‘The Social Meaning of Skin Color’:
Interrogating the Interrelation of Phenotype/Race and Nation in Norway

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) in Sociology

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University of Oslo

2021

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Series of dissertations submitted to the
Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oslo
No. 867

ISSN 1564-3991

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Cover: Hanne Baadsgaard Utigard.
Print production: Reprosentralen, University of Oslo.

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Summary

In recent years, young Norwegian writers of color have increasingly called attention to everyday experiences of racism and to the relative silence that surrounds this topic in Norway. Hegemonic societal narratives claim that 'race' is not a relevant category of difference in Norway because it is not verbalized through an explicitly racial vocabulary, and that Norway used to be a very homogenous nation that has only more recently become 'diverse' with the advent of non-European labor migrants starting in the late 1960s. A look at Norwegian history, however, makes clear that these narratives overlook the historic racialization of national and indigenous minorities (and their potential extension into the present).

Against this backdrop, this thesis asks how phenotype functions as a marker of difference and as a category of difference in Norway today. It further poses the question what phenotype means for understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related difference. The reason for making 'phenotype' the main object of research in this thesis is that race is projected onto individuals' bodies via phenotype and that race can manifest itself via phenotype even when no explicitly racial vocabulary is in use.

The project draws on life story interviews with 33 parents of young children who live in Oslo and vary in terms of migration background or lack thereof. Based on an understanding that phenotype/race is intertwined with other aspects of migration-related difference, the interviews focus broadly on participants' experiences with and reflections on 'ethnic diversity'. The interviews cover the participants' entire life story with a specific focus on their childhood/youth, working life, and parenthood. Further, the interviews contain a discussion of a range of categories that are used to situate individuals vis-à-vis the nation (Norwegian, immigrant, foreigner, minority) or with regard to ethnicity and phenotype/race (ethnically Norwegian, white, dark, brown, black).

Theoretically, the project is grounded in a standpoint theoretical approach. It also draws on several concepts from the literature on race and racism, which it treats as 'sensitizing concepts' (Blumer, 1954), so as to remain open to the empirical context. These concepts are race, racialization, whiteness, racism, and color-blindness. The thesis further makes use of the literature on boundaries and processes of categorization.

It is organized into six analysis chapters. The first among these, chapter 4, starts by presenting three constructed, 'typical' life stories that grant the reader a glimpse into the data material. The rest of the chapter analyzes how participants speak about experiences with 'ethnic diversity' they have had throughout their life course. This forms the contextual backdrop for the rest of the analysis. Chapters 5

and 6 focus on how participants understand and use the categories that were explored in the interviews. This allows for examining to what extent understandings of national belonging and of phenotype/race interrelate. Both chapters also discuss anxieties around language as well silences and hesitation that are present in the material. Chapter 7 builds on this and explores how participants without a migration background explain that they find phenotype difficult to talk about and which terms are used to refer to phenotype. Chapter 8 focuses on experiences of racism and discrimination that were reported by participants. It also discusses to what extent participants feel that they can label their own experiences as 'racism'. Chapter 9 attempts to describe phenotype as a marker of difference in a systematic manner and explores intersections between phenotype and other categories of difference.

While all the analysis chapters follow an inductive, empirically driven logic, the concluding chapter returns to the sensitizing concepts presented the theory chapter and discusses them in light of the empirical findings. It finds that the concepts of 'race' and 'racialization' can explain a dynamic in the data material that would otherwise be hard to grasp and explain. The fact that a differentiation in 'white' versus 'non-white' resonates throughout the material can be understood in reference to the category of 'race' as one that was constructed during the colonial period in order to instate and maintain differentiations between European/non-European, civilized/backwards, superior/inferior, and Christian/heathen. Even though the term 'race' fell out of use in Norway after the Second World War, the empirical material that forms the basis of this thesis illustrates that ideas of European/non-European and white/non-white are still socially significant in Norway today.

The conclusion further engages the concept of color-blindness to discuss how superiority and inferiority can be implied without being articulated through an explicitly racial vocabulary. A central argument is that 'ethnicity' as an every-day term performs a racializing function in Norwegian. Finally, the concluding chapter draws on Philomena Essed's (1991; 2002) concept 'everyday racism' and Ghassan Hage's (1998) 'white nation fantasy' to explore how racism functions without referencing an explicit racial ideology. Essed's concept proves apt at explaining repetitive stories of harassment in public space and at exploring how experiences of denigration, exclusion, and alienation draw on multiple markers of difference to construct minorities as non-belonging, culturally inferior, and overdetermined by their culture.

Acknowledgements

Writing this thesis has been a challenging and rewarding journey. I was not on this journey alone and many travel companions deserve my thanks.

I would like to thank all the participants who agreed to be interviewed for this project. Thank you for being generous with your time and for your openness in sharing your stories and reflections with me. I have been truly touched and humbled by meeting you. My thanks also go to Sabina Tica, Karoline Blix Hjelle, Rebekka Delegacz Eldøy, and Tina Andersen who helped with transcriptions.

I am grateful to my supervisors, Mette Andersson and Inger Furseth. Thank you for believing in and supporting my project and for providing many helpful comments on chapter and thesis drafts. Special thanks to Inger for providing emotional support during the final phase.

Moreover, I would like to thank all my colleagues at the Department of sociology and human geography (ISS) for providing a welcoming environment. ISS was the first place where I 'landed' after moving to Norway and I was struck by the flat hierarchies and how easy it was to talk to everyone. Special thanks to Andrea Nightingale for offering a 'corona support chat' that provided relief in fall 2020, when the combination of pandemic-induced home isolation, PhD workload, and impending Scandinavian winter darkness were wearing me down. I am also grateful to Lise Kjølsrød for her support and many good talks.

I would further like to extend my gratitude to everyone who has commented on chapter drafts – at the Norwegian sociologist association's Winter Seminar, at the Nordic Migration Research Conference in 2018 and 2021, and at ISS' various migration research seminars and cultural sociology seminars. Thanks also to everyone who commented at the PhD seminar organized by Mette Andersson in June 2020, specifically Arnfinn H. Midtbøen and Jørn Ljunggren.

Special thanks go to everyone who has participated in the departmental PhD seminar – Sabina Tica, Anne Heyerdahl, Milda Nordbø Rosenberg, Astrid Hauge Rambøl, Eviane Leidig, Synneva Geithus Laastad, Marcin Sliwa, Uzair Ahmed, Jan Pesl, Plamen Akaliyski, Adrian Farner Rogne, Liridona Gashi, and Sigurd M. N. Oppegaard. This has been a very important social and academic arena for me and your many insightful comments have really helped me progress in my work. Thanks also to Sveinung Legard for comments on a chapter draft.

Thanks to my fellow PhD students Edvard Nergård Larsen, Sabina Tica, Inga Sæther and Karoline Blix Hjelle for your friendship, for sharing laughter and worries, and for listening to me. Many thanks to Anne

Heyerdahl for your friendship and invaluable support. I am also deeply grateful to Nicolai Topstad Borgen and Solveig Topstad Borgen for being there for me when I needed it most.

I would like to thank Aaron Ponce for comments on the introduction and theory chapter and for many, many good conversations over the past year. Thank you for challenging me academically, for listening to me, and for generously sharing your knowledge. I have learned so much from you!

This thesis could not have been written without Uzair Ahmed. Thanks for taking the initiative and starting our writing group. It has meant so much to me and having a weekly 'accountability meeting' helped me tremendously.

I would also like to extend my deep gratitude to Rogers Brubaker for commenting on a first draft of the entire dissertation earlier this year. Thank you for taking my work seriously, for diligent and insightful comments, and for a good discussion.

I am further deeply grateful to Hallvard Indgjerd for help with a number of tricky Norwegian-English translation issues. I am lucky to have such a nerdy friend who enjoys diving down into linguistic nuance and who sees value in the nitty-gritty work that makes for elegant idiomatic translations. I am further grateful to Hallvard for tailor-making three maps for my thesis and finally for your emotional support during challenging phases.

Finally, I would like to thank the library at the University of Oslo for generously purchasing all of the books I suggested and the people running the Statistical database of the municipality of Oslo for quick help when I needed additional data. My thanks also go to Jørn Ljunggren and the people at Cappelen Damm publishing house for letting me reprint a map.

Laura Führer

Oslo, 2 May 2021

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Excerpt from Camara Lundestad Joof's (2018) book 'I Talk About It All the Time' ('Eg snakkar om det heile tida'), my translation.

A Friend First

I often think about what people talk about when I'm not there. Do white people spend a lot of time discussing the n-word?

Do they spend their days in cafés, in bars, during their lunch break, at work, talking about this? About the history, the use, do they discuss whether or not it's okay to say? Do they ask white strangers what they think? Do they tell white strangers that 'I've been thinking this and this, and I wonder whether you think that's racist?' May I buy your time?

Most of my friends are white. I live in Scandinavia. Most people around me are white. I often think that I spend disproportionate amounts of my time discussing racism. Getting questions about racism. Receiving links about racism. Inspiring articles, hysterical memes. My Facebook feed abounds in them, Mark Zuckerberg's algorithms have created an echo chamber just for me. I often wonder whether these are links that people I know send to other people they know. As if they want to say: this is important. Or do they only send them to me? Do they only discuss the word 'negro' when I am there, or do they also sit for themselves and do so?

This thought makes me happy. I think: Maybe their commitment is so deeply rooted that I am not a trigger in the room, a catalyst to talk about something that is difficult. I try not to bring it up. I often bring it up. It is always brought up. Before I meet my friends, I plan what I will talk about. How much have I talked about racism this week? Last time we had a beer? How much have I talked about something that has happened to me? Happened to others?

I am a witness of truth. I am a political project. I am brown. But I am a friend, first. First, I want to be one of those around the table who keep the conversation balanced. We talk a little about you, we talk a little about me, we talk a little about us. But when I am there, when my skin color is there, then it's difficult to shift the

> topic back to you afterwards. It's difficult for you, maybe because you don't want to seem disrespectful. It's difficult for me, too. I become consumed with it. I'm not able to let it go. I need you to believe me. I'd rather not have to. It's just that when I get going, I get fixated. I get anal. I become brown first. A friend, second.
>
> It happens that I feel relieved when someone calls me 'nigger' in front of somebody I know. I think: There, there you saw it. Next time it comes up, *you* can tell the story. *You* can go have a coffee with someone next week and tell them that this happened. It happened to you. So I won't have to.
>
> And when I meet my friends at the café two weeks later, and the others ask how I'm doing, and I don't bring up the episode when someone called me a nigger in the ER, at Karl Johan, at Oslo City Mall, at a bar, then they'll say that they know, they have heard what happened, and they ask why I didn't say anything. And then I can say that it wasn't anything special. It happens so often, all the time, I don't tell you about it every time, even though it seems like I talk about it all the time. I talk about it all the time. And then, maybe they'll think: Oh, she's brown first. And she tries not to be. She's also a friend. This happened, this often happens, this has happened more times than we understand. And I don't have to. Because in my fixation, I'm not only brown first and a friend second. I make you white first. Too.

This excerpt is from a book by the Norwegian actor, playwright, and author Camarra Lundestad Joof, who was born to a Norwegian mother and a Gambian father in 1988. The book has the title 'I talk about it all the time' ('Eg snakkar om det heila tida') and discusses Joof's personal experiences with and reflections around living life in a brown body in Scandinavia. This excerpt poignantly illustrates the ways in which she experiences her own skin color/race as a factor that shapes her everyday life and makes her the target of racist abuse.

In recent years, young Norwegian writers of color have increasingly called attention to everyday racism and to the relative silence that surrounds it (Ali, 2016, 2019; Bahar, 2017; Ismail, 2017; Joof, 2018; Reiss, 2017; Shanmugaratnam, 2020; Sibeko, 2019). This raises the question how these experiences can be understood sociologically.

A glance at Norwegian social science publications shows that while considerable attention has been devoted to 'ethnicity' as a category of difference (for example: Drange & Orupabo, 2018; Fangen, 2007; Friberg & Midtbøen, 2017; Hansen, Melhus, Høgmo, & Lund, 2008; Martiny, Froehlich, Soltanpanah, & Haugen, 2020; Midtbøen & Nadim, 2019; Reisel, Hermansen, & Kindt, 2019; Thuen, 2012; Walle, 2007),

the same cannot be said about skin color/race[1]. Alana Lentin's argument that 'race' became a taboo category in Europe after World War II (2008, p. 495) seems like a fitting description of the Norwegian context. This must be seen in connection with ideas about 'Nordic exceptionalism' (Keskinen, Tuori, Irni, & Mulinari, 2009; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012) that hold that the Nordic countries did not participate in colonialism[2], that they have been committed to humanitarian aid and peace-building efforts worldwide, and that they are thus untainted by 'race' as a colonial product. As a consequence, not only is 'race' not an established category in Norwegian sociology, but also 'skin color' – as one of the bodily markers used to read 'race' onto the body – has received comparatively little attention. Indeed, 'race' is by many considered a wrong and dangerous idea that must not be used and reproduced in contemporary research (for a discussion, see Andersson, 2018b; Birkelund, 2021).

In this thesis, I differentiate between 'skin color'/'phenotype' on the one hand, and 'race' on the other. I understand the terms 'skin color' and 'phenotype' to refer to visual, bodily markers of difference. While 'skin color' is narrower in scope, 'phenotype' also encompasses other physical features that are generally understood to point to geographic ancestry, such as hair color and texture, eye color and shape, and other facial features. 'Race' on the other hand, refers to a set of socially constructed categories that divide humankind into groups (Dixon & Telles, 2017; Lentin, 2008). As will be discussed in the theory chapter, there are different ways to conceive of and to define 'race' in contemporary social science. Historically, understandings of 'race' that were deployed in practice by state and non-state actors have changed, too. However, both in theory and practice, ideas of 'race' often involve interpretations of skin color/phenotype, and 'race' is read onto bodies differentially via skin color/phenotype (López, 2013; Sen & Wasow, 2016). 'Phenotype' and 'race' are thus entangled with one another, and it can be challenging to fully separate them analytically.

The term 'phenotype' is moreover used slightly differently in the natural and the social sciences. In the natural sciences, 'phenotype' refers to an organism's observable traits (Weatherall, 2006, p. 1). In humans, this encompasses a wide range of traits, for instance height, eye color, blood group, and lactose (in)tolerance. In the social sciences, however, the term 'phenotype' is used in a more narrow sense to refer to visible bodily characteristics that are generally associated with humans' geographical origin or heritage (such as skin color, hair color, hair texture, eye shape etc.) (Andersson, 2018b; Feliciano, 2015; Naber, 2000; Roth, 2016; Winant, 2000). In this thesis, I use the term 'phenotype' in this second, narrower sense. While 'race' and 'phenotype' cannot always be separated from one another, I understand 'phenotype' as

[1] While there is some sociological literature that investigates the related categories of difference of skin color/phenotype/race, these are far from established categories of difference in Norwegian sociology. I will give an overview over this literature in section 2.2 in the theory chapter.
[2] This is not true, as will be explored in section 1.3.

a descriptive category (straight vs curly hair, etc.) and ‘race’ as a context-dependent, socially constructed category with multiple implicit normative and descriptive meanings that transcend the merely phenotypical.

In this thesis, I examine how phenotype intertwines with ideas about Norwegianness and migration-related diversity. I am interested in ‘phenotype’ precisely because it has historically been the marker of difference through which ‘race’ was read onto bodies. Even though the term ‘race’ is virtually absent in Norwegian common parlance, public discourse, and academic research today, people may still be treated differently based on their phenotype. In order to make sense of the way in which ‘phenotype’ matters for understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related diversity, I draw on theoretical concepts such as ‘race’, ‘racialization’, and ‘racism’. As will be discussed in the theory chapter, I treat these concepts as ‘sensitizing’ (Blumer, 1954).

As in some other European countries (Ahmar, 2020; Haidari, 2020; Murray, 2021), the second half of 2020 saw a public debate over how to understand and label the experiences of racism reported by non-white minorities in Norway (e.g., Falk, 2020; Fjeld et al., 2020; Jørgensen & Kjernsli, 2020; Lidbom, 2020). In the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd on 25 May 2020, demonstrations in many European cities drew attention to the fact that people of color in Europe, too, experience racism (Avlesen-Østli, 2020; Birkeland, 2020). Still, the use of theoretical concepts such as ‘race’ and ‘racism’ is criticized by many as an ‘import of American categories’ that is deemed at odds with the various European country contexts (Abdi, 2020; Ahmar, 2020; Brekke, 2020a, 2020b; Mahler, 2021; Murray, 2021; Svendsen et al., 2020; Voyer & Lund, 2020).

One of the challenges of finishing this dissertation in this discursive context has been that this makes it very hard to even formulate a research question, since there is little agreement on terms and categories. This thesis attempts to unpack the field of ethno-racial meaning-making in Norway and must as such be regarded as exploratory. This is a field in flux where negotiations and contestations over labels and categories are ongoing. My approach to this field is not to start from any given definition of ‘race’ or ‘racism’, but rather to center ‘phenotype’ as a marker of difference in the empirical material. This choice is based on the understanding that ‘phenotype’ is important to the operation of ‘race’, and that ‘phenotype’ can matter even if ‘race’ is not used in common parlance. In other words: while ‘race’ as a concept may be controversial, it is harder to argue against the fact that ‘phenotype’ may play a role for how individuals are approached and treated by others. This thesis thus seeks to investigate ‘phenotype’ as a marker of difference and a category of difference in contemporary Norway.

Moreover, focusing on ‘phenotype’ allows to remain open to the empirical context and to guard against being overdetermined by any one specific definition of ‘race’. Of course, studying ‘race’ is a much broader undertaking than studying ‘phenotype’ as a category of difference because ‘race’ does not only function through ‘phenotype’. As such, the focus on ‘phenotype’ coupled with the choice to use life-story interviews as a method also serves to delineate the scope of this thesis, which centers around examining how phenotype factors into understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related diversity and how it shapes experiences with discrimination. Other arenas where race manifests itself, such as socio-economic inequality or policing and criminal justice are thus à priori not the subject of this thesis.

1.2 Research Questions

As I will discuss below, phenotype is in general a category of difference that is not spoken about much – though spoken about increasingly – in Norway. This makes it an elusive category of difference to center and to research. It therefore becomes even more necessary to identify a starting point for investigation, an area where one with a reasonable degree of certainty expects phenotype to matter.

In Norway, like in most other European countries, phenotype is often understood as pointing towards (relatively recent) immigration and the ‘ethnic diversity’ that accompanies it (Myrdahl, 2010b; Prieur, 2002; Vassenden, 2010). Because most European nation states had relatively homogenous populations in terms of ethnicity and phenotype until labor immigration picked off starting in the mid-20th century – and even much longer than that for parts of the continent – phenotype (and race) are by many seen as categories of difference that not only point to an elsewhere, but also belong to an elsewhere. This association of phenotype/race with immigration and immigrants ignores that the populations of European nation states have always been heterogeneous to a certain degree, as they have at all times included minority populations and recent migrants. As such, phenotype, ethnicity, and race have carried meaning in European countries for a long time. Section 1.3 embarks on a historical excursus that examines phenotypical and ethno-racial meaning making in Norway.

This dissertation builds on the assumption that understandings of Norwegianness and of migration-related diversity are an interesting starting point for unpacking the contemporary meaning of phenotype. Because phenotype is understood as pointing to immigration – i.e. newcomers moving into national space – it makes sense not only to investigate phenotype as a category of difference in relation to the newcomers, but also in relation to the ‘natives’, and to the topic of national identity more broadly. The extent to which immigrants and their descendants are regarded as legitimate members of the national community by the majority population carries great importance for their inclusion and sense of belonging (Fangen, 2007;

Løvgren & Orupabo, 2011; Vassenden, 2010). It is therefore important to study understandings and definitions of Norwegianness.

The main research questions this thesis seeks to answer are:

- Which meaning does phenotype carry as a marker of difference and as a category of difference in Norway today?
- What does phenotype mean for understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related diversity?

The understanding that phenotype today is perceived to be thematically linked to immigration has implications for whom I chose to interview, and how I designed the interview guide. These topics are discussed in the methods chapter.

In order to investigate the meaning phenotype carries for understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related diversity, I interviewed parents of young children[3] living in Oslo about their understandings of and experiences with ethnic diversity[4]. The resulting interview material was analyzed and is presented in six separate analysis chapters. Each of these answers one or several specific, sub-ordinate research questions. These are, respectively, for the six different analysis chapters:

- How do participants in this study talk about ethnic diversity when telling their life story, both in terms of content and conversational dynamics? By analyzing understandings of 'ethnic diversity' more broadly, this chapter generates the context in which discussions of phenotype (over the ensuing analysis chapters) are situated. [*Chapter 4*]
- How do participants use and define categories that describe situatedness with regards to the nation, on the one hand, and with regards to ethnicity and phenotype/race on the other? Do these categories overlap or intertwine in any way? [*Chapter 5 and Chapter 6*]
- How do majority participants explain that they find phenotype difficult to talk about? Which terms are used to refer to phenotype? [*Chapter 7*]
- Which experiences with discrimination and racism do participants report? What are participants' reflections around whether or not to label their experiences as 'discrimination' or 'racism'? [*Chapter 8*]

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[3] The choice to interview parents is discussed in section 1.5 below.
[4] The design of the interview guide, and my choice to interview 'broadly' about ethnic diversity, rather than 'narrowly' about phenotype, are explained in chapter 3.

- Is it possible to describe phenotype in a systematic manner, and if so, what are the boundaries between different phenotypical categories? How does phenotype intersect with other categories of difference? [*Chapter 9*]

Taken together, these sub-ordinate research questions will contribute to answering the two main research questions.

1.3 Excursus: A History of Phenotypical and Ethno-Racial Meaning Making

Even though phenotype is today understood as belonging to the thematic field of immigration, Norway also has a longer history of ethno-racial meaning making that partly drew on phenotypical characteristics and stretches back much further in time than the onset of post-war labor immigration during the 1960s. Dominant narratives about Norwegian ethno-national history claim that the country was ethnically very homogenous until that point in time. While this may be true in terms of numbers, it still needs to be supplemented with information about how ethnicity, language, and 'race' were interpreted at the time, in order to give a more nuanced picture of the history of understandings of ethnicity, race, and nation in Norway. The attempt at writing this history is in the spirit of Gurminder Bhambra's (2014) call to write 'Connected Sociologies', i.e. to work towards taking colonial connections seriously when studying the present. Another motivation for writing this excursus was to counter narratives of Nordic exceptionalism and colonial innocence, and to discuss how Norway's involvement in colonialism and other historical forms of ethno-racial meaning-making continue to shape phenotypical and racial meaning-making in the present.

From 1537 until 1814, Norway was the 'junior partner' in a union with Denmark. During that time, Denmark-Norway acquired and held a number of colonies, which Denmark retained after Norway left the union in 1814. The position that Norway had within the Dano-Norwegian Realm can be described in different ways. In relation to the Danish-Norwegian colonial empire, Morten Andersen (2014) calls Norway a 'semi-core' and compares it to Scotland, which he considers a 'semi-core' in the British empire.

In addition to Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands, the colonies held by Denmark-Norway included towns and trading posts in India (from 1620), trading stations and forts in West Africa (from 1658), and several islands in the Caribbean West Indies (from 1671) (Pedersen, 2017a). Through the Danish West India Company – initially called the Danish Africa Company – Denmark-Norway was also active in the Atlantic triangle trade (Green-Pedersen, 1975; Pedersen, 2017b, p. 289). Slaves were transported from

the colonies in West Africa to the colonies in the Caribbean, where they were traded for tobacco, sugar, and other raw materials, which were then shipped back to Denmark-Norway. In 1768, one of the ships used in the triangle trade, the *SS Fredensborg* – named after a Danish-Norwegian fort in present-day Ghana – sunk off the Norwegian coast (outside the town of Arendal) while on its way from the Caribbean island of St Croix to Copenhagen (Svalesen, 1996). Crew, commercial passengers, and two slaves who were onboard survived the shipwreck (Svalesen, 1996, p. 153). In terms of phenotypical/racial meaning-making, it must be noted that the entire European colonial enterprise and the triangle trade were built on a racial logic in which Africans were understood as ‘slave material’ that could be captured, traded, and owned as commodities (Nilsen, 2020).

During this period, some Norwegian colonial masters and mistresses also owned slaves in Denmark and in Norway[5] (Østhus, 2018). Cases of this have been documented for the 1700s in Bergen, Arendal, and Stange (Hedmark county) (Østhus, 2018). It is not known exactly how many slaves there were, because censuses at the time did not contain information about slave status or about ethnicity/race. Notwithstanding, descriptors like 'negro' were sometimes noted as 'profession' in the census and give some indication as to their presence. Yet, there are also known cases of slaves that were simply registered as ‘servants’ in the census (Østhus, 2018). In addition, there are known cases of free servants with a colonial background. Denmark-Norway outlawed trans-Atlantic slave trade in 1803 (Bregnsbo, 2017, p. 128). However, trading slaves within the Caribbean colonies was still allowed, as was owning them (Bregnsbo, 2017, p. 128). In 1848, all slaves in the West Indies were emancipated after a revolt (The National Museum of Denmark, n.d.).

Danish-Norwegian colonial history is a little-known chapter of history in Norway and is often overshadowed by the self-image of being a small, egalitarian nation that did not have colonies[6]. Comparing two series of middle school history textbooks, Sahra Ali A. Torjussen (2018, pp. 30–43) finds that both series only cover other European countries’ colonial empires and do not mention the Danish-Norwegian one. However, one of the series mentions that many Norwegians traveled to Africa as missionaries during the era of imperialism, and that 200 Norwegians served in the Belgian colony of Congo, while still contextualizing this information by stating that Norway was not a colonial power (Torjussen, 2018, p. 32). The fact that some people owned slaves in Norway is even less known. I only

[5] The fact that selling, buying, and owning slaves was allowed in the European parts of the Danish-Norwegian Realm was established by the Danish Chancellery in 1848 (Olsen, 2017, p. 260).

[6] This also holds true for other Nordic countries and has been termed ‘Nordic colonial innocence’ (Höglund & Burnett, 2019; Keskinen et al., 2009; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012) in the literature.

found out about it while writing this introduction in October 2020 due to an ongoing research project at the National Library of Norway.

When discussing the pertinence of studying race, an often used argument is that race does not carry meaning in Norway because 'unlike other countries, we did not have slaves or colonies'. Yet, in recent years there has been a growing interest for this colonial history (Blaagaard, 2010; Höglund & Burnett, 2019; L. Jensen, 2019; Keskinen et al., 2009; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012), including the publication of what is considered a new 'magnum opus' (Weiss, 2019) in Danish(-Norwegian) colonial history, the five-volume series 'Danmark og kolonierne' ('Denmark and the Colonies') published in 2017 (Brimnes, Gulløv, & Olsen, 2017; Gulløv, 2017; Hernæs, Gulløv, & Brimnes, 2017; Olsen, Gulløv, & Brimnes, 2017; Pedersen, 2017a).

In addition to racial meaning making that occurred through the colonial project, there were also other important channels and arenas where these dynamics played out. For a long time, Christian missions' publications were an important information source about Africans for people in Norway. In an MA thesis, Heidi Brandt Wendelborg (2018) examines how Africans were depicted in these publications in the period from 1850 to 1950. She finds that they were described in paternalistic terms as lazy, uncivilized, and in need of help from Europeans. The term 'race' was used throughout the entire period she studied, became more prominent during the 1900s and was most frequently used in 1950. Further, Marianne Gullestad (2007), in her book 'Mission Pictures: A Contribution to a Norwegian Self-Understanding'[7], argues that the way Norwegian missionaries described Africans in the period from 1920 to 2000 is tightly linked to imperialistic discourses and racial thought. Finally, Line Nyhagen Predelli (2003) examines how race, class, and sexuality interweave in constructions of gender relations in the Norwegian Missionary Society in Norway and Madagascar in the nineteenth century. Norwegian mission societies thus played an active role in creating and conveying racial knowledge.

Moreover, Norway had one of the highest European rates of emigration to the USA, most of which occurred between 1866 and 1905 (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 115). Even though emigration may not have seemed a racial project from a European point of view, immigration to the USA certainly was, and it is reasonable to assume that both emigration to the USA as well as return migration from the USA impacted racial knowledge in Norway.

Another important arena for phenotypical and ethno-racial meaning making has been the governing of minority populations in Norway. Today, Norway recognizes five different national minorities: Kvens / Norwegian Finns (people of Finnish descent in Northern Norway), Forest Finns (people of Finnish descent

[7] Original title: 'Misjonsbilder: Bidrag til norsk selvforståelse'

in a forested area on both sides of the Swedish-Norwegian border), Jews, Roma (descendants of people who immigrated from Romania in the 1860s), and Romani people / Taters (a branch of the Romani people who have lived in Norway for about 500 years) (Government.no, n.d.; Midtbøen & Lidén, 2015). In addition, the Sámi people is recognized as an indigenous people in Norway. Since Statistics Norway nowadays does not collect information on ethnicity, there are only estimates as to the sizes of these minorities. In 2019, 18,000 people were registered as eligible voters for the Sámi Parliament of Norway (The Sámi Parliament of Norway, n.d.).

The history of minority politics of the Norwegian state was for a long time characterized by an effort to assimilate or 'Norwegianize' the population and to suppress minorities' cultures and languages (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 145–151). This history comprises the placement of children in orphanages and boarding schools, a ban on speaking minority languages at school, forced placement in mental institutions, forced and voluntary sterilization, and disputes over access rights to land and natural resources (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 149–150; Gaski, 2020; Midtbøen & Lidén, 2015, pp. 33–59). These measures targeted different minority populations in different ways and varied in duration. In general, these policies were gradually abandoned during the 1960s/1970s, though they were maintained until 1989 for the Romani people/Taters (carried out through a missions organization at the behest of the state) (Midtbøen & Lidén, 2015, p. 51). During World War II, occupying German forces targeted the Jewish minority for extermination, killing almost 800 of Norway's circa 2200 Jewish citizens (Banik, 2020).

The Sámi were recognized as indigenous people in 1990 through the ratification of ILO Convention n169 (Government.no, 2020); the other groups as national minorities in 1998 (Banik, 2017). In 2018 the Norwegian Parliament commissioned a Truth and Reconciliation Committee that is to investigate the experiences of Sámi, Kvens / Norwegian Finns, and Forest Finns with the policies of Norwegian authorities so that these experiences can be officially recognized (UiT, n.d.). The committee is expected to deliver its final report in 2022.

Historically, the understanding of who was a part of these minorities was based both on culture/language and descent; the precise definition, however, especially regarding individuals of 'mixed' heritage, varied over time (Lie, 2002). Einar Lie (2002) traces the history of how the Norwegian census categorized Sámi and Kvens / Norwegian Finns from 1845 to 1930 and finds an increasing focus on 'nature' and 'descent' in the interwar years, which he attributes to the increased focus on racial difference and eugenics during this period.

The beginning of the 20th century saw the growth of a movement for eugenics or 'racial hygiene' in Norway (Bangstad, 2017, p. 240). At the time, Norwegian physical anthropologists, who entertained contacts to their counterparts in Sweden and Germany were theorizing the superiority of a Nordic / Germanic 'master race' (Kyllingstad, 2012, 2014). The Sámi minority, on the other hand, was claimed to belong to a 'lower-standing race' and was often regarded to be Asian in origin (Dankertsen, 2019, p. 117; Kyllingstad, 2017, p. 2). Physical anthropologists at the time were theorizing race and racial difference based on phenotypical differences – measuring skulls and body height, as well as recording eye and hair color (Kyllingstad, 2012, p. 49).

In 1914, as a part of the celebration of the 100-year-anniversary of the Norwegian constitution, an exhibition of a so-called 'Congo village' was organized in Frogner Park in Oslo. The village was supposed to show an 'authentic Congolese village' with mud huts covered in palm leaves and other artifacts, and was populated by about 80 'Congolese villagers' – who are today thought to have been brought in from Senegal (Graatrud, Bergmo, Svåsand, & Nordenborg, 2014). At the time, the inhabitants of this human exhibition were considered to belong to a lower-standing, primitive race, and phenotypical traits were seen as evidence of that.

During the early 1930s, leading Norwegian anthropological authorities condemned the idea of a 'Nordic master race' as 'pseudoscientific' (Kyllingstad, 2012). In the decades following the Second World War, during which Nazi Germany occupied Norway, 'race' gradually became delegitimized as a concept, though discrimination and abuse of national minorities based on their 'inferiority' continued after the war. (e.g., sterilization of Tater women continued until 1977 (Bangstad, 2017, p. 241)).

The late 1960s saw the onset of labor immigration, which initially mainly consisted of men from Turkey, Morocco, and Pakistan (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 193–194). In 1975, after the first oil crisis, the Norwegian government enacted an 'immigration stop' banning further labor immigration. As a result of the immigration stop, many labor immigrants, some of whom had previously travelled back and forth between their country of origin and Norway, decided to establish permanent residency in Norway and had their families join them (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 206–207, 213–214). From the mid-1980s, Norway saw an increasing arrival of asylum seekers, mainly from Iran, Chile, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Yugoslavia (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 214 ff). More recently, since the EU's Eastern enlargement of 2004 – Norway has seen the arrival of comparatively high numbers of labor migrants from EU countries, especially from Poland and Lithuania. Sweden was also a prominent country of origin during the 2000s. Today, 14.7% of the population of Norway are immigrants, and 3.5% are descendants of immigrants (SSB, 2020a). As of 2020, the five largest countries of origin of immigrants are Poland, Lithuania, Sweden, Syria, and Somalia – in this order (SSB, 2020a).

Congruent with the demise of the term ‘race’ after WW2, immigrant and minority populations are today not described in racial terms in Norway. Statistics Norway only collects data on country of origin, not on race or ethnicity. However, since the 1990s, ‘ethnicity’ has increasingly been used to describe differences between people with and without a migration background in both political debate and everyday talk (Herbjørnsrud, 2017). Whereas those without a (recent) migration background (and without an indigenous identity) are described as ‘ethnically Norwegian’, those with a migration background are identified as ‘ethnic minorities’, or more specifically ‘ethnically Pakistani’, ‘ethnically Moroccan’, etc. This usage is very widespread both in everyday language and in the media.

Recent years have seen increasing debates of the term ‘ethnically Norwegian’ (Erdal, 2017; Herbjørnsrud, 2017; Sandnes, 2017; Sterri, 2017), with some arguing that it excludes immigrants and their descendants from being ‘properly Norwegian’. Young Norwegians with an immigrant background have been more and more vocal in these debates, denouncing experiences with discrimination and racism, and describing a feeling that they can never be ‘Norwegian enough’ (Al-Nahi, 2019; Al-Samarai, 2016; Assidiq, 2015; Bergo, 2017; Kocabas, 2014). Many of these young writers who participate in public debate also use a more explicitly phenotypical or racial vocabulary than is otherwise used in Norwegian public discourse, actively employing terms like ‘white’, ‘brown’, ‘black’, and ‘dark-skinned’ (Ali, 2018; “Dark-skinned girl,” 2019; Gilani, 2011; Ismail, 2017). In May and June 2020, the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis saw a proliferation of articles in the Norwegian media about discrimination and racism experienced by ethnic minorities in Norway (e.g., Avlesen-Østli, 2020; Birkeland, 2020; Falk, 2020; Lidbom, 2020). On 10 June, in a country that had been on covid-19-lockdown for the past three months, an estimated 12 to 15,000 people demonstrated in Oslo in order to honor the memory of George Floyd, express solidarity with anti-racist struggles in the USA, and denounce racism in Norway (Fjeld et al., 2020). Protesters carried signs in both Norwegian and English, with many slogans referencing the Black Lives Matter movement (Jørgensen & Kjernsli, 2020).

In sum, even though it is not very common to employ phenotypical or racial descriptors in Norwegian today, it is possibly to trace a Norwegian history of phenotypical-ethnic-racial meaning making. Contrary to widely held assumptions, phenotype and/or race are thus not topics that only became salient in Norway with the arrival of international labor migration from the 1960s. Present-day interpretations of phenotype must be seen in light of this history.

1.4 A Note on Language and Context

Since I have previously lived in different countries (Germany, France, and Lebanon), and only moved to Norway when I started my PhD, I brought a particular sensitivity to differences in both language and context to this project. It was important to me to pay attention to how ways of speaking about ethno-racial difference are particular to the linguistic context where they happen. The topic of phenotypical and ethno-racial diversity is governed by very different conventions of speech in Norwegian and in English (and there is certainly much variation within Norwegian-speaking *and* English-speaking contexts, too). Since all the interview material on which this thesis builds was collected in Norway and the overwhelming majority of interviews – 31 of 33 – were conducted in Norwegian, I felt a need for this dissertation to have a title that made sense to Norwegian speakers and in the Norwegian context. The dissertation is titled "The Social Meaning of Skin Color': Interrogating the Interrelation of Phenotype/Race and Nation in Norway', and the first part of the title ('The Social Meaning of Skin Color') is a literal translation of how I would describe my project in Norwegian.

Throughout the thesis, I use the word 'phenotype' to refer to the phenomenon in which I am interested. This term is more encompassing – and thus more precise – than 'skin color', because it also includes other bodily features than skin color, such as hair texture, hair color, and facial features, as mentioned above. However, the word 'phenotype' is not used in Norwegian in everyday language, and I did generally not use it when telling others about my research. In fact, while I had been interested in understanding both phenotype/race and migration-related diversity more broadly since the beginning of my project, it took me quite a while before I found a good way of describing the project in terms that I felt captured my interest and were understandable to others. In the end, I found out that the formulation '*hudfargens sosiale betydning'* ('the social meaning of skin color') as a headline conveyed my interest to others who were curious about my research. This title does two things: first, it uses the term 'skin color', which is understandable (unlike 'phenotype'), not taboo/complicated (like 'race'), and clearer than the often-used 'ethnicity' (more on the latter below). Second, by stressing that what I am interested in is 'the social meaning' of skin color, it gives a clear indication that I do not think of it as biologically determining. It is thus a formulation that 'works' in Norwegian, and that, I would argue, flows better in Norwegian than in English.

By integrating a literal translation of this phrase in my title – rather than opting for a title that might be more in keeping with Anglophone speech conventions around ethno-racial difference – I want to indicate that I am seeking to understand the phenomenon I am interested in – phenotype – in light of the geographical, linguistic, national, and discursive context in which I work – the Norwegian context.

Different national and linguistic contexts may differ in how migration-related diversity and ethnicity/phenotype/race are generally spoken about. In Norway, migration-related difference is most often discussed under the headline of 'ethnicity'. Also, 'ethnically Norwegian' has since the 1990s been established as a term that refers to (non-Sámi) Norwegians without a (recent) migration background (Herbjørnsrud, 2017). In Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper's terms, 'ethnicity' can here be described as a 'category of practice', i.e. something resembling a '"native" or "folk" or "lay"' category (2000, p. 4). They distinguish 'categories of practice', which they define as 'categories of everyday social experience, developed and deployed by ordinary social actors' (2000, p. 4) from 'categories of analysis', which they explain are 'experience-distant categories used by social analysts' (2000, p. 4), for instance social scientists. Brubaker and Cooper argue that 'categories of practice' and 'categories of analysis' must not be confounded. Rather, it is necessary to examine the precise functioning of categories of practice. To this end, Brubaker in another paper suggests that this may be accomplished by adopting a self-reflexive stance towards categories used in research, by distinguishing between groups and categories, and by making categories of practice the '*object* of analysis' rather than a '*tool* of analysis' (2013a, p. 6 emphasis in original).

I would argue that the way 'ethnicity' is used as a term and category of practice in Norwegian, it can encompass different dimensions, such as descent, culture, and phenotype, in meaning. It is a term that is used widely, but somewhat ambiguously. 'Skin color', on the other hand, is used much more rarely in every-day speech in Norwegian, though the excerpt from Joof's book above provides an example of its use. I would further argue that much is changing right now with regard to how skin color/phenotype is spoken about in Norwegian, and that the protests that took place in Oslo after the murder of George Floyd testified to some of the ongoing changes.

The fact that skin color/phenotype is more rarely spoken about makes it both easier and more difficult to use as a 'category of analysis' in this thesis. Easier, because it avoids becoming conflated with an established 'category of practice' the way 'ethnicity' risks in Norwegian. More difficult, because it meant that I had to make many independent choices in terms of theory and methods since there was less literature to go by. In chapters 2 and 3, I explain how I approach 'phenotype' as a phenomenon of interest from a theoretical and methodological point of view.

It would certainly have been possible to use 'ethnicity' as a category of analysis in this thesis. A lot has been written about the question to what extent 'ethnicity', 'race' (, and 'nation') form a continuum or whether they are distinct phenomena (Back & Solomos, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 1999; Brubaker, 2009;

Fenton, 2010; Knowles, 2003). My focus in this thesis is on phenotype and I only discuss ethnicity in relation to it and do not make it a focal point in its own right. However, the literature on boundary drawing and categorization, which often focuses on 'ethnicity', has a lot to offer to the study of phenotype as a category of difference, and I will say more about this in the theory chapter (in section 2.7).

I conceive of phenotype as one category of difference that is interrelated with other categories of difference that belong to the field of migration-related diversity. As I will discuss in the methods chapter, this understanding has shaped my data collection. My approach was to collect data on the whole complex of 'migration-related diversity', and then to specifically interrogate phenotype in the analysis.

1.5 Interview Data

This thesis builds on 33 semi-structured interviews with parents of young children that were conducted between October 2016 and October 2017. I decided early on in the research processes to use life story interviews[8] and to interview participants of varying backgrounds, i.e. both people who had immigrated themselves, people who were born to immigrant parents, and people who do not have any migration background. Since this would result in participants varying in terms of migration background of lack thereof, I wanted to ensure that they had something else in common, and that everybody was roughly in the same 'life phase', so as to ensure some consistency (and comparability) in the life stories the interviews would produce.

I considered different life phases, and decided to interview 'parents of young children'. This was based on an assumption that this might be an interesting category of people to interview about their own experiences with 'ethnic diversity'. First, because parents of young children are in a life phase where they reflect over how they want to raise their children and what they want to pass on to them in terms of traditions, values, and cultural practices. This makes them insightful conversation partners for interviews about experiences with and views on 'ethnic diversity'. Second, because Oslo is a city that is characterized by a certain level of segregation (see section 1.6 below), both in terms of socio-economics and in terms of 'ethnicity' / immigrant background, many parents who raise children in Oslo are 'confronted with' the topic of 'ethnic diversity' in some way or another. Most parents in Oslo have some thoughts about where in the city they want to raise their children[9]. Since school segregation is a topic that is frequently covered

[8] This choice will be explained and discussed in the methods chapter.
[9] It is of course not thereby said that moving to their preferred neighborhood is feasible and affordable.

