Malaika's examples highlight the feeling of otherness. Emphasising how those that are not seen as normal or mainstream are considered to be "the others", not valued enough to be centred, but rather used as a prop or a tool to illustrate diversity without actually enriching movies and TV-shows with new stories. They feel that people like them get othered based on their background, rather than their personality or occupation. Zara also mentions that minorities are seen in light of their non-whiteness, suggesting othering based on looks or

ethnic background. Malaika on the other hand talks about othering in the sense of which roles figuratively and literally there are available for people with a minority background, regardless of if it is based on ethnic background or being part of other minority groups. One's minority status thus may play a part in how a character is perceived in contrast to how characters of majority background are not defined by a characteristic and meaning allotted to these characteristics. This plays into how stereotypes exaggerate specific characteristics and reduce a person to those traits rather than being seen as a multifaceted individual, which illustrates how people accentuate differences between out-groups and minimize differences between in-groups (Hall, 2013, p. 247, Fiske, 2000, p.304; Andersson, 2022a, p.61). This can be seen in relation to how representation on screen has the ability to establish for audiences who members of a group are, thus by repeatedly showing minority characters in set and simplified roles, the viewer might believe members of this group in fact do behave this way (Omi, 2017, p. 466-467). So when Zara mentions that representation has something to do with not being a prop and that the character is something more than their background she is focusing on minority portrayals not highlighting their minority status, but rather seeing the characters equal to their White counterparts that are not defined by them being White.

Being placed in an out-group based on exterior traits suggests that these traits are important to decide who is considered normal and to differentiate who belongs in the in-groups versus who belongs in the out-group. This is also known as racialization, the social process of which ethnic markers have meaning, often used in regimes of oppression (Fenton in Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013, p.180). Distinguishing based on ethnic markers thus suggests that there is a form of "cultural insiderism" that is based on phenotypical traits rather than other aspects of a culture, such as traditions, language or rituals (Gilroy, 1993, p.3). This might be because learned traits could differ based on upbringing or learned at a later age, while you are born with your ethnic markers, thus those markers represent "difference" through the body by being the first trait a person sees and bases their categorization process on (Hall, 2021, p.233). Typical of a racialized form of representation is stereotyping and reducing out-groups to the signifiers of their physical difference, such as hair type, eye shape or nose size (Hall, 2021, p.234-237). When the participants mention words such as "abnormal", "non-regular" and "non-white" to explain how ethnic minorities often get portrayed suggests that they are aware of such othering practices in the media as well as understand how some people who look like them are perceived. This legitimizes the negative feelings they have, such as how Bashir feels disappointed or how Haroon feels irritated by portrayals of ethnic minorities on screen, as



well as brings positive reaction when such portrayals change, such as how Malaika and her brother got excited seeing a superhero who looked “just like him”.

### **4.3 “My reality is outside, it is not on the TV-screen”**

Alex, a man of Vietnamese background, viewed representation in a rather different way than the rest of the participants highlighting that he didn't really care about representation on screen as it was fiction. However, racism and discrimination in real life was more important as it does happen to him, while he saw TV and film as only entertainment, happening on screen. Asked about how important film and TV were to influence his perception of other people, he said *“It surely affects many people, however for me I don't feel like I get influenced by it because my reality is outside, it is not on the TV-screen”*. Here he is highlighting a key difference between the life he is actively living and the film and TV-portrayals that ultimately are entertainment. This is an important distinction Alex makes and could be understood as the reason why he does not put as much emphasis on representation on screen as the other participants did.

Elaborating on why he believes some get influenced by what they watch he says *“They don't know better, they haven't experienced it outside. For example, my mom watches YouTube but she hasn't experienced what she watches on YouTube, and she believes that what she watches on YouTube is true, but it could be edited”*. Here Alex is acknowledging that people do get affected by portrayals on screen, however he explains it by saying it is because of lack of knowledge and real-life experience. This is in line with Omi's belief that racial stereotypes can become real in the minds of audiences due to repeated depictions, thus manifesting those stereotypical beliefs as “common sense” rather than stereotypes (Omi, 2017, p.470). One can therefore understand Alex's perspective on representation to be that portrayals on screen do affect those that are not familiar with other groups, and even if such portrayals present minorities in a stereotypic way, it doesn't affect Alex to the same degree as the other participants - unless he meets racism in real life.

Even though Alex personally didn't view representation on screen as of importance he acknowledged that others do. He highlights blackface as something he understood people perceived as wrong because he experienced others react to it, however he wouldn't necessarily care if people did yellowface on screen as he didn't get offended:

SH: What do you think of actors changing their appearance with makeup to portray other ethnicities?

Alex: Nothing much. (...) if he is Black in real life and then plays a White character or plays as a...what was that movie name again?

SH: White Chicks?

Alex: Yes! For example White Chicks, like you know that they are (Black), but it is funny.

SH: What if it was the other way around, that they were White playing Black?

Alex: Well then it would have been a completely different story, absolutely, but for me I wouldn't have cared.

SH: Why would it have been a different story?

Alex: Because I feel like Black people get offended by it.

SH: What if a White person were to portray an Asian person?

Alex: I wouldn't have cared. But when it comes to White and Black, it doesn't work.

SH: No?

Alex: No, it doesn't work.

SH: But Asian?

Alex: They can do whatever they want (laughs).

SH: Latin-American?

Alex: Whatever they want.

This quote illustrates Alex' indifference to racist portrayals on screen where he distinguishes between his personal opinion and others perception of the same question. He clearly doesn't get offended by racist portrayals on screen, both of other ethnic groups and his own ethnic group. However, he is aware of the fact that others do find offense, especially in questions regarding blackface. He goes on to highlight a recent Norwegian TV-show controversy<sup>10</sup> as an example of racist TV-portrayals that he personally didn't mind as he "didn't care if someone was to portray Asians", but due to the media response the show got pulled of air before he was able to watch the controversial episodes. However, if people were racist directly to him or someone he knew he would handle it differently stating that "*If I meet a dude that's racist against me, I wouldn't ignore it! I would say "what the hell is wrong with you?!" If I watch a movie and see a fucker being racist against an Asian, then it's a movie*".

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<sup>10</sup> TV-host Nicolay Ramm dressed, put on make-up and used an "Asian" accent to portray a Japanese TV-show host in a TV-show on NRK called "Japanese Ramm Show". The TV-show was inspired by Japanese gameshows and included several famous athletes competing on it. The TV-show got criticized for the way people of Asian descent was portrayed and got cancelled due to the strong reactions online (Christensen & Hansen, 2021).

Differentiating between real life and on-screen seems to highlight Alex' belief that film and TV is only entertainment, and puts representation into a new perspective in relation to the other participants' views on the topic. Alex was in minority as he was the only participant that personally didn't highlight representation and diversity as something of particular importance to him, stating that the production and entertainment aspect of the movies and TV-shows to be of more importance than how diverse a show is. However, that didn't mean he wasn't aware of there being a difference in the way ethnic minorities are portrayed on screen, he just didn't care in the same regard as the other participants did.

The difference between Alex' perception of portrayals of ethnic minorities on screen and the other participants' perceptions is that Alex did not focus on the dangers of negative portrayals of minorities on screen to the same degree as the other participants, and concentrated mainly on film and TV as entertainment. Even though he did not put emphasis on minority portrayals he does acknowledge there to be a difference in portrayals of people of minority vs. majority background. Nevertheless, he was more concerned with how others treated him in real life as opposed to how people of minority background got portrayed on screen.

#### **4.4 Symbolic Representation**

Representational practices are able to mark, assign and classify, in other words define, how one thing stands for something else (Hall, 2013, p. 249). Thus how something is represented could be connected to how one views how others behave, speak, which values one hold, opinions one expresses etc., which are important in questions regarding representation as they help diversify groups that are traditionally lumped together based on one shared characteristic (Hall, 2013, p. 249; Omi, 2017, p. 468). One could therefore say representation holds a form of symbolic power reflecting prevailing discourses in society, which continues to shape opinions of others leading them to believe what they see on screen mirrors reality (Hall, 2013, p. 249; Omi, 2017, p. 466-467). Omar, a man of Somali background, mentions representation as something other than how someone looks, but rather which opinions one has and which roles one takes. He says that representation based on looks is not really representation because if that person stands for the same views as the rest of the people already represented one hasn't contributed to anything other than colourful pictures one can use as advertisement. Therefore he believes representation is something more than external traits and cultural or religious background, but also which opinions these people have and how these opinions get relayed to others.

Elaborating he says:

“Representation is when one has people from different social strata, of different ethnicities, genders, religions represented in a place. But not necessarily just represented, because often people use words such as diversity, and I’m not really a fan of the word diversity, because one can have a large company and then they say we like diversity because we have a person with a darker face and that one person never talk about that people with a different background earn less, don’t get to take a day off when it is Eid or Diwali, they get treated so and so and get called such and such. I often then think, you know what; diversity is a cover many like to use. Representation too. They are words that we have used that now get used by the people that are not really for either diversity or representation. So for me representation is when one has people that look like rest of society, every part of society, and they talk for every part of society (...). If one has ten dark faces but all ten think exactly the same as everyone else then one doesn’t really have representation, one has a nice photo opportunity, that’s it really.”

Omar believes representation occurs when “one has people that look like rest of society, every part of society, and they talk for every part of society”. He focuses on looks and opinion in his description, which can be understood as highlighting a combination of exterior traits and cultural or religious background and personal opinions in his understanding of the term. He emphasizes how representation only occurs when one has a variety of opinions and he asks what the point of representation is if the people that are supposed to represent have the same opinions as those already existing in society. Distinguishing between looks and opinions seems to be an important factor in deciding what representation is, as representation based on just appearance is not enough for Omar. It could be understood that he believes that the diversity of the subjects in question are not of importance when they mean the same as others, however when one showcases different opinions representation plays out. This is in line with Halls view on representation where he emphasises how the production of meanings happens through language (Hall, 1997, p.17). By highlighting how he believes the words representation and diversity are just a cover for reproducing the same narratives, Omar feels like representation is not really happening because those who are representing are saying the same as what has been said before. Thus Omar believes that representation is not just about how a person looks, but also a variety of opinions that get illustrated on screen. This is in contrast to other participants statements highlighting appearance (as well as other factors) as

important for representation, while Omar has focused on a diversification of opinion, along with appearance, as an important factor for representation. Thus Omar believes representation should not be symbolic and for show, but rather challenge existing narratives as well.

Chloe seems to agree with the statement that representation should not be symbolic by bringing up Marvel movie *Eternals* (2021) as a recent example:

SH: What do you think about when you hear diversity in film?

Chloe: I think that the majority of ethnicities are included, and sexualities too, they are also included. (...) But, sometimes I feel like they just do it to appeal to the audience if you get what I mean? It is not just to make a good movie or a TV-show, and I felt it was that way with *Eternals* as well, because there you could...like sometimes I feel like one should just pick some good actors and like what fits, but not just to appeal to someone if you get what I mean? Like to appeal to an audience eh it can get too diverse sometimes.

SH: How so?

Chloe: Its just...you just want to include it, but there is no purpose to it, the only purpose is to make money or get money out of it. But is the purpose to make a good movie? Or is it not to offend anyone if you only have a white cast or like just Asians for example?

Elaborating she says:

Chloe: Like I said with *Eternals*, it's just as if...as if they were trying to tick some boxes. As if it must be a good movie because we have all types of people and stories one can tell, but it gets too much because it is not just one or two stories, it's like five stories you have to keep up with, so it almost gets too much. (...) *Eternals* is a very long movie and I couldn't like keep up with who stood for what and I didn't understand everyone's characters. It is like a little bit of everybody, and I don't believe that makes a good movie.