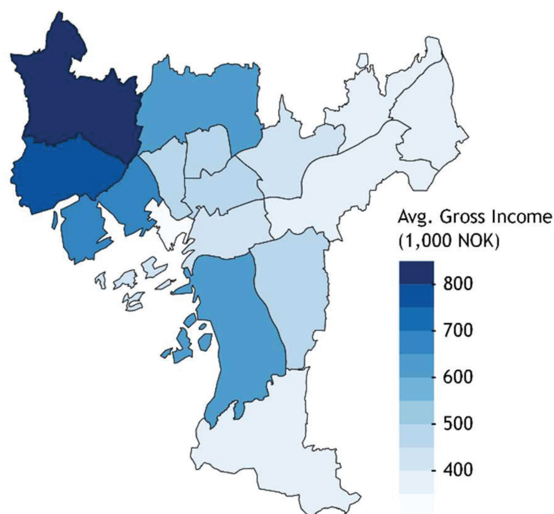
in the media, it is reasonable to assume that those thoughts include ‘ethnic diversity’ to one degree or another.

Hence, my decision to interview parents of young children was not taken based on a specific interest in parenting. Rather, it was based on the fact that I thought parents of young children were in a life phase that might make it easier for them to verbalize ideas about ‘ethnic diversity’. Data collection will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

1.6 Oslo as a Research Context

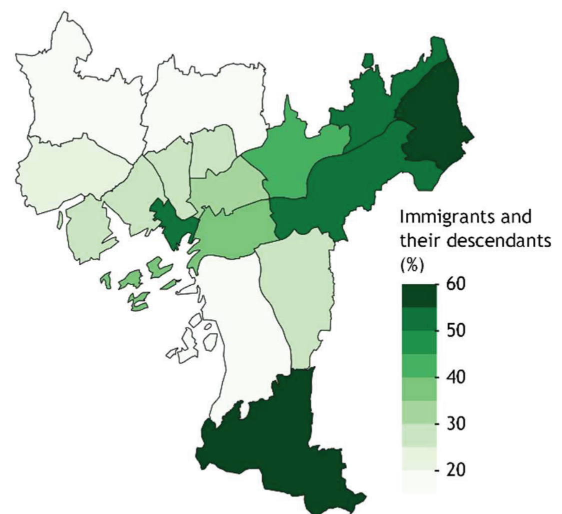
Oslo is characterized by an East-West dynamic that could possibly even by described as an East-West division. The populations in the East End and the West End differ both in terms of socio-economics and in terms of ethnicity / migration background. Whereas the West End is more affluent and has a lower share of immigrant residents, the East End is by comparison less affluent and has a higher share of immigrant residents (see figure 1.1 and figure 1.2 below).

Figure 1.1 *Average gross income per borough*



Source: Map by Hallvard Indgjerd, based on data from the municipality of Oslo’s database[10].

Figure 1.2 *Share of immigrants and descendants of immigrants per borough*



Source: Map by Hallvard Indgjerd, based on data from the municipality of Oslo’s database.

[10] https://statistikkbanken.oslo.kommune.no/webview/ (“Oslo kommune statistikkbanken [Statistical database of the municipality of Oslo],” n.d.)

Jørn Ljunggren remarks that the East End and the West End are often described as two different 'places' (2017b, p. 14), and the taken-for-granted division of Oslo into East and West draws on many narratives, stereotypes, and 'place myths' (Ljunggren, 2017b, pp. 15–16; Strømsø, 2019, p. 4). Yet, there is also diversity within the East End and the West End, respectively, as well as within different boroughs and neighborhoods.

The East End and the West End can be further subdivided by differentiating between neighborhoods close to the city center and further away, and thus speaking of the 'inner East End', 'outer East End', 'inner West End', and 'outer West End' (Bjørklund, 2017, pp. 154–155). I will make use of this distinction throughout the thesis. Figure 1.3 below shows how this distinction maps onto the different boroughs.

Figure 1.3 *Boroughs of Oslo divided into Inner/Outer West and Inner/Outer East*

Source: Bjørklund, 2017, p. 152[11].

Administratively, Oslo, which in 2020 had just under 700,000 inhabitants (City of Oslo, 2020), is divided into 15 boroughs (see figure 2) that each have an elected local council. The boroughs can further be subdivided into neighborhoods, which have local identities and distinctiveness and often are important

[11] Many thanks to Jørn Ljunggren, editor of the anthology 'Oslo – ulikhetenes by' ('Oslo, the City of Inequalities') (2017a) and to the publisher Cappelen Damm for providing me with a high-resolution version of this map and allowing me to reprint it here.

reference points in inhabitants' lives. However, the neighborhoods do not have their own administrations or elected governing bodies.

The fact that data for this study was collected in Oslo, as opposed to anywhere else in Norway, certainly played a role in many ways. 34% of Oslo's inhabitants are either immigrants or Norwegian-born to immigrant parents (SSB, 2020b)[12], which is a substantially higher share than the national average of 18% (SSB, 2020a). This fact, as well as the East-West divide, makes Oslo a unique setting in Norway in terms of studying ethnic diversity and phenotype. Hence, understandings of ethnic diversity and reflections around the meaning of phenotype can certainly be expected to differ between Oslo and other parts of the country, especially rural areas[13].

However, Oslo is of course part of the Norwegian national context, which is shaped by a particular history of nation building, welfare state expansion, and immigration. Moreover, the overall way of speaking about immigration and diversity (see discussion about the use of the terms 'ethnicity' and 'ethically Norwegian' in section 1.4) is something that is not particular to Oslo, but rather common to all of Norway. Also, the greater Oslo region is home to almost a fifth of Norway's total population (Falnes-Dalheim, 2018). Finally, many interview participants actually did not grow up in Oslo, but in other parts of Norway, and as such, their understandings of ethnic diversity and phenotype are also shaped by their experience and background from other parts of the country.

All this means that while my research certainly speaks specifically to the Oslo context, it also must be understood and read with regard to the wider Norwegian national context.

Finally, Oslo is a European capital city. Different European societies are shaped by their different colonial and migration histories, and by particular speech conventions regarding ethnic, phenotypical, and racial diversity. Yet, most European countries – with the exception of the English-speaking ones – also have in common that it is not common to discuss migration-related diversity in terms of phenotype or race. As such, this thesis also sheds light on phenotype as a category of difference in one particular European context. I will offer some thoughts on Oslo/Norway as a European case in the conclusion chapter.

[12] When reporting on immigration-related matters, Statistics Norway (Dzamarija, 2019) generally uses a three-pronged definition of 'immigrants', 'Norwegian-born to immigrant parents' (also called 'descendants'), and 'the rest of the population'.

[13] Of course, these also differ at the individual level, and between neighborhoods in Oslo.

1.7 Dissertation Summary

Chapter 2 of this thesis presents the theoretical literature on which later analysis chapters draw. It provides an overview over phenotype in the Norwegian social science literature, discusses how the thesis' research object was constructed and makes a standpoint theoretical argument for the importance of studying phenotype/race in Norway. The chapter then moves on to a presentation of different sensitizing concepts – race, racialization, whiteness, racism, and color-blindness. It concludes by discussing how phenotype and race are differentiated in the international literature and by shortly delving into the literature on boundaries and categories. *Chapter 3* provides a reflection around the methodological choices that undergird the study. It contains a discussion of how to design an interview guide that is apt at studying a phenomenon for which there is relatively little language, as well as reflections around recruitment and the interview process, and a presentation of the participants.

Chapter 4 is the first analysis chapter. It starts by presenting three typical life stories, one for each of majority participants, minority participants, and adult immigrant participants. The rest of the chapter summarizes and analyzes how participants speak about experiences with 'ethnic diversity' they have had throughout their life course. This forms the contextual backdrop for the rest of the analysis. *Chapters 5 and 6* focus on how participants understand and use categories that situate people with regard to the nation (Norwegian, immigrant, foreigner, minority), and with regard to ethnicity and phenotype/race (ethnically Norwegian, white, dark, brown, black). *Chapter 7* explores why many participants find phenotype a difficult subject for conversation. *Chapter 8* examines experiences of racism and discrimination that are present in the material. *Chapter 9* attempts to describe phenotype as a marker of difference in a systematic manner and explores intersections between phenotype and other categories of difference. Finally, the concluding chapter returns to the sensitizing concepts presented in chapter 2 and discusses them in light of the empirical findings.

2 Theory

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the dissertation's theoretical starting points. Since studying phenotype is somewhat 'off the beaten track' in Norwegian sociology, I want to spend some time carving out the topic and explaining how I approach it theoretically. Both phenotype and race are topics that receive little attention in Norway, both in common parlance and in the social sciences. This thesis thus takes an exploratory approach, attempting to shed light on a category of difference that has received little attention and about which little has been written theoretically. Against this backdrop, I want to explain and account for the approach I chose and the theoretical choices I made in studying phenotype. The chapter starts with an overview over previous research on phenotype/color/race in Norway. This is followed by a section that explains how I constructed this dissertation's research object. Next, I explain the choice to explore phenotype from a standpoint theoretical perspective.

While working with this research project, it has been my aim to approach the empirical context with an open mind and not to theoretically over-determine data collection and analysis. In attempting to make sense of phenotype as a category of difference, it has been important to me to find a balance between being rooted in existing literature on race and racism, and being open to the fact that I could not know beforehand to what extent and how existing theory would be applicable to my data. This caution is also due to the fact that there is a high degree of skepticism, both in Norwegian public discourse and in Norwegian sociology, to applying the concept of 'race' when studying Norwegian society, as this is seen as 'importing' US-American concepts that do not apply to Norway (for a discussion, see Andersson, 2018b; Birkelund, 2021). Summer and fall 2020 saw the publication of a large number of newspaper discussion pieces, mainly in the weekly *Morgenbladet*, debating the scientificity of 'critical race theory'[14] and its application in Norway (e.g., Abdi, 2020; Brekke, 2020a, 2020b; Svendsen et al., 2020).

My choice to study 'phenotype' can be understood in this light as an attempt to stay empirically grounded. 'Race' may not be a common term in Norway, but the existence of different phenotypes and skin colors is a fact. While I thus formulated my research interest very 'close to empirics', I still want to be able to draw on existing literature on race and racism. I therefore chose to treat a range of established concepts from that literature as 'sensitizing concepts', as developed by Herbert Blumer (1954). According to this

[14] While public debate often focuses on 'critical race theory' as a key term, the skepticism, I would argue, extends to any application of the concept of race.

approach, sociologists can be guided by existing theoretical concepts, while also remaining open to the empirical context they are studying. Concepts are in this tradition treated as something that will direct the gaze of the researcher and that needs to be developed and defined throughout the research process, rather than as something that is a given starting point.

The chapter then moves on to a section focusing on how phenotype and race are differentiated from each other in the international literature. It ends with a discussion of boundaries and processes of categorization. In order to understand phenotype as a marker and a category of difference, it is necessary to say something about how this category of difference is organized and where boundaries between different categories are.

2.2 Phenotype in Norwegian Social Science Literature

This section provides an overview over existing research on phenotype (and related categories, like 'race' and 'color') in the Norwegian context. First off, like in most other European countries, but unlike in the English-speaking world – sociological research in Norway has for the most part been devoid of a concept of phenotype or race.

However, different scholars, both in sociology and in other disciplines, have in recent years become increasingly attuned to the role that phenotype/color/race plays. In 2002, French-Norwegian sociologist Annick Prieur published an article titled 'Fargens betydning: om rasisme og konstruksjonen av etniske identiteter' (The Meaning of Color: on Racism and the Construction of Ethnic Identities). In her article, which was based on interviews with young adults with an immigrant background living in Norway, Prieur (2002, p. 82, my translation) argued:

> The darker one's skin color is and the more one differs in looks from the majority population, the more often one is reminded that one is not perceived as Norwegian [by others]. Other issues, which one also to a limited extent has control over, also become object for such interpretations: a name, a way of talking, an accent, a religion. This creates strong limits to one's possibilities of [self]identification

Throughout her article, Prieur (2002, esp. pp. 84–86) explains how the way majority society interprets the physical traits of young people with an immigrant background places constraints on the identity positions they can take and specifically to what extent they can identify as Norwegian.

In 2010, Eileen Muller Myrdahl defended her thesis entitled 'Orientalist Knowledges at the European Periphery: Norwegian Racial Projects, 1970-2005' at the University of Minnesota. In her dissertation, she examines three moments that she argues have contributed to processes of racialization and to making

'whiteness' an increasingly salient central aspect of understandings of Norwegian national identity. The first topic she discusses is the experience of postwar migrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. The second concerns parliamentary and media debates surrounding the passing of the 1975 'immigration stop' legislation. The third topic relates to legislation around family reunification.

Moreover, several articles have discussed the link between color/phenotype and Norwegianness. Anders Vassenden (2010), Mette Løvgren and Julia Orupabo (2011), and Brit Lynnebakke and Katrine Fangen (2011) all discuss how phenotype/color/race is one among several aspects that is a part of how 'Norwegianness' is understood. Similarly, Jon Friberg (2021) finds that phenotype, ethno-racial origin, and religious affiliation play a role for whether adolescents with an immigrant background are regarded as 'Norwegian' by others. Mette Andersson in her 2008 book 'Flerfarget idrett: Nasjonalitet, migrasjon og minoritet' (Multicolored Sports: Nationality, Migration, and Minority) examines links between color/race and Norwegianness based on interviews with non-white athletes and with coaches, journalists, and sports officials. Further, Yan Zhao (2012, 2013, 2019) has examined how transnational adoptees perform identity work in relation to Norwegianness, discussing the role of phenotype in great detail. Katrine Fangen (2006a, 2006b, 2007) discusses how Somali immigrants experience their skin color as imposing limits on their possibilities to be seen as Norwegian by others. All these contributions are unanimous in highlighting that a light phenotype is often implicitly seen as a prerequisite for authentic and full membership in the Norwegian national community.

Recent MA theses have examined 'the experiences of Norwegian authors with a visible minority background' (Tica, 2018) and understandings of 'identity and Norwegianness among young adults with a white Norwegian, and a foreign-born, non-Western parent' (Løkken, 2020). These works testify to the growing interest for color/phenotype as a category of difference among young researchers in Norway.

Further, in a recent article, Astri Dankertsen (2019) discusses the relationship between indigeneity, whiteness, and racialization pertaining to the Sámi minority, and contrasts shifts that have taken place over time in how Sámi are read and understood. Her work contributes to rooting reflections around phenotype and race in Norwegian history and ties them to the relationship between ethnically Norwegian majority society and the Sámi minority. This is important because it highlights that these are processes that have been endogenous to Norwegian society for a long time.

Moving away from sociology, there has also been an interest for the interrelation of phenotype/race and nation in other disciplines. Social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005, 2006) has written extensively on understandings of the nation in Norway. She analyses how immigrants are understood in relation to the nation and relates this to understandings of 'culture' and 'race'. Laurie

McIntosh analyzes how Norwegians of African descent understand ‘the ideological processes through which they are incorporated into understandings of the nation’ (2015, p. 309). She debates the tension between national narratives of solidarity and universal goodness on the one hand, and the exclusion of ‘certain bodies and identities’ (2015, p. 309) from this presumably universal community.

Human geographers Marta Bivand Erdal and Mette Strømsø (2018) – and Strømsø (2018) in a single-authored piece – study boundaries of the Norwegian nation, and examine how ‘race’, ‘skin color’, and ‘visibility’ factor into ideas about what it means to be a part of the Norwegian nation. Gender studies scholars Anne-Jorunn Berg, Anne Britt Flemmen and Berit Gullikstad (2010) examine the same topic from a somewhat different angle. They study the interrelation between gender equality, Norwegianness, and majoritizing and minoritizing processes in society. They have also authored a report (2002) on how to use memory work to study one’s own whiteness as preparation for doing research on Norwegianness and diversity. Also in gender studies, Cecilie Thun (2012) has explored how gender and religion play into understandings of Norwegianness and how this affects the identity work of women of different ethnicities and religious affiliations. Human geographer Micheline van Riemsdijk has examined the ‘ambivalent and partial incorporation of Polish nurses into the Norwegian nation’ (2010, p. 117), linking this discussion to notions of ‘variegated whiteness’.

In sports science, Tuva Beyer Broch (2018) has examined how young people with an ethnic minority background perceive outdoor physical activity as something that is tied up with ethnic Norwegianness and whiteness, and where they, as a result, do not quite fit in. Further, Prisca Bruno Massao and Kari Fasting (2014) examine how race, class, and gender shape the experiences of black Norwegian athletes.

One of the disciplines that has had the most thorough engagement with questions of phentoype/race and racism in Norway is educational science / pedagogy, where a number of scholars have grappled with how to make racial dynamics explicit in a societal context where they are usually not recognized. (Dowling, 2017; K. G. Eriksen, 2020; Fylkesnes, 2019b, 2019a; Harlap & Riese, 2014; Osler & Lindquist, 2018; Svendsen, 2014). Cultural studies scholar Ingunn Marie Eriksen (2012) conducted fieldwork in a multiethnic high school in Oslo and investigates, among other things, ethnicity, race, and noise as difference-producing categories.

Finally, cultural studies scholar Tony Sandset (2018) has investigated the meaning of being ‘mixed-race’ in contemporary Norway. In his monograph ‘Color that Matters: A Comparative Approach to Mixed Race Identity and Nordic Exceptionalism’, he argues that even though official discourses hold that Norway is ‘color blind’, color still matters in the everyday lives of mixed-race individuals.

There is thus ample evidence from existing research that suggests that phenotype/race is relevant as a category of difference in Norway. Yet, phenotype/race is relatively marginal for how migration-related difference overall is understood in Norwegian sociology, where preference is usually given to the term 'ethnicity'. This word choice mirrors every-day speech in Norwegian, where descriptions of skin color are rather uncommon and the term 'race' often is considered a taboo reference to a biological racial hierarchy. At a panel discussion organized by the Norwegian Sociologist's Association's 'Eastern Norway' chapter in October 2019 at the House of Literature in Oslo, the panel debated whether the term 'racism' should be used at all, given that it references the 'problematic' category of 'race'. Some panel participants argued that the term 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic discrimination' should suffice for all intents and purposes.

This thesis is situated in this context, attempting to shed light on the fundamental question of what meaning phenotype carries in Norway. It takes a very broad approach to this topic, which is also reflected in the methodological choices that undergird it (see chapter 3). In this thesis, I aim to center phenotype as a category of difference, investigating it in an empirically-grounded manner. Specifically, I will examine the meaning phenotype carries for understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related diversity.

This section has focused on research on Norway. Over the past years, there has been a growing interest in phenotype/race as a category of difference also in other European countries, including Nordic neighboring countries. Contributions from this literature are discussed together with the sensitizing concepts in section 2.5.

2.3 Constructing the Research Object

I became interested in phenotype and race as difference-producing categories when reading critical race theory (M. Andersen, 2003; Best, 2003; Frankenberg, 1993; Myrdahl, 2010b; Twine & Gallagher, 2008) and wondered to what extent this literature would be applicable in Norway. Specifically, I grappled with how to research phenotype in a setting that can be described as 'seemingly color-blind', i.e., where the 'mainstream' opinion holds that phenotype/race does not matter for individuals' life chances[15]. Indeed, as noted, in Norway, the term 'race' is not habitually used to refer to humans, and it is not very common (though not unheard of) to use skin color/phenotype when describing persons. This means that there is little – though I would argue increasing – awareness for phenotype/race as a category of difference, making it difficult to address racism.

[15] 'Color-blindness' is one of the sensitizing concepts in this thesis and will be discussed further in section 2.5

Further, there seem to be different understandings of what qualifies as racism among (parts of) the (ethnic) minority and majority populations. Sindre Bangstad (2017, p. 236) argues that according to Norwegian 'hegemonic and common sense-based ideas', an act or statement can only be characterized as racist when there is a concrete reference to biological human races. Similarly, Stine H. B. Svendsen (2014) explores the differences in understandings of racism among members of ethnic minorities and the majority. The gist of her argument is that the insistence that there are no human races – when not coupled with an understanding that there are indeed racism and discrimination in Norway – falls short of grasping the reality in present-day, ethnically-diverse Norway. Both these contributions show that social scientists seeking to understand racism in Norway need to step away from common-sense based understandings and categories of practice.

If one follows the 'mainstream' opinion presented by Bangstad, it is easy to refute racism for all instances where explicit biological references are lacking. As noted, when referring to migration-related diversity in Norway, it is more common to use the term 'ethnicity' than 'race'. According to a 'narrow' / 'mainstream' definition of racism, all statements about 'ethnicity' would automatically qualify as 'not racist' since they do not reference a racial biological hierarchy. Of course, developments in the international literature on race and racism – such as the literature on cultural racism (Barker, 1981; Stolcke, 1995; Wren, 2001) and the concepts of 'racialization' (Barot & Bird, 2001; Gans, 2016; Murji & Solomos, 2005b) and 'color-blindness'[16] (Bonilla-Silva, 2002; Doane, 2017) – suggest that this understanding falls short of how racism is articulated and expressed at present.

Part of the existing literature about phenotype/race in Norway was written by scholars who were trained abroad (C. E. Andersen, 2015; Dowling, 2017; McIntosh, 2015; Myrdahl, 2010b, 2014; Predelli, 2003; van Riemsdijk, 2010), illustrating that these researchers – especially those educated in Anglo-Saxon contexts – may be more sensitized to racialized dynamics than 'homegrown' social scientists[17]. There are, however, also studies conducted by Norwegian-trained scholars that attest to skin-color based discrimination (Andersson, 2003, 2008; Fangen, 2007; Fredriksen, 2001; Prieur, 2002; Sandset, 2012; Tyldum, 2019). Moreover, despite the 'official' line that skin color/phenotype does not matter, the word 'neger' (negro)[18] was in use until about 20-30 years ago[19] (Gullestad, 2005). Interestingly, the

[16] All of these are discussed in the last part of this chapter.

[17] That being said, skin color/phenotype is increasingly written about by Norwegian-trained scholars (Andersson, 2007; Bangstad, 2017; Prieur, 2002; Sandset, 2012; Svendsen, 2014; Vassenden, 2010; Vassenden & Andersson, 2011; Zhao, 2013).

[18] I decided to spell the word out here as the abbreviation 'n-word' can be ambiguous since it could refer to two different words.

[19] It gradually faded out of 'acceptable' use and it is somewhat difficult to set an exact 'cut-off' date. There were intense public debates about this in the early 2000s. While some people still insist on the term's 'innocence' today, it is no longer considered acceptable in the media, for instance.

acceptability of that term was premised on the fact that it was said to be merely descriptive and not depreciating when used in Norwegian. Of course, the fact that this term would be in use at all suggests that phenotype/race is interpreted as a meaningful category of difference.

There is thus much evidence for the relevance of phenotype/race; yet, its role as a difference-producing category is also often downplayed or denied. This is reminiscent of the concept of 'color-blindness' (Bonilla-Silva, 2002, 2015; Doane, 2017; Goldberg, 2006; Hughey, Embrick, & Doane, 2015; Lentin, 2016). The term 'color-blindness', which will be discussed in detail in section 2.5.5, describes a context with strong societal narratives that declare that color/race does not matter for individuals' life chances even though empirical evidence suggests the contrary. In a nutshell, 'color-blindness' means a denial of the existence of racism.

Norway thus presents as a rather ambivalent context when it comes to studying the meaning of phenotype. This ambivalence places me and my project before several challenges: 1. What is my research object, given that 'phenotype' does not seem like an obvious concept in Norway? 2. How can I distance myself from the 'dominant common-sense understanding' that phenotype/race does not matter in Norway? 3. How can I distance myself from the US-American literature's 'taken-for-grantedness' regarding 'race' and approach the empirical material with curiosity? I do not want to assume that phenotype/race carries the same meaning and functions the same way in Norway as in the USA, but rather ground my analysis in the empirical material. 4. How can I design a workable interview guide, given that 'phenotype' seems a difficult concept to use?[20]

My response to these challenges was to collect data about participants' experiences with and reflections on 'ethnic diversity' and to subsequently examine which role phenotype plays in the data material. By doing this, I construct my scientific object – 'phenotype' – as separate from the every-day category of speech, 'ethnicity', while also keeping it separate from the category of 'race'. My choice of 'ethnic diversity' as the main topic for my interview guide is based on the assumption that the role of phenotype is contextual and that it interacts with other migration-related categories of difference, such as ethnicity, language, migration background, nationality, and religion (Gans, 2016, p. 351; Roth, 2016, p. 1318; Sen & Wasow, 2016, p. 506). Moreover, it is based on the observation that the term 'ethnicity' in Norway is used as an umbrella term, which comprises several dimensions, and that it is also sometimes used as a stand-in for 'phenotype'. Finally, it is based on the fact that 'ethnicity' is a habitually used category of speech in Norway, that – unlike 'race' and 'phenotype' – easily can be made the topic of an interview.

[20] The methods chapter will discuss my interview guide and interviewing strategy in more detail, but I already present some information here, since it relates to the discussion at hand.

Collecting data about 'ethnic diversity' allows me to break with Norwegian perceptions of color-blindness and to create some distance to the international race literature, which heavily draws on empirics from English-speaking contexts. It breaks with ideas of color-blindness not by asking interview participants to actively relate to the term 'race', but by designing an interview guide that is apt at shedding light on the meaning of phenotype/race within the context of migration-related diversity. My hypothesis here is that 'ethnic diversity' is the category of speech that will allow me to gather data that will enable an exploration of phenotype/race. Asking participants about phenotype/race directly may have been difficult because it does not conform to how migration-related diversity is habitually discussed in Norway. By replicating this idea of color-blindness (at least at the start of the interview), I am able to gather data that can then be explored for the meaning of phenotype, hence breaking with the dominant perception of color-blindness. Simultaneously, conforming to Norwegian speech conventions by asking about 'ethnic diversity' serves to distance myself to an extent from US-American race literature by not assuming that phenotype/race functions the same way in Norway as it does in the US.

The reflections I have sketched here resemble what Pierre Bourdieu, Jean-Claude Chamboredon, and Jean-Claude Passeron (1991) describe as the epistemological break that is necessary to construct a scientific object. They argue that scientific research is 'organized around constructed objects that no longer have anything in common with the units divided up by naïve perceptions' (1991, p. 33) and that the scientific object is constituted 'in opposition to common sense' (1991, p. 34). If researchers do not achieve a break with an 'everyday view' of the world, these everyday perceptions will dominate their research. They thus argue for a reflexive sociology that subjects its own practice to sociological inquiry.

The choice I made in selecting the main topic for my interview guide can be understood as a way of 'constructing the research object'. I decided to design an interview guide about 'experiences with and reflections on ethnic diversity' that I will use to understand the meaning of phenotype/race in Norway. This approach follows neither the perception that is dominant in Norway – both in everyday life and Norwegian sociology –, namely that phenotype does not play a role in Norway and is hence not an object for research. Nor do I simply 'import' a US-American understanding of phenotype/race. Rather, I develop my own approach, which consists of using the topic of 'ethnic diversity' as an angle from which to explore the meaning of phenotype/race in Norway.

2.4 Standpoint Theory

I would like to elaborate further on the above-mentioned challenge of how to research phenotype in a context that is perceived to be 'color-blind', but move on to more epistemological considerations. A brief

discussion of standpoint theory will allow me to explore ‘from where’ I undertake this research project. The following quote by Sandra Harding (1992, p. 442) sums up the basis of standpoint theory:

> The starting point of standpoint theory - and its claim that is most often misread - is that in societies stratified by race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, or some other such politics shaping the very structure of a society, the activities of those at the top both organize and set limits on what persons who perform such activities can understand about themselves and the world around them.

Categories of difference such as race, class, and gender order the world into privileged and oppressed (Collins, 2005; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Crucially, privilege and oppression do not only affect the distribution of material resources, opportunities on the job market, and access to education, but they also influence knowledge production. Which categories, theories, and basic assumptions feed into research is a consequence of the social order and social hierarchies in place.

Standpoint theorists argue that all knowledge claims emanate from a social situatedness (Anderson, 2015) and that theorizing from marginalized standpoints leads to more significant insights (Harding, 1992, p. 443). Privileged or dominant groups in society can easily neglect their social situatedness. Because their view of the world and the categories and concepts through which they understand it are widely reflected in government, the media, and social science, they do not have to consider what society looks like from a different vantage point. Standpoint theorists argue that this leads to the dominant groups’ being in an epistemologically disadvantaged position for generating knowledge (Harding, 1992, p. 442). The lives of marginalized groups, however, ‘provide particularly significant problems to be explained or research agendas’ (Harding, 1992, p. 443). Hence, the logic of standpoint epistemology can be explained as ‘start thought from marginalized lives’ and ‘take everyday life as problematic’ (Harding, 1992, p. 438).

While feminist standpoint theory speaks about dominant and oppressed groups in terms of gender, it can be applied to other forms of privilege and marginalization as well. There is a long tradition of Black feminist writing defining a distinctive Black feminist standpoint (Allen, 1998; Collins, 2005; Harnois, 2010; Hooks, 2000; Reynolds, 2002). Similar work has been done for a Chicana (i.e., Mexican) feminist standpoint (Martínez, 1996). Finally, British sociologist Gurminder Bhambra (2017b, 2017a) has – though she does not use the term ‘standpoint’ – analyzed how a dominant ‘white standpoint’ colors (pun fully intended) the social scientific analyses of the Brexit vote and the election of US president Trump. In this context, Bhambra coined the phrase ‘methodological whiteness’ to describe perspectives that are blind to their own (ethno)racial situatedness.

Even though standpoint theory is best known as a feminist knowledge project, it has a much longer history. Standpoint theory’s history can be traced to Hegel’s writings on the master/slave relationship, and to

Marx, Engels, and Lukács, who argued that the proletariat is in a privileged position to understand class dynamics (Harding, 1992, p. 442). In his 1920 essay 'Of the Ruling of Men', W. E. B. Du Bois (1920) also advances a standpoint theoretical argument. This shows that standpoint theory can be applied to various pairings of dominant and marginalized identities and is in no way confined to gender issues.

My argument here is that it can apply in several ways to immigration, integration, ethnic diversity, and phenotype in Norway. Dominant narratives frame immigration as problematic, and both newspaper coverage and research often depart from that starting point, without it having to be named or explained as such. Immigrants are associated with high costs for the welfare state, oppressive gender roles, higher unemployment rates, gang violence, school and residential segregation, and lower job skills. Both (some) newspaper coverage and (some) research raises questions and problematizes immigration in such a way that it becomes clear that the (ethnic) majority's perceptions and standpoint are the unacknowledged and undebated starting point for the work. At the same time, there has been comparably little public attention to and awareness of the discrimination and racism faced by ethno-racial minorities, even though the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd in May 2020 seemed to be an exception. The way public perception and narratives are structured by a non-immigrant-background majority's life experiences is structurally similar to the way perceptions and narratives were male-biased in decades past, when feminist standpoint theory was developed. For this reason, just like researchers started arguing for research from a feminist standpoint, there is today a case to be made for research from an immigrant standpoint, or an ethno-racial minority standpoint, or a phenotype-conscious standpoint – or a combination – in Norway. This is not an entirely new idea. As Mette Andersson (2018a, p. 68) discusses in her book 'Kampen om vitenskapeligheten: forskningskommunikasjon i et politisk betent felt' ('The Battle for Scientificity: Research Communication in a Politically Charged Field'), there has since the 1990s been a division in Norwegian migration research, where some migration researchers approach their field of interest with a state-based perspective, focusing for instance on integration deficits, whereas others take a migrant-based perspective, focusing on power relations and the exclusion of migrants[21]. What is specific to the argument I am making here is the coupling of a focus on color/phenotype/race with standpoint theoretical perspectives.

An approach based on standpoint theory would be to say that Norwegian society, which comprises both an ethnic majority and ethnic minorities, can only fully be understood if pursuits of knowledge include

[21] For a detailed overview over the history of Norwegian migration research from 1970 until 2016, see Midtbøen (2017). Midtbøen argues that since the 2000s, the focus of Norwegian migration research has increasingly moved towards studying the consequences of immigration for the economic sustainability of the welfare state.

the minority's perspective. Their life experience should not be discounted as a basis from which to ask questions and to collect data.

My project is concerned with a specific aspect of the field of migration-related diversity, namely phenotype. The mere decision to make phenotype the object of my research can be analyzed from a standpoint theoretical angle. For whose reality is regarded as ‘real enough’ to define research agendas: the ‘mainstream’ one that denies that phenotype plays a role, or the ‘minority’ one that recognizes its importance? By going with the ‘minority view’ that acknowledges phenotype as a legitimate research topic, my project seeks to investigate how phenotype is intertwined with other migration-related categories of difference, and which meaning it carries. I will address my own positionality in section 3.6.4.

2.5 Sensitizing Concepts

I will now turn to Herbert Blumer’s text ‘What is Wrong with Social Theory?’ (1954). In his text, Blumer discusses possible solutions to the problem that, as he sees it, social theory is divorced from the empirical world. Blumer was writing at a time when structural functionalism was a dominant sociological perspective. He criticizes his contemporaries by saying that they often gave precedence to theory over empirics, ordering facts to fit theory, rather than employing theory to account for the facts (1954, pp. 3–4). Moreover, he finds that theory is not good at guiding research. In his view, the only meaningful way social theory can be in touch with ‘the empirical world’ is by using concepts. It is ‘the concept [… which] points to the empirical instances about which a theoretical proposal is made’ (1954, p. 4). However, there are, in his view, too many ill-defined concepts in sociology. This shortcoming, according to Blumer (1954, p. 5)

> hinders us in coming to close grips with our empirical world, for we are not sure what to grip. Our uncertainty as to what we are referring obstructs us from asking pertinent questions and setting relevant problems for research.

Blumer proposes a twofold solution to this issue of vague concepts. On the one hand, he proposes scholars follow a well-defined procedure for narrowing in and defining concepts. This procedure's main idea is to ‘isolate a stable and definitive empirical content which should constitute the reference of the concept’ (1954, p. 6). The second part of his solution is that often, the ‘vagueness’ of the concepts employed is actually because their precise meaning is inherently context-dependent. Blumer calls these concepts ‘sensitizing concepts’ and acknowledges that, lacking precise reference points and benchmarks, they rest rather on a ‘general sense of what is relevant’ (1954, p. 7). While ‘definite concepts’ are well defined and tell the scholar ‘what to see’, ‘sensitizing concepts’ only advise on how to look. Often, sensitizing

concepts are more useful to scholars because they are more flexible and do not impose theory onto the facts. Rather, they guide the researcher towards crafting their own understanding of the specific meaning the concept takes in the context under scrutiny. Of course, sensitizing concepts must not remain 'vague' forever. They can be 'tested, improved, and refined' (1954, p. 8) as well as 'formulated and communicated' (1954, p. 9). For this to be done well, the scholar must always work closely up to an empirical context. Blumer ends his text by calling on scholars not to accept vague and little plausible concepts, and to put in the work to overcome this.

Blumer's arguments resonate strongly with me. As the next section in this chapter will show, I draw theoretically on a range of concepts that emanate from the literatures on race and racism. Since there is relatively little Norwegian sociological research that employs these concepts (and quite a bit of skepticism to them), I will look to literature written in other geographical contexts, which raises the question to what extent concepts can be transferred from one context to another versus needing to be adapted (Andersson, 2018b; Voyer & Lund, 2020).

Blumer's elaborations on 'sensitizing concepts' can aid with this challenge. First, Blumer challenges sociologists to be empirically-minded. He encourages scholars to focus on the explanatory potential of theory for the empirical material, and not to consider theory a goal in and of itself. Second, Blumer makes an important point about the context-dependence of concepts. He concedes that concepts often need to be slightly vague in order to be flexible enough to fit several contexts. However, he advises scholars to keep working until they have defined and elaborated the concepts for their particular context sufficiently. He argues that 'sensitizing concepts' can guide a sociologist's gaze and that this is but half of the work, for the initially sensitizing concept should be fledged out more fully later.

This advice seems well suited when it comes to the study of phenotype/race in Norway. I have long grappled with how to use concepts sourced from US-American or English-speaking contexts, for instance, and how to adapt them to the Norwegian context. The idea of using them as 'sensitizing concepts' that will guide, but not over-determine my research, *and* challenge me to develop and define them further for the context I am studying sounds like a fruitful approach.

In what follows, I want to attempt to follow Blumer's suggestions. Hence, the next section presents several central concepts that I chose as 'sensitizing concepts' for my analysis. For each concept, I will present several definitions and discuss them. Consistent with Blumer's advice, I will not present any 'final definitions' here, but rather briefly discuss each concept based on the existing literature. I will return to the sensitizing chapters in the conclusion, where I will bring them in dialogue with findings from the analysis chapters.

2.5.1 Race

'Race' is a socially constructed category used to categorize humans that, throughout its long history, has taken on different meanings in different places and continues to do so today. Its origins can be traced to the period of European colonialism when claims about the inferiority of the 'savages' in the colonies were used to justify conquest, exploitation, enslavement, and genocide (Bonilla-Silva, 1999, p. 902; Goldberg, 2006, p. 331). In the colonial context, 'superior races' were differentiated from 'inferior' ones based on an amalgamation of physiological-phenotypical markers and ideas about culture, morals, and religion (Garner, 2010, pp. 13–17). These ideas existed in dichotomous pairings of white-black, cultured-savage, developed-backwards, and Christian-heathen.

During the era of scientific racism (ca. 1860 – 1945), these ideas were developed further by European anthropologists and ethnologists, who produced elaborate classifications, dividing humankind into a varying number of 'races'. They attributed different cultural and moral properties to these 'races' and set out to develop corresponding physiological classificatory schemes, detailing scull measurements, skin tones, and limb measurements, to name just a few (Andersson, 2018b, p. 287; Bangstad, 2017, p. 238; Garner, 2010, pp. 15–17). There were several different such classifications, comprising a varying number of 'races' (Garner, 2010, p. 17). While some of them ordered humankind into a mere three to five overarching 'races', other systems were much more granular, establishing various subdivisions among populations originating from the same continent (Fenton, 2010, p. 28; Garner, 2010, p. 17). The idea of 'race' was also inherently intertwined with how emerging nation states in Europe conceived of 'their peoples' (Bangstad, 2017, p. 238; Lentin, 2008, p. 492). Notably, some minority groups native to Europe were in many racial taxonomies categorized as non-European / non-white. For example, this was the case for Jews, Roma, and Sámi (Dankertsen, 2019; Garner, 2010, p. 121).

In Nazi Germany, this ideology 'culminated' in a gruesome racial ideology that underpinned Nazi German attempts to secure world domination through World War II, as well as related genocides and extermination programs, targeting Jews, Roma, people with disabilities, gay men, Jehovah's Witnesses, political opponents, and East European civilians.

During the decades after the war, the term 'race' gradually fell into disuse in most of Europe. Notably, in 1950, UNESCO commissioned a group of scientists who wrote a 'Statement against Race and Racial Prejudice' (Lentin, 2008, p. 495). This statement called the division of humankind into racial groups 'arbitrary' and went on to explain that while the study of human variation was interesting, existing '"racial" divisions' were of 'limited scientific interest' and should not be taken to imply a hierarchy

between groups (UNESCO 1968, cited by Lentin 495-6). According to the Australian scholar Alana Lentin, the UNESCO statement conceived of race as a 'pseudo-scientific concept' and set out to disband it as such, arguing that it had a weak basis in biology (2008, p. 495). However, the statement did not address 'race' as a political idea (2008, p. 495). In Europe, this had the effect of gradually removing 'race' from the vocabulary in most countries, even going so far as it becoming a 'taboo' concept (Goldberg, 2006).

Today, in most of Europe – with the notable exception of the UK – the term 'race' is not generally used (Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Goldberg, 2006; Lentin, 2008). Despite the term's European origins, it is nowadays often understood as a US-American concept. While some parts of the continent do not have much of a language for the kind of difference denoted by the term 'race', other parts have espoused a language of 'ethnicity'. Consequently, there was for a long time in the post-WWII period no European 'sociology of race' (outside of the UK). More recent years have seen an increased interest in 'race' also in the European social sciences and humanities (see for instance Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen, 2013; Andreassen & Myong, 2017; Blaagaard, 2008; Cretton, 2018; Danbolt, 2017; Essed & Trienekens, 2008; Hübinette & Lundström, 2014; Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009; S. Q. Jensen, 2007; Loftsdóttir, 2014; Rabo & Andreassen, 2014; Rastas, 2005; Sawyer, 2000; Sawyer & Habel, 2014). In the Anglophone world, however, sociology of race is an established sub-discipline.

I now want to discuss different definitions of the term 'race'. Stuart Hall (2017, p. 64) describes race as a 'floating signifier' that can be filled with different meanings in different contexts. This variation makes it notably difficult to draw up a definition of race that is both comprehensive and precise. For instance, Omi Winant defines race as 'a *concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies*' (2000, p. 172, emphasis in original). This definition can be contrasted to the definition by Angela Dixon and Edward Telles (2017, p. 406), who state:

> "Race" generally refers to categories of people divided by physical type, based on appearance or descent and real or putative characteristics, that are named, defined, and ordered by a racial ideology originating in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth century; this ideology puts whites at the top of the social hierarchy and blacks and other nonwhites at the bottom.'

Dixon and Telles's definition revolves around three central elements – phenotype, the existence of a racial taxonomy based on a European ideology, and the idea of a racial hierarchy with whites at the top. Comparing this definition to the one put forth by Winant, it is apparent that none of these elements are present in Winant's definition, which is formulated much more abstractly. This discrepancy illustrates how widely definitions of the term differ. Patrick Wolfe sums this insight up by saying that 'race is like a

family resemblance. Its various forms are recognisably related, but it is hard to pick out a single feature that unites them' (2002, p. 51).

One last definition I want to discuss is the one espoused by Alana Lentin. She writes (2008, p. 490)

> Rather than the standard conception of race as an outdated and discredited mode for hierarchically classifying human beings along biological lines, I am thinking about race as a more abstract signifier for separating human groups socially, politically and economically. As such, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality and (but not always) skin colour can all stand for race at different times.

Here, Lentin's definition seems to underscore the 'floating' quality that Stuart Hall attributes to race. She even goes so far as to suggest other concepts that she sees as 'stand-ins' for 'race'. Later in the same article, Lentin elaborates on the term 'race' in the following way (2008, pp. 497–498):

> Race, it is worth repeating, stands here for the crimes that it is responsible for, rather than any invocation of differences in human biology: the indelible experiences that mark and shape whole groups of people, often for generations. It is imprisonment and enslavement, forced labour and lynching. Death. But it is also assimilation through education and cooptation; the historicist racism that proffers progress as an always promised, but never quite achieved, prize.

This last definition differs from the previously mentioned ones in that it completely shifts the focus away from the categorization of bodies being *about the bodies themselves*. Rather, the focus here is on *what is done to the bodies* and how that affects them. While the idea of the social constructedness of race has become commonplace in the social sciences, Lentin takes this idea furthest in this second quote by making 'race' about the violence it engenders rather than the bodies it targets.

All the definitions discussed here have contributed different elements and ideas in terms of content. The variation among the definitions illustrates how little agreement there is as to how race should be understood and defined. For sociologists working in a European context, this raises the question of whether the fact that the *term* 'race' has fallen out of use means that *ideas* of 'race' have disappeared, too, and whether the concept of 'race' has analytical value in a European context.

In the English-speaking world, 'race' is used both in every-day language and in statistics, and there is an understanding that the term refers to a set of bounded racial groups. The boundaries between these groups have shifted over time, and there are 'mixed-race' categories and identities (Sandset, 2018; Song, 2020); however, none of this does away with the fact that racial categories are socially salient and commonly verbalized. In contrast to this, the word 'race' is by and large not used – and not considered acceptable to use – in everyday language in Norway; neither is it used in statistics. Historically, however, as discussed in the excursus in the introduction (section 1.3), it has been used.

Although race as a category was solidly rooted in Norway before WWII, the idea of a 'race-free' period after the war has lasted long enough that 'race' today feels like a 'foreign' word to many in Norway. In other words: 'Race' clearly is not a 'category of practice' in Norway today. Yet, it may still have value as a 'category of analysis' (Brubaker, 2013a). This will have to be explored and grounded empirically.

Indeed, Caroline Knowles has argued that a shortcoming in contemporary research on race and ethnicity is the 'failure to conceptualise race and ethnicity concretely, materially, in ways connected with their resonance in people's lives and the broader social and political circumstances in which they are set' (2010, p. 23). She argues that 'race' is an over-theorized category and that there is a need for 'new, materially grounded approaches to race theory' (2010, p. 23).

Finally, 'race' is a deeply problematic category. It is a political idea and a social construct that was constructed to legitimate group-based violence and exploitation. Over time, the concept has, to an extent, taken on a life of its own– like in the USA, where it today, by and large, is an every-day category of self-identification. Because of its problematic origin and history, 'race' is a category that presents many pitfalls. Using it risks reifying it and justifying it as a 'use-ful' category. For this reason, Yasmin Gunaratnam (2003) has called on researchers to work both 'with and against race', using 'race' to explore and understand racism, while at the same time deconstructing and unpacking it critically.

As mentioned above, phenotype/race has increasingly received attention as a category of difference in the social sciences throughout the Nordic region over the past decade. However, so far, the concepts of 'racialization' and 'whiteness' have been preferred over 'race'. I will account for these concepts below.

2.5.2 Racialization

Racialization is a concept that, despite its relatively long history in British sociology, only has gained prominence in the rest of Europe during the last ten to fifteen years. As Karim Murji and John Solomos (2005b) point out, there are many different definitions and understandings of the content of 'racialization', as well as disagreement about what *kind* of concept this is. After all, racialization can be 'regarded as "a problematic, a process, a concept, a theory, a framework and a paradigm"' (Small, 1994, cited by Murji & Solomos, 2005a, p. 2).

Even though there are many different definitions of 'racialization', there seems to be a rather broad consensus around the fact that the concept refers to '*processes* by which ideas about race are constructed, come to be regarded as meaningful, and are acted upon' (Murji & Solomos, 2005a, p. 1, emphasis mine). Hence, what is central to the concept is that it focuses on the fact that race is socially constructed, and

how it was socially constructed, and that this focus becomes more important than the concept of ‘race’ itself. In a similar vein, Suvi Keskinen and Rikke Andreassen (2017, p. 65) write

> The main benefit from using the concept of racialisation comes from its emphasis on processes and the varied ways ideas of race are turned into practices on different levels of the society. (...) Racialisation is not only about ideas, representations and discourse, but involves material processes and their likewise material effects. (...) Racialisation can occur based on alleged biological differences, skin colour or cultural differences, often combining elements of these.

This quote illustrates that scholars employ this concept in order to focus on *processes* leading to ‘race’ becoming salient and on the *consequences* of these processes, rather than on the category ‘race’ itself. The concept of racialization highlights the *processes* that lead to a group or a phenomenon being understood as marked and possibly determined by 'race'. This focus on the process expressed through ‘racialization’ also underscores that any racial quality is intrinsically socially constructed. Racial grammars *were made* to be that way; there is nothing natural and pre-determined about them, and they can change in the future. 'Race' only exists because it was invented and theorized and because people and societies continue to *behave like it exists and has meaning.*

One challenge that the concept of racialization presents, concerns the relationship between the concepts of ‘race’, and ‘racialization’. Murji and Solomos state that 'it is not always clear what the *race* in racialization refers to – a specific and narrow discourse of biologically distinctive race, a process of cultural differentiation, or a code in which the idea or language of race is not manifest at all' (2005a, p. 4, emphasis mine). While this conceptual ambiguity can be construed as a weakness, it may also represent a strength, allowing the concept to be applied to different contexts and different variations of the ‘floating signifier’ of race, and indeed challenging scholars to explain the precise functioning of racialization in each different context.

Although the concept of ‘racialization’ allows researchers to take a step back from the concept of ‘race’, and to emphasize its social constructedness and processual nature, ‘racialization’ on some level still points to ‘race’ as its underlying base concept. As has been discussed above, ‘race’ can be considered a ‘floating signifier’. The concept of ‘racialization’ adds to this a strong emphasis on the social constructedness of this concept. This means that it is not always clear *what kind of group-making* qualifies as ‘racialization’ and what does not (cf. Brubaker’s (2009) discussion of the ‘groupness’ of race and ethnicity). Regarding the question of to what the ‘race’ in ‘racialization’ refers, and specifically which markers of difference can be involved, Herbert Gans (2016, p. 351) states the following:

> Although skin colour is usually the first definitional criterion, other phenotypical characteristics can take its place when the newcomers’ skin is the same as that of racial

> dominants. The size and shape of the nose or the curliness and colour of hair are examples. However, non-phenotypical characteristics such as speech patterns, names, clothing styles and noticeable behaviour patterns and activities can also serve. Religion has always been treated as a potential racial characteristic, especially if religious populations vary phenotypically from racial dominants.

While Gans argues for the view that not only phenotypical traits, but also language, culture, and religion can be 'ingredients' in racialization, it is important to point out that there is disagreement on this issue[22].

As mentioned above, 'racialization' has been a more popular concept in the Nordic countries than 'race'. Because 'race' is not used in everyday speech, and because the term tends to evoke notions of biological racism, many researchers feel the need to clarify beyond doubt that by researching racialization or racism, they are not endorsing the view that 'race exists'. Employing the concept of racialization is a way of signaling that.

Overall, the concept of racialization allows researchers to analyze racism, while at the same time maintaining and highlighting that the basis for racism is the outcome of a process of social construction.

2.5.3 Whiteness

The next concept I want to discuss is 'whiteness'. The concept's history in sociology is about a hundred years long, stretching back to the writings of W.E.B. du Bois (Du Bois, 1969 [1903]; Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 7), and can, according to France W. Twine and Charles Gallagher (2008) be divided into three phases. In this chapter, I want to limit myself to presenting some more recent perspectives, drawing on writing from about the last 30 years. In 1993, Ruth Frankenberg, in her seminal work 'White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness', famously theorized whiteness as 'a location of structural advantage', 'a standpoint', and 'a set of cultural practices' (1993, p. 1). According to her, a central property of whiteness is that it often goes unnamed and unrecognized because it is constructed as the 'normal' benchmark from which other racial positions are seen to deviate. Frankenberg's book was an important contribution that, by separating different dimensions of whiteness, analytically dissected 'whiteness' as a category and phenomenon.

Even though Frankenberg thus proposed some central properties of whiteness, many scholars also emphasize that 'whiteness' has no stable meaning, and that it can be filled with different content that varies with time and place, and specifically, with the national context (Garner, 2007, p. 1; Twine & Gallagher, 2008, p. 6). Notably, there are many examples of ethnic or national groups, which, over time,

[22] See Murji & Solomos (2005b, p. 11) for a more detailed account of this.

have respectively been defined as both white and non-white (Bonnett, 1998; Dankertsen, 2019; Garner, 2006, p. 260).

Whiteness is also usually understood as a category that is defined in relation to its opposite; i.e., it takes on meaning precisely by not being ‘non-white’ (Garner, 2007, p. 2). Further, whiteness can also be seen as an analytical perspective, i.e., ‘a way of formulating questions about social relations’ (Garner, 2007, p. 3). Just like Ruth Frankenberg, Steven Garner also stresses that ‘white people frequently construct themselves as raceless individuals, unfettered by the kinds of collective identifications that they view other people as having’ (2007, p. 4). But, again, according to Garner, while whiteness as a category of difference may be invisible to white people, this is not the case for non-white people (2006, p. 259). Seen from the outside in, whiteness is visible. Garner also states that ‘whiteness is a phenomenon unthinkable in a context where white does not equal power at some structural level’ (2006, p. 262).

Another theme in the literature on ‘whiteness’ is the relationship between whiteness and the nation state. Garner (2007, pp. 11–12) says that whiteness functions to

> [bolster] the idea that white people (regardless of sex, age class, etc.) have particular collective claims on the nation which are and should be prioritised by the state over those of other groups. These claims can only make sense if the centuries-old ideological labour establishing the idea that white people are superior in terms of civilization is acknowledged. (…) The function that whiteness as a social identity performs is to temporarily dissolve other social differences – sex, age, class, region and nation – into a delusion that the people labeled white have more in common with each other than they do with anyone else, purely because of what they are not – black, Asian, asylum seeker etc.

Similar to the argument put forth here by Garner, Lebanese-Australian scholar Ghassan Hage has argued that in nations conceived of as white, the position of whiteness is bound up with the power to decide over who can legitimately be a part of the nation[23]. He states (1998, p. 59)

> Whiteness is an everchanging, composite cultural historical construct. It has roots in the history of European colonisation, which universalised a cultural form of White identity as a position of cultural power at the same time as the colonised were in the process of being racialised. Whiteness, in opposition to Blackness and Brownness, was born at the same time as the binary oppositions coloniser/colonised, being developed/being underdeveloped, and later First World/Third World was emerging. In this sense, White has become the ideal of being the bearer of ‘Western’ civilisation. As such, no one can be fully White, but people yearn to do so.

It is interesting to note that Hage thus qualifies whiteness as something cumulative, and follows are more/less rather than an either/or logic (1998, p. 57).

[23] I will return to this argument in the section on racism.

As stated above, the concept of 'whiteness' (often used together with 'racialization') has tended to be more popular in the European context than the concept of 'race'. A look at the existing whiteness literature from different European countries, such as Switzerland (Cretton, 2018), Turkey (Ergin, 2008), the Netherlands (Essed & Trienekens, 2008), France (Fassin, 2015), Germany (Müller, 2011), and Italy (Stanley, 2015), shows that the interrelatedness and amalgamation of nation/national belonging and phenotype/whiteness/race often emerges as a focal point.

In the Nordic region, too, 'whiteness' has become increasingly popular as an analytical concept over the past decade (Garner, 2014; Hübinette & Lundström, 2011; Hübinette & Raeterlinck, 2014; Keskinen, 2015; Loftsdóttir, 2013; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017; Pettersson, 2007; Rastas, 2005). If we zoom in further and focus on Norway, there are several scholars who have made use of this analytical concept in different ways. Marianne Gullestad can be considered the first to have applied the concept of 'whiteness' to the Norwegian context, writing about its normativity and invisibility (Gullestad, 2002a, 2004, 2005, 2006). Anders Vassenden (2010) has discussed whiteness as a dimension of 'Norwegianness', as have Mette Løvgren and Julia Orupabo (2011), and Katrine Fangen and Brit Lynnebakke (2011). Anders Vassenden and Mette Andersson (2011) have discussed how whiteness allows white Norwegians to conceal their religiosity, whereas non-white phenotype marks bodies as religious or Muslim. Micheline van Riemsdijk (2010) has explored gradations of whiteness in the Norwegian context, taking the experiences of Polish nurses as her starting point. Eileen M. Myrdahl (2014) has used whiteness as an analytical lens through which she examined media coverage after the 2011 terror attacks committed by Anders Behring Breivik. Yan Zhao (2019) has discussed the identity negotiations of non-white transnational adoptees in relation to being a part of white Norwegian families. Despite this growing list of publications using 'whiteness' as an analytical lens, it remains a very marginal concept in the Norwegian social sciences. There is also a substantial literature on normative whiteness in the field of pedagogy and teacher education (Dowling, 2017; K. G. Eriksen, 2020; Fylkesnes, 2019b; Svendsen, 2014).

Even though the term 'white' references the prevalence of light skin and light phenotype in populations racialized as 'white', whiteness needs to be understood as a position of power more than a description of phenotype. In his article subtitled 'Making Whiteness Visible in the Nordic Countries', Steve Garner (2014, p. 409) argues that

> whiteness cannot be reduced unproblematically to bodies. Whiteness is not only about the body, but about engagement in ways of thinking and doing: thus, in practice, people not racialised as white can embrace important aspects of whiteness, while people racialised as white can enter a process of dis-engagement from it.

In terms of its analytical value, ‘whiteness’ is thus less concerned with phenotype – though it is, of course, grounded in it – and more concerned with a position of power. Specifically, the power to determine who is a ‘true’ versus a ‘marginal’ member of the nation.

2.5.4 Racism

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva espouses a structural definition of racism. He understands racism as the product of *racial domination projects*. According to him, ‘race’ is not something that ‘just is’, but it results from racism (2015, p. 1359). He argues that racism should be conceived in a materialist fashion and that racism (2015, p. 1360)

> Is […] about practices and behaviors that produce a *racial structure* – a network of social relations at social, political, economic, and ideological levels that shapes the life chances of the various races. This structure is responsible for the production and reproduction of systemic racial advantages for some (...) and disadvantages for others. (emphasis in original)

Once race is thus instituted, it becomes socially real and reenacted in everyday life (2015, p. 1360). Bonilla-Silva terms his approach to racism ‘the racialized social system approach’. By this, he understands ‘societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races’ (2015, p. 1360). He proposes that social scientists should focus less on racial attitudes and prejudice, and more on the ‘specific mechanisms, practices, and social relations that produce and reproduce racial inequality at all levels’ (2015, p. 1360).

Bonilla-Silva also focuses on the material aspects of domination that flow from the social structure he studies, racism. According to him, racist ideology is both material and consequential because it is linked to domination. European colonialism, slavery, and exploitation would not have been possible without a racist ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2015, p. 1361).

Another scholar who espouses a structural definition of racism is Philomena Essed. Her account of what she terms ‘everyday racism’ focuses on the link between the structural and individual acts. Her point of departure is that racism should be understood as ‘routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices’ (2002, p. 177). These practices are systematic and recurring, and can thus be generalized and understood as the expression of activation of group power (2002, p. 179). Essed defines racism as ‘ideology, structure and process in which inequalities inherent in the wider social structure are related, in a deterministic way, to biological and cultural factors attributed to those who are seen as a different 'race' or 'ethnic' group’ (2002, p. 185). According to her, everyday racism is then how this power relationship

is called on and activated in different situations (2002, p. 189). As a consequence, everyday racism 'does not exist in the singular but only as a complex – as interrelated instantiations of racism' (2002, p. 189), whereby each instance 'has meaning only in relation to the whole complex of relations and practices' (2002, p. 190). Essed further argues that accounts of experiences of racism constitute the best basis for studying racism because the accounts situate the person subject to racism, and the experience itself, in the 'social context of their everyday life', which provides specificity and detail (2002, p. 178).

Two elements of Essed's theorization of 'everyday racism' are particularly noteworthy. First, she links racism as a structure to specific, singular instances of racist discrimination, making it easier (compared to some other structural theories) to see how her theory can be applied to empirical material, specifically interview material. Second, the fact that Essed – a Dutch scholar – makes it clear that the reference point for racism can be 'race' or 'ethnic group', points back to the questions raised in the section about 'racialization' regarding the 'reference point' of racialization, and by extension, racism. Essed clarifies that she would apply her concept of 'everyday racism' independently of whether it targeted someone based on their 'race' or 'ethnicity'.

The next conceptionalization of racism I want to turn to is Ghassan Hage's. His understanding of racism can also be qualified as structural. However, where Philomena Essed links the structural to everyday interactions, Hage links it to the question of which group in a society conceives of itself as having the right to make decisions on the nation's behalf. He agrees with Bonilla-Silva's assertion that racism is more about power than about 'prejudice' (1998, p. 36), but then pushes this idea further by asking: 'power to do what?' (1998, p. 35). Hage argues that racism is about the power to decide who can reside in or be a part of the nation (1998, p. 35). Thus racism must be conceived of in a spatial-national dimension, where the aim is not to have *too many* of those deemed 'undesirable' (1998, pp. 35–37). Hage bases his argument around a study of the Australian context. Whiteness and what he terms 'the 'White nation' fantasy' are central to his book's argument. His main claim is that 'both White racists and White multiculturalists share in a conception of themselves as nationalists and of the nation as a space structured around White culture, where Aboriginal people and non-White 'ethnics' are merely national objects to be moved or removed according to a White national will' (1998, p. 18). In other words, Hage theorizes whiteness as the embodiment of an idea of legitimate white ownership over the nation.

Next, I want to turn to a definition presented by two Norwegian scholars, social anthropologist Sindre Bangstad and historian Alexa Døving. Their definition of racism (2015, p. 16 my translation) is that it is

> A generalization that assigns certain properties to people, on the basis of their belonging to a specific group, and the fact that these properties are defined as so negative that they form the basis for an argument to hold members of the group at a distance, to exclude them, and,

> if possible, to actively discriminate against them. Such a negative generalization and subordination of people can be called racism, independently of whether it is grounded in people's skin color, religion, language, or culture.

I want to include this definition because – similar to what I have said above about race and racialization – this definition makes explicit that racism can have different reference points. According to Bangstad and Døving, the categories of people who are the target of racism can be defined based on their 'skin color, religion, language, or culture'. Thus, this definition takes heed of the malleability and changing nature of conceptionalizations of outgroups, while keeping as a constant the understanding that the discrimination, subordination, and exclusion of these groups – however they are defined – can be understood as racism. As such, their definition implicitly references the concept of 'cultural racism' (Barker, 1981; Stolcke, 1995; Wren, 2001), which highlights that throughout the 20th century, references to culture have increasingly come to replace references to biological difference in contemporary expressions of racism

The final definition I want to present is formulated by Steve Garner in his 2010 book 'Racisms'. While Garner notes that racism needs to be defined flexibly, so as to account for the changes in meaning it has undergone, he presents the following three points as the necessary minimum elements to any definition of racism (2010, p. 11 emphasis in the original):

1. **A historical power relationship** in which, over time, groups are *racialised* (that is, treated as if specific characteristics were natural and innate to each member of the group).
2. **A set of ideas** [*ideology*] in which the human race is divisible into distinct 'races', each with specific natural characteristics.
3. **Forms of discrimination** flowing from this [*practices*] ranging from denial of access to resources through to mass murder

Garner's definition combines elements of power, ideas, and practices of discrimination, thus accounting simultaneously for the structural aspect of racism, as well as individual acts of discrimination.

All definitions of racism presented here are structural in outlook[24]. What sets them apart from each other is the extent to which and how they also account for individual acts of discrimination as linked to the underlying racist structure. Essed and Garner are clearest in how they point out that racism comprises both structural and action-based elements, and Essed provides a clear account of how she sees these as relating to one another. The advantage of structural definitions of racism is that they account for racism's systemic and systematic quality. In the absence of this, racism presents as 'individual vile acts'. However,

[24] With Bangstad and Døving's definition being a bit more 'on the fence'.

structural perspectives can be challenging to substantiate empirically and to apply to an interview material. This is also the case for the next concept I will cover, color-blindness, which is also a structural concept.

Structural conceptions of racism have further been criticized for overstating race as the most important stratifying principle, for being unable or unwilling to account for reductions in racial inequality over time, and for asserting that race is uniformly important around the world (Wimmer, 2015). In a recent article, Midtbøen (2021) discusses how applicable theories of structural racism are when exploring patterns of discrimination and social mobility in Norway. On the one hand, he finds that structural and systemic discrimination against ethnic minorities, for instance in the labor and housing markets, are well documented, that descendants of immigrants do not experience less discrimination than immigrants themselves, and that many descendants of immigrants – especially Muslims – experience that their belonging to Norway is continually questioned. All these arguments indicate that 'structural racism' may be a relevant theoretical perspective for the Norwegian context. On the other hand, Midtbøen explains that employment discrimination varies between sectors and that it cannot easily be explained by one overarching structural theory or by a theory of implicit bias. Moreover, he explains that the share of ethnic minorities who report having experienced discrimination by the police is low and that there is upwards social mobility for descendants of immigrants in Norway, whereby free (higher) education and a generous welfare state play an important role. He concludes by stating that while a 'master narrative' of structural racism does not hold water in the Norwegian context, there are findings that point towards structural exclusion of minorities, which makes it necessary to tease apart theories of structural racism and to adjust them to the Norwegian context.

2.5.5 Color-Blindness

The next concept I want to explore – color-blindness – is tightly connected to structural racism. The Puerto Rican-American sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva defines it as 'the racial ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2013) based on the superficial extension of the principles of liberalism to racial matters *that results in 'raceless' explanations for all sort of race-related affairs*' (2015, p. 1364 emphasis mine). According to him, this racial ideology has since the Civil rights era gradually become the dominant way of viewing and explaining racial inequality in the US.

Ashley 'Woody' Doane (2017) has further developed and theorized the concept of 'color-blindness', taking Bonilla-Silva's work as his starting point. He understands color-blindness as a racial ideology that holds that 'race no longer "matters" as an obstacle to social and economic success in the United States, that substantial racial barriers no longer exist to keep historically oppressed groups from realizing the

"American dream"' (2017, p. 975). Doane gives an account of different 'racial ideologies' – i.e. "collections of beliefs and understandings about race and the role of race in social interaction" (2017, p. 976) – throughout US history and states that at any given moment, there can be competing racial ideologies – 'dominant' and 'oppositional' – that explain racial inequality in different ways (2017, p. 977). In line with Bonilla-Silva, he considers 'color-blind ideology' to be the dominant racial ideology in the US today, arguing that it obfuscates and defends white advantages (2017, p. 980).

Color-blindness does not refer to not seeing color/race, but to 'the denial and downplaying of racial inequality and racist practices' (Doane, 2017, p. 976). Within the color-blind paradigm, racial inequality is explained by referring to factors other than race, such as individual choice and meritocracy. Importantly, color-blind ideology needs to be understood as embedded in a racialized structure – 'a social system where power and valued resources are distributed unequally across (socially constructed) 'racial' lines' (Doane, 2017, p. 977). This is important because if there were no racial inequality, color-blindness would be a moot point.

Among the core elements of color-blindness are the denial of institutional and structural racism and the reduction of racism to individual attitudes and actions (Doane, 2017, p. 979). Notably, color-blindness is a flexible ideology that can 'be adapted to address incidents of racism without dropping the core principle that race no longer matters' (Doane, 2017, p. 981).

While this account of color-blindness is mostly concerned with structure and ideology, Bonilla-Silva is also interested in the concrete manifestations of color-blindness in language and speech. He argues that color-blind racism is expressed in language through three main elements he calls 'frames', 'styles', and 'racial stories' (2015, p. 1364)[25]. In line with this, Patricia Hill Collins (2013, p. 35) points out that there has been a shift, in the US, from a more explicit racial language used in the past ('the negro problem'), to using expressions like 'street crime', 'urban', and 'welfare mothers' that have a clear racial sub-text that need not be expressed explicitly.

In the Norwegian context, social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2004) has written about a similar tendency. She does not use the term 'color-blindness', but discusses the 'blindness' of the (ethnic) majority when it comes to understanding racism and racialization.

As discussed in the section about 'race', in European public discourse (except for the UK), the term 'race' was abandoned gradually after WWII. I want to return here to a question that I already raised above, namely whether abandoning a language of 'race' means that ideas about 'race', too, have vanished. The

[25] See also Bonilla-Silva (2002); Bonilla-Silva et al. (2004).

concept of 'color-blindness' opens for a way of understanding how ideas of 'race' can linger on even if – or maybe precisely because – 'race' as a term has been abandoned and become 'taboo'. The concept of 'color-blindness' can hence sensitize me to the fact that racialized understandings can be expressed in a language that is free from references to color or race, and that – at least in the US – current racial formations can be understood in terms of a dominant 'color-blind ideology'.

2.6 Phenotype versus Race in the International Social Science Literature

As has been discussed in the introduction, phenotype and race are not the same thing. While I have discussed race as a sensitizing concept above, I also want to say a few words as to how phenotype and race are differentiated from each other in the international social science literature. Angela Dixon and Edward Telles explain that in the US literature, 'racial categories tend to be discrete and clearly defined, and color serves only to differentiate members of the same racial category' (Dixon & Telles, 2017, p. 414). According to this definition, which they argue is specific to the US context, 'color' is thus the term used to distinguish within a racial group, for instance lighter-skinned from darker-skinned African Americans. This is for example reflected in the writing of Joni Hersch (2006, 2011a, 2011b) and Ellis Monk (2015) who discuss the significance of skin color for experiences of discrimination.

While the research discussed above thus conceives of color/phenotype as difference *within* a racial group, another strand of research discusses skin color/phenotype as one characteristic among several that are co-constitutive of race. Edward Telles and Tianna Paschel (2014), writing about Latin America, argue that skin color is the most salient characteristic of racial classification in the context they study. Maya Sen and Omar Wasow (2016) describe race as a 'bundle of sticks' and attempt to disaggregate it into its various constituting parts ('sticks'). They name skin color as one of the 'sticks', in addition to dialect, genes, neighborhood, diet, social status, norms, power relations, class, religion, region of ancestry, and wealth. Wendy Roth (2016) takes a different approach to differentiating various 'dimensions' of race, by distinguishing between racial identity, self-classification, observed race, reflected race, phenotype, and racial ancestry. She argues that the term 'race' is used as a proxy for each of these in the existing literature, which creates inaccuracies.

Consistent with Roth's argument that phenotype needs to be distinguished from other dimensions of race, there are a number of articles that precisely explore this relationship. For instance, Cynthia Feliciano (2015) studies how observers sort people into racial categories based on pictures. She finds that skin color

is the primary marker, but that the observer's gender and race are also important. Further, Jonathan Freeman et al (2011) explore how social status cues – such as wearing a janitor's overall versus a business suit – systematically change the perception of race. Moreover, Aliya Saperstein and Andrew Penner (2012) study how in the US, both racial self-identification and other-classification can change over an individual's life course in response to changes in social position. These changes in classification then in turn reinforce racial disparities, since 'successful' people are reclassified as white (or not black) while 'unsuccessful' people are reclassified as black (or not white). Finally, Miri Song (2020) writes about the relationship between minority status and phenotypical visibility as a non-white person. Taking the case of multiracial people, many of whom are not 'visibly non-white', she asks whether the relationship between minority status and phenotypical visibility needs to be rethought.

Color/phenotype can thus be understood either as a characteristic that varies within any racial group and/or as one of the co-constitutive dimensions of race. The literature discussed above shows that many scholars devote great attention to distinguishing the role of color/phenotype from other aspects of race and to singling out color/phenotype as a factor that produces differences within the same racial group. These endeavors seem fruitful and worthwhile. However, it is important to keep in mind that the field of phenotypical and ethno-racial meaning making is much less settled in Norway and that color/phenotype/race is rarely verbalized. My approach in this study is thus more exploratory. I aim to focus on phenotype as a marker of difference in a more general way, exploring broadly how it interrelates with understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related diversity. I will not attempt to zoom in on phenotypical differences among participants who trace their ancestry to the same world region; in fact, I did not attempt to measure participant's phenotype in any way. Rather, I take my starting point both in how phenotype interrelates with categories that describe belonging to the nation (chapters 5 and 6) and in how participants describe their own phenotype as relevant for experiences with discrimination (chapter 8).

2.7 Boundaries and Processes of Categorization

This thesis seeks to investigate 'phenotype' as a marker of difference and a category of difference in contemporary Norway. As such, the thesis can be situated within the literature on categories of difference. There is a vast literature that discusses various *markers of difference*, such as sonic habits (I. M. Eriksen, 2012; Schwarz, 2014; Schwarz, Willer, Rogalin, Conlon, & Wojnowicz, 2013), skin color (Dixon & Telles, 2017; Glenn, 2009), religion, and language (Brubaker, 2013b), as well as different *categories of difference*, such as ethnicity, race, class, gender, age, and sexual orientation. It must in this context be

noted that some dimensions, for instance religion or phenotype, can function both as a *marker of difference* and as a *category of difference*. Phenotype can be considered a *marker of difference*, i.e. a trait that contributes to assigning individuals to categories of difference – ethnicity and race come to mind – but it can potentially also be considered a category of difference in itself (closely connected to race, color, and ethnicity).

Rogers Brubaker has argued that categories of difference – specifically ethnicity, race, and nation – must be investigated as 'perspectives on the world', and not 'things in the world' (2002, pp. 174–175). Following this line of thinking, one would for example ask how race is mobilized and which effects it has, rather than treating it as a given attribute that individuals possess. Phenotype is a category of difference that is rarely treated as a 'thing in the world' in Norway. This holds especially in comparison to another category of difference that belongs to the same family of categories, ethnicity. Since phenotype is only seldom investigated as a category of difference in Norway, asking how it functions as a perspective on the world necessarily entails investigating processes of boundary drawing that are based on phenotype.

Brubaker has further criticized the propensity 'to take groups for granted in the study of ethnicity, race, and nationhood' (2002, p. 164), which he terms 'groupism'. He argues that categories belonging to the field of ethnicity, race, and nation need to be understood as claims rather than as facts. He encourages social scientists to direct their focus at how and to which end categories are used and mobilized and to study the properties of the category, rather than the properties of the 'group' that is constructed through the category (2002, pp. 167–168). A focus on categories, rather than a focus on groups will enable researchers to focus on processes and relations (2002, p. 170).

The literatures on markers of difference and categories of difference are often concerned with processes of categorization (Brubaker, 2002; Brubaker, Loveman, & Stamatov, 2004; Jenkins, 2000) as well as with boundaries between categories and processes of boundary-drawing (Lamont & Molnár, 2002; Lamont, Pendergrass, & Pachucki, 2015; Pachucki, Pendergrass, & Lamont, 2007). I want to briefly highlight some contributions to this literature and explain how I see them relating to my project.

In his much-cited article 'Categorization: Identity, Social Process and Epistemology', Richard Jenkins (2000) argues that understanding categorization is essential to understanding the social world and he encourages social scientists to examine both how and in which contexts categorization happens. Regarding boundaries, Michèle Lamont and Virág Molnár's seminal 2002 article 'The Study of Boundaries in the Social Sciences' provides an overview over developments in the field, and suggests three approaches to studying boundaries, two of which I briefly want to mention here. First, they advise that researchers focus on '[studying] the *properties* of boundaries such as permeability, salience,

durability, and visibility' (2002, p. 186). Second, they propose a 'systematic cataloguing of the key *mechanisms* associated with the activation, maintenance, transposition or the dispute, bridging, crossing and dissolution of boundaries' (2002, p. 187).

There are vast literatures that study both boundaries and processes of categorization in the interrelated fields of ethnicity, race, and nation. Here, authors analyze how social actors mobilize different terms and categories to make sense of the world around them, and how these categorizations in turn affect the social world. For instance, Anna Rastas (2005) examines the categories children and teenagers in Finland use to articulate racial difference, which allows her to draw conclusions about how racism is understood and articulated there. Further, Cathrine Talleraas (2019) analyzes formal and informal categories used by employees in the Norwegian welfare administration who work with clients leading transnational lives. By examining the categories, Talleraas gains insight into how bureaucrats understand and approach the diverse group of clients they serve. Similarly, Jennifer Elrick and Luisa F. Schwartzman (2015) study how the German statistical category 'persons with a migration background' is used in parliamentary debates on education. They show that even though the category is not 'ethnic' in and of itself, it is deployed in an ethnicizing manner and it carries connotations of deficient language skills, low socio-economic status, and exclusion from the national community. Moreover, Arnfinn H. Midtbøen, drawing on theories of ethnic boundary-making, has studied 'when and under what conditions ethnicity and religious background shape minorities' experiences when participating in the public sphere in Norway' (2018, p. 344). His analysis highlights the heterogeneity of experiences and the fact that some individuals are able to strategically cross ethnic boundaries. Finally, Mette Strømsø (2018) examines how 'ordinary people' in Norway (re)produce boundaries of the nation in their everyday lives. By focusing on boundary making as a contingent event, she challenges the idea that Norwegian nationhood is demarcated by fixed and stable boundaries. These examples demonstrate how focusing on boundaries and categories helps social scientists to gain a nuanced understanding of race, ethnicity, and nation as socially constructed.

This literature has drawn my attention to the role that both boundaries and categories can play for understanding my research object, phenotype. I want to understand in which way phenotype matters socially. This presupposes that *different* phenotypes carry *different* meanings, or lead to individuals' being treated differently. One approach to understanding this differentiation would be to work towards specifying what the salient phenotypical categories are and where the boundaries between them are located. These boundaries can potentially be fuzzy, ill-defined, or vague, but in order for there to be a distinction, there have to be categories or boundaries of some sort. Chapter 9 makes an attempt at systematizing phenotype in this manner.

As I will discuss in the methods chapter, a part of my interview material consists of participants reflecting on the meaning and the use of phenotypical and national-belonging categories. That part of the material lends itself to exploring categories in detail (and that is what chapters 5 and 6 will do). But I also want to try to think in terms of categories and boundaries beyond that specific part of the material. If the aim is to understand which meaning phenotype carries, it seems necessary to explore how it matters differentially. Here I also draw inspiration from the book 'Hvordan bruke teori?' ('How to Use Theory?) by Lars Johannessen, Tore Rafoss and Erik Børve Rasmussen (2018). They suggest a range of questions sociologists can pose themselves when attempting to narrow down how categories matter in their data. I want to cite some of their suggestions that I consider relevant for my project here (2018, p. 146 my translation from Norwegian):

> Do the categories appear apparent (selvsagt) and natural, or are there different opinions on which kind of categories should be used?
>
> In what way do the categories simplify reality? Are differences within categories overlooked, while differences with other categories are exaggerated? (…)
>
> Are the categories part of a system of categories? What are the characteristics of this system? Does the system have a vertical dimension, i.e. things can be described more generally ('Arab') or more concretely ('Palestinian')? What are the consequences of categorizing something generally or specifically? (…)
>
> Is the system of categories formalized (i.e. officially written down and clearly defined)? How is this system used? (…)
>
> Are there things that do not fit the categories? How is this handled [in the system]?

Since phenotype is a marker of difference that is spoken about relatively little in Norwegian, there is no clearly articulated and universally recognized 'category system of phenotypes'. Yet, thinking about phenotype in terms of boundaries and categories still seems promising because it encourages being precise and specific. This is a worthy aim to pursue, even if I may not be able to be as precise as Lamont and Molnár and Johannessen, Rafoss, and Rasmussen suggest.

2.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the theoretical starting points for this thesis. After a survey of the Norwegian literature on phenotype/color, a section entitled 'Constructing the Research Object' explained how I carved out 'phenotype' as the focal point of my research in response to a 'seemingly color-blind' research setting. It further discussed how phenotype relates to 'ethnicity' as a category of practice in the Norwegian context, explaining that the term 'ethnic diversity' was central to data collection. This will be explored further in the methods chapter.

The chapter also explained the choice to focus on phenotype as a marker of difference based on standpoint theoretical considerations, arguing that the field of migration-related difference cannot fully be understood without addressing phenotype and race as categories of difference. I then moved on to explore a range of 'sensitizing concepts' that can help direct my analytical gaze while exploring phenotype. The concepts discussed were race, racialization, whiteness, racism, and color-blindness.

The ensuing section focused on how color/phenotype is differentiated from race in the international literature. Ethno-racial meaning making is a field that is settled, articulated, and differentiated to a small degree only in Norway; this makes it more challenging to unpack these different categories when working in the Norwegian context. The chapter concluded with a section on boundaries and categories, arguing that understanding categories of difference presupposes paying attention to processes of differentiation and categorization. This literature can specifically contribute to the analysis of the part of the interview material that revolves around different categories that span the thematic fields of national belonging, ethnicity, and phenotype/race.

3 Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the methodological choices undergirding data collection. It starts by offering some reflections on how to research a phenomenon that is not spoken about much. Next, it discusses how I used memory work in preparation for data collection and how I designed an interview guide following a life story approach. The ensuing sections explain how participants were recruited and discuss the interview process. The chapter is rounded off by an overview over participants and a section that explains how the data material was coded and analyzed.

3.2 How to Research a (Seemingly) 'Absent' Phenomenon

About three months into my PhD project, I attended a course on interview and focus group methods. As part of the course, each participating PhD candidate received feedback on their project sketch from one of the instructors. The (external) professor commenting on my project was very skeptical about the very core of my research interest: 'Race and color?[26] Are you sure? I mean, is that even a thing? Don't you think that it all rather boils down to socio-economic difference?' And she continued: 'And anyways, in those interviews you are planning to do, what are you even going to ask?' – Yes, what was I even going to ask? Her question echoed in my head for the next couple of months, as I was working towards, and then on, my interview guide. While I easily dismissed her first comment – the one about socio-economic difference – the second one truly struck a nerve with me. What was I going to ask about in my interviews, given that I was interested in investigating the meaning of phenotype in Norway. I had a vague idea that it had something to do with boundary drawing regarding national belonging, discrimination/racism, and a taken-for-grantedness of the belonging of those deemed 'not-of-color'. But what was I actually going to ask?

Since 'race' is an elusive concept in Norway, there is a lack of words and concepts to talk about diversity when it comes to race and phenotype. Consequently, there is very little that could have given me an indication of what to look for, and where to look for it when setting out to research phenotype in Norway. It is all the more important, in this context, to shed light on the research process and on methods used. In

[26] This is how I phrased my research interest at the time. I did not use the term 'phenotype' until later in the process.

this chapter, I want to discuss both how I interviewed about phenotype, i.e. what I was looking for and asking, but also how the interview process itself was a site of racial meaning making.

There is an ample methodological literature covering different aspects of race research (Best, 2003; Bulmer & Solomos, 2004; Denton & Deane, 2010; Gunaratnam, 2003; Twine, 2000). Yet, little has been written on *how* to research race in a (seemingly) color-blind setting like Norway (yet, see Essed, 2004; Frankenberg, 2004). Thus, I had to find my own way and make my own decisions. Even though I did not, initially, know which questions to ask of my participants, I had some ideas that guided me as I moved towards developing the interview guide. My aim was to investigate what phenotype means in Norway, and I wanted that investigation to be grounded in concrete everyday experiences. I also wanted to guard myself as much as possible from projecting my own preconceptions into the study. Further, I understood that phenotype/race is a context-dependent category that cannot be analyzed or understood in isolation. Finally, Ruth Frankenberg's seminal 1993 book 'White Women, Race Matters' inspired me. She illustrates how to research a particular variant of race – whiteness – that usually goes unnoticed and unnamed. Hence, she, too, operates in a setting that is blind to the variable in which she is most interested, and searches to capture the moments when and the ways in which whiteness becomes salient.

When thinking about phenotype, and how I would interview about it, my mind circled times and again to the fact that in Norway, phenotype as a category is very difficult to separate from other migration-related categories of difference, such as ethnicity, nationality, immigrant background, religion, and language/dialect. I understand these categories of difference as tightly interrelated, and as intersecting in turn with other, not specifically migration-related categories of difference (such as gender, class, sexuality, and (dis)ability) (Collins, 2015; Collins & Bilge, 2016).

Therefore, I decided that I would not *à priori* attempt to separate the migration-related categories of difference from one another (i.e. have an idea about how phenotype, ethnicity, religion, nationality etc. are different from one another). I would not, going into the interview process, have a specific idea of how phenotype was different from ethnicity, for instance, and word my questions accordingly. I felt that this approach matched how 'people' relate to migration-related categories of difference in Norway; the categories blend into each other rather than being distinct. This approach would also guard me from projecting my own pre-conceptions onto the project/data, and rather allow for a sensitivity as to how these categories operate and interact when participants speak.

Hence, I decided to collect information about people's understanding of 'ethnic diversity' without specifically singling out phenotype. That would be my job to do once the interviews were done. I did have a special interest in phenotype as a category of difference, but the understanding was from the beginning

– and this was only reinforced over the course of the project – that the social meaning of phenotype becomes salient and manifest in interaction with other categories. In this context, it seems sensible to investigate 'ethnic diversity' as a holistic topical complex that encompasses different aspects of migration-related diversity.

When I made the topic of the interviews 'ethnic diversity' rather than 'phenotype', it was not in order to 'trick people' into talking about phenotype without revealing the 'actual topic' to them. Much rather, I was aware that neither for them nor for me would phenotype/race be an obvious category to talk about. Hence, talking about the broader topic of 'ethnic diversity' was one way of making sure that phenotype was covered. By setting up my interviews that way, I essentially treated phenotype the way it otherwise is treated in Norway (and in many other European countries). Not as something specific to talk about, but as a component of ethnic diversity. With the difference that I was aware that it was there, and that it might matter, and that I wanted to find out more about it.

Moving forward, I chose a two-pronged approach. Before I started interviewing, I conducted memory work to work with my own life experiences related to phenotype/race. When it came to interviewing, I opted for a broad data gathering approach using life story interviews. The next two sections in turn offer more insight into these two topics.

3.3 Memory Work

Memory work is a method that has been used by researchers working with gender and race as a way to examine their own experience with these categories. Doing memory work means collecting one's own concrete and specific memories that relate to a pre-defined topic. It allows for reflecting on one's own situatedness (England, 1994; Rose, 1997) and can thus be considered a way of working towards 'strong objectivity' (Berg & Lauritsen, 2002). When the goal of memory work is to note down memories that relate to a specific identity category, for instance race or gender, it allows to examine how these categories take shape and are filled with meaning over the course of one's own life. It is hence a way of examining the production of these categories ('doing race'/'doing gender'). A good example is the book 'Female Sexualization: A Collective Work of Memory' by German sociologist Frigga Haug (et al.) (1987), in which a group of women collectively examined their memories on the topic of being raised to be women. It is often cited as the first use of memory work as a sociological method and it is a good example of using memory work to examine the construction of a social category.