Chloe believes the movie *Eternals* (2021) to be a failed attempt of representation due to feeling that the inclusion of minorities in the movie was to tick boxes rather than inclusion of minority characters on par with how majority characters are portrayed. She mentions how she didn't feel connected to the characters because too much was happening and asks if it was necessary to include such a diverse group of people if it doesn't serve the story and just

confuses the audiences. Chloe also highlights another question: Are minorities included just to please an upcoming social media storm highlighting the lack of minority voices portrayed, or are they included as complete characters with their own storylines that are a part of the plot? These questions illustrate how topics surrounding representation on screen are not just about how the actors look, but also which roles they occupy and the purpose behind those roles and what it means for the audiences.

The main point Omar and Chloe makes is that representation is not just about looks and that there should be a purpose behind the representation that is taking place. It should not just be to “tick some boxes”. One might then wonder, do they have the same requirements for movies and TV-shows that are just featuring the majority population or do they judge all entertainment by the same standard? It does seem like they hold productions featuring minorities to a higher standard than other productions, however that could be because they are more critical towards productions featuring their own in-group of ethnic minorities. This could also be because they want their in-group to reflect how they themselves see its members, which are diverse and not constrained to one trait, as they often have been portrayed to do (Omi, 2017, p. 468). It could also be because they acknowledge the symbolic power media representations hold. Therefore, what they believe is a correct form of representation is one including varied portrayals of different types of minorities. Thus, by criticizing productions that don't do this they are acknowledging representation to be about varied and diverse representation that has a purpose, rather than for show or to fill a quota to avoid complaints of a lack of minorities on screen.

#### **4.5 Concluding Comments**

The participants highlighted different aspects in relation to their understanding of representation. The majority of the participants associated representation to media portrayals. Connecting representation and identity was also a common thread as the participants defined representation in varied ways. Some talked about representation in relation to external traits, while others focused more on a character's position in society, personality and view on life, highlighting that not everything is about looks. Participants from all three ethnic backgrounds expressed that there is a focus on negative representation, highlighting otherness as one of the main points for their disapproval of existing portrayals of minorities in western media. Notably several of the participants mentioned examples of a lack of representation in their

explanation of what representation is, which signifies that what is currently on offer does not meet their standards of what representation is or should be.

Several participants stated they were extra observant when ethnic minorities were included in western productions and expected stereotypes or bad representations to show up on screen. They also called for an intersectional representation highlighting that ethnic minority representation is important, but so are portrayals of people with different sexual orientations as well as people with disabilities. Some also highlighted a longing for a variety of stories that get told, as they were tired of the same old ones playing on identity struggles and cultural conflicts as the base of the plots. However, that is not to say that everyone cares about representation to the same degree, as illustrated by Alex' point of view. In sum my main finding of this chapter is that there seems to be certain expectations of what representation should be, and these expectations are currently not met.

## 5. Belonging on Screen

The magic of storytelling is that it is able to convey emotions and create a sense of understanding for what the characters go through for the viewers. This chapter explores how the participants understand representation when presented with an example of a minority focused TV-show. Looking at representation in connection to how it can convey feelings of enjoyment, distaste and scepticism depending on group affiliation. I first present how portrayals on screen can create a sense of belonging for the participants. Second, I present the participants opinion on TV-show *We Are Lady Parts* and discuss the participants opinion of this show in relation to group affiliation.

### 5.1 Sense of Belonging

The participants I interviewed have a multicultural identity, combining a Norwegian upbringing with cultural influences from their parent's or their own place of birth. Language spoken is often a marker of cultural belonging (Hall, 2013, p.xxi). Asked about how many languages the participants spoke, the majority mentioned at least three, with Norwegian, English and their mother tongue being the third language. As mentioned earlier the participants did not shy away from foreign movies and TV-shows, often using subtitles to understand what is said on screen. Several participants highlighted the role language had when watching films and TV-shows, stating that they felt a stronger connection to a character if they spoke their mother tongue. Saira mentions she got excited when a character spoke Urdu in Korean Netflix hit *Squid Game*:

SH: If you see it in relation to movies and TV-shows, what does representation mean to you?

Saira: I of course get really happy and I'm like "oh shit! There is a Pakistani acting". Like the guy in *Squid Game*, when he spoke Urdu, and even though he was an Indian actor, but that he was representing Pakistan, with the language. I found it very exciting and got very happy he had that role, and you get a little extra fond of the person (the character), I at least notice that. Ehm other..well in other movies and such too, when like I see someone maybe speaking either Hindi or Urdu I am like "wow that was so cool!" so yeah I do find it fun.

However, asked about if language is important to her when watching a TV-show Saira says:



No, I don't believe it is. As I said, I watch everything so no, not really. It's still a bit cool though, to see that they speak a different language, and I think everyone notices it. If there is a Hollywood film and suddenly there's a Norwegian character who had thrown in a Norwegian line, Norwegians would have...I know Norwegians would be very proud and happy.

Saira first says that she finds it cool that characters speak Urdu or Hindi on screen, leading to a sense of proudness and feeling, in a way, represented on screen. Then she says that language isn't that important to her, however she gets happy when a part of her identity is acknowledged. This contradiction of her saying that language is not really that important, but at the same time gets excited when she encounters such representations can be understood as her saying that everyone would get excited if a part of their identity is portrayed on screen through language. She explains it by saying that her getting excited hearing Urdu in a Korean TV-show is the same as a Norwegian person hearing Norwegian in a Hollywood production. This can be understood as her trying to normalize her excitement as not something out of the ordinary even though a part of her identity is being recognized. Language on screen can thus be seen as a mechanism for group affiliation and encourage a sense of proudness as it evokes a sense of belonging due to knowledge of language or cultural expressions. Along with Saira, several participants brought up both the language spoken on screen and the actors background as something that evoked a sense of proudness when it aligned with their background as well as values.

Language is also important for storytellers. During a panel discussion I attended after a showing of *The Gravedigger's Wife*, director and writer Khadar Ayderus Ahmed tells the audience he struggled to get funding for the film, one reason being the language spoken on screen was Somali. He wanted to make a film in Somali, for people of Somali descent, so that they are able to watch a movie in their mother tongue without needing subtitles<sup>11</sup>. He said investors suggested the character speak French to reach more people, however that went against Khadar's intention of having a Somali-speaking film which happened to be set in a location it would be unnatural to speak French. Seeing this in relation to representation and the importance of language and "feeling seen" one might then wonder if a change in language spoken by the actors would have had the same effect on the audience as the movie did by having Somali speaking actors.

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<sup>11</sup> Also mentioned by Farah (2021)

Just as language can suggest a sense of belonging so can appearance. Asked about her relationship to films and TV-shows Linh talks about how she doesn't really see people looking like her on screen and how that affects her:

SH: Could you tell me about your relationship with movies and TV-shows?

Linh: Yes, eh so when you grow up you see what's on TV, and it is mostly Norwegian programs and Norwegian-speaking (programs) so I've never felt that there isn't any representation for me except for when my mother was watching TV, which was in Vietnamese. So I've always seen Norwegian people on TV, like on children's TV there are always Norwegians, there are no immigrants so it was very difficult for me to relate to them. But the older one gets the more one wants to find representation of one's own culture, but I feel like finding Vietnamese people is difficult because it is not as popular. But, when I was 15 I started watching k-dramas, Korean dramas, and that was a step better than what I used to watch because it was Asians and it wasn't Norwegian and then it was people that actually looked like me, so that was cool. But it was something *I* had to go and look for, it wasn't something I could flip the channel to on the TV and it being there. So, I feel like movies and TV-shows were online because it was easier to find it that way, but it would have been fun to be able to turn on the TV and just see (laughs) Asians on TV. I don't remember the TV-hosts name from NRK, Solvang? No?

SH: Yes, Fredrik Solvang?

Linh: Yes, So he was Asian and he looks like my dad, like it was fun to see a little representation there, but otherwise it was difficult to find yourself on TV.

Linh highlights the visual and linguistic aspect of representation on screen when she reflects on her relationship with film and TV-shows. For her, both the language spoken on screen as well as how the actors and presenters look are important, which can be understood as a way of validating her existence as a part of society equal to her fellow Norwegian citizens. The lack of Asian representation on Norwegian television led her to look for it elsewhere, and even then she didn't really find any Vietnamese representation. However, she found something similar to what she was missing in Korean produced television. As previously discussed there has been a rise in popularity of Korean produced entertainment and other cultural products (Kim, 2022, p.5). This helps challenge the dominance American and European entertainment hold in Norway, and is something several participants highlighted as a welcomed

development due to the high production value, the stories told, as well as the inclusion of Asian actors and actresses in more prominent roles as opposed to the roles they typically have held in western entertainment. This finding occurred regardless of background and religious affiliation, and can be understood as a wish for a diversification of the screen, such as the inclusion of more people with a varied background, rather than presenting a homogeneous cast and storyline.

Linh also brings up relatability as a factor for her enjoyment of movies and TV-shows. She says that she couldn't really relate to what she saw on TV as the ones on screen not only weren't Vietnamese, but there weren't any with an immigrant background as well. As a child she had limited resources and knowledge of where she could look for other productions that satisfied her expectations of what she wanted to watch, and started to explore other options as she got older. Linh says she wishes she didn't have to look for portrayals that that included minorities on her own, and says it would have been nice to just flip the channels and finding Asians on screen. As Linh's wish for relatability led her to look for TV-shows elsewhere there seems to be a change in the recent media landscape where there has been a change in who is on screen now compared to who was on screen when Linh was younger. This can be exemplified with how the news anchor for the children's news program on NRK Super, which is NRK's children's TV-channel, was Salamatu «Sally» Kamara. She is a woman with an ethnic minority background, that also sits in a wheelchair. By employing her NRK has set an example of inclusion, that previously was not there, and created an environment that shows children that being of minority background as well as sitting in a wheelchair is not necessarily a limit, they too can become hosts on TV.

Linh is not the only participant highlighting how someone looks as a vessel for a sense of belonging. Reflecting around what representation meant to them Kim says:

“It means a lot. I believe it is because I am raised in Norway and that I don't feel that I belong even though it is my whole identity that I am raised here. So representation really means to find a place to belong, someone to recognize myself in, and there are so many for others to recognize themselves in, but like there are so few that are just Vietnamese in a TV-show. That are just is that. That I can be like “cool! Someone who looks like me!” or you know what? Representation for me is as simple as not feeling alone...because you already live in a society where one might feel alone when it

comes to the cultural identity and like I feel it is something others have that I would like to have, and when there is so little representation already, the tiny bit of representation that exist matters so much more”

Representation for Kim means to belong. Kim brings up that even though they are raised in Norway they don't feel like they belong. Kim feels like the portrayals on screen are not fair as there are so many for others to recognize themselves in, but few that are just Vietnamese. This has led to a feeling of alienation. Kim doesn't want to feel alone, but the current representations have unfortunately not filled the empty space Kim feels there is. Kim says representation leads to belonging due to feeling reflected on screen. This can be understood as Kim reflecting around a double consciousness of being aware that they are Norwegian, but has roots from other places as well. W.E.B Du Bois' term relates to how one sees “the self” through the eyes of others (Du Bois in Andersson, 2022a, 101-102). This relates to how those in power positions are able to shape the narratives of minorities, thus leading to Kim feeling a sense of estrangement even though they possess the qualifications that makes them Norwegian. Kim also mentions the same proudness relating to seeing oneself on screen Linh talks about. There seems to be a recurring connection between sense of self and portrayals on screen relating both to how one views oneself based on existing portrayals, as well as, a connection between how others see you in relation to existing portrayals. Representation is thus acknowledging their existence and leading to a sense of belonging due to finding someone to recognize themselves in.

Kim's belief that representation is important to acknowledge their existence and their cultural identity can also be understood as a way of showing others that people of different backgrounds are not homogeneous, but rather hold different qualities, which echoes the majority of the participants understanding of representation as well. Several of the participants shared the same view of wanting to watch more representation on screen, and made an active choice to watch other countries' productions, highlighting k-dramas and sought out other streaming platforms such as Mubi which offers a more curated film selection. In addition to seeking out American and British-produced productions that contain a greater diversity of actors, such as Michaela Coel's *I may destroy you* (2020) or Issa Rae's *Insecure* (2016), as well as productions from their home country published on YouTube. This is not to say that all the participants avoided seeing any Norwegian productions, but that the desire for a broader portrayal on screen led them to seek out other suppliers who could offer them what they felt they had not been offered locally.