Memory work consists of 'writing […] personal memories of particular episodes related to the topic under investigation' (Berg, 2008, p. 216). The aim is to focus on specific situations, and to write very descriptively, 'avoiding conceptualization, interpretations and self-censorship' (Jansson, Wendt, & Åse, 2008, p. 235). It is often recommended to use the third person when writing the memories (Jansson et al., 2008, p. 235). Further, the methodological focus is not on the self, but on the situation and the relations in it that 'make up the experience' (Widerberg, 1998, p. 196).

For my own memory work, I started with the question: 'What are situations where I was aware or became aware that I am white?' Soon after I started writing down memories I noticed that I in some cases had not thought of a situation as racial/color-coded when it occurred, even though it could have been interpreted that way. I decided to also include these situations in the exercise. I conducted this exercise over the span of six months, and focused on writing down concrete, detailed memories from my own life.

When analyzing my memories, there are a couple of main themes that emerge. For instance, I exclusively experienced whiteness through other people's non-whiteness. All my memories relate to people (often people I know on an acquaintance-basis) who are not white/visibly different in phenotype, and to situations where I was somehow confronted with their visible difference. This is sometimes set off by comments someone made, or by a situation that brings color to the fore, or by my own reflections on a situation (that I had never shared or verbalized before writing the memory notes).

I would like to give two examples. Both of them relate to girls that were in my secondary school, though not in my year. One of them, I will call her Rebecca Müller, looks very different from her parents. She looks like she might be from India, with brown skin, dark eyes and long, thick black hair, whereas her parents are very fair-complexioned Germans. My memory reads like this

> Rebecca does not look like her parents; she looks more like she is from India. That is a topic that is repeatedly brought up through the years. Not in front of Rebecca, that is, but in different constellations of people. [Two girls] say that Rebecca was asked in school whether she was adopted, which she refuted with an air of bewilderment. [Another person] is sure that there is no way she is that child of 'these two pale-lings'. […] For some reason this is all a topic, this is all important. Just like everyone repeatedly discusses who Sarah's father is. With Rebecca it is not because she is being raised without a father like Sarah, but because she does not look like Mr. Müller could be her father.

In this memory, Rebecca's darker complexion is 'for some reason […] a topic'. Her visible difference from her parents fuels speculation that she may not be their biological child and rumors about possible alternative explanations. Her color becomes hyper-visible in contrast to the pale complexion of her parents. The color of the gossipers remains unnamed, with Rebecca's complexion the 'obvious' object of interest.

Another memory relates to another girl, Valerie, who has one white and one black parent. I have known her for a long time. We take dance lessons together starting when we are children, and later, as teenagers, we sing in the school choir together. At some point, she starts an after-school job at a local *Subway* that just opened in our little town.

> Valerie has a part-time job at *Subway* now. […] One day, Laura and her sister go there together; it's cool somehow to know someone who works there, wearing the *Subway* apron and all. Valerie makes the sandwiches, and it's nice somehow. Afterwards, Laura starts thinking that Valerie might be perceived very differently by other people, and that it somehow 'fits' that she has this kind of job. For Laura herself it's different of course, because she knows Valerie from the dance lessons and the choir at their school that has a classics profile. But for someone who does not know Valerie, it has to look like a young black woman working a service job. An image that does not correspond to the image that Laura has of Valerie.

This memory clearly exemplifies the linkages that exist between phenotype/race and class. Somehow it 'fits' that Valerie would have this job – namely with the stereotypical image that exists of people her phenotype/race; and somehow it does not – because Laura knows her to 'truly be someone else' – doing ballet, singing in the school choir, and studying Latin from age 10. The Valerie she knows has a lot of cultural capital, an image Laura cannot reconcile with the seeming naturalness with which Valerie inhabits the counter at *Subway*. At the time, of course, I did not have the concepts or vocabulary to make sense of the experience, but I clearly sensed that there was something there that I could not put my finger on. There is an element of surprise in some of the memories I wrote down, such as in this one, where the interpretation ('somehow it 'fits' that she has this kind of job') happens even though the underlying interpretation grid ('black people work low-paid service jobs') has never been explicitly voiced.

I felt discomfort and shame while writing down the memories. I was uncomfortable with how 'cliché' many of the memories are. They draw on a very stereotypical repertoire of difference, and affix that difference to other people's bodies in a way that is completely ignorant of one's own situatedness, and of one's own agency in ascribing and producing the difference in the way that it is done. Rebecca's long, thick black hair, and Valerie's brown body in the green apron were the obvious objects for discussion, my own light-skinned self was not. Their otherness was out there, an already existing thing; my own contribution to the production of that otherness was not at stake.

What did I learn from this for my project? I feel that engaging in this form of memory work sensitized me to the mechanisms undergirding whiteness, and hence my own situatedness. I grappled with the stereotypical way in which I myself have been bound up in the mechanisms of whiteness, even before I had a concept of what whiteness was. I was impressed with how my memories followed a script of silent, invisible whiteness, and glaring, obvious otherness. I think this helped me be a better interviewer.

3.4 Life Story Interviews and Designing the Interview Guide

There are many different angles from which a study of the meaning of phenotype can be approached. Since I am most interested in exploring concrete, every-day meanings and articulations of phenotype, I have chosen to do life story interviews with new parents in different neighborhoods of Oslo. My approach to life story interviewing is based on Robert Atkinson's (1998, 2001, 2012) writings. Life story interviews are based on the memories, narration, and self-representation of the participant.

In the following I want to explain why the choice of life story interviews responds to the three main aims I had for interviewing. Those aims are 1) to collect a data material grounded in lived everyday experience, 2) to guard myself against projecting my own pre-conceptions onto the interviews, and 3) to treat phenotype as contextual.

A challenge that I encountered in developing the methodological design is how to simultaneously ground my project in existing literature on race and ethnicity, while remaining open to empirical reality. I wanted to be open as to what exactly phenotype means in an everyday context in Oslo. This raised the question which method would allow me to approach the meaning of a concept that I am interested in, without pre-determining it too much. It is against this backdrop that I decided to conduct life story interviews, which allowed me to gather material rather broadly, while supplementing with specific questions about migration-related diversity. I did not want to develop a more classical, qualitative interview guide that would focus solely on phenotype, as this would risk resulting in a too narrow data material, centering too closely on my own pre-notions. Rather, and partly inspired by Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) foundational study on whiteness, I wanted to speak with the participants about how they experienced '(ethnic) diversity' through their life course, examining how different aspects of diversity are presented as part of the life stories, and which role phenotype plays in this picture. I chose life story interviews because I am not interested in phenotype as an abstract, theoretical category, but rather want to examine which role it plays for how 'ethnic diversity' is experienced and narrated in everyday life.

Life story interviews have been known to allow researchers to 'ask questions about phenomena which are difficult to detect' (Furseth, 1999, p. 181) or to investigate topics about which one has little knowledge (Furseth, 1999, p. 182). In other words, life story interviews are well suited for exploring tacit knowledge. It has also been argued that this method is apt at accessing ambivalence and inconsistencies, since life stories rarely are told as one coherent, consistent story (Furseth, 2006, p. 34).

My approach to interviewing is in keeping with Caroline Knowles' argument that it is necessary to 'engage with the more mundane aspects of the social texture of life in racialised societies' (2010, p. 28), rather than to hyper-theorize race. In other words, according to Knowles (2010, p. 30):

> What we need to focus on is the way in which these things become part of social practice and social relationships. To transcend the mantra that race is socially produced we need to say specifically *how*, and we need to do so in materialist terms - terms that concretise discourse, symbol and representation.

I found that this way of designing my interview guide provided an answer to the challenge of how to study the 'elusive' category of phenotype. I chose a very indirect approach that takes heed for phenotype's contextual meaning. I designed an interview guide that very broadly collected data about life experiences with migration-related diversity, and about categories of speech associated with migration-related diversity. In this way, I did not have to single out phenotype in advance, and I collected a lot of contextual information. I could, so to speak, study phenotype in its natural habitat.

My aim was not only to examine phenotype in interaction with other migration-related categories of difference, but also to study it in a variety of contexts, such as school, higher education, jobs, and neighborhoods. I attempted to generate a lot of context, both in terms of analytical phenomena (focus on all aspects of 'ethnic diversity', not only 'phenotype'), and in terms of life contexts under scrutiny (neighborhoods, school, jobs, children, etc.).

I divided the interview guide into two parts: the 'life story part' and the 'concept part'. The life story part of the interview covers the participant's life story chronologically, with a specific focus on several life stages that I thought were relevant and would elicit talk about migration-related diversity. Some life story interviewing is very loosely structured, with the only information that participants receive being that they should tell their life story, in whatever form and length they want (Atkinson, 2001, pp. 131–132). In contrast to this, I opted for a much more structured approach (Atkinson, 1998, p. 39). I did this mainly by giving the interview a thematic focus – experiences with and understandings of ethnic diversity – but also by aiming to cover specific life phases and by guiding the participants through these, while also letting them talk quite freely. In this, I aimed to strike a balance between more general, context-generating questions, and questions that point more directly to diversity.

The first life stage in the interview guide is childhood, with a focus on the childhood residential area. I was inspired in this choice by Ruth Frankenberg (1993) who included a chapter about childhood neighborhoods in her book; however, I did not emulate her other focus, which was on love and especially inter-racial couples. Other topics covered in my interview guide are school, working life, and becoming a parent. For each of these life stages the interview guide contains a choice of several questions. The intent

is to cover all life stages with each participant, while choosing flexibly from the proposed questions. The questions always point to something very concrete, for instance asking the participant to talk about a specific memory or to describe a relationship or feeling. This was done in an effort to elicit storytelling, and in an attempt to move away from my own analytical questions and to develop interview questions that participants can easily relate to. For each of the life stages, I also included some questions that directly aim at diversity (e.g. 'Were there children with a native language other than Norwegian in your class?' or 'How was it to have an immigrant background in a Norwegian school?') in order to ensure that the interviews would relate to and take up the topic of ethnic diversity in one way or another.

During the 'concept part' of the interview, participants were invited to comment on a range of terms/categories associated with migration related-diversity. I asked participants whether they used those terms themselves, what they associated with them, and whether they thought they were positive, neutral, or negative in connotation. Initially, the terms included in the interview guide were: 'Norwegian', 'ethnically Norwegian', 'white', and 'immigrant'. Over time, I expanded the list of categories and also included 'foreigner', 'minority', 'brown', and 'black'. I never included the term '(dark-)skinned' or the n-word in the list, but since (some) participants brought them up, I ended up including them in the analysis (see chapter 6). Most participants had a lot to say about all these categories, and this part of the interview generated a lot of data.

The appendix contains the interview guide and the letter provided to participants.

Life stories are not factual accounts of an individual's life (Furseth, 2006, p. 36). Rather, they represent one among many possible stories that could be told about a person's life. Inger Furseth (2006, p. 35) explains this the following way:

> People create stories out of the building blocks of their life histories, and at the same time, these stories construct their lives, provide them with meaning and goals, and tie them to their culture. The construction of a life story is a process whereby the individual selects those aspects of his or her past that are relevant to the present situation. Life stories are, therefore, not a collection of all the events of the individual's life course, but rather "structured images" (Kohli 1981: 65).

Life story interviews are thus more apt at shedding light on *meaning* than on *facts.* For instance, when participants speak about their own childhood, the stories they tell are memories that seem meaningful to them in the interview context. For the data that constitutes the basis for this project, it means that the accounts that participants produce about the role that ethnic diversity has played in their life should be analyzed for the meaning making that occurs, more than for the factuality of the accounts. Life stories are

produced in the interaction between researcher and participant. As such, meaning is co-created during the interviews. I have attempted to be sensitive to this during the analysis and some of the quotes included in the analysis chapters include a dialogue between the participant and myself.

Life stories are not an illusion; they are rooted in reality. Yes, as Furseth explains in the quote above, they are still constructions, for participants choose different 'building blocks' and assemble them in a way that seems meaningful to them in relation to the present and, one might add, to the interview situation at hand. While the interviews that form the basis of this thesis thus do not represent 'reality', they do offer a glimpse into how participants make sense of ethnic diversity, what they associate with it, and how they include 'ethnic diversity' into their own life story. Section 3.8 below will explore how the material was coded and analyzed.

3.5 Recruiting Participants

The reason why recruitment is covered in some detail is because the reflections around how to describe the research project to potential participants coupled with the experiences during recruitment provide an illustration of the narratives that structure the field of migration-related diversity and an account of how I navigated these. Further, this section allows for a short reflection on the fact that the sample is geographically skewed in terms of participants' geographic residence within Oslo at the time of interviewing.

3.5.1 Gaining Access: How to Present My Research

Participants were initially recruited through municipal health centers[27] (*helsestasjoner*). I contacted all 17 municipal health centers in Oslo by e-mail, presenting my project, and asking for permission to 'hang out' at the health center with some flyers and posters, so that I could meet possible participants. Only one health center granted me permission; the one in Sagene borough. I went there five times between October and December 2016, recruiting a total of 17 participants.

At the health center, I set up a table with some posters and flyers about my project. I always visited on Wednesdays, which was the day for drop-in consultations. I wanted to be respectful of the fact that the

[27] In Norway, these free-of-charge public health centers provide pre- and postnatal care, as well as all child wellness exams and vaccinations up until children are about five years old. The health centers schedule regular consultations for all children/parents with a registered address in Norway and notify the parents of them. Failure to meet up at the health center leads to a follow-up by the health center and, if necessary, by child protective services. This means that basically all children living in Norway and their parents frequent these health centers.

parents first and foremost come to the health center for a well-visit with their children, so I chose a very hands-off approach to recruiting. My table and posters were right next to the entrance, and hence very visible, but I did not talk to participants unless they approached me first, curious about my study. I might smile at them when they came in, but I also looked away if they did. I wanted to make it easy for them to just pass by my table and go in for their consultation without having to 'deal with me' in any way.

I had two posters. One read (in Norwegian) 'Do you want to participate in an interview study with parents of young children in Oslo?'. The other one read: 'I am a sociologist from the University of Oslo and am looking for participants to a study about identity, ethnicity, and belonging[28] among parents of young children in Oslo'. My table was situated across from a waiting area, and I could see some parents looking at my posters, then at me, while they were waiting. Some of them came over, or they talked to me on their way out. Most of those who initiated a conversation ended up expressing interest to be interviewed.

I spent a lot of time working on the text of my posters, especially on the part that presented my study. I aimed to recruit participants with a majority Norwegian background as well as participants who had immigrated or were descendants of immigrants. When thinking about different formulations for my posters I thought about how they would sound to participants of different backgrounds.

I already knew from talking to friends and colleagues that conveying my research interests in a clear and straightforward manner was a challenging undertaking. I wanted to find a way of phrasing my project so that it would sound meaningful to participants of different backgrounds, and I assumed that the participants' own migration background or lack thereof would influence their perception of my project. Regarding majority Norwegians, I felt that including the word 'ethnicity' – a word that often is used in relation to immigrants – would sound to them as if though the research did not relate to them. Saying that I work on (everyday) racism, however, was likely to be understood as working on extreme right-wing groups.

Regarding non-majority participants, I wanted to avoid that my project would be understood as being an investigation as to whether 'all the immigrants' are 'well integrated'. That made me doubly weary of using the term 'ethnicity', and made me wish that I could use the expression 'everyday racism'. But I had already ruled that out as being potentially misunderstood to relate exclusively to extremist groups. Finally, the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, charged with overseeing ethical concerns of social science research projects, weighed in and obliged me, for transparency reasons, to include the word 'ethnicity' in my

[28] I will say more about this formulation below. I only became aware that the more concise expression '(ethnic) diversity' summed up my interests better and more elegantly than 'identity, ethnicity, and belonging' after the first couple of interviews. Had I thought of this formulation from the beginning, I would have put it on my posters instead.

recruiting information. Consequently, I settled on this formulation, which became a part of the text on the flyers: ‘My project is about identity, ethnicity, and belonging among new parents in Oslo. Oslo is a diverse and multicultural city, and I am especially interested in what that means for the everyday life of Oslo’s inhabitants’.

At the health center, I found my reflections as to the relevance of my title for majority Norwegians confirmed. Many people, whom I, based on looks and what they said to me, assume to be majority Norwegian, approached me and asked whether they ‘also’ could participate, or whether it ‘concerned them’ (‘Gjelder dette også oss?’). The formulation ‘ethnicity, identity, and belonging’ did seem to suggest that the study was more relevant to people with an immigrant than a majority background. My response was always that anyone who had a young child and lived in Oslo could participate. Once, I was also approached by a mother wondering if she could participate, given that she was in a same-sex partnership. She seemed unsure about it, and at the same time very motivated to contribute her perspective to the study. She ended up signing up for an interview.

My first round of ‘recruiting’ at the health center resulted in two minority participants, nine majority participants, four adult immigrant participants, and two mixed background participants[29] signing up. After that round, I wanted to balance out the background / migration experience of the participants more by increasing the number of minority participants and adult immigrant participants. In order to achieve that, I did two things in parallel: A) I modified my posters and paid one more visit to the health center. B) I reached out to two acquaintances asking them to pass information about my project on to potential participants in their network.

A) Modified posters

In order to specifically recruit more people with a migration background (either adult immigrants or minority participants), I modified my posters at the health center. They now read: ‘Do you want to participate in an interview study about Norwegianness?’ And ‘I am a sociologist from the University of Oslo and am looking for participants for a study about Norwegianness. This time around, I am interested in speaking with people who have parents with an immigrant background’. I was somewhat uncomfortable with the idea that this would reproduce a cliché about immigrants as obvious research objects. The expectations I had as to how people would interpret my posters was confirmed by my experience at the health center: Quite a few (presumably) majority Norwegian parents passed by my table, read my poster and strolled on, smiling (maybe a bit too broadly) and commenting: ‘well, that’s not us’ (‘det er ikke oss,

[29] This is how I categorize participants’ migration background – or lack thereof – throughout this study. The terms will be defined in section 3.7.

nei'). I felt that they were establishing a sort of complicity between themselves and me – the imagined majority – where we were produced as the ones that were interested in acquiring knowledge about 'the others'.

I recruited two 'adult immigrant' participants that day, and even interviewed one of them the very same day. She was originally from Romania, had come to Norway as a young adult to be an au pair, and stayed on after meeting her now husband, who is majority Norwegian. When I arrived at their apartment, I briefly met her husband. The first thing he said to me was: 'You are from the university, yes? Are you here to see how they assimilate into society?' This again confirmed my impression that 'everyone' sees immigrants as the obvious research object, and that the research topic is also seen as predefined: it is about the immigrants' exoticness ('ethnicity') or their degree of integration/assimilation.

I was not really happy with how that visit to the health center went and with the message that my modified posters projected. Luckily, at the same time, recruiting through friends and acquaintances picked up.

B) Acquaintances

I recruited through two acquaintances. One of them is minority Norwegian[30] and Muslim. She put me in touch with three participants and all of them were also minority Norwegian and Muslim. My other acquaintance who helped me recruit is also minority Norwegian, and put me in contact with seven people of varying backgrounds: Three of them were minority Norwegian, two of them majority Norwegian, one adult immigrant, and one mixed background participant. Based on snowballing from these seven, I met three more participants.

When I started interviewing, I first tested my interview guide on a colleague and a distant acquaintance (not one of those who helped me recruit). I decided to take the interview with the acquaintance, with whom I was unlikely to have much contact going forward, into my data material, while discarding the interview with the colleague at her request.

Altogether, including all participants recruited through different avenues, there were a total of 11 majority participants, 11 minority participants, 8 adult immigrant participants, and 3 mixed background participants.

[30] By 'minority Norwegian' I here refer to people who were either born in Norway to two immigrant parents or who were born abroad and immigrated to Norway before age six. This parallels how I otherwise use 'minority participant' throughout the text.

3.5.2 Recruiting 'Biases': Self-Selection

Figure 3.1 shows the current place of residence of participants. Only one health center granted me permission to present my project there and hence 19 of the participants lived in the same Oslo borough, Sagene, at the time of interviewing. The remaining participants, who were recruited through personal contacts, live more dispersedly, though mainly in inner East and outer East parts of Oslo (six lived in Gamle Oslo, one participant each lived in all the boroughs marked in figure 3.1, and one participant lived in Sandvika, which is not on the map).

Figure 3.1 *Participants' current place of residence in Oslo*

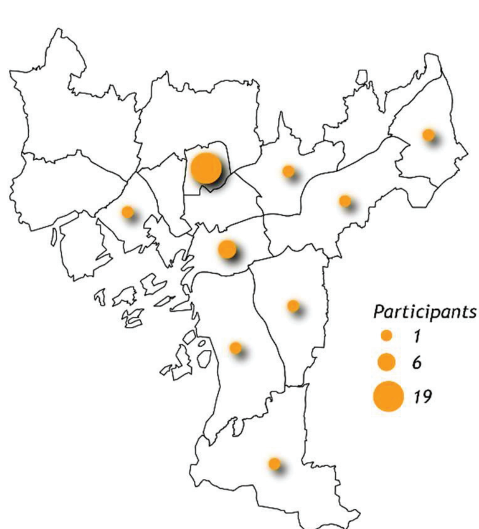
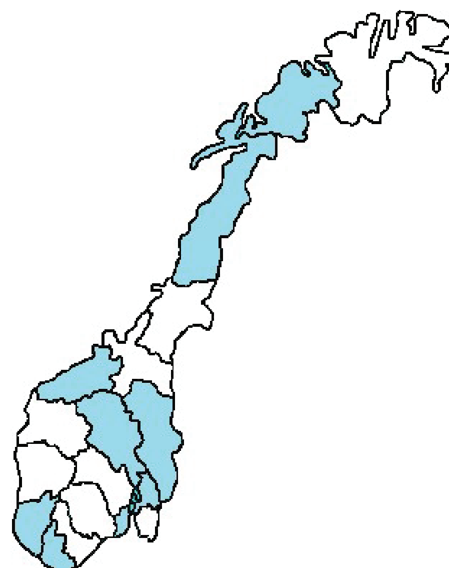


Figure 3.2 *Participants' counties of childhood residence*



Source: *Map by Hallvard Indgjerd.*

Many participants currently live in the same neighborhood, but this is only a momentary snapshot if you consider their entire life course. If one considers the main place of childhood residence, the picture looks quite different: twelve participants grew up in Oslo (though incidentally, none grew up in Sagene borough), eight grew up abroad, and the remaining 13 grew up in different counties of Norway (see figure 3.2).

The Western boroughs of Oslo are not well represented in terms of current residence. However, there are several participants who grew up in the Oslo's West End or in Bærum (a wealthy suburb bordering Oslo to the West) and several participants who have partners from these areas. As noted, Oslo's West End has a higher average income and a lower share of immigrants (see 1.6); it seems reasonable to assume that both everyday experiences with 'ethnic diversity' as well as appreciations of 'ethnic diversity' differ, on average, between inhabitants of Oslo's outer East and outer West (see also Vassenden, 2008). Hence, the fact that participants in this study skew towards Oslo's inner East and outer East means that participants can be on average assumed to have more personal experience with 'ethnic diversity' and potentially a more favorable attitude to it. Chapter 4 discusses how participants reflect on neighborhood preferences in light of ethnic diversity and other factors and the geographic skewedness of the data certainly plays a role there.

At the health center, people were free to choose whether they wanted to speak to me and whether they wished to participate in the study. The participants self-selected and do therefore not constitute a representative sample. My assumption as to who would sign up for an 'interview study on ethnicity, identity and belonging' is that this kind of invitation appeals more to people who have some degree of familiarity with university settings or research. Quite a few of those who signed up for an interview commented 'I'll join in on this. I support research' ('Dette her skal vi gjøre. Vi støtter forskning'). The majority of the participants have higher education and a middle class background (see also 3.7), and this arguably has to do with the fact that the participants self-selected – which they necessarily had to.

I do not have data on participants' political orientation, but my understanding is that there is an over-representation of people who are positive to immigration or at least not explicitly skeptical to it, and that people with these political leanings are more likely to sign up for this kind of study. They key words 'ethnicity, identity, and belonging' on the 'invitation poster' suggest that this is a study about migration-related diversity. My assumption is that people who are explicitly skeptical of immigration or dislike immigrants would be less likely to sign up for this kind of study, unless they were so convinced that they wanted to make a point.

There were some constraints when it came to recruiting participants, but overall, I think that I managed to obtain a very varied group of participants, considering my topics of interest. Section 3.8 below presents an overview over the participants across a range of different categories.

3.6 The Interview Process

This section discusses how I interviewed and thus how the interview data was collected and constructed (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004). It includes a discussion of feminist methodology, which has influenced my approach to interviewing. Moreover, I want to reflect on how the interviews were sites of racial meaning making.

3.6.1 Feminist Interviewing Principles

In my approach to interviewing, I draw inspiration from the feminist methodology literature (DeVault, 1996; Mohanty, 1988; Schrock, 2013; Taylor, 1998). In what follows, I want to outline some principles that are important to me and to discuss briefly how I attempted to implement them when interviewing. The feminist methodology literature has influenced 'mainstream' methods and nowadays, not all of the principles I mention may be considered explicitly feminist. However, I want to give credit to the genealogy of these values and debates. Since feminist methodologies place emphasis on creating ethical and equitable research relationships (DeVault, 1996, p. 33), this is a discussion of ethics as much as a discussion of methods.

Feminist research values include a research focus on women's lives and experiences and a strong commitment to building ethical research relationships, based on the values of reciprocity, reflexivity, openness, and empathy (DeVault, 1996; Huisman, 2008; Schrock, 2013; Taylor, 1998). While feminist methodologies thus advocate for a centering of research ethics, it is an illusion to think that they provide a recipe for completely eradicating imbalances and power structures in research (England, 1994; Stacey, 1991). There are clear roles; participants are volunteering their time and their life stories, sometimes sharing private and emotional stories from their lives. I am the researcher, taking the data home. I will be the one interpreting the data and speaking about it (Alcoff, 1992; Pillow, 2003). I feel a great responsibility towards my data, and the people who contributed to it. Yet, I acknowledge that no sense of responsibility will make that imbalance go away.

The first principle that was important to me was to take the stories participants told me seriously, and to make sure I do my best to understand them the way the participants intend them (DeVault, 1990, 1996). While I had an interview guide and an aim to cover certain topics during the interview, I wanted to hear the participants' stories, and let them speak for extended stretches of time, listening intently. Thus, the interview provided an opportunity for them to tell their life story, rather than merely an opportunity for me to have my questions answered. Atkinson has argued that life story interviews are particularly suited to create equitable research relationships by giving space to the 'voice and spirit of the storyteller' (2012, p. 116) In order to make sure that I understood participants correctly, I sometimes fed my understanding

of what they were saying back to them for confirmation and to guard myself against misinterpretations. I would sometimes also mention my own experience, or talk about other interviews – in general, anonymized terms – for context.

Second, I sometimes theorized together with participants, or offered them a theorization of what they had just told me so that they could react to it. I would tell them a more abstract version of what they had just told me. This happened organically and spontaneously during the interview, and we would move right on afterwards. This is a continuation of the aim to take the voice of participants and their interpretations of their own lives seriously. Theorizing together with participants ensures that my (subsequent) analysis is rooted in their understanding, thus taking both participants' contributions and the constructedness of data seriously. Section 9.3 features a longer quote by a participant called Zahra, where some of these dynamics become apparent.

Third, it was important to me to show empathy in research, and not to remain completely 'neutral' (Oakley, 1981; Stacey, 1991). When participants told me about tough or sad experiences, I would react empathically. When the 'tough experience' relates to marginalization or discrimination, then this becomes about more than just empathy; in a discussion climate where immigrants and minorities who address discrimination and racism often are accused of being overly sensitive, recognizing racism is not a neutral act (Collins, 2005). The fact that racism is often downplayed can make it difficult to talk about for those affected by it. Throughout the interviews, I strove to create an atmosphere for talking about racism. This will be discussed further in 3.6.2 and 3.6.4.

Fourth, I of course aimed not to contribute to marginalization, or to a replication of hegemonic narratives through my interviews. That meant, for one, to approach participants without stereotypes. Rather than only affording the majority the privilege of being an individual[31], my aim was to treat all participants as such. Likewise, I strove to avoid a 'white gaze' (hooks, 1992). It is not so easy to explain exactly how this can be done, other than by not making assumptions based on 'ethnicity' and 'religion', by having an understanding of how immigrants/minorities experience media discourses on 'integration' and deploying that knowledge during the interviews, and by making space for conversations about racism (see 3.6.4).

Fifth, I prefaced difficult questions – e.g., questions about experiences with racism – with a phrase that made it easy for participants to opt out of answering them, such as 'I don't know if it's okay for me to ask about this' or 'you don't have to answer this question if you don't want to'. Even though I had already explained before the start of the interview that participants could end the interview at any moment or 'hop

[31] See Marianne Gullestad (2004) who argues that there is a tendency to understand majority Norwegians as individuals, while (ethnic) minorities are understood as overdetermined by 'their culture'.

over' questions, it was very important to me to explicitly give people an 'out' when talking about sensitive and potentially painful topics. This can be understood as a continued actualization of informed consent throughout the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 88 ff.).

3.6.2 Introducing the Topic to Participants: Setting the Stage and 'Doing Race'

The beginning of an interview has great bearing on it. This section will explore how the way I introduced the interview changed somewhat over time and that I introduced the interview slightly differently to minority and majority participants.

When starting to interview, I told participants that I was interested in 'ethnicity, identity, and belonging and how a diverse society impacts this'. However, after the first couple of interviews, I shifted to 'how people experience diversity, and how they talk about it' because this summed up my interview guide much better. Initially, when using the term 'diversity' I did not specify the type of diversity and even mentioned several examples in the introduction (such as ethnicity, gender, and religion). After a while again, I started using the formulation 'ethnic diversity'.

Initially, I did not introduce the interview differently to majority and minority participants, but over time I began to do so. I told minority participants that I was interested in how people experience and talk about diversity, which is the same as I told majority participants. In addition, I told them that I was interested in Norwegianness as a category, what it means to be Norwegian, and how Norwegianness can be an excluding category, and that I was interested in experiences with discrimination and racism. If I had said those things to majority participants, there was a risk that the interview topic lacked meaning or was impossible to relate to for majority participants. It would also have required quite a bit of explanation since these are not common narratives in Norway, at least not among the majority. With minority participants, I said these things to signal that my research goal was not 'to check how well integrated immigrants are'. On the contrary, I wanted to signal that there was space to talk about experiences that did not fit the majority narrative.

Of course, having a different start to the interviews influenced them. It meant that with majority participants, the topic was a bit more general ('experiences with 'ethnic diversity''), whereas with minority participants I more clearly positioned myself and indicated that I was aware of how minorities experience the topic of 'ethnic diversity'. However, I also signaled this to majority participants, just more subtly, over the course of the interview, and in response to things they said. This of course also raises the question of who is a majority and a minority participant, a question I will return to in section 3.7.

3.6.3 Conducting the Interview

The interviews were semi-structured, but on the 'less structured' side of 'semi-structured' (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 47). I had an interview guide and aimed to cover every topic in it. I also had some suggestions for questions that I could ask about each topic in the guide, but I only considered those questions prompts to start a conversation. I was happy to follow the participants and to just listen to what they had to say about each topic. For example, when I felt that the participant had nothing more to say about their elementary school time, I might simply say. 'So after that, you started middle school?'. For many participants, this was enough of a prompt and they would talk quite lengthily about their middle school years. For others, I would ask more questions to get the conversation started, for example: 'Did you change schools when you started middle school?'[32] or 'How was it to go from elementary school to middle school?'. Then I would listen to what they had to say, asking them to clarify or elaborate as necessary. If they, for instance, said 'it was difficult', I would say 'how so?'.

Importantly, if the participants did not themselves talk about it, then I would always ask a question about experiences with diversity, for example whether there were children with a migration background in the class (for majority participants) or something related to their own experience with being minority (for minority participants). But often, participants spoke about this without prompting because I had already set the topic for the interview in the beginning. In general, I followed my intuition regarding how much to steer the interview and how much to talk myself.

3.6.4 'Doing Race' while Interviewing

'Race' becomes salient and manifests itself in interactions between people in different ways and intensities at different moments. When discussing 'ethnic diversity', phenotype/race both emerges and influences the interview situation. Moreover, interview participants speak from a position. This position is often not explicitly stated, though some participants framed their experience in terms of phenotype/race (e.g. 'being the only brown girl in class, I experienced that…') without being prompted. Others spoke in more general terms of their experience of being an immigrant or a minority. Crucially, majority participants did for the most part not explicitly situate themselves as majority.

[32] In Norway, some schools offer schooling from grades 1-10 (i.e. comprising both elementary and middle school), whereas other schools offer only elementary school (1-7) or middle school (8-10).

Claims-Making

Speaking about ethnic diversity and either positioning yourself as an insider or an outsider to the diversity – i.e., a member of the ethnic minority or majority – can be analyzed as a claims-making process (Best, 2003). People inhabit different roles by speaking about the topic of 'diversity' from the standpoint of 'minority' or 'majority' – of course, the standpoints can be more differentiated than that; for instance, 'majority married to an immigrant', 'majority converted to Islam', 'white minority', 'first generation Norwegian', or 'mixed background'. Crucially, these standpoints are expressed vis-à-vis someone, in this case the interviewer. Hence, how participants read the interviewer becomes important, as they might make different claims vis-à-vis different interviewers. This is much more complex than a simple insider-outsider dichotomy, as for instance argued by Jørgen Carling, Marta Bivand Erdal, and Rojan Ezzati (2013) and by Louise Ryan (2015).

Reflexivity

Reflexivity (Berger, 2015; May & Perry, 2014) around the researcher's own social standpoint often focuses on the pre-constituted baggage the writer brings to the field, but not on how the researcher's social identity also is an 'emergent feature of the research process itself' (Best, 2003, p. 908). I want to discuss how the standpoints of 'immigrant' and 'Western' were two categories that became salient during the research process in relation to myself.

In order to have that discussion, I first need to give some information about myself, so as present an idea of who the participants were meeting and what I brought to the interview process. I am originally from Southern Germany and moved to Norway when I started my PhD. I spoke some Norwegian when I moved and more very soon. All my roots are from Germany, as far as I know. I have dark brown hair, brown eyes – a minority eye color in Norway – and an olive-ish skin tone that tans easily and is a slight hue darker than the majority in Norway. In Germany no one thinks twice of it, but in Norway I have been asked 'No, where are you really from?' when telling people I am from Germany, I have been told I looked Arab, and have been classified as 'non-white' in a medical survey[33]. My phenotype thus seems to make for a somewhat ambiguous look in the Norwegian context.

How the Participants Read Me

As stated above, Amy Best (2003) argues that reflexivity should revolve not only around what a researcher brings to the field, but also how the researcher's identity is produced and created through interactions in the research process. My impression was that most majority participants read me as 'one of us', even

[33] This would most likely not happen in a non-Scandinavian context.

though I had only lived in Norway for seven months when I started interviewing. They knew I was from Germany – I always mentioned that when I introduced myself – and many asked, when mentioning a place in Norway or a neighborhood in Oslo, whether I knew where the place was, signaling that they were aware that I, as a newcomer, might not. Of course, they did not take me for Norwegian. When I still say that they read me as 'one of us', then I mean a member of the majority by proxy. I was being read as (white and) Western, and that trumped my immigrant position to a large extent. I was more an 'international student/researcher', taking a PhD in Norway, than an 'immigrant'. I was read as 'Western' – several majority participants commented on Germany and Norway having similar cultures – highly educated, and middle class. One participant repeatedly made comments about Bavarian (my home state in Germany) culture, and the fact that I had come to Norway by my own choosing, and hence probably liked Norway and Norwegian values and culture. She contrasted that with refugees, who did not have that choice and who often come from places with a 'bigger cultural difference to Norway' than Germany. Another participant talked about the building she lived in, and the fact that there were mostly ethnic Norwegians living there, whereas the blocks at the end of the road comprised many municipal housing units and housed mainly 'immigrants and addicts'. Asked whether I would fit in with the residents in her building, she said, 'yes, of course', confirming what I had already assumed: she saw me as one of the Norwegians in her building, rather than as one of the immigrants in the block down the road. Hence, despite my not being majority Norwegian, it was my impression that the interviews with majority Norwegians had a 'white-on-white' (Best, 2003, p. 906) dynamic, i.e. 'we' (individuals, secular-ish Western Europeans, not overdetermined by our culture) were talking about 'ethnic diversity', i.e. 'the others'[34].

When interviewing immigrants, my impression is that I was also positioned as a 'white Western immigrant', but my immigrant status carried more weight than when interviewing members of the majority. There was an understanding that we shared the experience of having a second reference point, in addition to Norway. That meant that we could sometimes take some distance from Norway in the interviews, talking about it more abstractly ('In Norway it's like that…') and not naturalizing cultural phenomena. When minority participants explained things about Norway to me, it put them in the position of knowing more about Norway than me (e.g. geography, older TV series, Norwegian personalities), reinforcing my position as a recent immigrant. Throughout the interviews, I strove to position myself as anti-racist, or at least as not subscribing to hegemonic narratives about immigration, integration, and ethnicity in Norway. I am not sure if that worked better for me because I am an immigrant, or if a majority

[34] Of course, we were not only talking about 'the others' since the participants themselves are always the central character in their own life story interview.

Norwegian interviewer with a critical distance to majority narratives about immigration and integration could have done the same. There are many examples in my interview material where I would argue that my taking this kind of stance opened up for unpacking minority-majority dynamics in a way that would otherwise not have been possible. I will discuss one such example from the interview with a participant I call Rian in section 6.3.3.

Creating Space to Talk about Racism

I had the explicit aim to create space to talk about discrimination and racism in interviews with minority participants. I was conscious of the fact that it would be necessary to actively create space for it in order to be able to talk about it at all. It can be hard to talk about these topics. Participants may be worried that this would be interpreted as 'taking a victim position', talking badly about Norway, 'playing the immigrant card', exaggerating, or misinterpreting a situation. Section 8.3 discusses participants' reflections around whether to label their own experiences as 'racism'. If one wants to be able to talk about these topics under these circumstances, one has to actively make room for it.

My approach to navigating these conversations was to show empathy and emotion and to label experiences – even if just by saying 'that's not at all okay'. By doing this, I wanted to make sure that participants felt heard and also to signal that the interview setting was a space where conversations about racism and discrimination were possible. I do not see my conscious efforts to create space to talk about racism as a way of contorting the interview, but rather as a way of correcting for a one-sidedness in dominant narratives, and a conscious way of opening up a conversational space to make room for minorities' experiences and interpretations, so that they can be voiced.

Of course, it can be problematic to interview about phenotype/race/racism as a white person, as voiced in his quote by Amy Best (2003, p. 909):

> I continue to question whether meaningful and open conversations about race are possible within the context of in-depth interviewing, aware that people of color have historically engaged in a form of self-censoring in the presence of those with power (largely as acts of self-preservation) and White folks rarely see themselves as racial meaning makers.

Throughout this chapter, I have outlined how I have worked towards understanding myself as implicated in racial meaning making. I used memory work in preparation for field work and I made conscious effort not to replicate a silence around racism in the interviews with minority participants. Yet, it is of course possible and even likely that the interviews would have had a different dynamic with an interviewer of color.

During the time when I was interviewing, I sometimes wondered to what extent it was okay to have different approaches to interviewing for minority and majority participants, for I wanted to meet everyone on an equal footing. Yet, effectively, I was meeting people differently based on their background: I introduced the interview somewhat differently, and I notably actively tried to make space for conversations about racism with minority participants. But other than that, I asked people the same questions, I listened to them all the same. For instance, I asked everyone – including majority participants – whether they had had experiences with discrimination or racism. In the same way that interviews about sexual harassment in the workplace would have had different dynamics with men, women, and trans or genderqueer people, so too interviews about ethnic diversity will have different dynamics with members of majority and minority groups. This goes against ideas about strict researcher neutrality and objectivity. It is, however, in keeping with feminist methodology, which values intersubjectivity, empathy, and reciprocity higher than neutrality and objectivity, and even argues that the latter can stand in the way for knowledge production (England, 1994). Alternatively, one can also question what 'neutrality' means and why *not* taking specific steps to 'excavate' racism would be more neutral than doing so. I would argue that that the only way to gather data about experiences with discrimination and racism is to be sensitive to it and to make space for it; otherwise, it will not 'show up' in the data.

Having slightly different approaches to interviewing majority and minority participants also means that I must have had an idea of who was, respectively, a minority or majority participant. As will be discussed in section 3.7, the categories 'majority' and 'minority' can be ambiguous. However, I did not just make assumptions based on the combination of people's names and looks. Upon starting the interview, my first question to the participants was where they were from and where their parents were from. I think that the benefits of adapting the interview situation to the participants' background outweigh the drawback of 'labelling' the participants in that way.

Finally, I want to address an ethical issue that is specific to the interviews with majority participants. Throughout this thesis, I analyze – among other things – how majority understandings of Norwegianness exclude minorities and how members of the majority often lack insight into how majority narratives are excluding towards minorities. While it is important to unpack these narratives and to examine their excluding function, I want to stress that I do not see this as an individual moral failing and more as an issue at the societal level. I do not mean to criticize individual participants or to hold them accountable. Rather, I think it is important to study the *effects* of these narratives.

3.7 Overview over Participants

The 33 participants in this study comprise 26 women, six men, and one person who identified as 'non-binary trans'. Twenty of them are married, eleven are cohabiting, and two are divorced or separated. 18 participants have one child, twelve have two children, two have three children, and one has four children. In terms of age, one participant was between 20-24, three participants were between 25-29, 16 were between 30-34, nine were between 35-39, and four were between 40-44 years old at the time of interviewing. Regarding the highest level of education participants had completed, one participant has a middle school education, nine have completed high school, seven hold a BA degree, 13 hold an MA degree, and three have completed a PhD. Nine participants were currently enrolled in studies at the time of the interview, either part-time or full-time. The sample is skewed towards participants with substantial amounts of higher education. I will comment on the significance of this throughout the analysis where necessary.

Immigrant background – or lack thereof – is an important category of difference for my project. There are different ways in which one could categorize on the basis of immigrant background. Throughout this thesis, I refer to participants as belonging to one of the following four categories:

- **Majority participants**: they have no (known, recent) immigrant background. **Eleven participants** fall into this category.
- **Minority participants**: they were either born in Norway to two immigrant parents, or they were born abroad and moved to Norway with their family before the age of six. **Eleven participants** fall into this category.
- **Adult immigrants**: these participants were born abroad and moved to Norway as adults. **Eight participants** fall into this category.
- **Mixed-background participants**: they have one Norwegian-born and one foreign-born parent. **Three participants** fall into this category.