## 5.2 We Are Lady Parts

“(…) if I know that a TV-show or a movie has an element of a non-white narrative, even though it also centres whiteness I guess, I automatically get interested in watching it and be like “alright how well done is it?”

A recurring topic during the interviews were their experience of the portrayals of minorities on screen. The comment above was made by Zara and illustrates an opinion I noticed the majority of the participants had when discussing productions including ethnic minorities on screen. They expressed being wary of how minorities were going to be portrayed on screen due to previous negative experiences of stereotypical and prejudicial portrayals, which both had related to their ethnic or religious background. I was therefore curious about their opinion when I presented them with a TV-show centred around what can be perceived as a non-white narrative.

As mentioned in the method chapter, at the end of the interviews I showed a 3 minute clip from the introduction of the first episode from the Channel 4 TV-series *We Are Lady Parts* (2021). The TV-clip consist of two scenes. In the first scene we are introduced to the main character Amina and her parents. They are at home sitting opposite a man and his parents at what seems like a first meeting between the two families that might be heading down the road of holy matrimony. In the scene they are heavily playing on common stereotypes such as the man having a long beard, the family seeming to be very conservative as well as having a negative view on music, colourful clothing and such. There is an obvious contrast between the main character and her family who seem bubbly and funny and the man she is meeting and his family who seem highly conservative and strict. In the next scene we meet a punk band consisting of three Muslim girls, of different ethnic backgrounds, playing various instruments as well as a vaping niqabi covered woman that manages the band. The band is singing:

*I'm gonna kill my sister (Go on then!)*

*This ain't about you, it's between her and me*

*She stole my eyeliner (What a bitch)*

*And she's been stretching my shoes out with her fucking big feet*

*It's an honour killing, it's an honour killing*

*It's an honour killing, it's an honour killing*

The band is obviously playing on honour killings and stereotypes with this lyric. Showing the clip generated mixed responses as some seemed very excited laughing loudly and coming with acknowledging comments during the clip, while others seemed more silent. One participant excitedly exclaimed that this was exactly the representation that she had previously talked about that she was missing. Another participant that had seen the show before mentioned that she loved the show so much she immediately rewatched it after watching it for the first time. On the other side there was one participant who mentioned that this was a kind of show he would turn off while being 1,5 minutes into the clip. These mixed perceptions of the clip were clearly divided by religious background. The majority of the Muslims, except three seemed positively interested and approving of the portrayal of Muslim characters in the clip. Those who were not approving were curious as to see where the episode was heading, except Jamal who had seen the episode before. Asked about his thoughts of the clip Jamal says:

Eh I just think that in a way it is...I feel it has an intention to break stereotypes and that is very nice but then I wonder, and I don't have the answers myself, but what kind of stereotypes will then give way, right? For now they are breaking a stereotype when a woman in niqab is smoking weed, and that there is a hijabi, and that she is nerdy and weird. So in a way it is nice that one creates a... in a way creates more portrayals of minority girls, which is pretty nice, but the question is: Will it last in the long run? Right? The idea is good but the continuation, these people's everyday lives and life, like will it gradually get realer? Will one recognise oneself in them or will it be a made-up truth?

Asked to clarify Jamal says:

Will these characters become a new idea of what one can be or in a way become more human or do they become very characterised like do they go from breaking from one stereotype to play another new stereotype. Will the weed-smoking niqabi girl be more than that? Is that the whole story? Is that the whole story because at first glance it is very interesting, but in the long run it is always.. – it is just another stereotype. What more are there in her? Like what more are there to her?

Jamal questions the sincerity of the showrunners in combatting stereotypes. He is asking the question of if these portrayals are just another way of creating new stereotypes without actually creating characters that are multidimensional with depth. Characters that are not just

dominated by a couple of surface-level traits which are supposed to be their characteristics. And will this just be another orientalist portrayal of characters of minority background? As ethnic minorities on screen often have been reduced to a stereotype this seems to be echoing other portrayals of ethnic minorities for Jamal (Omi, 2017, p. 469). However, one could also ask: are we expecting too much from a TV-show? How much importance are we actually putting on a comedic television series and its portrayal of fictional characters?

Questions of history and power suggests that there indeed is a point in reviewing portrayals of minority groups in popular culture as it can lead to action (Omi, 2017; Said 2003). By only showing certain groups as one type their individuality is ignored and members of a group are seen as one. This especially applies to minorities that have been stuck in one type of portrayal, such as Muslims and their subject to orientalist perceptions. Controlling the narrative of how ethnic minority portrayals are shown can shape the social realities existing in society, thus when someone connects Islam to terrorism one might believe that all Muslims share extremist traits, stripping them of their individuality based on nationality and culture (Selod, 2018, p.8). Looking back at Malaika's call for universal stories suggests that the need for more varied stories is not unfounded as symbolic power is exerted through representational practices (Hall, 2021, p. 249). Thus, there is a reason to believe that portrayals in TV-shows have meaning. I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

The participants with a Vietnamese background also had mixed responses regarding the clip that was shown. As no one had a Muslim affiliation I was curious of what they thought of the Muslim portrayals. Several seemed hesitant in their approval of this type of representation at first glance, except Alex who expressed: *"It had good humour. There were a lot of things that were unnormal and yeah you don't really see a hijab babe smoking weed for example. It was funny."* and *"I think my girl would have liked it. For me it's like..it seems like a nice series just for like girl-power. For me it just becomes like ah..but it was hella funny"*. Kim on the other hand was not sure how they should react as they weren't part of the group portrayed:

*"oh my god! I don't even really know, it is a bit to think about (laughs) ehm... on one hand it shows something that probably many people experience in relation to a clash between identities, but to show it as clearly as they have it becomes really really strong stereotypes. A large clash. And like I can't really relate a 100% to such culture-identity-clashes so I don't know how accurate it is to experience it in such way. So, for me it is hard to put it in a context when I don't know the context myself and I find it hard to laugh at something that I don't have any relation to because if it is funny then*

it can be funny for people that are like “Yeah! Yeah, Shit I relate to that” or it could be like “Oh! That was...very stereotypical. A bit uncomfortable”, and it is easier to relate if you're in a way a part of that environment. (...)

Kim mentioned several times that they were unsure of how they should interpret the clip as some aspects were funny, however Kim was questioning if it is appropriate to laugh at cultural or religion inspired jokes if one did not have the same background as the ones on screen. Questioning if it is appropriate to laugh or not based on their own background suggests that there are certain rules that exist for certain groups, thus even though Kim has a minority background they are not part of the same ethnic or religious group portrayed on screen. Would Kim have experienced it differently if they were Muslim but not of the same ethnic background as the characters on screen?

Kim then says:

“(...) It is cool to see that one has started to like explore these themes and to have these types of main characters but it doesn't necessarily mean that it will be perfectly done, and that one can't have a critical approach to it. I almost always have a critical approach when I watch all these types of issues, not because it cannot be funny but it just is that one is not used to seeing it represented, and it takes time to process how this type of representation will unfold. Especially because the debate surrounding Muslim values and such is very heated in Norway, so then I don't know how beneficial it is to counteract these types of stereotypes by splitting immigrant groups in two and be like “so yeah either you are mega conservative or you are like this - and we are more like you” if you get what I mean? Because a part of the debate is also about accepting people because they *are* more conservative in certain areas (...)

Here Kim says that they almost always have a critical approach to watching something when they are not “a part of that environment” as it is unusual because they “are not used to seeing it represented” as well as “it takes time to process how this type of representation will unfold”. This echoes Jamal's experience of the clip as he also questions how such portrayals will play out in the future. Both of them seem to highlight the societal implications of ethnic minority portrayals, thus connecting representation on screen to the society outside.

Regardless of the participants ethnic background they were interested in knowing who made this show as that seemed to be a deciding factor, often changing the participants' negative view to a more positive one when they learned the creator of the show, Nida Manzoor, had a



minority background as well (IMDb, 2022). This was especially the case when asking if the sender of the message would have an influence on their view of the show, exemplified by Chloe and Kim changing their mind to approve the message while Jannah and Zaid didn't approve as they expressed that the characters are a bad Muslim representation catering to the majority population regardless of who created the show. Chloe highlights how she initially didn't really find the marriage scene funny as she has friends that had been through something similar stating that her friends "had found their great love, but didn't get to marry them" because of their parent's wishes. Asked if she would change her mind if I told her that later on it would be revealed that the main character herself had initiated her parents being there for the date, Chloe changed her mind stating that "*yes actually (laughs) because I thought it was as usual, like I said, that you get forced into it. But if she was the one initiating then it is just funny. But I don't know the whole story (laughs), one can stomach it easier when it is not forced and such*". Questioning existing perceptions did not seem the case for Chloe as she thought it was just a repetition of her friend's real life experience, thus strengthening her belief that this is normal in Muslim communities. However, as she gained new information she changed her mind stating that the clip is funny instead of her initial reaction of negativity due to her previous experience with the theme. Thus, context seems to be an important factor in how the clip is perceived as the participants only got shown the first couple minutes of the entire TV-show.

Asked about if he perceives the characters as stereotypical Alex answers "no, they do a lot of the exact opposite of stereotypes". This was a common thread for all the participants as everyone mentioned the TV-shows satiric play on stereotypes. Even though some questioned the sincerity of it, as exemplified by Haroon:

SH: What are your thoughts on the clip?

Haroon: Eh (laughs) So I don't know if they are making fun of the stereotypes (laughs) if that is the intention, because then they have done a pretty good job (laughs) Because it was incredibly silly (laughs). Like the characters, they ticked all the boxes: lack of tolerance, idiots, lack of social antennas, religious, music is haram. Like they ticked all those boxes so I hope... and then there is this girl in the burqa that is rocking out and talking about that this is an honour killing because she took my eyeliner. So, it is obviously a little satirical to make fun of the stereotypes. So, it was actually a little

fun, and it is a real shame if I misinterpreted it because (laughs) they were very silly characters.

SH: In what way were they silly?

Haroon: Like if the intention was that there was going to be a little more serious representation of Muslims or individuals with a minority background when they are talking about honour killings then they have ticked all the boxes for absolutely everything that is wrong. That is to represent a...to build on racist stereotypes in every possible way. It is *only* based on racist stereotypes, so in that way it is incredibly harmful, but if it is in the form of making fun of those stereotypes then it was actually quite fun.

Haroon asks the question of if the stereotypical portrayal in the beginning of the clip is intentional and if it was, then that is a clever way to play on the stereotypes, to make fun of them instead of the stereotypes being used to define a person by portraying the characterized traits as fixed by nature (Hall, 2021, p. 247). The intention of the showrunners clearly influences the participants answers as exemplified by both Chloe and Haroon. Haroon's answer highlights his disapproval of common stereotypes, but he believes that by using them in a satirical way the creator of the show has done a good job in making fun of how Muslim characters have been portrayed through the years (Hawkins, Coles, Saleem, Moorman & Aqel, 2022, p. 16) There are not that many shows highlighting a Muslim everyday experience produced by Western countries, thus limiting how many diverse portrayals exist. American TV-show *Ramy*, Norwegian TV-show *SKAM* and British TV-show *We Are Lady Parts* are all TV-shows that do exactly that, by putting the individual in the centre and dealing with religion as an extension of the self rather than what the story is about. Thus, the character is not "just a Muslim", they are their own person with human flaws defined by their actions instead of by their religious affiliation. This plays into Kim's comment of how stories like these are cool as they introduce new new perspective starring underrepresented people and references Malaika's view on how universal stories could be told and experienced by anybody. By diversifying character portrayals as well as stories told one can actively diversify how ethnic minorities get viewed on screen by the public as well as contribute to people of ethnic minorities having more stories to relate to, as it could positively impact their identity construction (Fiske, 2000, p. 306).

Asking the question of “*Will one recognise oneself in them or will it be a made-up truth?*” Jamal seems to have a perception that in order to enjoy a show he needs to feel connected to the characters. However, the connection should not be based on surface level descriptions of the characters. He wants the characters to have more substance and depth to them as to be able to recognise himself in the character. This is in line with how some of the participants defined representation, as discussed in Chapter 4, such as Zara’s point of the characters “being more than their background” suggesting that portraying ethnic minorities to only hold the characteristic of being a minority is not enough. They are not just props to spice up a film or a TV-show, but rather giving them full-fledged stories that shows character growth is something several of the participants mentioned they wanted to see more of. Linh’s focus on language, as well as how she longed for her cultural identity to be shown on screen suggests that there is a need for TV-shows like *We Are Lady Parts*. Shows that tell stories rooted in different cultural portrayals without alienating the characters or portraying them as an outcast, but rather telling the stories from their perspective. As opposed to how Muslims are traditionally portrayed *We Are Lady Parts* contrasts recurring tropes by showing diverse characters not limited by one-dimensionality. Focusing on human stories *We Are Lady Parts* shows how a TV-show can portray Muslims as multifaceted, not limited by religious constraints, but rather show different aspects of culture and religion intertwined to tell a tale of young women, dealing with questions relating to work, university, friendships, romantic relationships and family. As several of the participants mentioned being able to identify with the characters and stories told in their definition of what representation is it seemed like *We Are Lady Parts* hit the brief for some of those longing for such representation.

### 5.3 Concluding Comments

This chapter has focused on the connection between representation on screen and a sense of belonging. I presented how language and appearance can lead to a sense of belonging, or lack thereof. Illustrated by an example featuring both ethnic and religious minorities the participants reflected on how their understanding of minority portrayals were affected by the sender. This presents an added factor to the understanding of representation as it is not just about what is on screen, but also who is behind the productions. Distinguishing between the sender and the receiver seemed to determine the participants acceptance of satire as illustrated by the clip shown during the interviews. Thus, the sender's background might alter the message perceived by the receiver. This was an interesting finding as not everyone are aware of who makes the productions we see, which was evident when I asked the participants questions regarding the entertainment-industry's role in shaping opinions through media. However, when asked about their experiences of *We Are Lady Parts* the production behind the show received a lot of attention in regard to determine if the clip should be perceived as stereotypical or not, as illustrated by Haroon, Kim and Chloe. Seeing this in relation to my thesis question this chapter shows that the participants experience representation differently based on the sender, as well as show that a sense of belonging depends on different aspects such as language and appearance.

## 6. Connecting Portrayals on Screen to Their Daily Life

The previous chapters have discussed how the participants understand representation and how they look at representation when presented with an example illustrating this. The aim of this chapter is to understand the participants' views on representation in relation to the Norwegian society and their lived experience as Norwegian citizens with a multicultural background. Both Omi and Hall discuss power and its relationship with popular culture portrayals. Hall writes that there is power in representation (Hall, 2013, p. 249). Omi writes that popular culture deals with the symbolic realm of social life, which can be understood that the images presented on screen contribute to the public opinion of the subjects and issues presented (Omi, 2017, p. 463). In this chapter I will first look into how the participants experience portrayals of ethnic minorities on screen and if they believe such portrayals have repercussions in their daily life. This chapter also explores how the participants experience what they watch by looking at themes of prejudice, both experienced by the participants as well as projected by them. The chapter ends with a discussion of what types of movies or TV-shows the participants would make if they had the opportunity to do so. This is to illustrate what they believe is missing from the entertainment industry, as well as bring light to what they would like to watch if they could choose freely without any limitations.

### 6.1 Prejudice Based on Location

Stereotyping can be alienating. Juggling the reception of stereotypical portrayals and how something is perceived by the general public can lead to questions of the intention of such portrayals of ethnic minorities. Repeated stereotyping of minority groups may also respond to existing social structures where prejudicial portrayals lay the framework for how certain groups get presented (Fiske, 2000, p.312-313). While discussing Norwegian TV-shows I asked Omar if he had seen popular TV-comedy *Førstegangstjenesten* (2019-2021):

SH: Have you watched *Førstegangstjenesten*?

Omar: eh yes but I haven't seen everything just some parts and...I stopped watching because of...what's his name? Herman Flesvig! Eh I don't like what he is doing.

SH: Why so?

Omar: He actually does everything except painting his face brown (laughs) and that is really why I don't like it, and it is a bit unpopular to say but I will say it anyways: He uses Ola Halvorsen as a cover. He actually wants to portray an immigrant, a person from Stovner or Haugenstua. Using such characteristics and such words and the way

he is behaving, the clothes he is wearing. I even think he is wearing dreads or at least braids too! So I think once I heard the way he was speaking then I was like (grimace) they don't laugh *with* us they laugh at us! And often I stop myself thinking alright did this person laugh at you or with you? In this TV-show, are they laughing at or with immigrants, or Muslims or Somalis? And if I figure they are laughing *at* them then I just pause and am like no thank you! And he (Flesvig) has done it and Mads Hansen is also known for laughing at and do comedy at the expense of immigrants, Muslims, Black people.

*Førstegangstjenesten* follows lead actor Herman Flesvig portraying various characters as new recruits in the military. The character Ola Halvorsen is of Norwegian background, however he is portrayed to have grown up in a multicultural environment in Haugenstua, which he repeatedly references throughout the show and is alluded to being a contributing factor for the way he talks and behaves. These are characteristics used as a comedic tool for laughs as he heavily plays on a distinctive sociolect and mannerism suggested to apply to people living in this area. By feeling like his existence is being made fun of Omar questions the reason for such stereotypical portrayals. He compares this character's mannerism and look as another form of blackface, stating that the actor basically does everything associated with blackface except colouring his face. He wears braid, talks a certain way, behaves a certain way, the clothes he is wearing, all of this results in a pretty stereotypical portrayal of a youth from the east side of Oslo, an area known for housing many of immigrant and working class background (Brattbakk & Wessel, 2013, p.393; Ljunggren & Andersen, 2015, p. 315). Omar questions the sincerity of the lead actor and showrunner suggesting that he doesn't agree with what is presented because the jokes they make are at the expense of minorities, and he doesn't find them funny. By making such jokes Omar believes they (the ones behind such productions) are not laughing with him, they are laughing at him. They are making fun of people who are from a specific area in Oslo, that is portrayed to speak or behave in a certain way. The *they* he refers to can be understood as they – the showrunner and creator of this show as well as the out-group of White Norwegians. Even though Omar was not from this part of town himself he identifies as being part of the in-group of ethnic minorities, thus feeling a sense of community with other ethnic minorities and their disapproval of such portrayals.

By not colouring his face Flesvig is technically not doing blackface, however he is adapting many stereotypical characteristics in his portrayal of a young man from the east side of Oslo.

One could then question if the issue would be the same if the showrunner or main character had an ethnic minority background such as Omar while still having the same stereotypical characteristics, as Omar had no issue with *We Are Lady Parts* even though both shows play on stereotypes. He justifies the difference by saying “ (...) it is humour and it is stereotypes, but in a good and not so good way, and I feel like you can laugh with and not of it (...)” and that “ (...) the reason I don’t really react on the negative portrayal of the more conservative family is that you get two different portrayals in this show (...) you get to see two different sides of how the religion is practised (...) the different nuances come across in a good way”. Here Omar is highlighting a key difference he experienced between the two TV-shows, even though both are playing on stereotypes. *Førstegangstjenesten* is laughing at ethnic minorities’ expense while *We are Lady Parts* show a nuanced portrayal not necessarily laughing more based on one group’s supposed background. Thus, he experiences that the jokes in *We are Lady Parts* are not founded on laughing at someone but rather with them. The issue might stem from the character Flesvig portrays. He is supposedly of an ethnic Norwegian background and not of an immigrant background. This character speaks with broken Norwegian and has braids, while *We Are Lady Parts* doesn’t play on stereotypes in this regard, but rather in a more culture focused way. The creator of *We Are Lady Parts* makes fun of the stereotypical portrayals while from the inside, while Flesvig’s character seems to make fun of a group he is not a part of, thus from an outside perspective.

Flesvig’s portrayal ultimately resulted in Omar deciding not to continue watching the TV-show. This can also be seen in connection to Zaid’s comment in the previous chapter, where he too decided not to continue watching a show if they portray minorities in a stereotypical light. By choosing not to watch something even though the TV-show is popular the participants are actively taking a stance and making their voice heard. While not necessarily vocalizing their opinion publicly<sup>12</sup> some mention having such discussions among friends and family members. Thus, highlighting how their opinions of how popular culture productions contribute to negativity overshadows a TV-shows otherwise popularity among others. Therefore, a negative experience of representation may lead to a distaste and lack of viewership from group members insulted by such portrayals.

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<sup>12</sup> During the interviews I asked the participants if they felt they could voice their opinion in public forums such as in newspapers, magazines or comment sections, if they disagreed with the way people with their background were portrayed. The majority said they either were not interested in doing that or that they wouldn’t as they felt the racist backlash was too strong.

There is also a power imbalance with such portrayals as well. Edward Said writes about how there is an idea of an European identity being superior in comparison to non-European identities (Said, 2003, p.7). By highlighting stereotypical characteristics and making fun of them Flesvig is reinforcing an orientalist portrayal of ethnic minorities, as one could question for what other reason than comedic effect did he have to play a character with broken language, caricatured behaviour and braids? Could he not have portrayed a person from the east side of Oslo in a different light, or did he have to reinforce stereotypical portrayals because that is what is known in the media? Even though there are some people that could speak in the same mannerism or wear similar clothing to Flesvig's Ola Halvorsen in real life, Flesvig is contributing to a racialized portrayal of people that are known to reside in certain areas of Oslo. This is because even though he is portraying an ethnic Norwegian, he is playing on racialized characteristics that repeatedly have been used by those in power positions to shape the narratives existing in society by portraying minorities as such in the media (Garner & Selod, 2015, p. 17; Li, & Nicholson, 2021, p. 7, Andersson, 2022a, p. 49). This also relates to how playing on such characteristics contribute to what Omi describes as our "common sense" assumption about race and racial minorities to be both generated and reflected in the stereotypes presented by the visual media (Omi, 2017, p. 467). Thus, connecting representation and the viewers understanding of those represented.

By continuing to reinforce existing stereotypes in film and TV-shows people of ethnic minority background are burdened by having to dismiss such portrayals as they reinforce already existing stigmatization connected to stereotypes based on location (Rosten, 2017). This type of stereotyping is connected to what is known as Loïc Wacquant's term territorial stigmatization, which is a form of urban marginalization based on where one has grown up or lives (Wacquant, 2008, p.238). Wacquant's term explores how a place can be tainted by the discourses surrounding the areas thus playing into Bourdieu's understanding of symbolic power by highlighting how a collective narrative of a place can contribute to change in how people perceive a location (Rosten, 2017, p. 54). Wacquant outlines how two forms of discourses contribute to territorial stigmatization, from "below" with face to face everyday interactions between the inhabitants and from "above" from descriptions by journalists, bureaucrats and politicians (Wacquant, 2008, p.238). Thus, the inhabitants of certain locations, as well as others of an ethnic minority background that don't necessarily live there but might be perceived to do so, are left with having to reject such portrayals as they do not apply to them, even though it is perceived this way by the public. This is because such ideas



are validated by mediums such as TV and film when they portray ethnic minorities to have accents or speak with certain mannerisms, which might serve to develop norms of treatment towards minorities as displaying stereotypical portrayals have greater effect on them as the power dynamics are skewed (Berg, 1990 in Maestro & Greenberg, 2000, p.692). Public understanding of places can therefore contribute to discourses surrounding these areas. When film and TV-shows highlight such differences they help legitimize stereotypical portrayals as the truth while failing to recognize the diversity that exists within the population living in these areas.