I use the term 'majority participant' instead of 'ethnic Norwegian' in order to create some distance from 'ethnic Norwegian' as an every-day category and in order to create a parallel to the term 'minority participant'. When using the pairing 'majority participant' / 'minority participant' it becomes clear that both categories designate Norwegians, just with different backgrounds. In contrast, the pairing 'ethnically Norwegian' and 'second generation immigrant' – an alternative way to label the same categories – gives different association as to who fully belongs in or to Norway. The terms 'majority' and 'minority' refer both to a numerical relationship as well as to a power relationship, where being the majority – as the

'unmarked' category (Brubaker, Feischmidt, Fox, & Grancea, 2006, p. 211 f.) – is related to symbolic power.

While the categorization outlined above divides participants seemingly neatly into four categories, these four main categories are in reality not homogenous. Besides the fact that they are of course crossed by axes of difference like gender, age, and education level, migration background itself, too, turns out to be more complex at a second glance than this categorization suggests. For example, all three 'mixed background participants' identify as Norwegian. However, one of them has experienced that others question her Norwegianness – based on her name, and her slightly darker complexion (one of her parents is from a Southern European country). Even though all three participants have a mixed background, that background is given a different weight by people they interact with. Ultimately this also has consequences for self-identification, for while two of the three participants in this category reacted with surprise to my question whether they had ever conceived of themselves as having an immigrant background, the third participant stated that while she herself felt Norwegian, she might sometimes identify with the labels 'minority' or 'foreigner', to an extent.

Another example for how the categorization presented above hides some complexity, is the fact that the 'adult immigrant' category contains three Swedes. While they are immigrants by definition, they are also from a neighboring country that shares many cultural similarities with Norway and they speak a language that is mutually intelligible with Norwegian. It could be argued that they thereby inhabit a middle position between being immigrants and being a part of the non-immigrant majority. In addition, one of the three Swedish participants is Muslim, and can trace her heritage to a Balkan country. To her great frustration, she experiences that that background is given a lot of weight in Norway, even though she identifies as Swedish.

Further, several of the 'adult immigrant' participants have acquired Norwegian nationality since their arrival in Norway. While they still fulfill the definition of 'adult immigrant' given above, the fact that they are Norwegian citizens of course also makes them 'Norwegian'. As 'Norwegian immigrants', they illustrate the fact that it is hard to categorize immigrant background in a neat and straightforward manner.

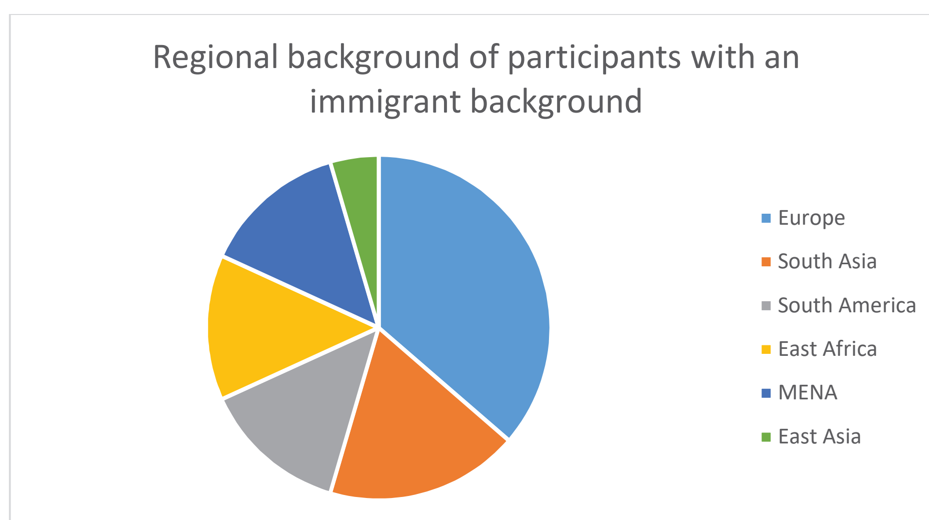
Moreover, one majority Norwegian participant converted to Islam as an adult, which gives her a lived experience of the minoritized position 'Muslim'. This acts of a strong confounder of her majority identity of 'Norwegian without a migration background', to the point that she has wondered whether being Muslim is compatible with being Norwegian (she finds it highly compatible, but feels that she is given the message by society that it is not). Similarly, three majority Norwegian participants have an immigrant partner and

thus ‘mixed background children’, which also positions them slightly differently than majority Norwegians who have a majority Norwegian partner.

Altogether, a number of participants do thus not fit neatly into one of the four categories presented above. This speaks on the one hand to the complexities of identities and lived experiences of Oslo’s inhabitants. On the other hand, it underscores the importance of conceptualizing identity and belonging as multifaceted, and it exemplifies that greater nuance can be achieved by supplementing the main, discrete categories with ‘confounding’ information, which I aim to do throughout the thesis.

In terms of regional background among the participants with some form of immigrant background (both ‘minority’, ‘adult immigrant’, and ‘mixed background’), eight had a background from a European country, four from South Asia, three each from South America, East Africa, and MENA (the Middle East and North Africa), and one from East Asia. The eight participants whose background is from Europe all fall in the ‘adult immigrant’ or ‘mixed background’ category, which means that all ‘minority participants’ have a non-European background. This is consistent with Norwegian immigration history, where migration from European countries is a more recent phenomenon. Figure 3.3 displays an overview over participants’ regional background.

Figure 3.3. *Regional background of participants with an immigrant background.*



Throughout the dissertation, I usually specify the exact country background when describing participants. However, to preserve anonymity, I limit the description to the world region when participants' background is from a country that is not among the top-20 countries of origin for immigrants in Norway[35]. I.e., I would state that a participant is from Poland (since it is among the top-20 countries of origin), but if there were a participant from Bangladesh, I would change that to 'South Asia' (since Bangladesh it not among the top-20 countries of origin).

In terms of citizenship, 25 participants hold Norwegian citizenship only, seven participants hold a foreign citizenship only, and one participant holds both Norwegian and another citizenship.

Even though this is a thesis about phenotype, I did not recruit 'by phenotype' or record phenotype in any way, and there is not one obvious way of categorizing phenotype. Hence, I will not provide a summary of it here. The regional backgrounds presented above do give a (vague) hint at phenotype. Throughout the dissertation, whenever relevant, I will refer to how participants themselves described their phenotype.

No participants identified as Sámi or as a member of a national minority and no participants were transnationally adopted. 31 interviews were conducted in Norwegian; two were conducted in English at the request of participants. All translations of interview excerpts throughout the thesis are mine. All names used in interview excerpts are pseudonyms.

3.8 Coding and Analysis

This section discusses how the interview material was coded and analyzed. Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Mashiah, and Tamar Zilber (1998, pp. 12–18) describe two main axes along which the analysis of narrative material – like life story interviews – can be classified. First, they distinguish between a holistic versus a categorical approach. While a holistic approach considers the life story in its entirety and strives to understand how different topics relate to the overall life course and development of an individual, a categorical approach has a different unit of analysis, singling out individual words or text sections that relate to a specific category of interest. Second, they differentiate between a focus on content versus a focus on form. While a focus on form focuses on the structure of the plot, the sequencing of events, the complexity and coherence of the story etc., a focus on content prioritizes the story's substance (what happened, who was involved, etc.).

[35] See SSB (2020).

By crossing these two axes, they arrive at four different ways of approaching the analysis of narrative material: holistic-content, holistic-form, categorical-content, and categorical-form (1998, p. 13). Within this matrix, the approach I have chosen most resembles a categorical content analysis. I was not concerned with holistic life stories – even though I of course needed to be familiar with the entire story in order to be able to interpret individual events in relation to it. Mainly though, my interest can be described as 'categorical' and this is reflected in how I coded and analyzed. Nonetheless, chapter 4 starts with a presentation of three 'typical' life stories. This is done with the aim of giving the reader a glimpse into the material and not in order to take a 'holistic' approach to the assembled life stories that are presented. With regard to the second dimension – content versus form –, I did not at all focus on the stories' form, giving content absolute precedence.

Using the software NVivo, I coded the interviews into overarching codes that closely followed the interview guide. I made codes for the main 'life phases', so that I could easily locate all the material that for example related to 'childhood' or 'work'. Further, I made separate codes for all the categories in the interviews' 'category part', which related to national belonging, ethnicity and phenotype/race, so that for instance everything that was said in relation to the category 'ethnically Norwegian' was coded as such. Finally, I made a last code for experiences with discrimination or racism.

In a second step, I worked towards what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, pp. 212–213) call 'meaning condensation'. I read through the different codes, identifying central themes, and making detailed tables to create an overview over all the themes that related to one code. Crucially, I paid attention to whether participants' background mattered, for instance whether certain themes related to a specific code were more relevant for participants with a minority background.

In this phase of analysis, I worked very inductively and close to the interview material. My aim was to understand how 'ethnic diversity' manifested itself throughout the life stories, what participants had to say about the categories I had asked about, and which experiences with discrimination and racism they reported. While theory of course mattered for how I collected data, and while it sensitized me to being open to how phenotype/race matters in the interview material, theory or a deductive approach was not what guided coding and analysis, or, indeed, the early writing phase. Even now, the analysis chapters are clearly guided by and organized around this focus on empirics and on an inductive approach[36]. It is only in the concluding chapter that I return to the sensitizing concepts and weave together theory and empirics.

[36] The exception is the chapter that focuses on discrimination and racism, which has more theory.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview over the different methodological choices I made in relation to data collection and analysis. It started out by discussing how I took a 'wide approach' to data collection, focusing on 'ethnic diversity' so as to take heed for the fact that phenotype/race is part of a larger cluster of migration-related categories of difference, which cannot be analytically separated *à priori*. Next, I explained how I used memory work in preparation for interviewing, and how I designed a life story interview guide that comprised a 'life story part' and a 'category part'. The ensuing section reflected upon how I presented my project to potential participants and how different formulations can evoke different associations in majority and minority participants, respectively. It also addressed the fact that the data skews towards Oslo's inner East and outer East boroughs. After that, I discussed how principles sourced from feminist methodologies shaped my approach to interviewing, how I introduced the interview differently to minority and majority participants, and how 'race' was an emergent feature of the interview process. With regard to this last topic, I explored how participants read me in different ways and how I consciously attempted to create space for talking about racism. The chapter's two final sections presented an overview over participants and over how I coded and analyzed.

Among all these elements I would like to highlight that I chose a 'non-neutral' approach to interviewing about racism. I have attempted to be transparent, throughout this chapter, as to how I attempted to achieve this. I am convinced that these choices were crucial for being able to gather the data that forms the basis for this dissertation, but I am also aware that many would criticize these choices precisely for not being 'neutral'. I hope that an open and reflexive discussion of these choices has made them as transparent as possible, as I want to shed light on how the interview data was collected and constructed.

4 ‘Ethnic Diversity’ throughout the Life Course

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I want to give an overview over the life story part of the interviews and explore how ‘ethnic diversity’ manifests itself throughout the different life phases of participants with differing backgrounds. The chapter has a twofold aim: 1) to present the reader with the participants and their life stories and thereby to lay a ‘thick’ foundation for later analysis chapters; 2) to describe how ‘ethnic diversity’ manifests itself throughout the life course, which will serve as contextual backdrop for the analysis of phenotype as a category of difference in later chapters.

This chapter starts by presenting three typical life stories – one of a majority participant, one of a minority participant, and one of an adult immigrant participant. Since it is challenging to ensure anonymity when telling a person’s entire life story, I decided to construct life stories by combining elements from several participants’ lives into one story. The aim has been to construct three typical life stories that reflect some of the common experiences present in each category of participants (majority, minority, and adult immigrants). Based on my familiarity with all the life stories, I picked elements from different participants that spoke to a common or recurring experience and assembled them into three stories. This approach ensures complete anonymity for the participants. While the pseudonyms used in all the other chapters of the thesis correspond to actual participants – so that pseudonyms are consistent across chapters and each correspond to one participant only – the ‘persons’ introduced in this chapter are based on several participants and will thus not be present in any later chapters.

I decided not to create a typical life story representing the three ‘mixed background’ participants (i.e. participants with one Norwegian-born and one foreign-born parent). First, because there only are three participants in this category, it becomes somewhat harder to create a typical story since it is more difficult to determine what is characteristic for ‘mixed background participants’ as a group and what is individual variation. Second, two of the ‘mixed background participants’ identified more as ‘majority Norwegian’ and one more as ‘minority Norwegian’, which has to do with social understandings of otherness and with phenotype. Hence, the two ‘mixed background’ participants who identify more as ‘majority Norwegian’ can be reasonably well represented by the typical ‘majority participant’ story below, whereas the ‘mixed background participant’ who identifies more as ‘minority Norwegian’ can be reasonably well represented by the ‘minority participant’ story below.

After presenting the typical life stories, the rest of this chapter explores how ‘ethnic diversity’ manifests itself in the life story part of the interviews. I attempt to explore this topic from different angles and at different levels of abstraction. I start out by summarizing how ‘ethnic diversity’ manifests itself in what can be considered three main life phases or life arenas – the participants’ own childhood, experiences from their working life, and from being a parent. After that, I turn to a more general analysis of the of the meaning of ethnic diversity, examining how it shapes participants’ experiences of belonging and how it manifests itself in the interviews through different conversational dynamics around ‘ethnic diversity’, as well as differing degrees of familiarity with it.

When I use the expression ‘ethnic diversity’, I mean ‘ethnic diversity’ as a phenomenon, not as a term. I am interested in the life experiences participants have had relating to, for instance, linguistic, cultural, religious, ethnic, and phenotypical difference. I am not interested in the *term* ‘ethnic diversity’, and I did not ask participants for their view on it. Rather, I asked questions such as ‘were there any children with an immigrant background in your elementary school class?’ or ‘how was it to be the only child with an immigrant background in your elementary school class?’.

This chapter thus aims to provide an overview over the life story part of the interviews from the vantage point of understanding how participants described the role ethnic diversity played throughout their life course. The chapter starts with three typical life stories, and the rest of the chapter summarizes main tendencies in the material, both in reference to the life stories presented, but also based on the totality of the material. The analysis in this chapter aims to summarize and provide an overview as much as possible, and not analyze specific quotes or formulations. I thus only use quotes sparingly in this chapter. Later chapters, however, will be based on and structured around individual quotes.

4.2 Meet the Participants – Typical Life Stories

4.2.1 Majority Participant

Iris (31) grew up in Kongsberg, a town with 25 000 inhabitants a bit over an hour west of Oslo. Her family lived in a single-family home in a relatively new development outside the town center. Iris describes the area where she grew up as very calm and having a small-town atmosphere.

> Everyone was very much alike; there were many children my age. (…) The town is small and not exactly diverse. People were very much alike in general. Most people had jobs and relatively long educations. (…) There were some – but very few – immigrants. When I think about Kongsberg, I think that everyone was so much alike.

At school, most students were ethnically Norwegian[37]. Only a few students in the whole school were not. There was one boy in her class who she thinks was originally from Iran. But his parents had lived in Norway for many, many years. ‘So, we didn’t really consider him an immigrant, in a way. Nobody thought about that. He was just as Norwegian as we were’. A couple of years later, a pair of siblings – a boy and a girl – from Pakistan, or Iraq, she cannot recall exactly – started attending the same school. Iris remembers that people were talking about the fact that the boy was dangerous, that he had a knife, stuff like that. She does not know where that idea came from. Other than that, there were some children who were adopted – some from South Korea and a boy from Colombia. Iris said she would describe Kongsberg as a good and safe place to grow up. It was easy for the children to play outside after school.

Iris did not like middle school. People started to split more into cliques and groups of friends – ‘the cool kids’ and the rest. She was very shy, but did have her group of friends. She was not really unhappy, but she felt it was draining that everyone was trying to be cool and that it suddenly was important whether you had Levi’s jeans or not.

When I asked her if she remembers when she for the first time thought of herself as Norwegian, she answered that she did not quite remember, but that it might have been when the new pair of siblings started at her school. At that point, she must have understood that there were differences. She cannot remember having been conscious of that earlier. But most people were just like her, so she did not think about it much. If she had attended a school that was ’50-50’ (in composition of ethnically Norwegian students vs students with an immigrant background), she might have thought about it more. She just thought of herself as ‘normal’.

When she started high school, students from different middle schools were mixed together. Suddenly, there were a lot more people overall, and also a bit more diversity. There were some students from North Africa and one who she thought was from Pakistan. Iris chose the ‘study specialization’ track[38]. She remembers one experience that everyone in her class thought of as a bit weird. When one of her classmates, who she thinks was from Pakistan, had his birthday, he invited the whole class for a birthday party, and it was a completely different birthday party than they expected. It was early in the day, the parents were home, and there were many cakes. She describes it as more of an adult birthday party, with

[37] In telling these life stories, I attempted to stay very close to the wording participants used during the interviews. While I otherwise in this thesis use the term ‘majority Norwegian’, the use of ‘ethnically Norwegian’ here mirrors the terminology used by participants.

[38] In Norwegian high schools, students choose a track. The main choice is between ‘study specialization’ and a range of different vocational tracks. Completing ‘study specialization’ leads to being qualified for entering higher education. Vocational tracks also enable students to take some higher education afterwards, but the choice is more limited.

a lot of good food, or food and cakes that the other students were not used to. The parents were home and the party was very calm. According to Iris, in high school, people expected a birthday party to be *a party* – without parents and late at night. That party, however, never turned wild. But it was very nice. There was no drinking or anything like that. Everyone was on their best behavior. But those boys from North Africa and Pakistan were maybe a bit excluded because they were different. That is what Iris remembers. The fact that they invited people to this kind of party was a reason why they were considered different. High school was not a time when people wanted to be different. The boys from North Africa and Pakistan were not part of the cool kids. They did not drink, either. Some people commented on that quite a bit, but she cannot remember bullying or teasing because of ethnicity at all, not even once. Even though that surely happened, but she did not hear about it or witness it herself.

After high school, Iris moved to Bergen to study comparative political science. It was very exciting to move to Bergen and a lot of fun to live alone. She lived in student housing a little bit outside the city center. There were a number of exchange students from other countries, but she never lived together with anyone who was not Norwegian. During her undergraduate studies, she spent one semester as an exchange student in Australia, which she remembers as a fantastic time. She went to Australia together with a group of friends and spend most of her time there together with them. After her semester abroad, she moved back to Bergen, finished her bachelor's degree and took a master's degree in comparative political science.

After she finished her studies, she moved to Oslo because she found a job as an assistant project manager for a private company. At work, most of her colleagues are ethnically Norwegian, but she has one colleague whose background is from Morocco. When I asked Iris if there had been situations at work where people's background meant something she asked me if I was asking whether there had been a conflict related to that and affirmed that no, there had not been conflict. Her colleague from Morocco is very nice and everyone gets along with her well.

After she moved to Oslo, she first rented an apartment in Tøyen, a multicultural neighborhood in the inner East End. After that, she moved together with her now-husband and they rented an apartment at Fagerborg, a calm residential area in the inner West End. Then, they bought a condominium in Sagene, the northernmost of the inner East End districts, which has many parks. They like living in Sagene a lot. Iris told me that she considered it a very family-friendly area. Most people in their building are like them: couples in their late 20s or early 30s who have one or two children. Iris and her husband just had their second child. They are planning to stay in their current condominium for a bit longer, but are planning to move in the mid-term. Their condominium is 70 m^2 and they want to have more space eventually. They

could image moving to Grefsen, an area in the outer West End[39] that contains many single-family and semi-detached homes. However, Grefsen is relatively expensive, and Iris and her husband might hence rather move a bit outside of Oslo. They are considering Kongsberg, where Iris grew up. The plan is to move before their oldest child starts school. Ideally, they would like to live in a house with a garden.

Their oldest child, a girl, attends a pre-school very close to where they live. There are mainly ethnically Norwegian children in her pre-school, and Iris is surprised about that, because they live in the East End, after all. There are also some children who are not ethnically Norwegian. One who is Swedish, one who has parents from Somalia, and several kids who have one Norwegian and one 'foreign' parent. Iris and her husband are happy that there is some variation and that their daughter is not only together with children who look like her. It is good for her to experience some different things. They want their daughter to think that it is completely normal that people are different, dress differently, and talk differently. It is nice that she experiences this from childhood onwards, more than Iris and her husband did.

It is still some years until her children will begin attending school, and most probably, they will move before that time comes. If she is to think about what is important to her when it comes to the school her children will attend, she thinks it is important that the building be well-maintained and that the children can walk to school. When it comes to ethnic diversity, she says that she has to admit that she would be skeptical to having her children attend a school with 80 percent non-Norwegian students, both in terms of language and culture. But that doesn't mean that she would have liked to live in Frogner or Holmenkollen – two of the most affluent and least immigrant-dense parts of Oslo, respectively located in the inner and the outer West End. There, she would worry about brand pressure, when it comes to what kind of clothes and bags the kids want to have. It is important to have a good mix at school. They will have to consider that when trying to decide where they want to live.

4.2.2 Minority Participant

Jasmin (32) was born in Oslo to parents who had immigrated to Norway from Iran. When she was a child, her family lived in an apartment in Sofienberg, a neighborhood in the inner East that is dominated by apartment buildings. She started attending elementary school there and has many good memories from that school. She had many friends, and there were many other kids with an immigrant background, but also ethnically Norwegian kids. She thought it was fun to have classmates whose families came from many different parts of the word, but her parents thought that that was a negative thing. They did not want

[39] Geographically, Grefsen is located in the north of Oslo. However, following the distinction into inner/outer East and inner/outer West that was presented in the introduction, Grefsen falls into the 'outer West'.

to live there any longer, and thought that by moving to an area with more ethnic Norwegians, they would give their children better chances in life and better chances to become integrated in Norway.

After fourth grade, her family moved to Bærum, an affluent suburb that borders Oslo in the West. Coming to Bærum, where everyone was alike and had stable jobs, big houses, and good finances felt like a shock. Jasmin was sad that she had to leave her friends in Sofienberg behind. At the new school, one could count the non-Norwegian students on one hand. She did not think so much about that in the beginning, but became more and more conscious of that as time went by. She was the only one with an immigrant background in her entire grade. 'I came there, with my dark hair and skin…'. But already on the first day, everybody was nice and welcoming. However, things became a bit more difficult over time, when it showed that she had a different cultural background. Moving to Bærum was a big transition and she found it difficult to find her place there. 'I was accepted, luckily, but I did feel that I was different. Different background, different looks. Most things were different, I guess'.

She felt that her being different became most apparent at social events, for instance regarding food. She was the only one who did not eat pork, but at all birthday parties, parents would forget about that and serve *Grandiosa*[40] pizza with pork toppings. Then, she either had to wait for the cake, or someone would fix her a cheese sandwich. She was acutely aware that she was always the only one who could not have pizza and had to sit and wait. It bothered her. She thought that she already stood out enough as it was, and this did not make things better. It would have been easier if there were a least one other kid in the same situation. She thought about that when she was a child, but also now, looking back. However, she did not feel bullied, and she is happy about that.

Later, around seventh grade, a boy who was transnationally adopted started in her class. She thought that it was 'so nice that there was another one. Who, uhm, uhm, who… Well, he was adopted, so he had ethnically Norwegian parents, but his original ethnicity was not Norwegian'. She thought that it was nice that he was 'a bit closer to her'. Then, a boy from Somalia started at her school. 'And I was like "oh, how nice, another dark one!"'. Jasmin said that when they were finally two, three people, that meant a lot. It was so nice not to be the only one who was different. I asked if she was aware of the fact that she looked different already at the time. She affirmed and said that she never liked her hair. She thought that the Norwegian girls who had straight, blond hair did not have to do anything to look pretty. She started straightening her hair in order to fit in as much as possible. Her hair was still black, but at least it was straight. She received a lot of attention about her hair, which she thought was negative attention. The school she attended was a combined elementary and middle school.

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[40] *Grandiosa* is the most widely sold frozen pizza brand in Norway.

She attended a high school in Bærum. She told me that there were very few ‘visible’ students there, too. There were some kids with Pakistani parents, a girl with Ethiopian parents, and a number of kids who were adopted from Asia or Latin America, but who did not identify with being different at all. There was a lot of alcohol and partying. She became active in the school’s theater group and made good friends there. At her high school, material things were important, as was having good grades and having an idea of what you wanted to study. Everyone chose the ‘study specialization track’ and planned to attend college. Many students were aiming to study economics or law. Unlike many others, who got a lot of advice from their parents, she did not have any specific plans for her career.

After high school, she started studying at the University of Oslo. On campus, she met a completely different world than in Bærum. Diversity! For example, there were some ethnically Norwegian students who had grown up abroad, and moved back to Oslo to study. They had lived in Norway shorter than she had. Many people she met looked at internationality and diversity as a resource, which was new to her. She did not understand that her background and culture could be a resource for her. She felt that a new world opened for her on campus. Her background had been looked down on in Bærum, but it was cherished on campus. In Bærum, the most important thing was to fit in, and to become as Norwegian as possible. Today, she cherishes that she is Iranian in some ways and contexts.

She studied criminology, linguistics, and media science and had a part-time job with a volunteer organization. She made new friends and felt accepted for who she is, including her background. During her first year of studies, she lived with her parents, but then she moved into a shared flat in Grünerløkka – an inner East End district that is popular with students – with some friends. She had a really good time there. She obtained both a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in criminology.

After her master’s degree, she applied for jobs for more than nine months without getting a single interview. She felt that nobody gave her a chance. While she was looking for a job, she worked as a personal assistant for a person with a disability. She applied for some jobs in the public sector, and the application form contained a question about the applicant’s migration background. She wondered if she should tick that box, whether she should ‘use her ethnicity’ to maybe get an interview more easily than an ethnically Norwegian person. She wondered if that was cheating, or if this would lead to her being evaluated by different criteria. In the end, she checked the box, because she wanted the job. Eventually, she was hired as a case worker with the Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration (NAV). She initially worked with unemployment benefits and later transferred to a different division where she works with improving refugees’ language skills.

When she met her husband, who is ethnically Norwegian, they first rented an apartment in St. Hanshaugen, an inner West End district that is popular with young adults. Then, they bought a condominium in Gamlebyen – a historic inner East End working class neighborhood – where some of their friends lived. Moving to Gamlebyen came very natural to Jasmin and she was very happy there, but most of her friends from Bærum ended up moving to Bærum again. She thinks Bærum is a nice place to grow up, but she would not want her children to have her experience, since she felt that it was very hard to her to fit in and to identify with her surroundings.

They just had their second child and are thinking of moving, because their condominium is becoming too small. They could imagine staying in the area if they could afford a bigger condominium there, but real estate prices have risen. Another argument for moving is that they would prefer to have their children in a school that does not have more than 50 percent minority-language children, and she thinks that their closest school is right around that threshold. It feels a bit weird to say that they do not want too many minority-language children. It goes against the ideology of diversity. But they consider the teachers' capacities and the school's resources and they think it is easier to have their children in a school that has less than 50 percent minority-language students. At the same time, Jasmin cannot at all imagine living in Oslo's West End or in Bærum, because she would not want her children to attend an 'all-white-school' and to have the experiences she had as a child, or to feel economically excluded. Therefore, they recently bought a terraced house in Lambertseter, an outer East End area that Jasmin describes as quite diverse, but with a good mix, both regarding the type of buildings, socio-economically, and ethnically.

They are happy with the pre-school that their oldest attends in Gamlebyen, but will have to change pre-schools when they move. There is 'a lot of mix' in the current pre-school and they like that a lot. She thinks it is important that the children there represent all of Oslo because her children will probably meet those same people in the future. Jasmin says that she wants her children to understand that there are different kinds of people with different social and cultural backgrounds, so that they will not only feel at home in a homogeneous group. She wants her children to learn to see people as people and thinks that a diverse pre-school will help with that.

Jasmin told me that she remembered that when she was young, she thought that by the time she would have kids, it would be so much easier for them. But now she is actually a bit worried. She feels that there is so much hate and racism in the world, and she cannot imagine for her children to grow up and hear hate about their mixed family.

> I am working to get rid of that pessimism inside me, and rather focus on the fact that there is change, and that my family is actually in a good position. My children are pretty light-skinned and have pretty straight hair; they got that from their father. They speak Norwegian

> fluently, and are as Norwegian as one can be. So I’m sure they will have it easier, for example compared to some kids in the same pre-school who have Somali parents who speak Norwegian a bit less well, and, uhm... I know that my children will do fine. But I want to be optimistic for all kids, no matter what! I feel that I have a big task, as a parent, and for sure when I also have mixed children – to teach them to like everything and that everyone is equal, when you clearly see that this is not how things are done in practice. I do hope that things can change for the better.

4.2.3 Adult Immigrant

Agata (29) grew up in a small town in Southern Poland. She remembers people living in her town as ‘just normal’ and cannot remember any immigrants living there. Nobody had a lot materially, but nobody knew any different. Most people had big gardens and spent of lot of time there in spring and summer. Agata had good friends as a child and teenager. After high school, she studied graphic design at the university in Krakow, earning a bachelor’s degree. After graduating, the job market was tight and she found it difficult to find a job. When she heard about the possibility of doing an au pair year abroad, she decided to do that.

She moved to Norway and worked as an au pair for a family with three children in Lillehammer, a small town two hours north of Oslo. She liked the kids in the family very much and felt that the parents treated her well and as their equal. She had her own little section in the house, with her own bathroom and kitchenette, which gave her the independence she needed. Towards the end of her time as au pair, she met her now husband, who is originally from Sweden. Hence, she decided to stay in Norway even after her time as an au pair was over. The other factor was that wages are much higher than in Poland. She moved to Oslo where her boyfriend lived.

In Oslo, she found a job with a cleaning company, cleaning pre-schools. After a while, she stopped working there because the work was very hard physically, the days were long and the hours were inconvenient since all pre-schools need to be cleaned when they are closed. After that, she worked as a kitchen aid in a restaurant for half a year – a job she found through a staffing agency – and then she found the job she currently has, in a canteen in a large hospital in Oslo. She told me that she gets along well with her colleagues at work.

Agata said that the time when she was employed through a staffing agency was hard, since the commission that the agency subtracted reduced her wage considerably. She further stated that some aspects of her work experience have been very hard, but she was conscious that as an immigrant she did not have the same point of departure that many Norwegians have. To her, that is okay and she is determined to work

hard and build a future for herself and her family. She told me: 'It's been hard, but that's okay. I know who I am and that I have worked hard for everything I have'.

Agata likes living in Norway. She stressed the good social safety net and the fact that wages are higher than in Poland. When she first moved to Oslo, she, together with a friend, rented a small basement apartment in Majorstuen, a vibrant affluent neighborhood in the inner West End with many shops and restaurants. When she moved together with her now-husband, they first lived at Grünerløkka in the inner East End and now live at Torshov, a neighborhood in the inner East End that is popular with families. Agata likes Torshov and finds all the neighbors friendly.

Agata and her husband just had her first child. They hope to get a spot at a pre-school nearby. When I asked her what she thought about her child growing up in Oslo, she said that she hoped that people would consider her daughter Norwegian. Because even though none of her parents are, her daughter was born in Oslo and she will most likely grow up here. Hence, people should consider her Norwegian and accept her.

4.3 'Ethnic Diversity' Throughout the Life Course

In this section, I want to give a brief overview over the general tendencies of how the theme of ethnic diversity is interwoven with and plays out throughout the different life story parts. Of course, there is a lot of variation here, so this necessarily is a summary that involves some level of generalization in order to be able to highlight overall trends.

4.3.1 Childhood

As the typical life stories above show, there is a tendency for majority and minority participants to have very different childhood memories with regard to 'ethnic diversity'[41]. It is hardly surprising that majority and minority participants would have very different experiences and memories and very different ways of talking about them, since they are fundamentally differently positioned with regard to 'ethnic diversity'. When minority participants talk about their childhood experiences with 'ethnic diversity', they talk about *their own experience of being different from the majority*. Majority participants, on the other hand, talk about *relating to people who are different from themselves*. Notably, when the participants in this study where children – during the 1980s and 1990s – the migrant population in Norway was overall considerably smaller than it is today, and somewhat unevenly distributed geographically. Consequently, some majority

[41] I exclude adult immigrants from this discussion, as their childhood took place abroad and before they were immigrants any place.

participants hardly had any contact with immigrants or descendants of immigrants during their own childhood.

It is thus little surprising that participants of majority and minority backgrounds respectively speak very differently about their own experiences with migration-related diversity in their childhood. Many of the majority participants describe growing up in relatively homogenous, small-town or rural settings in different parts of Norway. Participants tended to stress the homogeneity – often phrased as 'sameness' (*likhet*) (Gullestad, 2002a) – of their childhood residential areas, both in terms of ethnicity, socio-economics, life style, and life situation. One participant expressed this observed homogeneity by saying: 'Everyone was ethnically Norwegian, lived in a house with a yard, had a car, two children, and parents with a good job'.

When talking about what could be referred to as ethno-racial difference, most majority participants use a language that focuses on ethnicity. Yet, several also employed a more phenotypical or racial language, for instance describing their places of childhood residence as 'very white'. When majority participants refer to minority peers – e.g. classmates of immigrant origin – their descriptions often remained relatively general, identifying them as having a minority background, but not giving an account of how their minority status may have mattered.

Minority participants, by virtue of being the ones who 'embody' ethnic difference, give very detailed accounts of how their own minority status mattered for them and influenced them throughout their life course, starting from their accounts of their childhoods. These accounts tend to be detailed and rich. Minority participants' accounts of their own childhood are characterized by manifold experiences of otherness, exclusion, and discrimination, and a rather pervasive sense of 'being different'. This difference tends to revolve around and consist of phenotype, culture, religion, parents' 'immigrant experience', and socio-economic difference[42].

The main difference between minority and majority participants' accounts of how ethnic difference manifested during their childhood can be described in the following way. Minority participants develop an understanding and a lived experience of minority and majority identities as socially relevant categories of difference. Majority participants mainly perceive themselves as 'normal' and 'average' and minorities as a deviation from that norm, but without being as conscious of and outspoken about this dynamic as minority participants. In this sense, they, too, understand minority and majority identities as socially relevant categories of difference, but do not voice it in the same way. As I will also discuss later in this

[42] Of course, not all of these factors are present in every life story and they are present to differing degrees.

chapter, minority participants often feel thoroughly misunderstood precisely because they experience that there is not enough societal understanding for and recognition of the ways in which they are marginalized.

As this section has shown, majority and minority participants report quite different experiences with ethnic diversity in their childhood. It is reasonable to assume that how individuals experience and what they learn about migration-related diversity throughout their childhood influences how they experience, understand, and interpret ethnic diversity in later life phases.

4.3.2 Working Life

When participants talk about the role that 'ethnic diversity' plays for their experiences at work, the pattern that emerges also differs largely by participants' background. Overall, minority participants report experiencing their ethnic/immigrant background as relevant at work, and the experiences they relate are often negative. Majority participants, on the other hand, report widely varying experiences with 'ethnic diversity' at work. Yet, they do not report that these experiences affect them negatively, like minority participants do. Many majority participants also did not have very marked experiences or strong opinions about the role of 'ethnic diversity' in the workplace. This also sets them apart from minority participants.

Several minority participants shared reflections they had around how their 'ethnic background' may have mattered for job applications or how it matters at their workplace. These reflections for example revolve around how to present or how much to emphasize one's cultural background during a job interview, whether one should indicate one's minority background when applying for a job in the public sector[43], or whether one may be perceived as a 'diversity hire'. In these examples, participants' accounts gave the impression that having a 'migrant background' is something that needs to be managed and made palatable to employers; employees with a minority background have to ensure that it does not become a hindrance in the job application process. Similarly, participants shared stories and reflections around how their 'ethnic minority background' may be seen and interpreted by their employers or by superiors at work. In participants' reflections, their 'minority background' can be a positive or a negative factor, but it definitely plays a role, and they relate to it and reflect on it. This dynamic can be experienced as diminishing participants' individuality because their 'background' seems to play an important role for how they show up and are read at work.

[43] Job application forms for public sector employment always contain a question about the applicant's migration background.

Different factors contribute to whether participants are perceived as having a 'migrant background' by others. Based on the interviews, foreign-sounding names, a non-Nordic or non-white phenotype[44], wearing a hijab, non-native language skills, or unexpected behavioral or communication patterns are all factors that contribute to being understood as an 'immigrant'.

In addition, a number of minority participants shared that they had experienced discrimination at work, either by customers or by colleagues or employers. Experiences of discrimination had to do with either the hiring process, obtaining promotions, or interactions with customers or with colleagues. Discrimination experiences were often related to phenotype (when occurring at work) or to foreign-sounding names (when experienced during hiring). Chapter 8 will examine discrimination experiences in detail. Many minority participants also reported that they had good relationships with their colleagues.

For adult immigrants, the main topic with regard to their working life was (bad) working conditions. Among other topics, participants discussed temporary work, short-term contracts, long working days, and irregularities with regard to wages and 'on-the-job-training' (*praksisplasser*). These topics did not play a role in interviews with majority and minority participants.

Overall, it seems that for minority participants, their own minority background entailed many negative consequences that needed to be navigated and 'managed' at work. Majority participants, on the other hand, reported a much wider range of experiences with 'ethnic diversity' at work, and they in general seemed to feel less strongly about it. Many majority participants did not have any strong opinions or marked experiences related to ethnic diversity and their own working life. None of them had to 'manage' their own ethnic background or experienced discrimination based on it.

Some majority participants stressed the positive value of diversity at work. They would, for instance, explain that experience with ethnic diversity at work had helped them to counter their own negative stereotypes, that minority colleagues at work added specific cultural or linguistic competence, or that having colleagues with a minority background was interesting and enriching (e.g. leading to more diverse cakes at the office).

In terms of the importance 'ethnic diversity' plays for their relationship to their colleagues, majority participants reported a range of experiences, ranging from not having minority colleagues, to having a good relationship, to experiencing challenges, which were mostly tied to language skills and communication.

[44] I will expand on this in chapter 9.

Finally, another finding is that the mere question of what ‘ethnic diversity’ meant at work was as a general tendency interpreted differently by majority and minority participants. Minority participants generally interpreted the question as ‘How did your minority background affect how you are treated by others at work?’, whereas majority participants tended to interpret it as ‘Do any of your colleagues have cultural, linguistic or religious traits that mark your everyday work day significantly or that create conflicts at work?’. These differences in how the questions were interpreted and answered followed directly from participants’ own life experience and majority or minority background. They might thus not be particularly surprising, but this is an important finding because it speaks to an ingrained dynamic that is characteristic for how minority and majority participants in general interpret and relate to ‘ethnic diversity’. I will say more about these kinds of conversational dynamics further below.

4.3.3 Parenthood

When participants talked about themselves being parents, ‘ethnic diversity’ clearly was a topic that mattered for how they reflected around their children’s future, and around choices pertaining to parenting children in Oslo – specifically choices[45] around where to live, and which pre-school and school their children would attend. This was the case for participants with both majority and minority backgrounds. For the life phases of ‘childhood’ and ‘working life’, participants’ reflections around ethnic diversity were different for, respectively, majority and minority participants. For the life phase of ‘parenthood’, however, the picture is more complex and nuanced.

The first cluster of topics that emerged related to parenthood and ethnic diversity, were reflections around the ethnic compositions in different neighborhoods, pre-schools, and schools. When participants – both majority and minority – talked about what was important for them regarding the school their children would attend in the future, many of them used the phrase ‘the right mix’ to refer to their preferred ethnic and linguistic composition of the school or class. Participants had different opinions on what constituted ‘the right mix’, but many stated that they wanted a school that has at least 50 percent ‘ethnically Norwegian’ students. This was also the case for most minority participants. Reasons given for this were concerns around the school’s resources[46], worries that too much cultural diversity might lead to conflict, and the wish that the school should be representative for Norwegian society. Some participants also expressed the view that schools with more ‘ethnically Norwegian students’ are ‘better schools’ overall.

[45] These are of course not completely ‘free’ choices, but many constraints, specifically economic constraints, apply.
[46] Some parents voiced the concern that schools with a high share of ethnic minority students need to spend a lot of resources to help students acquire language skills, which might divert resources from other areas.

At the same time, many participants expressed skepticism towards having their children attend schools in Oslo’s West End[47]. The reasoning for this differed by participants’ background. Majority participants tended to emphasize that they did not want their children to become too materialistic, which they saw as a problematic characteristic of the West End. Minority participants, however, – especially those who themselves were one of very few minorities in their schools as children – tended to express a fear of their children meeting exclusion or stigmatization if attending a school where they would be one of few minority students. Since school allocation is based on residence, these preferences also mean that most participants would want to live neither in one of the most immigrant-dense Eastern parts of Oslo, nor in one of the more affluent Western parts of town.

Even though most majority participants do not want their children to attend a school with ‘too many’ immigrant or (ethnic) minority children, many of them expressed that they wished for their children to experience ethnic diversity in pre-school, or that they did not want to live in completely homogenous neighborhoods. Participants tended to express that they wanted their kids to learn that ‘it is completely normal that people are different, dress differently, talk differently, and have different skin colors’. They want their children to ‘learn tolerance and respect’, rather than to be ‘scared and prejudiced’. Some majority participants also stated that they wished that their own circle of friends were more diverse, and they expressed a hope that they would meet people of different backgrounds through their children once they started pre-school. Majority participants tended to speak about this in a quite distanced manner, for instance saying: ‘It would be nice for my son to experience this’. This way of speaking reflects the fact that many majority participants experience a certain distance from ‘ethnic diversity’.

The fact that many majority participants state that they wish for their children to develop a kind of ‘diversity competence’, points to the fact that they are aware that ethnic diversity carries meaning and that they want their children to be ‘competent’ in it. In this context, some participants also stated that they wished they had had more exposure to ‘ethnic diversity’. This dynamic differs from the previously covered life phases in that majority participants seem to engage ‘ethnic diversity’ as a topic to a greater extent when talking about topics related to their own children’s future.

The second cluster of topics that emerged with regard to parenthood relates to children’s identity and categorization. These topics only came up in interviews with participants whose children had some kind of minority status (i.e. either with minority participants, or with majority participants who had an immigrant partner). When these participants reflect on their children’s identity, they often say that they

[47] This tendency is almost certainly influenced by the fact that the sample of participants in this study skews towards an overrepresentation of inner East and outer East boroughs of Oslo.

hope that their children will be able to 'choose the best from both worlds', rather than to feel stuck in between them, or to feel that they do not belong in either.

In terms of categorization – i.e. how their children will be seen by others – some minority participants expressed a worry that their children, despite being born in Norway, would not automatically be seen as 'Norwegian' by others. Here, phenotype emerged as an important topic. Several minority participants commented on their children's phenotype in relation to their life chances, for instance by saying 'I think she will do okay. She's quite light-skinned'. Two minority participants in particular shared long reflections on their children's phenotype and the fact that others comment on it. In both cases, when one parent is out with the children alone, they are often asked where their partner is from, based on the fact that the children are, respectively, darker or lighter than the parent in question. Both these participants highlight the role phenotype plays for how other people see their children, how they categorize them, and whether they include them in a 'Norwegian in-group'. The parents are aware that their children may be *à priori* understood as 'non-Norwegian' based on their phenotype. The inter-relation between phenotype and understandings of Norwegianness will be further explored in chapters 5 and 6.

Overall, an analysis of the three life phases shows that for 'childhood' and 'working life', experiences with 'ethnic diversity' differ markedly by participants' background. For 'parenthood', the picture is more mixed. Here, majority participants engage the topic of ethnic diversity to a much greater extent, and majority and minority participants' reflections around desired places of residence and school preferences overlap to a large extent. However, when it comes to children's identity and categorization by others, difference between minority and majority participants are again more salient.

4.4 Belonging and Exclusion with Regard to Ethnic Diversity

Considering the typical life stories above, as well as the summaries of the three life phases, I now want to ask how ethnic diversity shapes participants' life experiences and experiences of belonging. The first finding, which is probably not very surprising, is that it plays different roles in the lives of, respectively, majority and minority participants. As I will explore over the next three sections, this relates to how participants experience belonging or exclusion, but also to conversational dynamics, and to their level of familiarity with ethnic diversity as a phenomenon.

One topic that emerged from the interviews is the ease and extent to which one can experience belonging. For minority participants, an important issue when it comes to their own experience of 'ethnic diversity', is that they feel that their belonging is not taken for granted by others, but that it is questioned or tenuous.

This can manifest itself in very different arenas, and with regard to different spheres of belonging. Having a minority background means that one's belonging is questioned by others, for example through the question 'Where are you *really* from?'. It can also mean experiencing to be reduced to one's background, rather than being met as an individual. In a way, having a minority background means owing an explanation for why one is here and how one's background matters. Even though one's belonging is not questioned all the time, it can be questioned at any time, and that in itself makes any belonging tenuous.

When talking about their childhood and youth, many minority participants described that they had a strong desire to 'fit in' and to become 'as Norwegian as possible'. This entailed doing things that were seen as Norwegian, such as dressing a certain way, bringing 'Norwegian food' for school lunch, or engaging in certain leisure time activities. Importantly, it entailed a desire to *be seen as* Norwegian by others, specifically by their majority Norwegian peers. Of course, there is some variation to this pattern, and these things did not matter equally to all minority participants. Some of them even rejected the idea of wanting to be Norwegian – though this seemed to be based on a realization that they would not ever be able to legitimately inhabit this category. This desire to fit in must also be seen in light of the fact that there is a tendency to consider members of the majority for their own, individual personality traits, whereas being a member of the minority can mean being seen as a group representative, first and foremost.

Both these themes – having one's belonging questioned by others, and wanting to 'fit in' as seamlessly as possible – are intertwined with participants' phenotype. Even though questions of fitting in and being different also revolve around other factors – such as having parents with a different native language, possibly having a different religion from the majority, or material and socio-economic aspects – phenotype was highlighted by many participants as a contributing factor. Many minority participants stressed how the fact that they were one of a few children in their school who differed visibly with regard to skin color and hair color made them stand out. In this sense, even though phenotype is not intrinsically tied to language, religion, wealth, or cultural practices, it can become a symbol for these things. This symbolic tie will be explored further in the chapters to come. Moreover, while language skills, socio-economic status, and religion can change over the course of a lifetime, phenotype can generally not, making it by comparison more 'sticky' as a category of difference.

In addition, minority participants often address how immigrants and immigration are problematized in the media and in political debate and they relate that to themselves. They may link public discourse around immigration to experiences they have had in their own life when their belonging was questioned. The fact that the media often discuss problems related to immigrants, and the fact that many immigrants have been met with stereotypical expectations and questions – e.g. 'Do you have to submit to your husband?' – conflate in the experience of some minority participants, thus reinforcing each other. Therefore, many

minority participants feel like they are often met as ‘an immigrant’ rather than as an individual with their own personality. For this reason, some minority participants have at some point their life found it easier to befriend other people with a minority background, who understand these dynamics. This shared understanding reassures them that they will be as an individual and not as ‘an immigrant’.

None of this happens every day or all the time, but even so it still seems to form the ‘background noise’ of what being a minority means. For many participants in this study, the ‘minority experience’ is characterized by experiences of having their belonging questioned and being confronted with a problematization of ‘immigrants’ – i.e. themselves. Phenotype is not the only category of difference that is relevant for this experience, but it becomes its visible external signal.

For majority participants, ‘ethnic diversity’ as a topic is more distant to their own life experience, compared with minority participants. After all, they are not the ones who embody it, but the ones who encounter it. Hence, ‘ethnic diversity’ inherently has a very different status in majority participant’s life stories and it does not affect their possibility to experience belonging. In terms of the life phases described above, ethnic diversity is less present and meaningful for the life phases of ‘childhood’ and ‘working life’, but more present and meaningful for the life phase ‘parenthood’. Since majority participants have less lived experience with diversity, much of their reflections around ethnic diversity that relate to the topic of being a parent – i.e. where to raise their children, as well as thoughts relating to pre-school and school – are more hypothetical. These are reflections about how the ethnic composition in a certain neighborhood, pre-school, or school might or would influence their children. A tendency here seems to be that ethnic diversity is imagined to influence oneself or one’s children negatively if there is too much of it, but that it can have a positive impact if it is the right amount and if it shows up in the right way. Notably, as noted above, the desired outcome for many parents is that their children would acquire a greater familiarity and ease with ethnic diversity than they themselves possess. Many parents stress that they want their children to learn that it does not matter what skin color someone has, how they dress, or what they eat.

Throughout their life course, majority and minority participants have very different experiences of ‘ethnic diversity’, which means that they associate different things with ‘ethnic diversity’ and understand it differently. Where this for minority participants points back to their own experience of not having their belonging taken for granted, it is a much vaguer concept for the majority, at most somehow related to cultural, religious, and linguistic difference, but in a way that has not actually shown up in or shaped their own lives much. These fundamental differences in lived experience shape how participants see themselves (‘questioned’ or ‘just being’) and how they experience their own belonging to the nation (‘tenuous’ or ‘obvious’).

Notably, many minority participants are aware of this difference in lived experience and in understanding ‘ethnic diversity’, whereas most majority participants are not. The exceptions here were majority participants who due to their life experiences, like converting to Islam or marrying an immigrant, had more insight into the ‘minority experience’. This finding resembles W.E.B. du Bois’ (1969) concept of ‘double consciousness’. This term refers to the fact that members of a subordinate group experience a ‘two-ness’, where they at the same time experience themselves through their own eyes and – being thoroughly familiar with ‘majority culture’ as a survival strategy – also through the eyes of the dominant group, who has a negative view of them.

Some minority participants expressed frustration at the lack of insight that ‘majority society’ has into this dynamic. They had experienced to be questioned in their belonging, or to be met with skepticism due to being ‘an immigrant’. But to add, metaphorically speaking, insult to injury, they felt that ‘society at large’ (*storsamfunnet*) or ‘ethnic Norwegians’ do not recognize the barrier to equality that these experiences represented. Rather, ‘the immigrant question’ is reduced to differences in culture, religion, and language.

4.5 Conversational Dynamics when Talking about Ethnic Diversity

Just as important as where and how ‘ethnic diversity’ manifests itself throughout the life course is how and how easily participants talked about ‘ethnic diversity’ during the interviews. For this reason, I now want to shift the focus toward the conversational dynamics and away from the content of the interviews. How ethnic diversity is talked about, how it *can be* talked about, and how the conversational dynamics play out can shed light on what participants make of ethnic diversity and how they relate to it. In this section, I will direct my attention towards these dynamics and examine what they can reveal about understandings of ‘ethnic diversity’. Similar to the other sections above, in this section, too, participants’ background plays an important role.

Majority Participants

Overall, there is a tendency for majority participants to find it rather difficult to talk about ethnic diversity, which is considered a sensitive topic in Norway. In what follows, I want to describe and discuss several different variations of what majority participants may find difficult when talking about ethnic diversity.

a) ‘There Is Nothing to Say’

The first theme I want to discuss is the tendency not to attach much meaning to ‘ethnic diversity’ that I described for the life phases ‘childhood’ and ‘working life’ above. As discussed above, when talking about these life phases, majority participants often told me whether they had / have classmates or colleagues with a minority background without having much more to say about it. They might state that they considered that classmate ‘just like everybody else’, or might ask me what I meant when I asked whether ‘ethnic diversity’ meant anything in their everyday life at work. In short, they expressed that they did not have anything to say about how ‘ethnic diversity’ mattered in these situations. This finding is interesting when contrasted with the detailed descriptions minority participants gave of how they experienced their own ethic minority status to matter in significant ways in these same settings.

In this context, the interview situation could sometimes have the somewhat peculiar effect of making the ‘non-topic’ of ethnic diversity the center of the conversation in a somewhat artificial way. Since majority participants knew that I wanted to talk to them about how they had experienced ethnic diversity throughout their lives, they sometimes ended up scanning their lives for the presence of minorities, and then reporting them to me while adding that they did not feel that those people’s background carried any meaning. As stated above, some majority participants also grew up in very homogenous settings and thus de facto had very little contact with ethnic minorities for most of their childhood and youth.

b) ‘I Do Not Want to Offend, and Hence Feel Insecure as to Which Terms I Should Use’

A second theme is that many majority participants reported feeling insecure about which terms and labels to use when speaking about minority classmates, colleagues, or acquaintances. Many hesitated and some of them directly addressed their insecurity, stating that they were not sure which words to choose, or ‘what the correct terminology is right now’. For instance, one participant told me that she found it difficult to talk about skin color because one can easily say ‘something stupid’ that can be understood as racist because ‘one has not thought things quite through’.

Beyond the question of which words to use, some participants also wondered whether it was at all acceptable to talk about someone’s minority background. One participant called this topic ‘a minefield’ and it seemed that some of them felt that even mentioning someone’s minority background could be construed as negative. With one interviewee, this tendency was so pronounced that it actually precluded our conversation from ever truly developing a natural flow. The participant gave very short answers throughout and seemed to try to avoid or circumvent some of my questions. After the interview was over and the recorder was turned off, she relaxed visibly. When I asked her how she had experienced the

interview, she responded that she felt very uneasy and like she had to be careful not to say anything wrong, and not to use ‘words one should not use’, or to ‘say things that someone else can find offensive’. She followed that up by explaining that ‘the rules change so often’. This example illustrates that some majority participants find it very difficult to talk about ethnic diversity. The fact that this kind of anxiety around language was a rather prominent theme in interviews with majority participants may partly result from the fact that the data skews towards individuals who are favorable to immigration and rather highly educated. In a different sample, one would likely encounter less anxiety around language.

In addition, interviews with majority participants were also characterized by the presence of ‘indirect talk’ and silences. I will continue to explore these dynamics with the help of longer quotes throughout the chapters to come.

c) ‘One Is Not Allowed to Say Anything Anymore’

The last theme I want to explore was less common than the other two. Some participants stated that they felt that there were ‘politically correct’ rules of speech that applied to the topics of immigration and ethnic diversity that precluded conversations about the topic. This feeling is different from the theme discussed above in that participants above seem eager to ‘follow the rules’ but unsure what the ‘rules’ are, whereas in this last theme, participants state that the ‘rules’ hinder them from saying what they really want to say. For instance, one participant repeatedly hinted at negative consequences of immigration without ever fully spelling out her thoughts and then stated that ‘one is not allowed to say anything anymore’.

Minority Participants

a) Creating Space for ‘Diversity Talk’

One observation regarding conversational dynamics with minority participants is that space for certain kinds of ‘diversity talk’ needed to be actively created during the interview. My main objective during the interviews was that participants should feel comfortable and should know that they had no obligation to answer any of my questions, while at the same time giving them the space they needed to talk about their own experiences on their own terms. Talking about minority experiences ‘on one’s own terms’ can be challenging in a societal environment where ‘majority’ narratives and frames about immigration, integration, and ethnic diversity dominate. Hence, I aimed to signal during the interviews that the conversation was not beholden to dominant/majority ways of talking about ethnic diversity, and that participants were entitled to their own narratives about their own lives. This point is not just

methodological, but also analytical. It speaks to the fact that 'ethnic diversity' as a topic is shaped by a minority-majority dynamic, whereby the majority's view and understanding of 'ethnic diversity' are dominant.

b) Easier to Establish Diversity as a Topic

Since minority participants have their own, lived experiences with ethnic diversity, it was much more concrete to talk about, and no time was spent wondering whether it at all 'meant anything'. Rather, from the outset, the conversations revolved around exploring the meaning of ethnic diversity and how that meaning was experienced. Moreover, minority participants were decidedly less worried about vocabulary, or using the wrong words. However, there were still instances where minority participants problematized their own word choices. For instance, they might worry about reproducing 'dominant' categories ('see, now I even called myself a foreigner!'); they might hesitate to use skin color terms ('I know that I said: 'I was the only brown girl in middle school', but I actually don't like to use skin color terms (*hudfargebetegnelser*) because that's not nice'); and they might be conscious not to speak stereotypically about majority Norwegians ('Ok, now I said 'ethnic Norwegians' are like this and that, but of course that doesn't make sense either'). Yet, overall, these kinds of 'worries' and interjections did not hamper or halt our conversation about ethnic diversity.

c) Difficult to Talk about Discrimination/Racism

A third conversational dynamic is that it can be hard for minority participants to talk about experiences of discrimination and racism. Some minority participants were worried about being perceived as 'hostile to ethnic Norwegians' or as overly sensitive. Others shared their experiences, but did not label them as discrimination or racism. This topic will be further explored in chapter 8, which focuses explicitly on experiences with discrimination and racism.

Adult Immigrants

The conversational dynamics with adult immigrants differed from those with majority participants and minority participants. First, since adult immigrants are a very diverse group[48], there is less homogeneity

[48] The category 'adult immigrant' is very diverse in terms of region of origin. For instance, it contains adult immigrants from Sweden who is some ways resemble 'majority participants' more than they resemble other 'adult immigrants'.

when it comes to how ‘ethnic diversity’ is talked about. Second, because adult immigrants spent more than half their life outside of Norway, their frames of reference are often different from those of majority and minority participants. Overall, they were less concerned with the kind of minority-majority dynamics I have outlined so far in this chapter, and tended to focus more on economic concerns than on identity categories, integration discourse, and power dynamics. Interviews with adult immigrants often focused on working conditions and challenges with the secondary labor market. Of course, these socio-economic topics intersect with their immigrant background, but in many interviews, the explicit focus rested on material factors rather than on ethnicity or minority status. Among the participants in this study, adult immigrants were much more concerned with economic and material concerns than minority participants. This can partly be explained by the fact that the sample of minority participants is skewed towards individuals with higher education. Had there been more minority participants with shorter education and working-class jobs, then these topics would likely also have be more prominent in those interviews.

4.6 Degrees of Familiarity with Ethnic Diversity

This section addresses what can be termed degrees of familiarity with ‘ethnic diversity’. When analyzing the life story material, I noted that there was a stark contrast in the degrees of familiarity with ‘ethnic diversity’ and in how abstractly or concretely participants talked about it. As a general tendency, majority participants related to ‘ethnic diversity’ as something abstract and difficult to grasp, while minority participants related to it as something concrete, lived, and even banal.

In general, majority participants talked about ‘ethnic diversity’ as if they themselves are not a part of ‘diversity’. The mental image this conveys is not that of a society that is a diverse whole, but rather a society that consists of a non-diverse ‘ethnically Norwegian’ majority, and then ‘ethnically diverse’ minorities. Consequently, in terms of ‘degrees of familiarity’, majority participants tended to speak about experiences with ‘ethnic diversity’ in their own life as something that seemed both distant and abstract. It seemed that they often did not have a very concrete idea about what diversity was, nor significant amounts of lived experience with it[49].

When majority participants expressed a wish to have more acquaintances or friends with diverse backgrounds, or the hope that this might happen through their children’s pre-school, ‘ethnic diversity’

[49] Note, again, that the questions were worded rather concretely. I did not say ‘did you have experiences with ethnic diversity during your childhood?’, but I would ask ‘were there children in your class whose native language was not Norwegian?’. Hence, when I say that majority participants related to ‘ethnic diversity’ in an abstract and distant way, I am not referring to how they relate to the *term* ‘ethnic diversity’, but rather to the *phenomenon* ‘ethnic diversity’.

was discussed as something that is currently absent and that remains rather vague and distant, even if it is hoped and wished for. Finally, when talking about 'ethnic diversity' or immigrants, this diversity is often imagined as 'exotic', or as synonymous with a non-European origin or with being Muslim.

Minority participants, on the other hand, tend to relate to 'ethnic diversity' as something concrete, lived, and almost banal. Conversations about 'ethnic diversity' tend to both cover a lot of ground and go into great depth[50]. Participants drew on vast personal experience and tended to speak about it at length. At the same time, to minority participants, 'ethnic diversity' is not something remarkable or extraordinary. It is just a fact of life. As mentioned above, some minority participants expressed frustration about how 'ethnic diversity' and immigration are discussed in the public and in the media. Specifically, they mentioned problematizations of 'immigrant culture', a lack of seeing minorities as individuals (through tokenization, essentialization, or generalization), and the use of stereotypes. This discursive representation of 'ethnic diversity' is diametrically opposed to their own familiarity with and understanding of it.

4.7 Phenotype throughout the Life Course

Finally, I briefly want to comment on the way in which phenotype surfaced as a topic throughout the life story part of the interviews. As the life story of Jasmin above illustrates, minority participants often mentioned their own phenotype and connected it to experiences of non-belonging, differential treatment, or exclusion. For example, Jasmin emphasized that she already felt that she stood out as the only kid with dark hair and dark skin in her elementary school class, and that cultural/religious difference – such as her not eating pork – came on top of that and amplified it. When pondering her children's future, she also cited the fact that they are relatively light-complexioned and have straight hair – i.e. are phenotypically close to the majority population – as arguments to be 'optimistic for her children's future'. These examples illustrate that minority participants perceive their phenotype as relevant for how they are treated by others and to what extent they can legitimately and effortlessly belong.

Majority participants mentioned phenotype much more infrequently. If they did, it was usually to describe a place or a collective of people – such as describing a neighborhood as 'white' or a school as 'Blenda white'[51], but they did not tend to use phenotype do describe individuals[52]. Some majority participants also commented on phenotype very indirectly, for example by saying 'I think it's good that (in pre-school),

[50] More so than what transpires in the typical life stories presented above, since the actual interviews were much longer.
[51] *Blenda* is a Norwegian detergent brand. 'Blenda white' is an expression that means 'all-white'.
[52] I want to emphasize here that not all minority participants were comfortable with using phenotypical descriptors for individuals, either. I will discuss this in more detail in chapter 6.

my daughter isn’t only around kids who look like her’, or ‘I think it’s good that my son learns that people look differently’[53]. Some majority participants also commented on a pre-school’s or school’s ‘mix’ – i.e. ethnic composition – based on visual observations from the yard or playground, i.e. based on phenotypical criteria. However, they rarely used an explicitly phenotypical vocabulary to describe their observations. Rather, they might for instance say: ‘From passing by the school yard at Sagene school, I know that there are some immigrant kids, but not that many’. When discussing ethnic compositions at schools more explicitly, this tends to happen in a language around ‘minority language students’ and ‘students with an immigrant background’, and not an explicit mentioning of phenotype. This topic will be discussed further in chapters 6 and 7.

It seems that minority participants perceive their phenotype as a symbol of difference. Their visible difference signals ‘ethnic diversity’ and symbolically ties their body to a geographic elsewhere. In that sense, their phenotype can become a vector of exclusion and non-belonging. Majority participants were much less likely to connect phenotype to differential treatment. Comparing minority participants to adult immigrant participants, phenotype as a topic mattered much more for participants who grew up in Norway compared to adult immigrants. A possible explanation for this is that minority participants who grew up in Norway speak Norwegian accent-free, have had all their schooling in Norway and are well-acquainted with Norwegian social norms and institutions; the only factor that sets them apart is their phenotype.

Finally, phenotype intertwines with other categories or aspects of difference. Some participants experienced being different as an intersection of their phenotype with culture or religion; for others, it was phenotype in combination with socio-economic difference. Hence, in the analysis chapters to follow, I want to zoom in on phenotype as a category of difference, while – to the extent possible – also taking into account its interrelation with other categories of difference.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to provide an overview over how the topic of ‘ethnic diversity’ manifested itself in the life story part of the interviews. The main finding is that majority and minority participants have different experiences related to ‘ethnic diversity’, that they talk about it differently, and that they are familiar with it to different degrees. Minority participants tend to have the experience that ‘ethnic diversity’ is *both* about their cultural, religious, or linguistic background *and* about the ‘minority

[53] This language of ‘looks’ and ‘looking differently’ is an indirect way of referring to phenotype. This will be discussed further in chapter 7.

experience' of being treated differently and questioned in their belonging. In the understanding of majority participants, however, 'ethnic diversity' seems to point to the former rather than the latter.

This chapter has also shown that 'ethnic diversity' is considered sensitive and that the conversational dynamics governing it tend to differ according to participants' migration background or lack thereof. Finally – and somewhat unsurprisingly, given the entry hypothesis that phenotype and 'ethnic diversity' are thematically connected – participants did bring up phenotype in the context of conversations about 'ethnic diversity'. Minority participants mentioned and discussed it as a meaningful category of difference in relation to experiences of differential treatment, exclusion, or non-belonging. It seems that 'the minority experience' to a substantial degree is about being 'the other' and being conscious of one's own otherness.

'Ethnic diversity' is a large thematic complex that includes culture, language, religion, phenotype, country of origin, and 'immigrant background'. All these dimensions must be understood in interrelation, but in this dissertation, I am specifically interested in phenotype. The next analysis chapters will thus focus specifically on this category of difference. Chapters 5 and 6 will examine categories that are used to refer to national belonging and to ethnicity and phenotype/race, chapter 7 will discuss color-blindness, chapter 8 will examine experiences of discrimination and racism, and chapter 9 will attempt to systematize phenotype as a marker of difference.

5 Categories I: Situating Individuals vis-à-vis the Nation

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 and chapter 6 examine, respectively, categories that are used to situate individuals vis-à-vis the nation (‘Norwegian’, ‘immigrant’, ‘foreigner’, ‘minority’) and categories that describe ethnicity or phenotype/race (‘ethnically Norwegian’, ‘white’, ‘brown’, ‘black’). Both chapters are mainly based on the part of the interviews that was explicitly concerned with categories, but also draw on how participants use them throughout the entire interview. The analytical question that guides the chapters is: How do participants use and define categories that describe situatedness with regards to the nation, on the one hand, and with regards to phenotype on the other?

The categories examined belong to the interrelated thematic fields of national belonging, migration-related diversity, and phenotype/race. They also belong to a family of categories that spans nationality, ethnicity, and race (Brubaker, 2009). Understanding what the categories examined in this chapter mean to participants, how they are used, and how they interrelate thus speaks to how national belonging, migration-related diversity, and phenotype ‘function’ in Norway.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines the category ‘Norwegian’ and the second part examines the categories ‘immigrant’, ‘foreigner’, and ‘minority’.

5.2 Norwegian

5.2.1 ‘Typically Norwegian’

When asked what being Norwegian meant to them, many participants answered by referring to what they saw as ‘typically Norwegian’ things or activities. For instance, Stine, a majority participant, said:

> Stine: I feel that one is quick to go to those standard def-, those prototypes in a way, of forest and woodland (mark) and ski and snow and cabin life. Like a cabin in the mountains. It’s typically Norwegian to like those things.

In Norway, outdoor activities are very popular and are understood as ‘typically Norwegian’, a national pastime. 22% of Norwegian households own a cabin, and more than half the population say they have

access to a cabin someone in their family owns (Larsen & Sti, 2020). Cabins are often used as starting points for outdoor activities like hiking, skiing, or fishing. Asked what being Norwegian meant, many participants, like Stine above, mentioned cabins, outdoor activities, the mountains, and especially the 'Norwegian national sport', cross-country skiing. The fact that Stine uses the terms 'standard definition' and 'prototype' illustrate how tightly connected to the idea of Norwegianness these items and activities are. They have a strong symbolic value, and for many participants, these were the first associations they had when asked about Norwegianness. Other things that participants mentioned as 'typically Norwegian' are typical food items, like brown cheese[54] or waffles, and (culturally) Christian traditions like celebrating Christmas or Easter.

5.2.2 Counter-Claims

While some participants, like Stine above, answered the question by matter-of-factly mentioning 'typically Norwegian' things, other participants engaged in more of a negotiation as to who and what could be considered 'Norwegian'. For instance, Elisabeth, who was born in East Asia and moved to Norway as a young child, said:

> Elisabeth: I think that with Norwegianness, many people automatically think in this direction: that you like nature and that you do this and that. I am not so much concerned with *doing*. Because most people can manage *doing*. For me it's much more about *feeling,* really. I do a lot of things that are regarded as very *typically* Norwegian. But for me *that's* still not what (…) I associate with what it means to be Norwegian. For me it's about where my *heart* is, what emotions I feel about living in Norway. Doing is not so important for me. Eating a waffle with brown cheese – I am lactose intolerant, so that… hehe, that really doesn't work for me. Being out in Holmenkollen skiing arena in order to cheer for, well, either the skiing world championship or whatever it is. Well, I think it's quite alright to just watch that on TV. Going for a hike in the mountains – I like that, but a couple of times a year is enough for me. I just don't quite understand when people start listing: I am Norwegian because I hike in the forest, or I am Norwegian because of this and that. (…) It's not *things* that make me – that [make] me feel [Norwegian].

Elisabeth argues for defining Norwegianness on the basis of feelings of belonging rather than on the basis of participation in 'typically Norwegian' activities. Her quote illustrates a tendency among minority participants to actively distance themselves from the 'prototypically Norwegian' as a benchmark of Norwegianness, even if they, like Elisabeth, actually engage in some of the 'typical' activities like hiking or skiing. Majority participants, like Stine above, did not necessarily formulate those 'typically Norwegian

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[54] A sweet cheese made from cow's or goat's whey, milk, and/or cream that has a caramel color.

things' as membership criteria or a boundary around Norwegianness, but many minority participants, like Elisabeth, engaged them as a boundary that they actively contested.

Another minority participant, Halima, who has a Somali background and has lived in Norway since she was a young child, had the following to say about what being Norwegian mean to her:

> Halima: [Being Norwegian] is having a Norwegian passport, full stop. I think. That you have a Norwegian passport. (silence). That's it. You have documentation that you are Norwegian, so you are Norwegian. However else you describe yourself, or which 'plus-plus' you may be. Some people say that, well, skiing, or eating *kvikklunsj*[55], and, you know, celebrating Christmas and so on [is what makes you Norwegian]. But I can be Norwegian just as well, if I don't eat *kvikklunsj* and I celebrate Id and so on. What is Norwegian, actually? I think: throughout history, Norwegian-Norwegian has been mixed with *a lot* of things in order for it to become Norwegian. Even the king and the king's father and his mother have an immigrant background, if I can say that. So, what is 'Norwegian-Norwegian', really? I don't know. Really hard to say.

Similar to Elisabeth above, Halima also challenges the idea that 'typically Norwegian' things and activities – like skiing, eating *kvikklunsj*, and celebrating Christmas – should serve as membership criteria for Norwegianness. Where Elisabeth above argued for the importance of feelings of belonging, Halima presents citizenship as the benchmark for being Norwegian. Both Elisabeth's and Halima's arguments can be read as counter-claims of sorts to the importance they feel that the 'stereotypically Norwegian' has for many. These claims are made as part of an ongoing societal negotiation about membership in the national community, where minority Norwegians attempt to stake out a way of being included.

To bolster her claim that the category 'Norwegian' can contain people of different origins, Halima further mentions that even the Norwegian royal family – being descended from English, Danish, and Swedish royal houses – has an immigrant background.

5.2.3 Who Can Be Norwegian?

However, not all answers to the question about Norwegianness revolved around the idea of 'typically Norwegian' things or activities. In what follows, I want to discuss two quotes where majority participants discussed *who* can be considered Norwegian.

> Berit: It's a difficult question. It has several dimensions, in a way. You can say that you're born in Norway, to Norwegian parents. That can be the extreme, like… But, well, you can also say that you're born in Norway to foreign parents, or, well… I don't know. At one end of the spectrum, I am Norwegian because I have Norwegian parents, Norwegian family, Norwegian very many generations back, and [am] thus ethnically Norwegian. But *many* of

[55] a Norwegian brand chocolate bar that is associated with being eaten while hiking or skiing

> those who have foreign parents or have Norwegian citizenship, can be defined as Norwegian just fine, based on how they – . Yeah well, that they have culturally become very Norwegian, to put it like that.

Berit starts out by focusing on ancestry as a membership criterion, which she qualifies as ‘extreme’ or being ‘at one end of the spectrum’. She also thinks that people with an immigrant background can be defined as Norwegian if they have become Norwegian culturally, thus hinting at an idea of assimilation or integration. She starts by asserting that ‘it is a difficult question’ and hesitates a lot throughout her answer. It seems that to her it is not straightforward who is or can be Norwegian.

Historically, an image of ethnic nationhood has been dominant in Norway (Gullestad, 2002b). In recent decades, this conceptualization has been challenged by a sustained inflow of migrants and an ethnic diversification of the population. The insecurity that some participants, like Berit, express around whether access to the category ‘Norwegian’ is granted on the basis of ‘ethnicity’ or on the basis of other factors can be understood to point back to the question of what constitutes the basis of nationhood in Norway. Like in many other European countries, there is not (yet?) a new, agreed-upon image of national identity and national belonging that reflects a situation where a considerable part of the population has a familial history of migration.

The next quote by Anne, also a majority participant, expands on this topic.

> Anne: it’s not so easy to know what to say about people (…), whether they are immigrants, or first-generation immigrants, or Norwegian. (…) It’s a bit difficult with different nationalities, it’s easy to misstep when you are supposed to describe people. (…) I even feel that now, that I am a bit scared to, in a way say – to use the wrong words about different groups. That it’s going to come out wrong.
>
> Laura: what are you scared about?
>
> Anne: that I will sound, maybe racist, or, that I say something wrong that offends somebody.

Several participants stated, like Anne, that they were worried about using the wrong labels and thus being understood as racist. This worry can be understood as a consequence of the insecurity around the basis of nationhood discussed above. When people are unsure whether the main criterion for ‘Norwegianness’ is ancestry/ethnicity or another criterion, like citizenship or residence, it is not surprising that they would be worried about mislabeling others. Anne’s fear of sounding racist seems to stem from an insecurity around whether the ethnonational can be a legitimate reference point for Norwegianness, coupled with an understanding that this can be problematic or offensive. Ultimately, the insecurity that Anne expresses here raises the question of how the nation is imagined and what that means for national membership criteria. This worry about being offensive or racist is not only expressed with regards to the category

Norwegian but also in regards to other categories, so we will encounter it several times in this chapter and the next.

5.2.4 Phenotype as a Boundary?

When asked about the term 'Norwegian', many participants mentioned phenotype as an aspect of Norwegianness. For instance, Liv, a majority participant, shared the following:

> Liv: I've actually been asked whether I'm Norwegian. I have kind of dark features (mørke trekk), and some people think I look like I'm not Norwegian, but you think so?
>
> Laura: I don't know, hehe.
>
> Liv: I do have blue eyes.

This quote by Liv points to an assumption and experience that 'dark features' make one look 'non-Norwegian'. While her 'dark features' – of which her dark hair probably is a part – thus make her look 'less Norwegian', her 'blue eyes' seem to point in the opposite direction, making her more Norwegian. Indeed, several majority participants shared similar reflections, with some explaining that they have been asked where they 'are from originally' because of their phenotype. One majority participant has a (biological) sibling who has repeatedly been insulted in public and told to 'go home to where you came from' based on 'not looking Norwegian'. These examples point to the fact that there is a very narrow, light-complexioned phenotypical range that is associated with being Norwegian. This range is so narrow that even some majority participants have experienced having their belonging questioned.

Many minority participants shared this experience. When discussing the category 'Norwegian' with minority participants, quite a lot of the discussion revolved around them feeling excluded from that category, and phenotype emerged as an important factor in this context. For instance, when I asked Farida, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from Pakistan, whether she thought skin color played a role for how one was approached and treated by others, she said:

> Farida: Yes, I think so. Hm, yes. I proudly call myself Norwegian, but I know that many people don't consider me Norwegian.

Farida thus links her skin color to the fact that 'many people don't consider [her] Norwegian'.

In the next quote, Iman, who was born in Norway to parents with a North African background also discusses the link between phenotype and Norwegianness:

> Iman: Norwegians who emigrated to the USA during the war *feel* American, but they know that they also have their origin in Norway. At least those I talked to. But *for them* it's more

> accepted [to say that they are Norwegian], and that is quite interesting. [For me] it's not accepted, almost, to say that 'Yes, I am Norwegian' – 'You're not Norwegian' – 'What do you mean?'. [What they mean is] that I am not white, right. And if [my husband] had said 'I am Norwegian', nobody would have reacted to that, even though he has dark features. But they still ask: 'yes, but are you completely Norwegian?'. Then [he says]: 'My father is [from continental Europe]' – just because he has dark features. That's why I think that when [they say] Norwegian, they mean skin color.

Iman compares herself to Norwegians who emigrated to the USA several generations ago and to her husband who has one Norwegian and one foreign-born parent from a continental European country. When comparing whose claims to Norwegianness are accepted as authentic, she arrives at the conclusion that 'skin color' plays an important role. In her opinion, being light-complexioned is a prerequisite for being able to authentically claim Norwegianness.

This quote highlights not only the importance of phenotype, but also the importance of having one's own claims of identity or belonging accepted by others. In the quote, there is an unnamed counterpart who either accepts or questions Iman's and her husband's claims to Norwegianness ('Yes, I am Norwegian' – ***'You're not Norwegian'***). At some point, Iman refers to this counterpart as 'they' ('But they still ask…'). Iman does not say this explicitly, but it seems reasonable to assume that the 'they' in this quote refers to a generalized idea of 'white majority Norwegians'. Whether 'they' accept Iman's self-identification as Norwegian is very important to her.

Many minority participants feel strongly about the significance of phenotype for being understood as Norwegian and formulate it as a rather impermeable boundary. This topic takes up a lot of space in interviews with minority participants, whereas it is peripheral in interviews with majority participants. Many minority participants expressed that having a darker complexion or other phenotypical traits that are not associated with Norwegianness, such as voluminous dark curls, means that they can 'never really be Norwegian' in the majority's eyes.

Interestingly, no majority participant formulated phenotype as an impermeable boundary around Norwegianness, but some of them discussed the relationship. For instance, Anne said the following:

> Anne: And then there are of course people who are born to, maybe Pakistani parents – which makes them first generation immigrants[56]. So, they grew up in Norway, just like me, right. So, then it's a bit difficult to know, I suppose…
>
> Laura: what do you mean?
>
> Anne: well, it's hard to tell… Well, if you are a first-generation immigrant, and you are dark-skinned, and maybe you wear a hijab, well, it's difficult to know how to categorize (putte i båser) people.

[56] I assume she means 'second generation immigrants'.

Anne mentions three factors that make it difficult to know whether to categorize someone as Norwegian or not, namely having parents who were born abroad, being dark-skinned, and wearing a hijab. While she does not say that a dark-skinned person can never be Norwegian, she clearly interprets it as an indicator that makes her unsure.

It is interesting that – with some exceptions – the only majority participants who mention phenotype as playing a role for Norwegianness are the ones who have themselves experienced being interpreted as 'non-Norwegian'. This might mean that it is easier to speak about these experiences than about one's belief that being Norwegian entails being 'white' or 'light-complexioned' or that participants are not conscious of the meaning of phenotype unless they have slightly 'dark features' themselves.

This section about the category 'Norwegian' has shown that there is a lot of discussion regarding this category. Many participants debated rather than answered the question of what 'being Norwegian' means to them. While some majority participants pointed to an idea of the 'typically Norwegian', minority participants often contested the 'typically Norwegian' as membership criteria and staked out counter-claims. Examining the question of who can be Norwegian sheds light on the fact that some majority participants feel insecure around the status of ethnicity and ancestry as membership criteria. Finally, phenotype seems to play a role for understandings of Norwegianness. Both majority and minority participants perceive a light phenotype as 'more Norwegian' and a darker phenotype as 'less Norwegian'. However, minority participants formulate it as a much more impenetrable boundary. Majority Norwegians seem more likely to mention the importance of phenotype if they have (slightly) dark features themselves. The connection between Norwegianness and phenotype will be revisited in the next chapter when discussing the terms 'ethnically Norwegian' and 'white'. Another interesting finding regarding the category 'Norwegian' is the absence of any discussion related to either national minorities or Sámis.

5.3 Immigrant, Foreigner, and Minority

This section discusses three terms that can be used to describe people with an immigrant background, namely 'immigrant', 'foreigner', and 'minority'.

5.3.1 Denotations…

In the following quote, Elisabeth, who was born in East Asia and moved to Norway as a young child, explains how she differentiates the terms 'immigrant' and 'foreigner' from each other:

> Elisabeth: An 'immigrant' to me is a person who has a country background from a different place, and who came to Norway in order to take up residence here. 'Foreigners' are other people who are in Norway and haven't taken up residence. A foreigner can be here on a business trip, they can be tourists… they can be anything [as long as they] don't need a residence permit.

In this quote, Elisabeth explains the core meaning of the two terms, defining 'immigrant' as a person from abroad who has taken up residence in Norway, and 'foreigner' as a person from abroad who is in Norway temporarily. As will be discussed below, participants actually associated much more with these terms and ascribed them meanings that transcended their literal meaning. It thus makes sense, for all three terms, to differentiate between their denotations, i.e. their direct or core meaning, and their connotations, i.e. their implied meaning or associations.

Asked how they understood the term 'minority', some participants answered 'someone who is different from the majority', 'someone who is not a part of the majority', or 'someone who is a minority number-wise'. While these are less precise than the definitions Elisabeth offers above, they can be understood as approximations to the 'core meaning' of the term 'minority'.

5.3.2 … and Connotations

The following quote by Alexandra, who moved to Norway from South America as a young child, provides a good starting point for exploring the connotations that the terms 'immigrant', 'foreigner', and 'minority' carry. When I asked Alexandra what she thought about the term 'minority background', she answered:

> Alexandra: Yes, that's a very neutral word, I feel. The kind of word that one is to use because the other words are too ugly, hehe. And actually, I think [it's about] looking different. (pause) Or like, that you are darker than the others, hehe, something like that. It really isn't, but, uhm, yeah. I feel it is often used for… uhm... a child who has darker skin or hair. That's a child with a minority background because there is some foreign parent, or grandparent or someone there who [is the reason for] the child looking darker than the others. Something like that.
>
> Laura: and you think that a child of two Frenchmen or to Danes wouldn't necessarily be…?
>
> Alexandra: no, that's precisely it. Well, according to the definition they are. But I don't think it's used so much about them, no. (Pause). No, well, (…) it's more easily used about others, where it's easier to see, I would say. This is true for all those terms. [They have a lot to do] with looks (utseende), I think. At least they do for me.
>
> Laura: yeah. When you hear 'foreigner', or 'immigrant', you think
>
> Both at the same time: dark
>
> Alexandra: yes, you do. Immediately.

Alexandra asserts that all three categories designate individuals who have darker skin or hair and who thus ‘look different’. She points out that there is a discrepancy between the terms’ definitions and how they are used and understood (‘according to the definition they are. But I don’t think it’s used so much about them’). Alexandra pauses a lot during the quote while she reflects on the difference between the core meaning of the categories and the associations they produce, but it seems that she feels quite secure about these associations, even though they are not a part of the terms’ literal meaning. Indeed, the associations Alexandra describes here are fairly consistent across participants.

It is further noticeable that Alexandra uses a rather careful language when describing phenotypical difference. She uses the expressions ‘looking different’, ‘darker skin or hair’, ‘looks’, and ‘where it’s easier to see’. Implicitly, what she is talking about is looking different from the white majority and being able to see or infer someone’s migration background by way of phenotype. In an English-speaking context, this would probably be expressed in a more explicitly color-coded or racial language by saying ‘this word is commonly used for non-white people’. Like many participants, Alexandra seems very careful as to how she words her understanding that phenotype/race plays a role for how these categories are used.

Alexandra’s quote addresses the discrepancy between these categories’ denotations and connotations. They convey an image of non-whiteness that is not a part of the terms’ core meanings. In the following quote, Ellen, a majority participant, expands on the consequences of this discrepancy.

> Ellen: I think that when you hear about statistics, like, this and this many percent of [the population] in Norwegian prisons are immigrants, many people will immediately have a [mental] image of who these immigrants are. And often, [they will think of] immigrants who are visible in terms of skin, or hair, or culture (…). While maybe many of those immigrants who are in prison have white looks (har et hvitt utseende), are from Eastern Europe or other places in Europe, and hence they don’t fit this description, but they are immigrants, too, and they are part of the statistics. They can be Swedes, as well.

Ellen’s example illustrates how the connotation ‘non-white phenotype’ that the term ‘immigrant’ carries can lead to confusion. This happens when the term is employed with the denotation in mind, for instance in police statistics or media reporting, while the audience understands the message in terms of the phenotypical/racial connotation it carries. Interestingly, four different participants – independently of each other and without me asking – used this example of prison statistics to explain how the term ‘immigrant’ evokes a skewed picture in people’s mind. The effect of using the term ‘immigrant’ in this way is that it inflates the perceived criminality of non-white immigrants.

Some participants further mentioned that the term ‘immigrant’ for them carries a connotation of ‘non-Western’. For instance, Berit, a majority participant, said:

> Berit: When it's people from non-Western countries, then it's very easy to use the word 'immigrants', but when it's someone else…
>
> Laura: What do you say then? (…)
>
> Berit: I don't know. But I do distinguish. But, it's a stupid distinction, uhm, it's not.. actually correct. 'Immigrants' should be everyone who moves here from a different country, no matter the reason.