## 6.2 Experiencing the Effects of Representation

The linkage between social perceptions of minorities and the roles they occupy on screen is something several participants highlighted they notice and believe is a result of representation on screen. Asked about if they experience that others treat them differently based on portrayals of others with the same ethnic, cultural or religious background in film and TV-shows Kim says:

« (...) When Squid Game came out I was interning at a primary school and everybody called me the girl from Squid Game all the time like 100 times every day, and they were children. I feel like children are the perfect example of that if you do not have any other representation that one portrayal will be what they connect to your *whole* identity. I am not even Korean and I do not look like the character they are referencing even though we both have short hair, but you really notice how large reach it has, because these children might not have even seen Squid Game, I don't even know how they saw it, but it just shows how quickly and how big reach it has (...) It is like cultural phenomena gets stuck really quickly and people think it is amusing and so yeah I do believe it actually says a lot (...). It shows how much the message or the representation of just her face is for everyone, especially when we are not used to seeing *any* Asian representation really (...) »

Here Kim is illustrating how they got treated at their place of work. Kim explains how popular cultural portrayals on screen have actual effects on their life by constantly being compared to a character from the South Korean Netflix hit *Squid Game* (2021). Kim says they don't really look like the character but by both having short hair and an Asian background they are perceived as similar looking, thus resulting in name-calling on the schoolgrounds. Kim believes this is due to the lack of Asian representation on screen and thinks they

wouldn't have been called "the girl from squid game" had there been more actors of Asian descent on screen. Kim understands this to be because by there being a variety of actors of Asian descent "the girl from squid game" wouldn't be singled out. One might then also wonder if Kim's incident is a result of name calling based on ethnic background or could be understood as a popular cultural phenomenon that is rooted in the time the series is popular. The interviews got conducted around the same time *Squid Game* got its popularity, and had I asked brown haired boys that wore round glasses if they got called Harry Potter when the movies/books were at the height of their popularity I might have gotten the same answers of name calling based on popular character portrayals.

Kim brings up a point of not being of the same background as the *Squid Game* character. Even though they share an Asian background they are not from the same country. This illustrates how people of Asian descent habitually have been grouped together based on the belief that "all Asians look alike" due to a focus on a race stereotype rather than looking at individual differences among people of Asian descent (Ferguson, Rhodes, Lee & Sriram, 2001, p. 567). By grouping Asians of East Asian descent together they are consequently seen as a homogenous group not acknowledged by their varied cultural, linguistic and religious differences. By focusing on Kim's ethnicity rather than other traits Kim believes TV-portrayals in fact do influence how others see them. Kim also expresses how stereotypical portrayals affect their daily life stating "(...) *I actually get really stressed because people are not aware of the consequences it has for me and my daily life as well as consequences for others that might experience it similarly (...)*". Kim explicitly believes there is a connection between representation on screen and how people think about others stating:

"(...) I notice that everything I experience often is built on things that I see in the media. People pulling their eyes to the side to make them smaller is a result of White people dressing as Asian people in this way. Taping their eyes, colouring their skin etc. is reflected in the way that when I look around I can see people do it to me, so that might be why one gets so affected by it, because it is not just one incident. And it is so easy for people to say "but it's just a TV-show, there is no harm, these people are not doing it to you, you are safe here" and then I'm like no people get influenced by it! The media and the entertainment industry are what nearly influences most of all as there are fewer people reading the news than watches movies. So for me it is strange to say it is "just something that happens in the movies" because people adapt a lot of what happens in the movies and use it to measure how they themselves can treat the

people around them, often as an inspiration to new racist stereotypes, that they didn't think about before. And for those that do not have a relation to people of a different background it is easy to pick up what you see in TV-shows and in films *as* a direct representation of these people. And I do believe we all do this to some degree when we watch. We adopt stereotypes, especially when it comes to impressions of things we don't really have a relationship with and then we implement it in our own understanding of the world and the people around us (...)"

Here Kim is connecting how racial stereotypes that are portrayed on screen do indeed influence how others treat them. Kim mentions that this is not something that is exclusive to how others treat them, but rather as a result of "impressions of things we don't have a relationship with" suggesting that one is more likely to believe in stereotypes or stereotypical portrayals because they are not necessarily presented as such in the media. This can be explained by what Gordon W. Allport calls the contact hypothesis, which suggests that the more contact you have with members of other groups the more inclined you are to accept them and see them as individuals (Andersson, 2022a, p. 79). This is because contact between groups reduces prejudicial thoughts and promotes tolerance and understanding by exposing the groups to each other, thus reducing the belief that the out-group differs a lot from the in-group (Andersson, 2022a, p. 79).

Haroon, Alex and Bashir mention being called derogatory terms such as "ching chong", "paki", "nigger" and "sand nigger" as a result of portrayals of people looking like them in films and TV-shows. These derogatory terms were thrown at them in different situations, the majority being after work, in social settings or while running everyday errands, where the common denominator being that these terms were based on their looks rather than the way they behave or their personality traits. One could question if these comments were said to them because of negative portrayals on screen or because of racism in general. Alex believes that these terms come from the media stating that:

"I feel that many that are for example racist against Asians always say "fucking noodle eating ching chong!" but like where the fuck did they get it from? It is from there (movies and TV-shows). But if they got to know me they would've known that I eat as

much ribs and potatoes<sup>13</sup> as those fuckers. It doesn't matter because they watch TV, it is what they see there”.

Here Alex tries to compare himself to ethnic Norwegians calling him names saying that they are more alike than they make it seem, highlighting similar taste in food. By bringing up a traditional Norwegian dish to emphasise the similarities between them, he manages to bridge the gap between minority/majority by highlighting a common food and culture interest. As well as also mentioning the role film and TV-plays in portraying stereotypes based on food and how certain dishes have been made to be known to represent geographical regions, such as Indian curry, Mexican tacos, Middle Eastern falafel and East Asian noodles.

Omar expresses that he also faces prejudice in relation to how others believe his language skills are poor and expects him to use “kebabnorsk” (slang) instead of proper Norwegian, which echoes Flesvig's portrayal of a person growing up in the east side of Oslo. He exemplifies this by saying that in high school people thought he had a lower GPA than he did, and just got placed in a school that happened to have a high approval criteria. However, after two weeks his classmates came up to him to apologize and tell him that they were impressed by how smart he was and that they were not expecting that. Asking them what they meant by that he says:

“(…) so without me giving them a reason for believing me not being smart enough or as clever as they are, they thought I was not clever at all, and of course the only explanation being the fact that I am black. And often people think that I am not progressive when it comes to political questions because I am religious or because I am Somali. Because I am a Somali man they think I am maintaining the patriarchy on a daily basis, but then I think like I don't believe I have given you a reason to believe that. So yeah It happens all the time”.

Being placed in a category without behaving in a way that justifies this assumption is one of the disadvantages of being an ethnic minority as other's understanding of who you are could be based on other peoples preconceived notions of people having similar traits as you due to prejudice (Andersson, 2022a, p. 79). This could also be understood as a form of stereotypification due to Omar being reduced to his background rather than being perceived as

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<sup>13</sup> Ribs and boiled potatoes are considered traditional Norwegian food, often served during Christmas celebrations.

an individual responsible for his own merits (Hall, 2013, p. 249). Omar explains this by stating that humans are “associative beings”:

“So, I don't know how Norwegian-Somalis have been portrayed if they have been portrayed at all in the Norwegian media landscape, but I think that eh I think people *see* something, because we are associative beings. We see something and then we build on it afterwards. We just build on it in our series of associations, so I think that based on one or another portrayal, I think that there are a lot of people here who face prejudice and hostility based on that.

False ideas about a group can be validated by repeated media portrayals (Omi, 2017, p. 470). This linkage between social perceptions of minorities and the roles they portray illustrate how prejudice may stem from similar and few portrayals on screen (Maestro & Greenberg, 2000, p.701). By making Omar and Alex feel like the other for not conforming into their view of how a Norwegian is or looks like the participants are placed in a box of otherness that they don't necessarily feel is justified. They become excluded from the narrative of “Norwegianness” by being questioned of their values and language-skills, as well as having to go through tests other Norwegians don't need to just to be accepted as an equal on par with other colleagues, independent of their ethnic background.

By questioning their membership as citizens it could be understood that their colleagues are filtering out those who do not fit the norm as a form of exclusion tactic based on alienation rather than hospitality and warmth. This leads to ethnic minorities feeling judged based on their ethnic background rather than their performance skills, which in the end leaves a bad impression and a sense of othering. Such actions can be understood as microaggressions, which are intended or unintended statements or actions resulting in a person of a marginalized group feeling “less-than” or discriminated against *because* they are a part of said group (Harlap, 2022,p.140). One of the characteristics of microaggressions is that they are cumulative in nature, being constant reminders of a person not belonging in some way or other through the various social spheres they are a part of in their daily life, such as at school, work, social media, popular media, politics and so on (Harlap, 2022,p.143). By repeatedly being reminded they don't belong they are excluded as equal Norwegian citizens because they are perceived to be limited to certain roles they can have based on their background, which can lead to a form of stress due to constantly having to deal with a sense of otherness based on

how others treat them (Harlap, 2022,p.143,152) . Seeing this in relation to what Malika and Zara requested in the previous chapter suggests that a diverse representation could help combat othering microaggressions as there are a more varied portrayals on screen, resulting in fewer repeated depictions. Thus allowing the viewer to form a more holistic opinion, rather than one constrained by the few and repeated narratives presented.

### **6.3 Bias Against Others**

Being a part of an ethnic minority does not mean one is exempt of having prejudice of other groups. Some of the participants mentioned being confused when their stereotypical beliefs of others did not correspond with what happened in real life, which made them question their judgement. Portraying group-members as diverse rather than always having the same traits might add to the conception of people of certain backgrounds not carrying the same personality traits as it diversifies how people are viewed. You rarely see a dumb Asian character in western media says Kim, while highlighting the characters London Tipton of Disney Channel's *The Suite Life of Zac & Cody* (2005-2008) and Cece of FOX' *New Girl* (2011-2018) as the few exceptions to this stereotype. This is in line with how Bashir feels when he encounters people of an Asian background when he teaches:

SH: Do you experience a connection between how people are portrayed in films and TV-series and how you perceive them?

Bashir: No, I don't think so. I think that...or maybe I do? No, I don't think so.

SH: No. What you see of films and TV-series do not affect how you think about others?

Bashir: (deep breath) eh, maybe it does? It probably does. But I try to be like if I meet a Norwegian-Pakistani in the hall I know better than to think that what I've seen of Norwegian series or eh I don't know or for example Asian-Americans are always seen as diligent, kind of good at school. But like maybe sometimes I kind of think, because I sometimes work as a teacher and if I see a Norwegian-Asian person, I might think that "well, *they* must be diligent" and if they hand in something (that's not good), then there is something that clashes with my world view.

SH: Have you caught yourself thinking that if, for example, you have had a student with an East Asian background, you think okay, this person is going to do well, and if they don't do well, you think "oh"?

Bashir: Yes, it has happened, it has happened once or twice yeah.

Bashir points out how media has shaped his view of East Asians and how they often are portrayed as smart or good at math, which he has carried on to his classroom. By judging his students based on their background rather than seeing them as individuals he is letting his prejudice dictate how he thinks about them. He is seeing them as marked by their background rather than their level of knowledge, which can lead to him holding these students to a higher standard than the rest of the class due to his belief that students with an Asian background are diligent. Chloe mentions how she has been affected by this stereotype because of her background saying that people think Asians are supposed to be smart, but she was never good at math. Having this stereotype pushed on a specific group adds to the pressure people of an Asian background might feel to conform to a certain standard, as well as it could lead others to view them as a homogenous group not acknowledging individual differences.

Bashir also says that when he experiences that these students don't meet his expectations something clashes with his world view, which illustrates how such stereotypical portrayals are ingrained in his daily life, showing how one thinks about others is affected by the media (Omi, 2017, p. 463).

Saira who also worked with children seemed to agree with what Bashir said concerning how his preconceived notions could affect how he thought about his students in relation to portrayals on screen. She however mentions how this prejudice seemed to decrease the more she learned about and talked to her students. This is in line with the previously mentioned contact hypothesis, which illustrates how more contact with members of other groups promotes tolerance and weakens prejudicial beliefs due to experiencing that people are different, even though they share some similar group-traits (Andersson, 2022a, p. 79; Fiske, 2000, p.304). Thus, by repeated inter-group contact group members of different categories get to challenge their prejudice by seeing that group-members in fact can be different.

Even though Saira and Bashir both belong to their own country-specific-in-groups (Pakistani and Somali) in Norway they also are a part of the collective immigrant/foreigner category. Nevertheless, they still get affected by stereotypic portrayals of other minority groups in the media, which as they mention, result in their own prejudice of other minority groups. Asked about if she experiences having prejudicial thoughts about other people Saira reflects on how representations of minorities living in certain locations do influence how she perceives people from those areas:

SH: Do you find that series that perhaps are located close to areas where people live, such as here in Oslo, affect what you think about these areas?

Saira: Yes, it does. But at the same time with 17 and 18 it's also an eye-opener. I've worked at a school for many years, and many of those students were like those in that series. But I thought okay, maybe it's because of the parents, and you kind of get a slightly different view on things. But I do watch the show because it's a little more realistic.

SH: Have you ever caught yourself thinking something about someone from a certain background based on what you've seen on screen?

Saira: That I have somehow changed my opinion about them or?

SH: Yes, or perhaps had some thoughts about a person without actually having met them?

Saira: No, not really. I... or yes, I may have thought that "Stovner people" are like this and that (laughs a little). There are so many people that I automatically think, okay, if my sister is going to date someone from there, I'm like no no. A Stovner boy is a bit like that, you become a bit like investigating who he is and become a bit extra than if she would want to date someone from the west side of Oslo. Even though you don't want to be like this you get influenced by it.

Saira says she doesn't want to be like this, but admits she is influenced by what she watches. She mentions how she would view a potential new family member differently based on where he is from because she has been influenced by realistic fictional portrayals of people living in these areas, as well as seeing these portrayals reinforced by the students she teaches. Even though people that occupy similar group traits can be different from each other, her experience of watching people portrayed to be from these areas on screen has reinforced her prejudicial thoughts (Andersson, 2022a, p. 79). Seeing this in relation to how Haugenstua is portrayed in *Førstegangstjenesten* and Omar's reaction to such portrayals, one might wonder how big reach such shows have and how much they can shape someone's view of an area and the people who live there. Sociologist Nancy Wang Yuen experiences something similar while watching a trailer for movie *Django Unchained* (2012) in the cinema. The trailer shows actor Jamie Foxx as a bounty hunter saying «Kill white folks, and they pay you for it-what's not to like?» which evokes a reaction by two viewers in the cinema audience annoyingly saying «That's what's wrong with our urban areas!» (Yuen, 2016, p.7). The fact that the women saw a connection between a fictional character in a film clip and a geographical area



says something about how some people fail to differentiate between fiction and reality when it comes to racist stereotypes, hence highlighting the importance of ethnic representation and its role in shaping the viewer's understanding of others (Omi, 2017, p. 463).

While Saira expresses how her prejudice seemed to decrease the more she learned about and talked to her students creating new diverse portrayals are important in shaping the belief of others because they work as a physical example of how someone might act and serve as a representation. This especially applies for people that are not familiar with these groups due to living in a homogenous society. A solution to this problem could be to take inspiration from Allport's contact-hypothesis and realize it through the screen by producing more diverse movies and TV-shows including minorities in various roles that differ from the roles they have had before. By doing so one is widening the viewers opinion of which boxes minorities occupy and show them that people of different backgrounds are not homogeneous, but rather hold different qualities, which echoes how the majority of the participants understood representation as well.

#### **6. 4 Constructing Their Own Narratives**

A question I asked during the interviews was if they had the opportunity to make their own film or TV-show, what would they want to watch? I was interested in finding if there were any similarities or differences between the ethnic groups as well as those with a religious affiliation. Common for all three ethnic groups was a focus on a non-White narrative as well as making something that showed a positive view on their own and other minority groups, especially their own in-group. Another similarity between the participants was what Linh referred to as stories that portray "a slice of life", which can be understood as narratives exploring regular people and their daily life. However, the main finding from their answers is a wish for more stories that follow characters of ethnic minority background as opposed to the regular White-narratives they have grown up with. Thus, emphasizing the focus on seeing oneself on screen and being seen as "normal" as something the participants would have wanted to highlight if they could make their own films and TV-shows. This also plays into how several participants defined representation, as discussed in the previous chapter.

The differences between the groups were that the participants with a Pakistani background focused on people with a Pakistani background or Muslims, the participants with a Vietnamese background focused on diversity as well as people with an Asian background and the participants with a Somali background focused on minority groups in general highlighting

Muslims, immigrants and Black people. The participants, regardless of ethnic background highlighted historical series, the sci-fi/fantasy genre as well as regular drama, comedy, rom-coms and action movies or TV-shows where the protagonist is of minority background, as something they would like to see more of. All groups mentioned the de-mystifying of minorities highlighting wanting stories that do not necessarily focus on their ethnic or religious background, but rather a character's other characteristics. This included the religious and ethnic-background-aspect being part of a character, without it being made into a "big deal" and focal point of the story. As well as more portrayals of other minority groups, such as the LGBTQ+ community, indigenous people and people with disabilities. Some also mentioned a focus on language, highlighting the importance of hearing one's mother tongue spoken on screen, which as discussed in chapter 5 contribute to a sense of belonging.

Asked about what she would like to watch if she had the option to make something herself Linh says:

"Like daily life, everyday actions. It doesn't need to be a big plot but just a slice of life, ordinary. I would have liked to see *Gilmore Girls* but with Asian characters or *Friends* with Asian characters, or it doesn't even need to be Asian characters but just with minority background. Like everyday things. So, what I like to watch is *Friends* and stuff like that, and there's a series called *Fresh Off the Boat* that follows a family from China who have come to America and how they live their lives, so it's fun to watch. Series such as this, showing everyday actions."

Linh would like to watch stories portraying people of minority background in regular situations, and gives examples of famous American TV-shows *Gilmore Girls* and *Friends*. These shows both fall under the comedy genre, and deal with topics related to daily life, such as relationships, family and work. She then lists *Fresh of the boat* as an example of a TV-show that she enjoyed, which also happened to feature minorities at its core. The "slice of life" Linh speaks of can thus be understood as regular life occurrences, that one faces, regardless of ethnic background. By using words such as "daily life" and "ordinary" suggests that Linh want to be seen as normal, and a part of society without being questioned or seen as an "other". By mentioning wanting more shows featuring people with a minority background also suggests her identifying with other minorities as well, and not necessarily only Asians. This is in line with Mathisen's finding of how minority youth in Oslo relate to each other on the basis of having an immigrant background (Mathisen, 2020, p. 136). Linh's request for productions featuring plots focusing on daily life thus suggests a wish to validate her

existence as a part of society equal to the majority population, may it be her fellow Norwegian citizens or White people in America (as portrayed in Hollywood productions), which can also be understood as her wanting to be seen as normal.

Omar seems to agree with Linh on wanting more stories including minorities doing ordinary things saying:

“I would have liked to see a series about a Muslim Black boy or girl that didn’t really have anything to do with him or her being Muslim or Black, like *yes* it is a Muslim Black boy or girl but the series or movie is about them becoming elite athletes or that they have lost their mother or just something completely ordinary. That one doesn’t need to make something big of the character’s identity, because it is really only then that you have actually reached a point where things have actually changed. One doesn’t need to make like tragedy porn out of it, like one is supposed to think “oh poor them, these immigrants that have it so hard” or be like “this is a strong immigrant that beat the odds”. Like just a normal movie, I would have liked to see that. I really enjoy watching movies about religion and culture and ethnicity, but it would have been really interesting to see a movie where they haven’t made a big deal out of it.”

Omar’s point of view highlights a wish for inclusion of minorities without their minority status being highlighted as the reason of conflict in the story. He makes a point of emphasizing a difference between portrayals of minorities and highlights how it is only when one doesn’t make something big of a character’s identity one reaches a point of change in the way minorities are perceived. It is only then, when a character’s minority status is not seen as a conflict of interest, one is equal to the White majority. This is because the character is not othered and therefore not seen as being labelled by their minority status. The character is thus seen as a role rather than a representative of a group. Omar mentions not wanting to be pitied and represented by roles that highlight stories featuring struggle or “beating the odds” in some way. It could then be understood that Omar simply wants more stories featuring minorities, without questioning their minority status, but rather highlighting other aspects of a character, just like one would characters that have a majority background. Like Linh, it seems like Omar just wants to be perceived as normal. They both want portrayals of ethnic minorities on screen, but the focus should not be on the characters as ethnic minorities, but rather as characters. Their minority status is just an added feature, and can be used as a tool to include

diverse cultural portrayals on screen, without the “White view” of mystifying these cultures or putting them in boxes due to unfamiliarity with minority cultures.

During the interview Zaid had mentioned he enjoyed watching historical dramas such as Ertuğrul, which is a Turkish TV-show he watched dubbed in Urdu on the Pakistani state TV-channels YouTube page. When he got asked what he would have liked to watch if he was to make his own movie or TV-show he answered he would like something similar to Ertuğrul:

SH: what was the TV-show about?

Zaid: It was actually trying to show like a historical picture (...) (thinking) Okey, I will start with this; What was very different about this series was that it is a *rare* case of showing Muslims as a positive representation. Like they are the heroes of the TV-show, which is a rare occurrence in American shows/movies. And it's done properly! And like again it is a representation, and it's like values, there are attitudes, there are clothes, there is language. And all of this came from people who probably have the same background, and then the representation becomes much better than if it had come from another group that only looks at them from the outside.

Zaid highlights several factors for why he enjoyed Ertuğrul and would like more shows like this one, such as the focus on a non-White narrative that is “done properly” and portrays Muslims as the heroes and therefore in a positive light. He credits the sender (the people behind the scenes) as a factor for this. He also focuses on other factors than just looks when highlighting representation, such as values, attitudes, clothes, languages that are presented in the show. This can be understood as Zaid seeing representation as a layered term, including other aspects as well as looks when explaining why representation in this way is done well. Highlighting these other factors as a reason for why he enjoyed the show so much can also be understood as a form of representation that resonates with him because he sees a part of his identity reflected in a way he is not used to, which again promotes a positive reaction to such portrayals. Zaid thus seems to be wanting more stories that highlight a part of his identity, his faith, in a positive light.

Even though the TV-show does not focus on people of Pakistani descent it does highlight Islam and Muslims, which is something Zaid felt was important as he mentions he liked seeing Muslims as heroes as opposed to how he believes they usually are portrayed. This can be understood as ethnicity not being the only factor that is important when considering if the

show will resonate with the viewer as the viewer may see themselves reflected in other aspects of a character, such as the language spoken, the values a character hold or the religious affiliation highlighted. A comment I found interesting was that Zaid mentions seeing Muslims as heroes, which he found novel and great. Being able to recognize oneself in a story when ones faith often is under attack could be tiring as it deals with negative associations towards something he values, so seeing such portrayals is a change from the terrorist stereotype that is common in western media (Yuen et. al, 2018, p.3). Zaid also brings up another interesting point by mentioning who was behind the production saying that the show was so good because the people behind the scenes most likely had the same background, thus writing with an inside perspective as opposed to portraying Muslims from an outside point of view. This echoes how Omar experienced stereotypical portrayals differently based on the sender, accepting the stereotypes by minorities as he felt they were playing with the stereotypes rather than making fun of people like him.

Jannah, who works in the field of education, mentioned wanting to see a children's TV-show starring a person with an ethnic minority background as the lead and hero of the story:

SH: When I asked you what you wanted to watch as a movie or TV-show you mentioned a children's TV-show including a person of ethnic minority background as the hero and the villain not be of ethnic minority background, but then I wonder, what would the plot be about? What would the TV-show be about?