The association 'non-Western' that Berit mentions here and the association 'non-white' that Alexandra mentioned above can be understood as interrelated, but they stress slightly different dimensions of difference. Whereas 'non-white' stresses the visual more, 'non-Western' emphasizes the geographic and possibly the cultural. It may be that 'non-Western' is used as a substitute for 'non-white', but this is somewhat speculative. Further, participants discussed associations relating to reasons for migrating when it came to the term 'immigrant'. While some understand the term as a synonym for 'refugee', other precisely define it in opposition to the term 'refugee'.

Finally, some participants mentioned that they associate the term 'immigrant' with being Muslim. For instance, Anne, a majority participant, explained:

> Anne: I may well consider people who were born in Norway immigrants, if they wear a hijab and if I don't know them.

Regarding the term 'minority', several participants pointed out that it can designate different axes along which one can be a minority. For instance, Farida, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from Pakistan, explained:

> Farida: Well, I'm a minority as a woman, then I'm a minority because I'm brown, and then I'm a minority because I'm religious, well, visibly religious, too. So, there are many factors here. (…) I try to differentiate between them.

Farida mentions three different factors that make her a minority and expresses a desire to differentiate between them. Other participants argued that since the term 'minority' can refer to different dimensions, it is somewhat unclear and in need of a qualifier. Other minority axes that participants pointed to were disability, gender, LGBTQI identities, poverty, unemployment, language, and religion.

5.3.3 Positive, Negative, or Neutral?

I asked participants whether they thought that the terms 'immigrant', 'foreigner', and 'minority' carried positive, negative, or neutral associations. Asked this, Annette, a majority participant, answered the following about the term 'immigrant':

> Annette: The word 'immigrant' and 'immigrant population' is something that is used quite a lot in common parlance in Norway. I think it can be understood as relatively neutral, descriptive. Like an action a person has carried out. But many people also use it with a negative ring. Like, when they want to talk about all these immigrants who come here and steal our jobs.

Annette does not think that the word itself is negative, but states that it is often used in a negative manner. When asked about the term 'foreigner', they[57] answered:

> Annette: It's not a neutral word! Many people use it as a derogatory term and as something that gives negative characteristics based on skin color, religion, and culture. I feel that this word is maybe used more orally. I feel that I have seen it less in writing.

Annette thus distinguishes between the term 'immigrant', which they feel is neutral, but often used negatively, and foreigner, which they see as always negative. Many participants agreed with this distinction, but some participants also held a different view. For instance, Halima, who has a Somali background and moved to Norway as a young child, stated:

> Halima: It's not because the words are negative, but because they have been used in such negative contexts. That's why when I hear 'foreigner' and 'minority background' (…) and 'immigrant' then it's like, immediately something negative. Because when growing up, this has always been an isolated (…) group who does something wrong all the time. That's what it means to me.

Halima does not differentiate between the three terms in question and feels that all of them carry a negative connotation because she has consistently heard negative messages about the category of people they designate. The negative messages thus spill over and taint the terms themselves. Similarly, Samrath, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, explained:

> Samrath: When you use a term like 'ethnic minority', 'non-white', 'non-Norwegian', 'foreigner', 'black' or whatever it is, I think the point is: all these terms in the end are about one thing. 'You're not like *me*'. That's what it's about, right. Or: 'You're not like *us*'.

Samrath expresses that these terms are used to create in- and outgroups and that they are thus excluding.

In general, many participants considered 'minority' a more neutral and less negative term than 'immigrant' and 'foreigner'. This was for instance expressed by Alexandra in a quote further above, who called it 'a very neutral word (…). The kind of word that one is to use because the other words are too ugly'.

[57] Annette identifies as non-binary trans and prefers the pronouns they/them (hen).

5.3.4 Self-designation

Another question I asked participants is whether they used the categories discussed here to refer to themselves. Regarding the term 'immigrant', Valentina, who moved to Norway from South America as an adult, stated:

> Valentina: I think that I have talked about myself as 'us immigrants', for example, I say that about us. I use that [expression] quite a lot because that's what I am.

While Valentina thus emphatically claims the term 'immigrant' for herself and also used it as a self-designation several times throughout the interview, most minority participants stated that they do not call themselves an 'immigrant'. However, the term 'foreigner' was very popular as a self-designation among minority participants. For instance, Alexandra, who moved to Norway from South America as a young child, said about the term 'foreigner':

> Alexandra: I use it for people who look foreign or, well, who have parents from a different country, but who aren't foreign, they are Norwegian, of course. But I call them 'foreigners'. I think that has to do with slang from my youth, right. Like: 'foreigner'. I also refer to myself as a 'foreigner'. People sometimes… - for example [name], my partner, can be like 'huh? What you do you mean?'… Yeah, I understand that it's bad, it's not very specific, or used correctly, but I do use it. I just think that it's a *much* easier word, hehe. It's only to describe that somebody has some kind of background.

Alexandra's quote exemplifies a very wide spread use of the term 'foreigner', which is used as a self-designation by people with a minority background, independently of whether they hold Norwegian citizenship or were born in Norway. As Alexandra puts it: '[they] aren't foreign, they are Norwegian, of course'. Alexandra explains that she uses the term to refer to herself and for others who 'look foreign or (…) have parents from a different country'. Many participants with a minority background stated that they use the term 'foreigner' to refer to themselves or that they did so when they were younger.

This usage stands in contrast to the fact that many participants considered the term 'foreigner' to carry a negative connotation. It seems that by using the term as a self-designation, people are claiming it back, whereas it otherwise is seen as negative and inappropriate. The appropriation of slurs is well documented in the social science literature for many different minority groups, for example the African American community and LGBTQI communities (Andersson, 2005; Bianchi, 2014; Croom, 2011; Ritchie, 2017). In the instance at hand, the term 'foreigner' thus captures experiences of exclusion from national belonging and turns them around into a self-designation. Further, Alexandra states that she uses the term 'for people who *look foreign*'. Hence, differing phenotypically from a 'typically Norwegian' light

complexion plays a role for who identifies with this term. Finally, some participants reported that they used the term 'minority' as a self-designation, but the usage was nowhere near as widespread as for 'foreigner'.

5.3.5 Insecurity

Finally, a topic that emerged regarding the categories 'immigrant', 'foreigner', and 'minority' is that many participants felt a lot of insecurity around how they can be used. The following interview excerpt from the interview with Nina, a majority participant, illustrates this finding.

> Nina: I notice that I become very aware of what kind of words I use, or I am afraid to say something wrong
>
> Laura: When you talk to me during the interview, or generally?
>
> Nina: Generally, generally. I didn't think so much about it now, but… those are touchy words because… I just think of those people who are second generation or third generation, and they… I don't want to say something that is offensive in a way. That's why you become very aware of your choice of words. (silence). If I say like… If I say… Is it in a way right for my friend if I say 'second generation immigrant', is that right, or will she be offended? If I say that? Is it more correct for her if I say 'Norwegian'? 'With an immigrant background'? (…) I sometimes feel it's a pitfall and I notice that I become kind of afraid of what, in way – well, not afraid, but that I become a bit – yeah, what's the right word? I become a bit careful, maybe.
>
> Laura: Yeah. But have you talked to your friends about it? About, like, which words they prefer?
>
> Nina: No, I haven't talked about it because I have been a bit afraid that by highlighting it (sette hale på grisen), in a way, that it will be like – it shouldn't be an issue, so why are you bringing that up, in a way? 'I'm Norwegian', right. So in a way I have just tried not to engage with it that at all – well, towards them – not to engage with the fact that they have a different skin color, or that they have a different native language. That's nothing to talk about, in a way. If you understand what I mean.

This quote illustrates the insecurity Nina feels around labeling migration-related difference. Her use of the expressions 'afraid to say something wrong', 'touchy words', 'pitfall', and 'careful' shows that she considers this topic to be very difficult to discuss. She also emphasizes that she does not want to offend anyone by her choice of words. Nina wonders which terms she can use when describing a friend with an immigrant background. She is aware that any labels she may choose may contradict how her friend self-identifies ('is that right, or will she be offended?'). By using the 'wrong' label, she may deny her friend membership in a group to which she feels belonging. Since categories that designate migration-related difference are tied up with people's sense of self, they easily become 'touchy' and complicated. The fact that Nina has a majority background and her friend has a minority background may also play a role here. As discussed above, minority participants experience it as important to have their belonging recognized

by ‘the majority’. Nina does not explicitly say that here, but it seems plausible that her worry to cause offense is rooted in an understanding of these underlying power relationships. Since she has a majority background, her ‘verdict’ as to whether her friend is ‘Norwegian’ or a ‘second generation immigrant’ has the potential to cause offense.

Another factor that may contribute to her insecurity is that there is not one correct terminology that can be learned, but that it changes over time and varies by individual preference. This fact may well create insecurity because there is no way of knowing what is ‘right’. This challenge is compounded by the fact that Nina considers the topic so ‘touchy’ that she is afraid to ask her friends what they prefer.

Nina expresses a fear that asking her friends for their preferences will draw attention to a topic that ‘shouldn’t be an issue’. The use of this expression points to a normative engagement where migration related-different *should not* matter. Nina states that having a different skin color or a different native language ‘is nothing to talk about’, so she just tries ‘not to engage with’ it, at least towards her friends. The way she talks about it, saying ‘well, towards them’ and ‘nothing to talk about, *in a way*’ underscores that actually, this is a topic, and there might be things one could say about it. The fact that she is looking for words she can use to describe her friends’ background to others also speaks to the fact that there are things to talk about here. Finally, her use of the expression ‘sette hale på grisen’[58] also illustrates that there is something here that *could* be talked about, but is not. She does not want to highlight and make explicit what is there implicitly. This can be understood to point to a norm of color-blindness. Color should not be an issue, it should not matter, and even if you feel that it does, you should at least not talk about it.

5.4 Discussion and Conclusion

All the categories discussed in this chapter – ‘Norwegian’, ‘immigrant’, ‘foreigner’, and ‘minority’ – have in common that their meaning is multi-layered and that they generated a lot of discussion by the participants in this study. The categories contain different dimensions and associations about which there are different degrees of agreement. For instance, participants debated the role of the ‘typically Norwegian’, the ethnonational, and of phenotype as reference points for who can be considered ‘Norwegian’. Similarly, they discussed the phenotypical associations of the terms ‘immigrant’, ‘foreigner’, and ‘minority’, and debated to what extent those terms are positive, negative, or neutral in connotation. The minority participants felt excluded from Norwegianness, often on the basis of phenotype,

[58] Literally: ‘pinning a tale on the pig’. Idiomatically, it can roughly be translated as ‘to call a spade a spade’ or ‘to say things clearly’. In the quote above I translated it as ‘to highlight’ because that fits the way Nina uses the expression here.

and they felt that the words used to designate a minority background often carried a negative connotation. The majority participants expressed a lot of insecurity and worried about mislabeling others or as being interpreted as offensive or racist.

All the categories discussed in this chapter convey a phenotypical association. It is present, but is not – or only partly – communicated. Even though the phenotypical dimension is not clearly communicated, participants seem very aware of it, such as Iman who said that 'when they say 'Norwegian', they mean skin color'. At the same time, this latent meaning can create confusion, as was illustrated by the example about prison statistics.

Fifty years ago, virtually the entire population in Norway was white and Norwegian. Even though this has changed and there are today many non-white Norwegians and white immigrants, the associations of white with Norwegian and non-white with immigrant/foreigner are still present. This logic leads to specific population groups being in a squeeze between the categories' denotations and connotations. For instance, non-white international adoptees and non-white Norwegian-born children are often perceived as 'immigrants' or 'non-Norwegian' based on phenotype, whereas white immigrants may more easily be able to 'blend in' and be read as Norwegian. These cases may be perceived as 'exceptions', to the 'rule' that 'Norwegian equals white and immigrant equals non-white', but in fact the three largest immigrant groups in Norway are white Europeans (from Poland, Lithuania and Sweden) (SSB, 2020a).

Overall, it seems that phenotype is an important, albeit under-communicated dimension of all categories discussed here. Participants who differ phenotypically from the majority population – even those who do not have an immigrant background – expressed this more clearly than light complexioned majority participants. The fact that even majority participants with 'dark features' had experienced questions as to 'where they were from originally' shows that the phenotypical range that is associated with ethnic Norwegianness is very narrow.

6 Categories II: Ethnicity and Phenotype/Race

6.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to investigate and map categories that belong to the field of migration-related difference. Specifically, this chapter focuses on categories that describe ethnicity ('ethnically Norwegian') and phenotype/race ('white', 'dark-skinned', 'brown', 'black', 'negro'). Categories like 'white' and 'black' can be understood as phenotypical and / or as racial. I will comment on these different meanings and uses throughout the chapter and will address the relationship between phenotype and race further in the concluding chapter.

6.2 Ethnically Norwegian

Compared to all the categories discussed in the previous chapter, whose meaning was discussed and disputed, there was much less disagreement on or variation in opinions regarding what the category 'ethnically Norwegian' means. Still, the answers comprised several slightly differing dimensions, which will be presented and discussed in what follows.

6.2.1 Ancestry

Participants were unanimous in saying that the main meaning of the term 'ethnically Norwegian' revolves around ancestry. In a very typical statement, Iman, who was born in Norway to parents from North Africa, stated:

> Iman: To me, 'ethnically Norwegian' means that you have parents who are ethnically Norwegian, that your heritage (arven) or your ancestors, your grandparents and your parents are from Norway. For generations. That's what I think 'ethnically Norwegian' [means].

The unanimity about the term 'ethnically Norwegian' stands out among all the terms discussed in this chapter. Participants tended to reply to this question promptly, stating matter-of-factly that the term 'ethnic Norwegian' designates a person whose ancestry is Norwegian 'all the way back'. It is interesting to contrast this every-day understanding of the term 'ethnicity' with a sociological definition. According to Steve Fenton (2010, p. 22), the term 'ethnic group' has two main dimensions: it refers to a group that is defined both by its ancestry and by its cultural practice. Between those two dimensions, cultural practice

tends to be more important. Yet, this does not correspond to how the term 'ethnically Norwegian' is understood and used by interview participants in this study, who give absolute precedence to ancestry and do not discuss cultural practice when asked about the term 'ethnically Norwegian'.

6.2.2 Phenotype

Further, participants quite unanimously reported that the term 'ethnically Norwegian' also points to a certain phenotype. For instance, when I asked Alexandra, who moved to Norway from South America as a young child, what she associated with the term 'ethnic Norwegian', she responded:

> Alexandra: It's a person who looks light, but not in a Polish way, hehe, right. (…) That somebody looks completely Norwegian, without looking Slavic or foreign in other ways. I feel that it relates to how you look, maybe. I associate it with that, and use it in that sense.

Other participants also described the phenotypical associations they have with the term 'ethnically Norwegian' as 'white', 'Viking Norwegian', or 'blond and blue-eyed'. Given that Norway has historically had a rather homogenous population, where the Sámi, who for a long time were defined as 'non-white' were marginal, it is not surprising that 'ethnically Norwegian', meaning 'fully of Norwegian descent', would evoke an image of the 'most common' phenotype.

Some participants also used the terms 'white' and 'ethnic Norwegian' as synonyms for one another, switching back and forth between using either descriptor within the same anecdote. In this same vein, Linn, a majority participant, explained:

> Linn: when you say 'ethnically Norwegian', I actually just think 'completely white'. [Even though] you don't have to be Norwegian [to be white], but it shows much better that you are not Norwegian when you are not white.

For Linn, the core meaning of the term 'ethnically Norwegian' is that it evokes 'complete whiteness'. In the quote above, Linn expands on this by explaining that there are of course white people who are non-Norwegian, but that if someone is non-white, it becomes immediately apparent that the person in question is not (ethnically) Norwegian. Hence, it could be said that what the term 'ethnically Norwegian' really points to in her view is the exclusion of non-white individuals from the category.

Linn's quote suggests that whiteness is an important component of ethnic Norwegianness. This is not surprising when considering that the population in Norway has historically been almost exclusively white, but it is surprising when considering that being 'white' is a much wider category than being 'ethnically Norwegian' and as such not the boundary one would expect to be named, first and foremost. When asking

about the category ‘ethnically Norwegian’, I would have expected participants to delineate it from other ethnicities or nationalities. The fact that whiteness is mentioned by many participants as important to their understanding of the term ‘ethnically Norwegian’ shows that phenotype is considered an important boundary around ethnic Norwegianness.

Another example that illustrates this link is from the interview with Bente, a majority participant. When discussing which pre-school her infant daughter would attend in the future, Bente mentioned that there was a pre-school just around the corner from where she lived that had a ’50-50’ composition in terms of ethnicity. When I asked her how she knew what the ethnic composition was, she said that ‘you can just go and have a look’. The implication was that one could tell the ethnic composition from passing by the pre-school and observing the children there.

Of course, when passing by the pre-school and looking at the children playing outside, you can glean whether they are light- or dark-complexioned, but you cannot see their ‘ethnic’ or national background. After all, the three most numerous immigrant groups in Norway are from Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden. The fact that Bente says that you can observe ethnicity by ‘looking’ speaks both to the fact that a light phenotype is automatically associated with ethnic Norwegianness, but also to the fact that what she perceives as salient regarding ‘ethnicity’ is a question of light versus dark phenotype, more so that a question of individual country backgrounds.

Just like the last chapter showed that the terms ‘immigrant’, ‘foreigner’, and ‘minority’ carry a connotation of non-whiteness, it becomes clear that whiteness is an important aspect of ethnic Norwegianness. This seems to constitute a racial boundary and indicates that ‘ethnic Norwegian’ is a racialized category. The ones who are ‘truly out’ are non-white immigrants and their descendants. It is curious that none of these categories are explicitly racial or even phenotypical – ‘immigrant’ does not imply race or skin color, after all – but their usage clearly is. This finding points to the fact that phenotype/race is salient and that it is expressed through other categories.

6.2.3 Purity

Finally, a last theme that emerged with regard to the term ‘ethnic Norwegian’ is that it refers to one’s genetic make-up, one’s ‘blood’, or ‘race’. For instance, Sofia, who was born in Norway to parents with, respectively, a majority Norwegian and a Southern European background, said, about the term ‘ethnically Norwegian’:

> Sofia: for me, it's about purification (renselse). 'Ethnically Norwegian', maybe this is from the olden days, it means that you are pure, that you are kind of Aryan, like you also should be.

The words 'pure', 'purification' and 'Aryan' have clear racial implications. Sofia further underscores this thought by saying that to her, the term 'ethnically Norwegian' conveys an idea of what you 'also should be'. This addition could be interpreted as implying a hierarchy, where being 'ethnically Norwegian' is 'what you should be', i.e. good, whereas not being ethnically Norwegian is 'what you should not be', i.e. bad. Notably, Sofia followed this explanation up by saying that she thought the term 'ethnically Norwegian' should not be used in every-day speech because of its problematic meaning.

This theme was clearly less prevalent than the other meanings of the term 'ethnically Norwegian' discussed so far.

6.2.4 Criticisms and Doubts

Many participants – also those who did not report associating 'ethnically Norwegian' with the words 'Aryan' or 'purification' – discussed what they saw as the term's problematic aspects. For instance, Rian, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents form India, shared the following:

> Rian: To me, 'ethnically Norwegian' is a device, a rhetorical device that is used to create a distinction that one feels has been washed away by saying for example: 'Yes, you are born in Norway and you grew up in Norway and therefore you are Norwegian, and you are allowed to be, but you surely aren't *ethnically* Norwegian because that is different, still'.

Rian thus argues that the term 'ethnically Norwegian' creates a distinction between the 'truly Norwegian' and the 'passport Norwegian'. Subdividing the idea of Norwegianness in this way institutes an impenetrable boundary around 'true Norwegianness'. Since whiteness, as discussed above, constitutes an important boundary around ethnic Norwegianness, it is probable that this division into 'passport Norwegian' and 'truly Norwegian' also follows a phenotypical/racial logic.

Rian understands the term 'ethnically Norwegian' as 'creating a distinction' and thereby performing an excluding function. The year 2017 saw the publication of the anthology 'Skal liksom liksom-passet ditt bety noe?' (Reiss, 2017) (approximately: 'Like, Should Your Kinda-Passport Mean Something?'). The book contains contributions from young Norwegian writers with a migration background who discuss experiences of discrimination and exclusion and argue for the definition of a new, inclusive Norwegian 'we'. Its title alludes to the same sentiment that Rian expresses in this quote, namely that holding Norwegian citizenship may make you Norwegian *de nomine*, but not *de facto*.

Further, some participants expressed insecurity as to whether the category ‘ethnically Norwegian’ can legitimately be used. Linn, a majority participant, said:

> Linn: Well, I think it’s a bit weird, right, ‘ethnically Norwegian’, does that mean ‘white’? (…) I think it’s a bit difficult to always know what to say. I try to do it right, because I don’t want to be racist, or perceived as racist.

Like some majority participants in the previous chapter, Linn here expresses a fear of ‘being racist’ or ‘being perceived as racist’. To understand this quote one has to be aware of just how taboo racial qualifiers are in Norway. *If* ethnically Norwegian means ‘white’, then this makes it a potentially racist word for Linn. Since she is not exactly sure that is what the term means, she finds it hard to ‘do it right’ and choose a terminology she is comfortable with. The fact that the phenotypical/racial dimension of the category is not clearly articulated – but implied by association – thus creates insecurity for Linn.

Finally, even though participants were unanimous about the fact that the term ‘ethnically Norwegian’ refers to ancestry and phenotype, a number of participants still expressed doubt about the category’s exact boundaries. For instance, Annette, a majority participant, explained:

> Annette: Well, the term ‘ethnically Norwegian’ is very tricky because I don’t exactly understand what it means. What is ‘ethnically Norwegian’, really? Are you ethnically Norwegian (…) if Portuguese sailors shipwrecked [off the coast of] Western Norway in the 17th century and mixed with the local gene pool?[59] Are you still ethnically Norwegian then? Where are the boundaries? Well, one might have to do genetic testing. But do we want to go there? We don’t want to go there.

Annette questions the boundaries of the category ‘ethnically Norwegian’. Specifically, they[60] wonder about the degree of genetic purity that is required and they link this to a temporal dimension, asking whether ‘foreign’ gene admixtures that happened a long time ago play a role. While Annette thus reflected on the past, several minority participants wondered whether future generations born in Norway – their own children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren – would be seen as ethnically Norwegian at some point. By debating the temporal dimensions relating to the concept ‘ethnically Norwegian’ – either regarding the past or the future – these participants thus challenge the often taken-for-granted manner in which the concept dichotomously sorts people into either ‘ethnic Norwegians’ or ‘non-ethnic Norwegians’.

[59] Anecdotal evidence has it that this is the explanation of the higher occurrence of brown eyes and dark hair color along the Norwegian west coast compared with the rest of the country.
[60] Annette identifies as non-binary trans and prefers the pronouns them/them (Norwegian: hen).

Similarly, Lars, who has a Norwegian and a Swedish parent, reflected on the boundaries of the category 'ethnically Norwegian'. Talking about a classmate who was transnationally adopted, he stated:

> Lars: I think this [concept of] 'ethnically Norwegian' is a little problematic. Because in a way I think of a guy called [name], who I went to high school with, who actually is dark-skinned, or darker, and who is from Portugal, I actually think of him as ethnically Norwegian. Because maybe I give a lot of importance to language. He speaks […] an even more pronounced [regional] dialect than I do. So, it would be weird not to call him 'ethnically Norwegian'. I don't know, [I guess] it's wrong when you think about what the word 'ethnicity' means.

Lars considers the importance of language/dialect as greater than phenotype when it comes to whom he considers 'ethnically Norwegian'. However, he seems to think that this consideration is not universally recognized, since he states '[I guess] it's wrong when you think about what the word 'ethnicity' means'. Based on this quote, it seems that Lars thinks that the generally recognized meaning of 'ethnically Norwegian' revolves around skin color or biology, and that even though he considers language/dialect important, this is not universally recognized.

In sum, the meanings that participants associate with the term 'ethnically Norwegian' mainly revolve around ancestry and phenotype, with some participants also making connections to genes, blood, and racial purity. This section has further shown that many participants problematized this term and debated its boundaries. While the category 'ethnically Norwegian' *de nomine* situates people with regard to the nation, its meaning revolves exclusively around ancestry and phenotype. The term expresses a type of national belonging that points back to a biological basis. While there are many different definitions of 'race' and 'ethnicity', Steve Fenton (2010, p. 22) maintains that both 'race' and 'ethnicity' designate 'descent and culture communities', with 'race' emphasizing physical or visible difference and 'ethnicity' emphasizing cultural difference. Following this distinction, 'ethnically Norwegian' corresponds to the definition of a racial rather than an ethnic category, since it is exclusively defined on the basis of ancestry and phenotype and not on the basis of cultural practice.

6.3 Phenotypical / Racial Categories

6.3.1 White

6.3.1.1 Norwegian

When I asked Samrath, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, whether he used the word 'white' in every-day language, he replied:

> Samrath: I actually think that happens, but I think it's more natural for me to say *Norwegian.* (…)
>
> Laura: And to mean 'white'.
>
> Samrath: And to mean 'white'. Right, yeah. So I say 'Norwegian'. And that's really weird because I am Norwegian myself. I think my incorrect use of these words [comes from] having been told what I am not. Throughout the years, right. I'm not Norwegian, right. And [at the same time], I *am*. *That* is very, very weird.

Samrath's answer that he would rather say 'Norwegian' when he means 'white' is something many participants reported. This finding may at a first glance not seem surprising, given that whiteness also emerged as a dimension of the categories 'Norwegian' and 'ethnically Norwegian'. Yet, it is maybe here this association surprised me the most. 'White' is a much wider category than 'Norwegian'. The fact that many participants nonetheless reported that their first association with the term 'white' was 'Norwegian', or that they would use 'Norwegian' as a synonym for 'white' shows just how strongly interrelated the two concepts are. While the two terms are not technically synonyms, they are used as synonyms by many participants.

In this context, some participants also explained that 'Norwegian' or 'ethnically Norwegian' were the 'politically correct' terms to use instead of 'white'. Interestingly, majority participants were much quicker to reply 'Norwegian' when asked what 'white' means, than 'white' when asked what 'Norwegian' means. Taken together, this suggests that majority participants find it much more legitimate to speak about nationality and ethnicity than about phenotype and race. If 'Norwegian' is the politically correct equivalent of 'white', this also suggest a strong norm of color blindness, where color is socially meaningful but should not be named.

Returning to Samrath's quote above, he also points out that it is 'weird' for him to use 'white' and 'Norwegian' as synonyms because he is Norwegian himself. What makes it 'weird' is that he as a non-white Norwegian would use this terminology, even though he embodies the contradictory nature of that use of terms. He follows this up by explaining that he is in a double position, where he at the same time *is* and *is not* Norwegian.

Similarly, several minority participants explained that they use the term 'Norwegian' as an antonym to the term 'foreigner', where the pairing 'Norwegian-foreigner' then comes to mean 'light-complexioned' versus 'dark-complexioned' or 'white' versus 'non-white'. This pairing illustrates once more how strongly ideas of national belonging and phenotype are intertwined and it suggests that minority participants, too, are to an extent beholden to the norm that phenotype is less legitimate to talk about than national belonging. This norm then leads to the development of color-coded terms. This strong association

between whiteness and Norwegianness leads to many non-white Norwegians feeling excluded from ‘Norwegianness’.

6.3.1.2 Light Skin Color

A second association that participants had with the term ‘white’ is that it designates skin color. Ingrid, who moved Norway from Sweden as an adult, defined the term ‘white’ like this:

> Ingrid: I think is means that you are light, a lighter skin color, of course. But also that you are from a country where the population is white, or where the original population is white.

This association was presented as relatively uncontroversial and straight-forward by participants, who explained that they understood the term ‘white’ to relate to people’s skin color and other physical features associated with European descent.

6.3.1.3 White Supremacy

Another cluster of associations participants reported with the term ‘white’ was related to high socio-economic status, privilege, superiority, and an idea of ‘white power’. For instance, Ellen, a majority participant, said the following:

> Ellen: In these days [it makes me think of] white, white power, white, uhm…
> Laura: Because of what’s been in the media, with Charlottesville and all that?
> Ellen: Yes, that’s what - what comes to mind

Ellen’s interview was conducted shortly after the white supremacist ‘Unite the Right’ rally that took place in Charlottesville, Virginia, on 11-12 August 2017. The rally and the killing of a counter protester were covered in the Norwegian media and I hence immediately interpreted Ellen’s use of ‘in these days’ as a reference to the rally. Ellen thus associates the use of the term ‘white’ with white supremacy.

Other participants reported associating ‘privilege’ or ‘high socio-economic status’ with the category ‘white’. While these are not the same thing as ‘white power’, what they have in common is that people are critical of the category ‘white’, aware that some people place it atop a hierarchy, and that it bestows privilege.

6.3.1.4 European

While less common than the associations mentioned so far, some participants said that the term 'white' to them meant 'European'. In the quote below, Berit, a majority participant, discusses this association at length. I decided not to redact the quote too much for readability, so that hesitations and incomplete sentences show how she grapples with the association.

> Berit: So, what is white? Yeah, well, you can look at color, uhm, uhm, well, I think 'white', then you're… well, European, or, yeah, ethnically European, right. (pause) Even though, uhm, *parts* of Europe are more influenced by Arab, uhm, influence, for example. Uhm, Spain and Portugal have much more Arab influence, with the Moor- …
>
> Well, regarding looks (utseende), well, you have the Moors who were - . Well, I don't know history that well, but a part of Southern Europe clearly has been more influenced by Arab…. Like, when it comes to looks (utseende) and those things. I would still define all of Europe as white, both when it comes to looks (utseende), and culturally. You can talk about being white, like, culturally, as well. I think. Yeah. (Pause). But, uhm, in a way I think this question [of what 'white' means] is easier [than the previous question of what 'Norwegian' means] because you can just look at color. If you want to. Like skin color and such things. But, uhm, that's not quite right, either. The Arabs aren't that dark, or, as I was saying, some Afghans are white as well, right. Yeah. (Pause). I don't know. And: where do you put (literally: define) the Sámi in all of this? They are white, but they are a completely different culture, actually, than we have in Norway. If we think of Norwegians as not including the Sámi. But the definition of 'white' is… yeah, … (pause). It makes me think: European, ethnically European, yeah.

Berit starts from the idea that 'white' relates to color; yet, throughout the quote she mentions several examples of peoples or regions of origin that make it hard for her to go by color alone when deciding who is 'white' or not. She explains that Arabs are not very dark in complexion, that 'some Afghans are white', that people in Southern Europe are darker in complexion, and that the Sámi are white 'but (…) a completely different culture'. In order to be able to draw a boundary between who is 'white' and 'non-white', she introduces as idea of 'cultural whiteness'. This concept helps her to draw a distinction between 'white' and 'non-white' in those instances when she finds that she cannot decide based on color/phenotype alone. In the end, she concludes by defining 'white' as 'ethnically European', which sounds more like a racial than an ethnic category – to the extent that it is possible to differentiate between the two. 'White' here becomes a category that differentiates the European from the non-European. It is based around an idea of color/phenotype, but also draws on an idea of culture to delineate its boundaries.

6.3.1.5 "Jeez, Can You Call a Human Being That?"

The next point I want to address is how widely the term 'white' is used and whether it is seen as legitimate to use. The following quote by Bente, a majority participant, can shed light on these questions. When I asked Bente what she associated with the term 'white', she replied:

> Bente: I think it sounds a little like, uh, yeah. Being white… is best, kind of. (…)
>
> Laura: Do you use that word yourself?
>
> Bente: No.
>
> Laura: To describe yourself or others? And would you have reacted to it if someone had called you 'white'?
>
> Bente: Well, I would have reacted to that and thought: 'Jeez, can you call a human being that'? ('Jøss, er det en betegnelse på et menneske?'). Like… if… huh? Uhm, yeah. I wouldn't have liked that!

From this exchange it becomes clear that Bente does not want to use the category 'white' *because* she thinks it implies that 'being white is best'. She understands the category 'white' to reference a hierarchy, which she thinks is illegitimate. It could be argued that Bente perceives the term 'white' to refer not to a mere phenotypical description, but to a racial hierarchy. 'Race' is seen as an absolutely illegitimate category in Norwegian public discourse because it is seen as a reference to biological categories and a biological hierarchy. This explains Bente's exclamation of 'Jeez, can you call a human being that?'.

Keeping this in mind can also help with understanding the next quote by Julia, who moved to Norway from Sweden as an adult. When I asked her whether she used the term 'white' to describe herself or others, she replied:

> Julia: Yeah, I think I do. Because it's eas- . Yeah, yes, white, black, yes, I do. Because I don't think it means anything else than just describing a look (et utseende). Which is an easy way of doing that. I don't know how I'd otherwise describe that.

Julia almost excuses her use of the term white, saying 'I'm just describing a look', i.e. a phenotype[61]. What remains unsaid, but is possibly implied is 'I'm not describing a biological racial category, and I'm not implying a racial hierarchy'. Phenotypical/racial categories like 'white' are considered taboo by many in Norway and Julia thus explains herself and emphasizes that she does not mean anything else than a phenotypical description.

Julia and Bente exemplify the opposite ends of the spectrum regarding whether or not the term 'white' can legitimately be used. Compared to all the categories discussed so far in this chapter and in the previous

[61] I will say more about the use of the term 'look' (utseende) as a reference to phenotype in chapter 7.

one, usage of the category 'white' seems least uniform. With other categories (like 'Norwegian', or 'immigrant') discussions revolved around the categories' meaning and to an extent around the implications of their use, e.g. asking whether 'ethnically Norwegian' is an excluding category. With the category 'white', however, participants raised the question whether it was *at all* legitimate to use. Positions taken by participants with regard to this ranged from 'yes, it can be used' through various middle ground positions ('I use it, but I'm not happy with it', 'I use it sometimes, but I'd rather use a synonym', 'I don't use it, but I use a synonym', or 'I use it only in specific situations') to a decided 'no'. Based on this great divergence, the term 'white' can be called a contested category. There is much insecurity around whether it can legitimately be used.

With the other categories discussed so far, participants with the same background (majority or minority) tended to use categories similarly or raise the same criticisms to them. For instance, participants with a minority background were more likely to challenge the category 'Norwegian' by arguing for new or additional membership criteria (though some majority participants also did so). However, regarding the question whether the category 'white' can be used, participants' background seemed not to matter. Both majority and minority Norwegians' answers fall all along the spectrum.

Finally, many participants use the word 'white' when referring to other geographical contexts, e.g. when talking about their semester abroad in Australia, New Zealand, or the US, but they did not use it when talking about Norway. Some participants explicitly stated that the term makes sense 'there', but not 'here'. For instance, Kari, a majority participant, explained:

> Kari: It doesn't come naturally for me to use it at all, actually. No, uhm, … I think. But I might – *if* I were talking about the USA, then it might come more naturally that, that you have, like, 'the whites' who are the Europeans, and then, uhm, the Latin Americans, and the African Americans. … But here it's not quite a necessary expression, I think. I don't know. There is no, there is no *use* for it in the same way, I think.

For Kari, a division into 'whites', 'Latin Americans', and 'African Americans' 'might come more naturally' when referring to the USA, but not when referring to Norway. Her explanation that there is 'no *use* for it' seems to suggest that to her, race is not a meaningful category in Norway. When she says that 'it is not quite a necessary expression', it speaks to an understanding that this way of sub-dividing the population does not find any resonance with her.

There is an interesting discrepancy between Kari seeing 'no use' for the term 'white' in Norway and all the ways in which the significance of phenotype/race has surfaced throughout this chapter and the previous one. On the one hand, many of the categories discussed convey a clear phenotypical/racial connotation. Minority participants were particularly clear in expressing this, for instance by saying 'When

they say ‘Norwegian’, they mean skin color’, or ‘When you hear ‘foreigner’ or ‘immigrant’, you think ‘dark’’. Majority participants also expressed these associations, albeit often more carefully, for instance stating that they prefer to use ‘ethnically Norwegian’ instead of ‘white’ because it is more ‘politically correct’. On the one hand, phenotype matters and is woven into these categories. On the other hand, there is a strong norm – more so among majority than minority participants – not to explicitly name phenotype/race, but to replace is with ‘color-less’ / color-blind categories instead.

6.3.2 Dark

The term ‘dark’ (mørk) or ‘dark-skinned’ (mørkhudet) is the most frequently used term to designate any phenotype that is not understood as ‘typically Norwegian’. The term has already made an appearance several times throughout this chapter and the previous one. For instance, Lars described his transnationally adopted classmate as ‘dark-skinned, or darker’, several participants described themselves has having ‘dark features’, and Alexandra explained that the terms ‘immigrant’ and ‘foreigner’ give the association ‘dark’.

The term ‘dark’ is used by both majority and minority participants, and it was often used in a very straightforward manner and without much hesitation. It clearly represents the least controversial way to describe a non-white phenotype and also seems much less controversial than the term ‘white’.

The terms ‘dark’ and ‘dark-skinned’ are used to refer to a wide range of phenotypes. Sometimes participants try to express gradations by using modifiers like ‘dark features’ (mørke trekk) (i.e. central European, Mediterranean, Middle Eastern phenotypes) or ‘completely dark’ (helt mørk) (i.e. black).

Another topic that was discussed in relation to the term ‘dark-skinned’ is that being ‘dark-skinned’ can make one the target for exclusion, discrimination, or racism. These topics have to do more with the experience of being ‘dark-skinned’ than with the terms ‘dark’ and ‘dark-skinned’ itself. They will be covered more extensively in chapter 8. In general, with the terms that describe darker or non-white phenotypes, which I discussed more with minority participants, the discussions revolved more around the experience of being ‘dark’, rather than around the use of different terms and categories.

Very recently, as a part of the debates about racism that dominated Norwegian public debate in the wake of George Floyd’s murder, the term ‘melaninrik’ (literally: rich in melanin) has gained prominence as a self-designation for non-white people (Majid, 2020). Since my data was collected before then, I do not discuss this term in this chapter.

6.3.3 Brown

The term 'brown' was only mentioned by some minority participants, and no majority participants mentioned it. This term is not entirely uncontroversial in use, as the following example illustrates. Farida, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from Pakistan, used the term brown several times during the interview to refer to herself. For instance, when talking about middle school, she stated that she was the only 'brown girl' in class, whereas everyone else was 'Norwegian'. Much later in the interview, we had the following exchange:

> Laura: You used 'brown' a couple of times during the interview.
>
> Farida: Yes, I have. I don't think that's right, but, uhm, how should I otherwise explain…? I can say 'darker', right? Uhm… (she sighs).
>
> Laura: It's absolutely fine by me, hehe
>
> Farida: Yeah, I know that. But, I… don't like, I don't like these… – how shall I put it? These labels (stemplene) because I feel that… – . Well, it's surely possible to use it academically (faglig) to discuss things, but I'm a bit unsure how it's used and how it's interpreted and how it's abused, too.

Farida is unsure if she wants to use the term 'brown' when talking about experiences in her own life where she felt that her own skin color was relevant. She is worried that these kinds of labels can be 'abused'. Like Farida, several minority participants grappled with the question whether they could and wanted to use the term 'brown' when talking about themselves.

Other minority participants, however, took the term 'brown' for granted as a self-designation. Rian, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, had a lot to say about the significance of having brown skin. He was very conscious in his use of this term, and very vocal about being proud of his skin color. Interestingly enough, he did not mention a word about this during the entire first half of the interview. At that point, I asked him if his background played a role at work. He replied that his background is not manifested at work, only his skin color is. I followed up by asking if his skin color played a role at work and he answered 'yes', but stated that it was often difficult to point to very concrete experiences. He compared it to the way gender manifests itself at work, which can also be difficult to substantiate. After that, we had a longer conversation about to what extent there is a vocabulary for talking about skin color and color-based discrimination in Norwegian, compared to English. This conversation paved the way for us being able to speak about phenotype more explicitly, and Rian was much more direct regarding this topic during the second half of the interview. The first thing he did at this point, half-way through the interview, was to revisit his life-course, which we had just covered, and to add episodes in a much more explicit, color-conscious language. The very first episode he added was this one:

> Rian: What I remember from elementary school – now I'll rewind to elementary school – is that there was a period when I thought it was uncomfortable that I had brown skin and that it was clearly outside of what was normal. There weren't many other things that made me different, but *that* I couldn't do anything about. I grew up with an esthetic where, where one simply was white, so it wasn't even… – so it was wrong in all possible ways. And it was, uhm (silence). And it was like – yeah, people wanted to take their summer vacation in warmer countries to get tanned (literally: to become brown[62]), but for sure not as brown as Rian, because that was… right? So it was a kind of…
>
> Laura: Did anyone say that?
>
> Rian: Yes, people said that, and that was [considered] okay [to say]. There was an acceptable brown and a not acceptable brown color. (...) Later on, I've had an intense brown pride period, hehe. It became important for me to celebrate the color brown, as an adult. (…) It was important for me that it wasn't 'You're brown, but that's okay'. I wanted it to be 'You're brown and I *see* that, and that's great!'. That's what I wanted. Not this kind of 'I don't see color'. I wanted 'I see color and I'm excited!'.

The conversational dynamic that led up to this quote illustrates that phenotype and race are anything but obvious topics of conversation and that in order for us to have this conversation, we first needed to make room for it (cf. what was discussed in section 3.6 in the methods chapter). Non-white participants may have previously received negative reactions when openly talking about phenotype/race, and may be especially hesitant to directly address this topic with a white interviewer like me. However, after the ice was broken, metaphorically speaking, Rian ended up talking about his own experiences with and reflections about being brown in great detail.

In terms of his *experience* of being brown, Rian tells that as a child, he experienced his own skin color as 'clearly outside of what was normal' and 'wrong in all possible ways'. As an adult, 'brown pride' has been important to him. Rian has lived abroad in several countries and has had various experiences and received different 'input' regarding brown pride. In countries with historically longer established non-white minority groups, there may be more awareness and more language for these dynamics. In terms of the *category* 'brown', Rian actively uses it to describe himself.

Farida and Rian thus both have experiences of their phenotype being relevant for how they were treated or perceived by others during their childhood. Yet, they make quite different choices regarding language as adults. While Farida thinks that it is problematic or at least not entirely unproblematic to use the term 'brown', Rian celebrates being brown. Still, it also took half an interview before he started talking more openly and directly about color.

[62] The Norwegian equivalent of 'to get tanned' is 'å bli brun' ('to become brown').

6.3.4 Black

The term 'black' is debated, and participants have different opinions about whether it should be used. Only one person I interviewed self-identifies as black; she moved to Norway from an East African country as an adult. The interview with her was (one of only two interviews that was) conducted in English; hence her use of the term 'black' may well not reflect on its Norwegian translation 'svart'.