Jannah: It could just be about like an evil villain trying to ruin the city

SH: right, and it is a superhero-show where the hero is coincidentally of minority background

Jannah: Not coincidentally but consciously

SH: consciously

Jannah: yes

SH: why consciously?

Jannah: because if I was a mother who had children I think I would have liked to show it to my kids. Then they can recognize themselves in some way, either by name or skin colour or something like that I think

Jannah brings up an interesting point of representation and its meaning for children. As she herself works in a field surrounded by kids she reflects on how important fictional characters

are for children. She mentions wanting more representation of fictional characters that *consciously* have a minority background – so the children can recognize themselves in the characters, either by having the same skin colour or name as the characters. Recent examples of consciously casted fictional characters that are portrayed by actors of minority background are Ariel played by Halle Bailey and Tinker Bell played by Yara Shahidi. While some have criticised these portrayals due to the actors having a different background than how they previously have been portrayed, others have praised them for being inclusive. Videos of children reacting to the trailers featuring these characters have been circulating online, praising this inclusion (Tumin, 2022.). Even though these are fictional productions made for entertainment purposes they bring out strong emotions, both for and against such productions. Some arguments against this change have been that this casting choice is the result of “forced diversity”, “woke ideological agenda”, not being historically accurate as well as a cheap way out of creating new stories featuring minorities (Romano, 2022).

Jannah specifically wants to see a children’s TV-show where there is a superhero with a minority background because she believes it is important for children to feel included and seen on screen. Jannah’s example illustrates how representation is important for children, as well as their parents, and says something about how conscious choices can make an impact in other peoples’ lives. Seeing this in relation to how Malaika experienced watching *Black Panther* with her brother and the excited children’s comment on the Ariel trailer there seems to be a need for such portrayals as these portrayals can be understood to validate the viewers feeling of inclusion because they may feel reflected on screen. *Black-Panther (2018)*, *Shang-chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings (2021)*, *Moon Knight (2022)*, *Ms.Marvel (2022)* are all newly adapted filmization of comic books that include superheroes of minority background as well as themes exploring other cultures than an American or European. The exploration of these cultures is also done in a new way, focusing on respect, rather than the degrading of the cultures as something unknown, therefore bad. The villains in these fictional superhero movies do not belong or represent a country or religious group, thus also not contributing to the hate many has associated to be represented by minorities on screen.

## 6.5 Concluding Comments

This chapter set out to understand the participants' views on representation in relation to the Norwegian society and their lived experience as Norwegian citizens with a multicultural background. By looking at representation through the lens of power there seems to be a connection between images presented on screen and the public opinion of the subjects and issues presented. This was evident both by the participants saying they have experienced prejudice based on representation on screen as well as themselves saying they get affected by such portrayals in relation to how they view others.

Asked about what they would like to watch if they could make a movie or a TV-show by their own choosing it seemed that the participants wanted stories normalizing minorities on screen. While some highlighted wanting stories that took inspiration from daily life occurrences, others wished for inclusion of minorities without a focus on them being minorities. In other words, they wanted to be viewed as normal, without the added stereotypical baggage they mentioned were usually present when minorities were included on screen. Seeing this in relation to how they previously defined representation it seems like their understanding of representation is twofold. With one part focusing on the physical representation on screen, occupied by actors and actresses one sees, the second part of representation focuses on which stories got told and assigned to the people that hold a minority status. Thus, when one looks at representation in this way one can question if both forms of representation are included when actors of minority background are on screen, and how this connects with the public opinion of the subjects and issues presented.

## 7. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

The goal of the study was to research how young adults with an ethnic minority background experience representation in movies and TV-shows. Interviewing Norwegian participants with a background from Pakistan, Somalia and Vietnam my results suggest there are three main findings:

1. *Representation is not just about how someone looks, intersectionality is important.*
2. *Portrayals on screen do affect the participants, both emotionally and in social settings.*
3. *The sender help shape how something is understood*

### 7.1 Thoughts on Representation

Seeing oneself on screen is a recurring theme when talking about representation. As discussed previously one can divide the understanding of representation in two parts. One part that discusses the physical representation on screen, occupied by actors and actresses one sees. The second part of representation focuses on which stories get told and assigned to the people that hold a minority status. Thus, when one looks at representation in this way one can question if both forms of representation are included when actors of minority background are on screen. Representation on screen was deemed as something all participants were mindful of, however to which degree varied based on their interest in watching movies and TV-shows. The majority mentioned actively looking for productions that included a form of representation, either based on looks, language spoken, or story told on screen. Several participants mentioned feeling that Norwegian and “Western” entertainment lacked portrayals representing them, and ended up approaching foreign productions to fill this void. However, not everyone believed representation on screen to be of importance, mentioning how actions in real life played a more active role for them, such as Alex pointing out that there is a difference between what happens on screen and what happens in real life.

An interesting finding is that the participants didn't necessarily need to watch portrayals with people of the same background as themselves to feel represented on screen. This says something about how people with a minority background are able to relate to each-other forming an in-group consisting of other people that share the same experience of growing up as an ethnic minority in Norway (Mathisen, 2020, p. 136). As illustrated by Linh and Bashir,



they both mentioned how seeing portrayals of other minority groups led to them feeling seen. This relates to how group affiliation can be felt across the broad minority-spectrum, and highlights how a sense of belonging based on immigrant-status can lead to a cross-cultural understanding of representation. However, this was not apparent when discussing the clip of TV-show *We Are Lady Parts*, as the majority of the participants that did not have a Muslim background were unsure of how to react to portrayals that highlighted a rather stereotypical “Muslim experience” on screen. This could be understood to be because while the Vietnamese participants are a part of the in-group of ethnic minorities, they are not a part of the religious group portrayed on screen, resulting in them being unsure of what shown in the clip is a reflection of real life or just a form of satire. This can be illustrated by how one participant mentions her friend went through something similar in regards to the marriage scene presented in the beginning of the clip. The debate between if the clip showed a satirical or stereotypical portrayal was something several Muslim participants highlighted as they mentioned how the intention of the sender played a part in how they would perceive the clip. Thus, reflecting around how the sender of the message plays a part in how the participants understood representation and led to either acceptance or dismissiveness depending on what the participants felt was the message the clip conveyed.

Looking at representation in relation to meaning it seems like the participants believe representation plays a part in the construction of opinion other people have about them. This can be illustrated by the discussion in Chapter 6, and how some participants believe portrayals on screen seem to influence how others treat them. Illustrated by different experiences such as name-calling to feeling misjudged the participant relay how they feel portrayals on screen lead to “othering” mechanisms. Even though one cannot check that what they experience is in fact due to others being influenced by what they watch, the participants believe there is a connection. Gerbner and Omi draws a line between power and portrayals on screen and sees it in relation to how the dominant racial ideology is able to shape how one thinks about minorities (Gerbner, 1998, p.180; Omi, 2017, p. 466-467). Looking at this in relation to how soft power works, portrayals on screen seem to allude to a connection between how ethnic minorities are portrayed and the opinions others have of groups they belong to. The participants vocalized their awareness of this connection and relayed that they feel that minority portrayals, when they could find them, often were unjust in the sense that they often focus on a negative stereotype, as opposed to portrayals of White-actors’ that are intersectional.

When the out-group controls the narrative they are able to portray people of different backgrounds the same based on a single trait rather than focusing on other identity markers. This could be because people tend to see the out-group as more homogenous than the in-group (Fiske, 2000, p. 307-308). This could both be done purposely as a political tool, but also unknowingly as the in-group genuinely could believe that all people of a background are similar based on their limited experience interacting with the out-group. This could explain why Muslims traditionally have been portrayed the same way by western media, without the media highlighting the fact that the religion stretches over many countries and continents stressing cultural differences. Not to mention that people have different language skills, personalities and occupations as well. Going back to the importance of the sender Zaid mentioned how he enjoyed Turkish TV-show *Ertuğrul* mainly saying it is because he felt the show was “done properly” most likely because it came from someone from the “inside”. At the same time he believed that *We Are Lady Parts* was a bad representation of Muslims, even though that show too was made by someone from the “inside”. Distinguishing between how the sender of the product conveys meaning for the participants experience of said production could thus say something about how their experience and understanding of a movie or TV-show relays on several factors, mainly if they enjoy it as entertainment, and second if it appeals to them by inclusion of other factors such as an intersectional approach.

Even though movies and TV-shows tell fictional stories they seem to have an impact on the participants. Findings suggest that the participants both were subject to comments that seemed to derive from the media, as well as themselves exhibiting such comments. Stereotypical comments made based on portrayals in the media were said to several of the participants, contributing to negative experiences both at work but also during social gatherings. Being exposed to prejudice does not mean that one is exempt of having prejudicial thoughts about others. Such as Bashir and Saira’s expectation that people of East-Asian decent be good at school.

The participants highlighted wanting an intersectional approach to representation, as opposed to “othering” portrayals they felt were typical for how minorities were usually portrayed. Thus, the participants wanted stories that consciously feature minorities, as opposed to inclusion just to “tick some boxes”. This relates to how representation on screen has the ability to establish for audiences who members of a group are, thus by repeatedly showing minority characters in set and simplified roles, the viewer might believe members of this group in fact do behave this way (Omi, 2017, p. 466-467). Seeing this in relation to how the

participants didn't want to be seen as a prop and included as to not cause controversy due to a repeated lack of minority portrayals the intention behind the inclusion seemed to be of importance. One solution to the issue regarding othering portrayals of minorities the participants brought up is to approach representation in line with Allport's contact hypothesis. As he believed that contact between groups promotes tolerance and understanding, portrayals on screen may illustrate differences between out-groups, which is a contrast to how people tend to see the out-group as more homogenous than the in-group (Andersson, 2022a, p. 79; Fiske, 2000, p. 307-308). Illustrating differences between out-groups seemed to be important for the participants as some mention how they felt representation of minorities were often grouped together based on a single stereotypical trait.

The last couple of years have shown me that there is an ongoing change where an international focus is at the enter of what type of culture productions I have consumed. This is a significant change from what I used to watch, and opened up new doors to various countries productions. Looking at this in relation to my participants' answers they too seem to consume a varied amount of international movies and TV-shows, illustrating a change in comparison to how previous generations only watched what was on traditionally scheduled programming on linear TV. By having an international approach to culture-productions one opens the door to new impressions, thus not solely relying on a traditional "White-gaze" production.

## **7.2 Future Research**

The entertainment industry is an ever-changing environment. I conducted my interviews towards the end of 2021, and since then there has been a change in TV-shows and movies produced as I experienced there to be a rise in entertainment featuring people of minority background. This especially applies to productions featuring people of East-Asian descent, such as Marvel hit *Shang-chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings* (2021), *Parasite* (2019) as well as Netflix sensation *Squid Game* (2021). Now with the praise of *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022) winning several prestigious awards, there seems to be a change in both the portrayal of minorities on screen, as well as the reception to stories featuring them.

As this topic is understudied from a Norwegian point of view I believe a focus on a larger interview group that looks at representation by interviewing people from the majority population in comparison to people with a minority background could be an interesting approach. Looking at representation in this way may examine the view on representation when one is already represented, and research if one notices a lack of portrayal of other

groups when one already sees oneself on screen. Another interesting approach could research religious background and religious representation in the media, as the participants in this study did highlight religious representation as something they were mindful of. Nevertheless, there are many ways to further research this topic, especially from a Norwegian point of view, and new research looking at the connection between representation in movies and TV-shows are needed in Norwegian sociological literature.

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All references in this thesis are reported.

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## 9. Appendices

### APPENDIX A: Table of number of young adults between ages 18-30 years old sorted by ethnic background and immigration status

This is the table I based my choice of participants on. I reached out to SSB and requested data on country of origin based on young adults between 18-30 years old. The table shows the largest groups of immigrants and people born in Norway with parents that have immigrated between the ages 18-30 years old. The table is sorted based on the total number of immigrants in both categories. The figures are per 1.1.2021 and the age is based on the age at the end of 2020. The total at the bottom of the table shows how many between the ages 18-30 years old are in each category.

Landbakgrunn	Innvandringskategori		
	Innvandrere	Norskfødte med innvanderforeldre	Total
Polen[Poland]	15967	410	16377
Somalia	8201	2166	10367
Syria	8899	306	9205
Pakistan	2615	6205	8820
Litauen[Lithuania]	8498	13	8511
Afghanistan	8070	231	8301
Eritrea	7012	469	7481
Irak[Iraq]	5396	1644	7040
Sverige[Sweden]	5135	377	5512
Vietnam	1058	4011	5069
Filippinene[Philippines]	4452	592	5044
Tyskland[Germany]	4162	285	4447
Thailand	4044	163	4207
Tyrkia[Turkey]	1442	2744	4186
Iran	2681	1464	4145
Sri Lanka	618	3163	3781
Kosovo	2029	1685	3714
Rusland[Russia]	3558	138	3696
India	1962	1289	3251
Bosnia-Hercegovina[Bosnia-Herzegovina]	1499	1480	2979
<b>Total</b>	<b>147433</b>	<b>37297</b>	<b>184730</b>

## APPENDIX B: Interview guide

### Innledningsspørsmål:

- Kan du fortelle litt om deg selv?
  - Navn
  - Alder
  - Fødselssted og oppvekstområde
  - Bosted
  - Jobb/studie (evt. tidligere studieretning) → Hva gjør du nå for tiden?
  - Foreldres opprinnelsesland
  - Religiøs bakgrunn
- Kan du fortelle meg om ditt forhold til film/tv-serier?
  - Hva slags (sjanger) filmer eller serier ser du på til vanlig?
  - Hvorfor ser du på disse filmene/seriene?
  - Hvor ofte pleier du å se på?
  - Pleier du å se med andre eller alene? Hvorfor det?
  - Hvor ser du på de/ på hvilke plattformer?
  - Spesielt interessert? Evt. Når ble de interessert?

### Dybdespørsmål:

#### Filmer/tv-serier – opplevelse og erfaring

- Hva kjennetegner en god film/serie?
- Hvordan velger du hvilke filmer eller serier du skal se på?
  - Er det noen filmer eller serier du føler appellerer mest til deg? Hvorfor?
- Hva vektlegger du når du vurderer kvaliteten til en film eller serie?
- Kan du gi meg et eksempel på en god og en dårlig film eller serie?
  - Hvorfor er den god/dårlig?
- Er det noen filmer eller serier du tidligere har sett på som har gjort et sterkt inntrykk på deg?
  - Hvorfor? / Hvorfor ikke?
- Hva betyr representasjon for deg?
  - Hva tenker du på når du hører om mangfold i film?
- Pleier du å legge merke til skuespillernes etniske bakgrunn når du ser på? Eller tenker du ikke på det? Hvorfor?

#### Stereotypi

- Hvordan definerer du stereotypi?
- Hva tenker du om stereotypiske fremstillinger av etniske minoriteter?
- Pleier du å legge merke til om noen karakterer oppfører seg stereotypt (eller pleier du ikke å følge med på det)?
- Påvirker det deg hvis en karakter oppfører seg stereotypt? (føler du noe?)
- Hva med historiene som fortelles? Pleier du å tenke på handlingen og hvordan du kan relatere det til ditt liv eller ser du kun på det som ren underholdning?

## Film og tv-bransjen

- Har produsenter noe å si for om du velger å se på noe?
- Har du sett på noe kun fordi det er laget av mennesker med etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn eller har noen skuespillere med den bakgrunnen i rollelisten?
- Pleier du å legge merke til produksjonsland når du velger hva du skal se på?
  - Har produksjonsland noe å si for hvordan enkelte grupper fremstilles?
- Pleier du å søke opp manusforfatterne?
- Hva synes du om den generelle film- og tv-bransjen?
  - Er det rom for forbedring? (eller liker du den som den er?)
  - Hva synes du om den norske filmbransjen?
  - Hva synes du om historiene som fortelles i film og tv-seriene?
    - Opplever du de som representative?
  - Hva hadde du likt å se?
  - Hva kan gjøres annerledes?

## Samfunnet (/representasjon)

- Hva er felles for filmene som har en viss representasjon?
- Hvem er typiske skuespillere (etniske minoriteter)?
- Kan du gi meg et eksempel på hvordan etniske minoriteter typisk fremstilles på tv?
- Opplever du en sammenheng i hvordan mennesker portretteres i film og tv-serier og hvordan du selv oppfatter dem?
- Tenker du over fordommer du har mot andre og hvor de stammer fra?
- Opplever du at andre har fordommer mot deg basert på hvordan du ser ut eller snakker?
  - Klær
  - Utseende / fenotype
  - Religiøse symboler
  - Sosiolekt
- Opplever du å ha forventninger til andre basert på hvordan de ser ut eller snakker?
- Hva tenker du om filmer og tv-seriers rolle i samfunnet?
  - Hvor viktige er de?
  - Hvor viktige er de sett i sammenheng med meningsdanning?
- Opplever du at andre behandler deg annerledes basert på fremstillingen av mennesker med samme etniske/kulturelle/religiøse bakgrunn i film og tv-serier? (eks. blir kalt kommentarer tatt direkte fra en film eller serie)

## Identitet

- Kan du fortelle litt om oppveksten din?
- Hvor kommer foreldrene dine fra? (Land og by) Når kom de til Norge?
  - Har foreldrene dine sitt bakgrunnsland påvirket hva du har sett på (film/tv) i oppveksten?
- Hvordan vil du definere din kulturelle tilhørighet?
- Har du en religiøs tilhørighet?
  - Påvirker det hvilke valg du tar når det kommer til hva du ser på?
- Var det fokus på kultur eller kulturelle uttrykk hjemme i oppveksten?
  - Kun utenlandsk/ kun norsk/ kombinasjon hjemme?
- Familie og venner
  - Lik smak?

- Hvordan velge hva dere ser på hvis dere ser sammen?
- Noe du unngår å se med andre/ ser kun alene?
- Opplever du at ditt liv eller opplevelsene du har hatt gjenspeiles i film og tv-serier?
  - Hvorfor/ hvorfor ikke?

### Sosiale medier/reklame

- Hva synes du om sosiale mediers rolle når det kommer til å skape oppmerksomhet rundt en film eller tv-serie?
- Opplever du at det er en forskjell i hvordan filmer og serier med etniske minoriteter blir markedsført?
- Hva kan gjøres annerledes for å nå ut til flere?
- Har det skjedd en endring i hvordan filmer eller serier blir markedsført? Bedre/verre enn før?

Nå skal jeg vise et lite klipp (0:00-03:17) fra en tv-serie. Hva er dine tanker rundt klippet?

Link: <https://tv.nrk.no/serie/vi-er-lady-parts/sesong/1/episode/1/avspiller>

Hva føler du når du ser på dette klippet?

- Opplever karakterene som stereotype?
- Hva prøver klippet å formidle?

### Avslutningsspørsmål:

- Opplever du å kunne si din mening hvis du er uenig i måten mennesker med din bakgrunn blir fremstilt? Eks. i kronikker i aviser eller samtale med andre.
- Er det noe mer du ønsker å legge til/ vil si som vi ikke har snakket om?
- Takk for at du er med. Repetere om konfidensialitet og anonymitet.

**Er det greit om jeg kontakter deg senere hvis jeg har noen oppfølgingsspørsmål?**



## APPENDIX C: Questionnaire

1. Alder: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Kjønn?     Mann  Kvinne  Annet  Ønsker ikke å oppgi  
Spesifiser hvis annet: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Hvor er du født? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Hvis aktuelt, hvor gammel var du da du innvandret? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Hvor vokste du opp? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Har du gått i barnehage i Norge?  
 Ja  Nei
7. Har du studert? \_\_\_\_\_  
Hvis ja, hva har du studert? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Har du jobb? Hvis ja, hva jobber du som? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Hvor i verden kommer dine foreldre fra?  
Mor: \_\_\_\_\_  
Far: \_\_\_\_\_
10. Har du en religiøs eller etisk overbevisning?  
 Ja  Nei  
Hvis ja, hvilken? \_\_\_\_\_
11. Har du vokst opp i et flerkulturelt miljø? \_\_\_\_\_  
Hvis ja, hvordan? \_\_\_\_\_
12. Har du flerkulturelle venner? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Hvor ofte ser du på serier (t i uken)? \_\_\_\_\_
14. Hvor ofte ser du på filmer (t i uken)? \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX D: Informed Consent Form**

Forespørsel om deltakelse i forskningsprosjektet

### **”Unge voksne med en etnisk minoritetsbakgrunn og deres opplevelse av film og tv-serier”**

#### **Bakgrunn og formål**

Dette prosjektet er en masteroppgave i sosiologi på institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi, ved Universitetet i Oslo. Formålet med studien er å få mer kunnskap om unge voksne med en etnisk minoritetsbakgrunns tanker rundt film og tv-serier. Spørsmål jeg er interessert i å få svar på er blant annet: Hvordan velger unge voksne hva de ser på? Blir de påvirket av måten mennesker som ligner på dem blir fremstilt? Har produksjonsland noe å si for måten film/serier blir mottatt? Det vil også bli stilt spørsmål rundt temaene religion og etnisitet. Dette er et lite studert felt innenfor norsk sosiologi, og med min studie ønsker jeg å bidra til mer forskning på feltet.

#### **Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?**

Studien baserer seg på muntlige intervjuer som varer mellom 60 og 90 minutter. Spørsmålene vil være åpne og ta for seg deltakernes opplevelse av film og tv-serier sett opp mot fremstillingen av etniske minoriteter i populærkulturen. Under intervjuet vil data registreres som notater på papir og med båndopptaker, hvis deltakeren samtykker til dette. Deretter vil intervjuet skrives ned, anonymiseres og lydopptakene vil slettes. Jeg ønsker også å benytte meg av de nedskrevne anonymiserte intervjuene i videre forskning, hvis deltakeren samtykker til dette.

#### **Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?**

Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt, og kun til formålene som er nevnt i dette skrevet. Alt av datamateriale vil bli lagret på sikker maskinvare som tilhører UiO. Jeg vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene jeg har fortalt om i dette skrevet. Jeg behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Hvis du tillater bruk av båndopptak under intervjuet, vil jeg slette dette etter at intervjuet er skrevet ned. For å ivareta konfidensialitet vil informasjonen bli anonymisert gjennom koder som knytter deltageren til hans opplysninger. Disse vil lagres adskilt fra øvrig data. Etter at datamaterialet er anonymisert vil jeg analysere intervjuet på min personlige datamaskin, som er sikret med brukernavn og passord. Deltakeren vil ikke kunne gjenkjennes i oppgaven. Prosjektet avsluttes januar 2022.

#### **Dine rettigheter**

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke opplysninger vi behandler om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene
- å få rettet opplysninger om deg som er feil eller misvisende
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger

## Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

På oppdrag fra Universitetet i Oslo har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å vite mer om eller benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi ved hovedveileder for prosjektet Sabina Tica (sabina.tica@sosgeo.uio.no)
- Universitetet i Oslo sitt personvernombud: Roger Markgraf-Bye. Han kan nås på epost personvernombud@uio.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personvertjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 53 21 15 00.

## Frivillig deltakelse

Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle personopplysninger om deg bli slettet. I tillegg har du som deltaker i denne studien rett til innsyn, retting av opplysninger og muligheten til å klage til Datatilsynet hvis du ønsker dette.

Dersom du har spørsmål til deltagelse eller om studien, ta kontakt med Suhad Hadi, enten via epost: suhadh@student.sv.uio.no eller telefon 96730866.

## Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

- Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, har fått mulighet til å stille spørsmål og er villig til å delta
- Jeg samtykker til bruk av båndopptak under intervjuet
- Jeg samtykker til at den anonymiserte informasjonen kan lagres etter prosjektslutt og benyttes i videre forskning

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)