Consider the following quote by Anne, a majority participant who works as a museum guide.

> Anne: I do use it – white and black, yes. (…) When we do guided tours, for example, we do say 'white' and 'black'. We have some paintings with white and black [people]. And we were told that it is correct to say 'white' and 'black'.
>
> Laura: Instead of?
>
> Anne: Instead of 'colored' for example, which one said in the past. But now you are supposed to say 'black'. (…) We are told which words to use. What is correct.

Anne feels secure in her use of the terms 'white' and 'black' because she has been told that this is 'correct to say'. She later elaborated on this by explaining that she appreciated being told which words to use, as this spared her from misstepping. Incidentally, she was an outlier among the majority participants in that she frequently used phenotypical/racial categories during the interview, even before I started asking about those categories. Interestingly, the terms she actually used throughout the entire interview were 'white' and 'dark'. While she thus uses 'black' at work, it seems that this category has not entered her vocabulary outside the workplace.

In the next quote, Kjersti, a majority participant who has lived in the USA for many years, reflects on the difference between the English word 'black' and its Norwegian equivalent 'svart'.

> Kjersti: The friends, the black friends I had… Uhm, well, it sounds – 'black' in American English sounds different than 'svart' (black) in Norwegian. So when I say 'my black friends' [in Norwegian], then I feel like 'ugh, no, I can't say that!', but 'black' [in English]
>
> Laura: oh? Can you say more about that?
>
> Kjersti: I think that (pause) 'black' in the American context… (pause). Oh, there is so much that is implicit here, which I don't have an explicit language for, but I think when I say 'svart' (black) in the Norwegian context, then I think more of a word that white people use about others. Whereas 'black' in the American context is more of a word that black people use themselves.

Whereas Kjersti would use the term 'black' in English, using the Norwegian word 'svart' makes her pause. Her first reflex is to feel that 'ugh, no, I can't say that'. The Norwegian word does not sit right with her. Other majority participants, too, said that it was not a word that should be used. Overall, the term 'black' was marginal in the interview material. 'Dark' and 'dark-skinned' were considered the 'safest'

and least controversial words to refer to a non-white phenotype by majority participants, and both 'dark' and 'brown' are used for self-description by minority participants.

6.3.5 N-words

I did not include the term 'negro' (hereafter: n-word) in the interview guide, but several participants brought it up during the interviews. There have been several rounds of public debate about this word and its use over the past decades in Norway (Gullestad, 2005). The majority opinion today is that the word is offensive, and the press has for example stopped using it. I decided to include this term here as it clearly is a term that participants still found relevant to address.

For instance, Berit, a majority participant, defended the use of the term in the following way:

> Berit: I actually think it's better to say '[n-word]' than black, but I don't say '[n-slur]'. But I think it's stupid that so many words have, like, become forbidden to say. Because I haven't always thought that '[n-word]' would be something negative. To me, '[n-word]' isn't a negative word. Whereas 'black', to me, goes maybe almost rather… But that's personal, for me. 'Black' ('svart'). But if you say 'svarting' (literally 'blacking'), that's negative, just like '[n-slur]'. (…) And because 'svarting' to me is a negative, a very negative word, therefore 'black' also becomes negative in a way.

Berit argues that while she considers 'svart' ('black') offensive due to its lexical closeness to the slur 'svarting', she does not mean anything negative when she says the n-word and thinks it is 'stupid that so many words have become forbidden to say'. Her quote combines a mix of not wanting to offend and thereby abstaining from the use of certain slurs, while wanting to maintain her own 'personal' interpretation of the n-word as not negative.

Compare this to this quote by Nina, another majority participant, who argued:

> Nina: I get so worked up when other people say, like 'yeah, I should be allowed to say '[n-word]' because I don't mean anything negative with it'. Well, it's not, it's not up to *you* as a [member of the] majority to define what is okay to say, I think. It has to be the recipient, or the designated party, who should be the one to say what is okay.

Nina thus criticizes the idea that the speaker's intention matters for the use of the n-word and argues instead that it should be up to the 'designated party' to define what is offensive or not. Indeed, several participants argued that because the n-word was considered acceptable in the past it can be hard for old people to understand that it is not considered acceptable anymore.

Overall, the extent to which phenotypical/racial categories are considered acceptable to use varies for different terms. Whereas 'white' and 'black' are quite controversial terms and 'brown' is only used as a

self-designation, 'dark' and 'dark-skinned' are considered merely descriptive and hence unproblematic to use. Likewise, some participants argue that the n-word should also be understood as a descriptive category. One possible explanation is that it is considered acceptable to name color when this is understood as purely descriptive and not as a reference to a racial category.

6.3.6 'This Is a Rhetorical Minefield'

As many of the examples above illustrate, participants generally found phenotype a difficult topic to talk about. There is little agreement about to what extent it is okay at all to describe somebody's phenotype. In this context, many participants explained that it was very easy to say something wrong. For example, Stine, a majority participant, shared the following:

> Stine: Well, there has been so much talk that I even notice that when we are supposed to talk about it now, that I become, like – I look for words because I am so scared to use words that someone can perceive as offensive. (…) This is a rhetorical minefield. And I think that's too bad because you make the topic so scary.
>
> Laura: Have you experienced that with your friends? That, for example that you or someone else said something, and then someone reacted to that and said: 'You can't say that!'?
>
> Stine: Yes, I have experienced that at university. We had a study group, where everyone was ethnically Norwegian, with a Norwegian background. And then there was one person who wasn't. So we were sitting there one day, and there was one person missing. Nobody could remember who was missing. And nobody knew her name, because we had only met once before. I don't remember which word I used, but I tried to explain who was missing. Because I, well… And the most natural thing to say was: 'The girl with dark skin, right, she's missing. What was her name again?' And someone reacted to that, that this was a terrible thing to say, right. I became frustrated – because I didn't mean anything with it. But now we've been sitting here for five minutes, and nobody dares to say who is missing because one doesn't know how to explain it because… If she had had glasses, one could have said 'the girl with the glasses'. But because she was dark-skinned, one cannot say it, in a way. I think that's too bad. Because I think most people don't mean anything negative with it.

This quote illustrates that there is little agreement as to whether phenotype can legitimately be described. For Stine, this leads to her becoming 'scared' and at loss for words. Just as with the national-belonging categories discussed in the previous chapter, there is a worry of saying something wrong and being interpreted as racist. The difference is that while the national belonging categories' meaning was disputed and discussed, with phenotypical categories, their *meaning* is clear, but it is unclear whether they can at all be legitimately used. In the quote above, Stine is criticized for at all describing the absent group member's phenotype. As noted in chapter 4, the fact that insecurity around language is rather prevalent in the data material may be partly attributable to the fact that participants skew towards highly-educated and favorable to immigration.

The lack of an accessible vocabulary also applied to me as an interviewer attempting to navigate the topic of phenotype. I had to find out how to talk about phenotype while interviewing, and I found this quite unchartered territory. This was probably influenced by two factors: the fact that I had only lived in Norway for half a year when I started interviewing and was still learning about the context, and the fact that I am myself positioned and socialized as part of the white majority in my country of origin, Germany. In addition to these factors, I am of course influenced by the overall (partial) silence admixed with worry, insecurity, and discomfort that characterizes conversations about phenotype in Norway and many other contexts, including Germany. Yet, I found it easier to investigate whiteness as opposed to non-whiteness. Based on an understanding that whiteness is bound up with privilege (of unquestioned, legitimate belonging to the nation), investigating whiteness is maybe uncomfortable because it breaks with existing speech conventions ('there is no use for this word in Norway'), but I understood it as a 'legitimate' endeavor of examining locations of structural advantage. Questions about non-white phenotype, however, can potentially be understood as more problematic or racist. In this sense, I – at least initially – confronted similar challenges as the ones described by participants above. However, this changed during the course of interviewing.

I conceived of phenotype as important from the start of my project, but I explored non-white phenotype more through questions about discrimination and racism and the question 'Do you think skin color means something for how people are approached/treated (møtt) in Norway today?', rather than by asking specifically about terms used to describe non-white phenotype. I did the latter also, but more as a follow-up if participants brought it up, and I became more and more confident throughout the interview process. In the initial phase of interviewing I only asked about it if participants brought it up, whereas I asked about it of my own volition towards the end. I also think I found it easier to talk about with non-white participants because I felt it was clearer that I asked because I understood it to be a reason for experiencing discrimination and racism. There is also a temporal dimension here, where I had more majority interviews in the beginning and more minority interviews towards the end.

The following quote from the interview with Iman illustrates how I approached the topic and attempted to understand which terms are used to talk about non-white phenotype. Given everything that has been said here about how hard or controversial this is, it should not come as a surprise that I did not have everything figured out beforehand.

> Laura: Yeah, uhm, do you also use an expression to describe your own looks? In relation to 'white'?

> Iman: Uhm, yes. Yeah. I say ‘foreign background’, but that can be so many different things. And if I say [North African[63]], they people quickly understand what one looks like. A little dark-skinned, dark hair, dark eyes.
>
> Laura. Yes. I think at some point during the interview you also said ‘dark features’.
>
> Iman: yes.

The questioned I asked was worded very indirectly, asking how she described her ‘own looks in relation to white’. This illustrates that I was treading carefully. The fact that Iman herself uses the expression ‘foreign background’ rather than a more explicitly phenotypical/racial term to refer to her own phenotype, fits what has so far been said about a general reluctance to name phenotype explicitly. The quotes by Farida and Rian that were discussed in the section on the category ‘brown’ also exemplified that I had an active role in conversations about the use of phenotypical/racial categories.

6.4 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the category ‘ethnically Norwegian’ and a range of phenotypical/racial categories. Contrary to the categories analyzed in the previous chapter, there was less discussion about the *meaning* of these categories, but their *usage* proved to be controversial. A discussion of the category ‘ethnically Norwegian’ showed that its meaning revolves around ancestry and phenotype. While there was thus no discussion as to the category’s meaning, its potential to function exclusionary was debated by participants.

Examining the term ‘white’ further corroborated how closely intertwined whiteness and Norwegianness are. The use of this category was highly disputed, probably because it is understood as a racial category. In general, none of the phenotypical/racial categories generated debate as to their meaning, but regarding their use[64]. It is unclear to what extent phenotype can at all be spoken about – with the partial exception of the terms ‘dark’ and ‘dark-skinned’. Participants, especially majority participants, worry that using these categories, or using them wrongly, can lead to them being perceived as racist. This testifies to the existence of strong norms of color blindness and also suggests that it is unclear whether these categories merely describe a person’s phenotype or whether they reference a racial hierarchy. Since ‘race’ is an illegitimate category in Norway, categories will be deemed illegitimate if they are understood as ‘racial’. However, also categories that are mainly considered descriptive, like ‘dark-skinned’ can be understood as problematic as the quote by Stine showed, since, by association, speaking about phenotype as all is

[63] She used the exact nationality/demonym here, but I redacted it for anonymity.

[64] I did explore different dimensions of the term ‘white’, but just like for the other phenotypical/racial categories, the debate regarding the term ‘white’ related to its use and not to its meaning.

often considered ‘dangerous’ or ‘taboo’. There is an idea that phenotype ‘should not matter’ and that by mentioning it at all, one is conceding that it matters, and that in itself is considered problematic.

How easy or difficult participants found it to talk about phenotype depended partly on their own standpoint and experience. In general, minority participants found it much easier to talk about. Many of them found it unproblematic to refer to themselves or others as ‘dark-skinned’ or ‘brown’, whereas majority participants tended to think that in general, talking about phenotype was ‘a rhetorical minefield’ and potentially problematic.

Another difference is that with visible minorities, the conversations about, e.g. being brown, revolved mostly around their experiences, rather than around categories, which was more the case with majority participants. This tendency reflects the fact that visible minority participants generally experience their phenotype in itself as relevant in social interactions. White people on the other hand tend not to experience phenotype in general, and their own phenotype specifically, as relevant. Many of them take their own experience of not experiencing their phenotype as relevant for granted, where they are not confronted with and not aware of their own phenotype’s meaning. They can take it for granted because it is the majority experience. That is why with white participants, the interviews tended to revolve more around categories.

Considering both this chapter and the previous one, it becomes clear that while phenotype is generally not considered legitimate to speak about, it carries meaning for who is understood, respectively, as Norwegian or as an immigrant. Possibly, it is because phenotype should not be spoken about, that other, seemingly ‘color-free’ terms like ‘immigrant’ are used instead.

While national-belonging categories can legitimately be used, the fact that their phenotypical dimension is not explicitly voiced can lead to confusion and uneasiness with the categories. It also makes conversations about migration-related diversity challenging. Many people think that it is illegitimate to name phenotype because it makes them feel racist, but the fact that phenotype is an association of many of the ‘color-free’ national-belonging categories confounds matters. As a result, both minority and majority participants, but especially the latter, do not have the language accessible to have the conversations about diversity, ethnicity, and race that they may wish to have.

7 Interlude: Color-Blindness

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has shown that phenotype is a topic that many participants consider difficult or even taboo to talk about. This chapter will explore this further. It starts by examining how majority participants explain that they find phenotype difficult to talk about. It then moves on to the question which terms are used to refer to phenotype, since the term 'phenotype' itself is not in use in Norwegian common parlance.

7.2 Difficulties Discussing Phenotype

Phenotype proved to be a tricky conversational topic. In this section, I explore how participants explain the fact that they find phenotype difficult to talk about and what that says about phenotype.

Consider the following quote by Anne, a majority Norwegian participant, who found talking about diversity in general, and phenotype specifically, challenging.

> Anne: Where I'm from, there wasn't anyone who was anything else than white and all-Norwegian. (…) I don't have that much experience with growing up in a society with different cultures, actually, I feel.
>
> Laura: No, but now you have lived in Oslo for a very long time [which is a] very diverse city. So you definitely have experience with that.
>
> Anne: Yes, I have experience, but I'm not together with so many ['diverse' people] every day, because – there is no one at my work, no colleagues and no friends who – yeah, so in my every-day life, there isn't that much, right. I'm used to seeing people with different skin colors, but, yeah, [it] doesn't concern (literally: touch) me that much. (…) I think those who are younger than me – it's easier for them because they are used to different skin colors and different groups.

Before analyzing the quote by Anne, I want to present another quote by a majority participant called Stine. The interview with Stine never quite developed flow; she often gave very short answers and I had the impression that she was maybe trying to avoid my questions. Finally, I said:

> Laura: Uhm (long pause). I don't really know. Uhm. I feel like talking a bit about diversity, ethnic diversity and such, all the time. But I feel a bit like *you* feel that that's actually not much of a topic to talk about. Is my impression correct, or?
>
> Stine: Yes, or I guess I feel that both… - . I don't know *what* [aspect of it] to talk about (hva jeg skal ta tak i ved det). Well, there is a lot of ethnic diversity, but, which elements of that should I in a way…

> Laura: It's also completely fine if it's not a topic for you (…) I don't want to pressure you to find meaning in something that doesn't mean anything to you. (…)
>
> Stine: No, but I understand what you mean. Because my experience is that when I was growing up it wasn't a topic. But of course it's a topic today, in a way. Or, it's something that you… of course notice and think about. But I can't manage right now to sit here and think about *what* that would be. What I should think about.

Both Anne and Stine find it difficult to talk about ethnic diversity and phenotype. Anne ascribes this to a lack of exposure, and what could be called a resulting lack of competence. She thinks it is easier for younger people who have grown up with and are used to phenotypical diversity. Anne's manner of speaking about diversity is distanced. She states that she is used to *seeing* people with different skin colors, but that it does not concern her much, which probably means that is not used to *interacting* very much with people who look different from herself.

Stine on the other hand places most emphasis on the fact that she does not know what exactly to talk about. She states that it is clear to her that ethnic diversity carries meaning, she just does not know what exactly. Contrary to Anne, Stine grew up in a part of Oslo that was relatively diverse when she grew up (during the 1990s). While she feels that diversity was not much of a topic then, it is definitely one now; she just does not know exactly in what way. Both Stine and Anne thus find it difficult to say what phenotype means to them.

Kjersti (who is also majority Norwegian), on the other hand, told me that she had an experience at work where she thinks phenotype and ethnicity had played a role. She has a colleague who is originally from an African country and who works with diversity as a topic. She finds that other colleagues often are dismissive of him at meetings, that they find him weird, and that they are not interested in hearing his perspectives. Kjersti feels strongly about what she sees as biased treatment of her colleague; she told me that it makes her both angry and upset. When I asked her if she had ever spoken to him or to other colleagues about this, she answered in the negative and went on to explain the following.

> Kjersti: It's weird how, as soon as you assume that it's skin color or ethnicity that is the reason that someone is treated differently, all of a sudden everything is covered in egg shells. Then you have to place your steps carefully. But if (…) the reason that someone is treated differently is because they have very strong opinions that everyone else disagrees with, then it's much easier to talk about. Whereas I experience that talking about things related to culture or ethnicity or skin color – it is much more difficult to talk about that in a good way. And that's surely related a little to my own cowardice. (…) I'm worried that if I raise the topic, then it will come out that I haven't thought enough about my own relationship to these things, or that I'm not doing a good enough job at being inclusive, or… well, I worry about being the pot calling the kettle black[65].

[65] Literally: I'm worried about throwing stones in the glass house.

Kjersti thus stresses how very sensitive topics ethnic diversity and phenotype are. In contrast to Stine and Anne above, she has identified a situation where she thinks phenotype and ethnicity matter, but she finds it very difficult to raise the topic. She explains this by stating that she is worried that she herself might not have thought enough about the topic, and that she thus should not be the one to bring up this topic. This is reminiscent of how Anne thought that she was lacking diversity competence.

It further illustrates that phenotype and ethnic diversity are topics that are infused with morality. It seems that in Kjersti's eyes, speaking about phenotype and ethnicity in the right or the wrong way can reveal something about your moral characteristics as a person. As long as you are not sure that you yourself are above reproach, you should not bring the topic up with others. Otherwise you might be 'the pot calling the kettle black'.

It is no coincidence that all participants quoted in this section so far were majority Norwegian. There is a general tendency among the participants in this study that majority Norwegians find phenotype more difficult to talk about than minority Norwegians. In this context, it is worth mentioning that the phenotype that is seen as a potential topic for conversation is always automatically assumed to be the dark / minority phenotype. In the quotes above[66], majority participants struggle to talk about what a minority ethnic background, or a darker phenotype means. I am not arguing that it would be easier for them to talk about what being white and a part of the ethnic majority means, but I think it is striking that the ethnicity/phenotype that is seen as a potential, albeit thorny, topic for conversation is minority ethnicity and minority phenotype.

When asked about the meaning of skin color/phenotype, members of the white ethnic majority tend to interpret that question to refer to what it means to have a dark phenotype. They tend not to consider that also a light complexion might carry meaning in some way. This corresponds to what Rogers Brubaker et al. (2006, p. 211 f.) say about 'marked' and 'unmarked' categories. According to them 'unmarked categories' are 'normal, default, taken-for granted' (2006, p. 211), while 'marked categories' are 'special, different, 'other'' (2006, pp. 211–212). As such, the 'unmarked' categories are the ones that receive focus and require an explanation. They illustrate this argument by providing examples of several pairings of marked and unmarked categories, namely woman (marked) – man (unmarked), black (marked) – white (unmarked), and homosexual (marked) – heterosexual (unmarked) (2006, p. 212).

[66] Maybe with the exception of Stine, who speaks in more general terms.

7.3 Which Words are Used to Refer to Phenotype?

The next question I want to address is which words are used to speak about phenotype. I refer here not to phenotypical categories covered in the previous chapter (white, black, brown), but rather to terms that are used to refer to *phenotype* in itself.

By now, I have established that phenotype is somewhat of a 'taboo' topic in Norway (and that the term 'race' is not in use). This raises the question of how it is then possible to refer to phenotype at all. I want to tease out the words that are used to refer to phenotype because there is little previous research on this topic in Norway.

7.3.1 'Skin Color' and 'Looks'

Both the terms 'skin color' ('hudfarge') and 'looks' ('utseende') are used to refer to phenotype in Norwegian. The term 'looks' can potentially also refer to other dimensions of one's physical appearance (i.e. not only to color/phenotype), such as attractiveness, personal grooming, or physical features more in general. In the interviews, both the participants and I often used the term 'looks' to mean 'phenotype'. For example, when I asked Kari, a majority Norwegian participant, if she had ever experienced discrimination, she told me:

> Kari: Maybe I don't look very Norwegian. And as a result, my brother has been insulted [in public space] because he looks foreign. He's been called 'pakkis'[67] (…)
>
> Laura: Yeah, that's interesting that you are mentioning looks.

Kari's use of the expression 'looking foreign', and my use of the term 'looks' in this quote clearly refer to phenotype. The term 'skin color' was used in the same way in many interviews. What is noteworthy here is that while 'skin color' only refers to one aspect of the overall phenotype, it was often used more broadly than that in the interviews, relating to overall phenotype. For example, Zahra, whose background is from Iran, at some point referred to herself as 'having a different skin color', even though her skin is rather light. She then explained that her dark curls set her visibly apart and the term 'skin color' can encompass this in meaning. Further, her specific use of the phrase 'different skin color' ('annen hudfarge'), which is quite common in Norwegian, also implies that there is a standard or regular skin color, from which 'different skin colors' deviate. One participant even explained the meaning of the term 'white' by saying 'white means having a different skin color than someone who has a different skin color',

[67] This is a racial slur originally derived from the word for 'Pakistani', but used more widely against/about non-white people.

underlining how the expression ‘a different skin color’ functions as a fixed expression. This usage raises the question which skin colors can be regarded as ‘different’. I will say more about that in chapter 9.

The term ‘looks’ represents a rather careful wording, and is possibly somewhat euphemistic or evasive. From context, it is understood to refer to color/phenotype, but this is not said explicitly. The term ‘skin color’, on the other hand, is more explicit in naming color, though somewhat metonymic since it tends to refer to phenotype more generally while only naming one aspect of it.

7.3.2 Ethnicity

Regarding the use of the term ‘ethnicity’, consider the following answer Liv gave to the question of how she would describe the neighborhood she grew up in:

> Liv: If you’re interested in ethnicity, it’s very white.

This quote illustrates that for Liv – like for many other participants – there is a link between the term ‘ethnicity’ and phenotypical/racial categories. This deserves attention. As I have stated elsewhere, ‘ethnicity’ is a frequently used category of difference in the context of migration-related diversity in Norway (both in the media, in politics, and in every-day conversation).

Based on my empirical material, I would say that ‘ethnicity’ is used to either refer to a person’s ancestry (‘she’s ethnically Pakistani’) or to a person’s phenotype (‘he looks ethnically Norwegian’), or as a synonym/substitute for either ‘phenotype’ or ‘race’ (like in Liv’s quote above). Another example of this latter use would be a news article on police violence targeting black people in the USA published by the Norwegian state broadcaster on the website nrk.no, where the term ‘ethic background’ is used to distinguish between white and black people (Elster, 2020). The article says the following about victims of deadly police violence in the USA in 2019: ‘Among those [victims] whose ethnicity is known, 46% were white and 29% were black’ (Elster, 2020). ‘Ethnicity’ is thus here used as a substitute for or a translation of the term ‘race’. It thus seems that by using the term ‘ethnicity’ it is possible to circumvent the term ‘race’ or to avoid making explicit reference to color at all.

Because the term ‘ethnicity’ is a widely used category of practice (Brubaker, 2013a; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000) in Norway, it can be difficult to use as a category of analysis. The fact that ‘ethnicity’ can also mean ‘phenotype’ (in addition to ancestry/origin), has received some attention in the press in the form of critical op-eds (Erdal, 2017; Herbjørnsrud, 2017; Sandnes, 2017; Sterri, 2017). These critical discussions seem marginal, however, when compared with the general, uncritical use of the term in the press, in research, and by the general public. There is thus an unspoken, latent ambivalence in the concept ‘ethnicity’, where

the widely understood meaning is ‘origin, ancestry’, while it can also refer to phenotype and race. This allows statements about ethnicity to have phenotypical/racial implications without saying so outright. In statements about ethnicity, phenotype can thus be present *implicitly*, while at the same time not being there *explicitly,* creating something akin to a *Schrödinger’s phenotype*. Just like the cat in Erwin Schrödinger’s thought experiment is paradoxically alive and dead at the same time, the term ‘ethnicity’ as commonly used in Norwegian, allows to at the same time refer to and not refer to phenotype. This ambivalence *and* the fact that the ambivalence is not usually made explicit, makes it challenging to use this concept in sociological analysis. The following quote illustrates the ambivalence. Here, Liv talks about her elementary school class.

> Liv: We had two adopted kids in my class. One of them – but that was like, we were just joking with it, and he was a part of that himself – we just called him ‘the negro’ (she laughs). So that wasn’t very nice, but, uhm, he, he also joked about it himself. (silence). But it was… quite Norwegian, yes
>
> Laura: mhm. And where was he – so one of them was adopted?
>
> Liv: hm. [Name], the one we called ‘the negro’, he is from Colombia, I think. Then we had one boy from Pakistan; both of them were adopted. (Silence). But it wasn’t a mean thing. It was just a joke, it was – [I’m] only [telling you] because you are interested in ethnicity. (…) They weren’t (silence) a different ethnicity, either. Well, they were completely… adopted, right, they were – they had lived here their whole life, so they were very Norwegian in that sense.

In this quote, Liv uses the term ‘ethnicity’ in two different ways. First, she tells me that the reason for letting me know about the nickname ‘negro’ is because ‘you are interested in ethnicity’. Here, she uses ‘ethnicity’ as a synonym for phenotype or race. Shortly afterwards, however, she states that the adopted kids were *not* ‘a different ethnicity’ because they were ‘completely adopted’ and ‘very Norwegian in that sense’. I interpret this latter statement of hers to refer to the fact that the adoptive kids are Norwegian because they have Norwegian (adoptive) parents. Hence, their (adoptive) ancestry makes them Norwegian. Yan Zhao (2012) has analyzed in depth how transnational adoptees are ‘kinned’ as ethnically Norwegian through their adoptive families. Liv’s second use of the term ‘ethnicity’ thus refers to ancestry. She thus uses the term ‘ethnicity’ to convey both meanings – ancestry and phenotype/race – within the same quote. The fact that the adopted boys in her elementary school class at the same time *were* and *were not* ethnically Norwegian demonstrates the deep ambivalence that characterizes the term ‘ethnicity’.

The ambivalence inherent in the term ‘ethnicity’ makes it necessary to unpack the term and be as specific as possible when using it for the purpose of sociological analysis. In many cases, it may be fruitful to substitute the term by, respectively, ‘ancestry’ and ‘phenotype’ to refer to its respective components. That

way, it is possible to create distance between ‘ethnicity’ as a category of practice and ‘ancestry’ and ‘phenotype’ as categories of analysis (Brubaker, 2013a; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000).

Moreover, I would argue that the term ‘ethnicity’ is central to how Norwegian color-blindness functions. Because of its inherent ambivalence in meaning, the term ‘ethnicity’ can imply phenotype/race without naming it explicitly. As noted in the theory chapter, the concept of ‘color-blindness’ (Doane, 2017) does not refer to literally not seeing color, but rather to the existence of a dominant societal narrative that holds that color/race does not mean anything, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. The fact that the term ‘ethnicity’ can carry a phenotypical connotation that need not be explicitly named to be present almost makes it a color-blind term *par excellence*. Statements about ethnicity can always be defended as statements about ‘ancestry’ only, which are seen as relatively unproblematic statements in Norwegian. In Norwegian public discourse, the use of the word ‘race’ is often seen as a prerequisite for qualifying a statement as racist (Bangstad, 2015, p. 51). This argumentation does not take into account that the term ‘ethnicity’ also conveys phenotypical/racial connotations[68].

Tony Sandset (2012, 2018) has argued – based on how the term ‘ethnicity’ is used in the UNESCO declaration from 1950 and in Norwegian anti-discrimination laws – that ‘ethnicity’ came to replace the term ‘race’ in Norway during the decades after World War II. Based on my analysis here, I would agree with him that the term ‘ethnicity’ in Norwegian has racialized connotations. I will return to this point, and to a more general discussion of the term ‘ethnicity’, in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored why majority participants do not feel comfortable talking about phenotype. It found that majority participants reported a lack in exposure and competence, a lack of knowing what to talk about, and a fear to say something wrong and thereby reveal one’s own ignorance or even moral failings. Further, this chapter discussed different words that are used in Norwegian to refer to ‘phenotype’. Both ‘skin color’ and ‘looks’ are used as synonyms for ‘phenotype’. ‘Skin color’ is very straightforward – though probably less commonly used – whereas the more commonly used ‘looks’ is somewhat evasive or euphemistic. Moreover, ‘ethnicity’ can mean both ‘ancestry’ and ‘phenotype’/’race’, though the latter is usually only an implicit dimension. Because of this ambivalence, where ‘ethnicity’ at the same time signifies and disguises ‘phenotype’, the term plays a central role in the functioning of color-blindness in Norway. This chapter has shown that phenotype is considered difficult to talk about and that it therefore

[68] Much more could be said about this argumentation, but I want to limit myself here to discussing the meaning of the term ‘ethnicity’.

often is sub-textual rather than directly articulated. This is also an important methodological finding for researchers wanting to interview about phenotype in the Norwegian context in the future.

8 Experiences of Discrimination and Racism

8.1 Introduction

The following chapter takes a closer look at participants' experiences with discrimination and racism. In discussing these experiences, I do not aim to gauge them against any given definition of discrimination or racism. Rather, I aim to take participants' accounts as a starting point to understand minority experiences in Norway. Interestingly, some participants themselves raised the question of what could (legitimately) be labeled discrimination or racism. Thus, they discuss how they can understand and speak about their own experiences in light of how they think 'society' more in general understands discrimination and racism. I devote attention to these reflections towards the end of the chapter. The analytical question this chapter seeks to answer is: What experiences with discrimination and racism do participants relate?

In this chapter, I only examine experiences of discrimination/racism that are due to religion, culture, ethnicity, phenotype, or immigrant background. I asked all the participants (including majority Norwegians) if they had experienced discrimination. Some of them reported discrimination based on their gender, based on being from Northern Norway, or stated that they had met prejudice while travelling (e.g. being treated as a 'rich Westerner'). I will not discuss these examples in the chapter. Hence, when I talk about 'discrimination' here, I refer specifically to discrimination on religious, cultural, ethnic, phenotypical, or xenophobic grounds. I do not *a priori* single out phenotype as grounds for discrimination; rather, many of the examples throughout can shed light on how phenotype and other migration-related categories of difference interrelate.

Finally, I want to preliminarily address the question how widespread discrimination is in my material. Even though my data is qualitative, I can say something about that. Among all minority participants, the two whose origin is from Sweden are the only ones who did not report experiences of discrimination (based on culture, ethnicity, etc.). All other minority participants did report such experiences.

8.2 Experiences of Exclusion, Alienation, Harassment, Discrimination, and Racism

8.2.1 Harassment in Public Space

Several participants told me stories of experiencing harassment in public space at the hands of strangers. I want to let three participants each tell the story of a specific experience they had, and then analyze the three episodes together.

> **Iman (born in Norway to parents with a North African background):**
> I just remembered a thing when it comes to racism (…) which happened after 9/11. I remember that I was on my way home, late at night, and there were two boys who passed me, and then I just heard 'go home!', [or something like that]. And I remember that I thought 'yeah, what do you want, I am on my way home'. And then [it just hit me] 'oh, *they mean home-home*'. They mean: 'go back to where you come from!'. Ohh! (she laughs). I took me some time before I understood… I just thought: 'I am on my way home, what are you talking about?' (….) I remember thinking 'oh well, that's too bad for them' (…) and I couldn't understand how they could say something like that.

> **Faduma (born in Somalia, moved to Norway as a young child):**
> Around the time when I turned twenty, I think, I started noticing more racism. For example if I went to Majorstua[69], it could happen that a lady would look at me with the burka[70] I am wearing, and she would call me 'garbage', say if I was wearing a black *jilbab*. So they say – they kind of mumble, those who are a bit older, they don't dare to say it right to your face, they just go: (she mumbles) 'nanana.. garbage' (she chuckles). So you understand it's directed at you, not at anyone else.

> **Valentina (born in South America, moved to Norway as an adult):**
> Once a little victory happened to me, here in Frogner[71]. I was [exercising] at Sjølyst, I remember it was winter, [I was walking back home after exercising] and (…) I met a lady, an old, old lady (…) she was walking a dog. (…). [We were walking towards each other]. When she came very close to me she said 'there are so many immigrants now in Frogner', and she spat in front of me. Not at me, but in front of me. (…) I didn't say anything, but I thought, she is so old, 80, 90 years, should I start arguing? She doesn't (…) know me, should I explain to her everything I have done since I moved here? No, she won't change her opinion anyways after our conversation. (…) Should I spend energy on this? No. (…) What the lady did can maybe be called racism because it was not against me, Valentina, [but it was against me as] a collective image. She looked at me and I wasn't Norwegian. Maybe she also has that image of being Norwegian as being white and light blond. What if I was the third generation here in Norway, she didn't know that, right. (…) Was it because of how I look (literally: was it because of looks)? To be judged for something so superficial!

[69] A lively neighborhood in the inner West with many restaurants and exclusive shops.
[70] Faduma does not wear burkas in the narrow meaning of the term, but rather the kind of *jilbab* that is popular with Somali women. Her use of the term 'burka' here possibly reflects how her clothing would be interpreted by the 'old lady' in the story.
[71] A posh residential neighborhood in the inner West.

Instead of choosing just one instance of harassment in public space from my material, I quoted three stories because I wanted to highlight the repetitiveness and similarities that exist between these stories. Even though they all happened in different settings, and with varying actor constellations in terms of age and gender, they seem to follow a similar script. One or several majority Norwegian[72] actors encounter a person who they read as an immigrant in public space, and they verbally harass them by making statements about their supposed inferiority and non-belonging. In one instance, this is accompanying by the act of spitting.

All these stories represent examples of negative differential treatment that leave little room for doubt or interpretation (‘go home’ / ‘garbage’ / ‘there are so many immigrants now’ and spitting). Further, all interactions in these stories are between complete strangers, meaning that they are solely based on and prompted by externally visible characteristics like phenotype and visible signs of religiosity (the latter only being the case for Faduma, who is the only one who wears a hijab). In Iman’s and Valentina’s stories, phenotype is the only clue based on which the participants’ interlocutors were able to pick up on the fact that they had an immigrant background in one way or another.

All three stories are examples of what the Dutch racism scholar Philomena Essed (2002) termed ‘everyday racism’. She defines everyday racism as ‘systematic, recurrent, familiar practices that can be generalized’ (2002, p. 177) and adds that racism is the ‘expression or activation of group power’ (2002, p. 179). According to Essed, everyday racism ‘does not exist in the singular, but only as interrelated instantiations of racism’ (2002, p. 189). Each instance of racism thus has meaning only in relation to the whole complex of relations and practices. This is why everyday racism designates racism that is interwoven in the fabric of the social system. For Essed, individual instances of racist behavior thus always speak to a deeper underlying system of racism.

I would argue that all these instances speak to an activation of group power; specifically, the power of the ethnic majority to treat the nation as their legitimate dominion. This is the power to define who is *at home* in the nation, who is ‘foreign’ (and must *go home*), who is ‘too many’, who is worthy, and who is ‘garbage’. In all the stories presented above, majority Norwegian actors put themselves in the position of being the legitimate arbiter over these issues. In nation states that are constructed upon an ethnic understanding of the nation, the ethnic majority is seen as the legitimate ‘owner’ of the state. Ethnic minorities as well as immigrants and their descendants can be guests, legal residents, and (one might say, *even*) citizens in these states, but they are in many instances not seen as legitimately rooted in these states

[72] None of the participants explicitly qualified their interlocutors as ‘ethnically Norwegian’ or something similar, but the only plausible interpretation of the stories to me is that they were.

in the same way the ethnic majority is. Ghassan Hage (1998) has discussed how even when members of the ethnic majority[73] make statements that are welcoming to immigrants, this still puts them in the position of being the arbiter over who can legitimately reside in the nation.

In the stories presented above, the actors harassing Iman, Faduma, and Valentina take on this role and enact it. Their statements can thus be read as an activation of group power, whereby they position themselves as belonging to the group that legitimately has dominion over the nation. Simultaneously, they ascribe the role of the 'intruding ethnic other' to the people they target. Using Essed's terminology, each individual instance described above thus speaks to underlying racist narratives, whereby non-white and/or Muslim individuals are seen as illegitimate intruders. The fact that ethnic majorities are seen as the legitimate 'owners' of the nation is deeply rooted in collective societal understandings in Europe, very much taken for granted, and not problematized all that often. I would like to add that the 'old lady from Western Oslo' is a recurring persona in many stories of harassment in public space that I have collected.

8.2.2 Denigration, Exclusion, and Alienation

The previous section focused on harassment in public space. I.e., it was concerned with and built on unmistakably negative comments by strangers. In this section, I focus on examples of denigration, exclusion, and alienation that are more subtle. They are not as direct as the examples above, but still leave participants feeling inferior or alienated.

Devaluation of Immigrant Culture

The first quote I want to use to illustrate these dynamics is from the interview with Elisabeth who came to Norway from East Asia as a young child and grew up in Bærum, an affluent Western suburb of Oslo. She told me the following about realizations she had after she started studying at the University of Oslo (UiO) as a young adult.

> Elisabeth: I was very stuck on the fact that the things I had in my 'luggage' weren't worth anything, they were something that really wasn't worth talking much about. But when I came to [UiO], people were super interested in 'But have you been to [East Asia]? How is it there? What goes on there?' and blablabla. 'What kind of food do you like?' Anything, right. But in Bærum it was like (with a depreciating voice): 'oh, uhm, well, mushrooms in your food, uhm, no, that's, that's a bit weird'. But I didn't know that. I didn't understand then that that was a thing in a way. I only understood that [my East Asian side] was just something to leave aside. Then, at [UiO], it was very much like 'nonono, we have to use that, and maybe we should do a potluck where everyone brings a dish that they like', and

[73] His discussion is based on Australia, which, as a state with a history of settler colonialism, is built on a different 'logic' than European ethnic nation states. I would argue that this does not matter to the specific argument I make here, though.

> those kinds of things. Even though I have a minority background, I didn't really understand diversity and integration until I turned 18 years. *That* is actually quite sad. But uhm, yeah. Later, things changed a lot. (…) I didn't understand that those were *worlds* that could be *combined*. I didn't understand that having a different *background*, having parents who think differently, have different opinions, actually was a resource. That it's completely *okay* to think differently, to have different opinions because you had a different upbringing, or a different kind of luggage (…). I didn't manage to see it as a resource before I started attending college.

Elisabeth describes how her background and her family's cultural heritage was devalued by her (upper middle class) majority Norwegian surroundings while she was growing up. It took her quite a long time to understand these dynamics and the fact that it did not have to be like that. In fact, a change of scenery and social arena provided her with a different frame of reference for reflecting around the relationship between her own cultural heritage and majority Norwegianness. While she felt that her 'luggage' was not 'worth anything' in her Western Oslo suburb, it become 'a resource' on campus, and she realized that those were 'worlds that could be combined'. She told me elsewhere in the interview that while growing up, her idea of integration was to leave aside everything that made her different, and attempt to assimilate into majority Norwegianness as best she could. She further explained that now, as an adult, she does not recommend this way of integrating. Many majority Norwegians may look at this as 'ideal integration', she says, but it clearly came at a price for her, which was having to deny and devalue her parents' cultural heritage.

The following quote by Samrath, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, speaks to a similar theme:

> Samrath: The thing that still bothers me most is when people talk about other minorities as if I were not in the room. Because they've gotten to know me, so they have made me Norwegian, in a way, which actually is very good. But then they have the same prejudice, it's just that they don't include me in the out-group.

This quote by Samrath also speaks to a devaluation of immigrants, except that he in those instances is regarded as included in the majority Norwegian in-group. Several minority participants related experiences like this. The implication of these statements seems to be that 'you are okay because I look at you as Norwegian, but all those other immigrants are a problem'. Elisabeth, who also talked about her experiences with these kinds of comments, called this 'the classical Norwegian everyday racism'.

The main message of these kinds of comments is a general devaluation of being an immigrant. The fact that the person being addressed actually is *excluded* from the devalued group barely attenuates the comment. After all, the addressee knows fully well that they could be read differently in a different

situation, and be included in the problematized out-group of ‘immigrant’. This kind of comment is still a devaluation of who they are and who their parents or their wider social network are.

The devaluation of ‘immigrant cultures’ that is expressed in the quotes by Elisabeth and Samrath can be understood as a form of cultural racism (Wren, 2001). The latter means that cultures are understood as bounded, static, and hierarchically ordered in such a manner that ‘Western cultures’ are inherently better than ‘non-Western cultures’.

Invisibility, Alienation, Prejudice

The next quote is taken from the interview with Lejla. She was born in a Balkan country, moved to Scandinavia as a child and to Norway as an adult. When reflecting around the topic of ‘prejudice’ during the interview, Lejla shared the following story:

> Lejla: Once at work – it wasn’t something negative, we were just talking about something – and they said: ‘Yeah, but Lejla, you have brown eyes’. (…) And I said: ‘I don’t have brown eyes’. – ‘Yes, you do!’ They were completely convinced that I had brown eyes. And I thought, that’s very weird because I don’t. And they actually had [brown eyes]. So I said: ‘But look at me, I don’t have brown eyes, I have blue-green eyes’. They looked at me and were shocked. [Then they said] ‘But you are so dark overall’. Then I thought: ‘You actually have darker hair than me. And you have brown eyes’. Then I understood that they (…) hadn’t actually looked at me. They had only thought: ‘Well, she’s a foreigner, so she has to have dark eyes and dark hair’. But I was together with them all the time every day, and they had never even noticed that… Well, it doesn’t matter, but it was a bit weird that it had gone so far that they don’t even look at the person. So I thought that they even less listen to you, they just think: ‘Yeah – foreigner. She has to have dark eyes and dark hair’. Yeah. It was kind of weird. Maybe it wasn’t negative, but it was very clear that it was a preconceived opinion. They had constructed (literally: provided, obtained) a face, based on prejudice. That was one example. (…) They never said certain things openly, but I can suspect that they thought them, since they (…) had never really looked at me in a way without thinking that I was a foreigner. Had they done that then they would have [realized]: ‘Oh boy, she doesn’t have dark eyes. She also has light hair’.

Even though Lejla says that ‘it wasn’t something negative’ and that ‘it doesn’t matter’, a deep sense of alienation and frustration emanates from this quote. The conversation with her colleagues, with whom she spends all day, every day, leads Lejla to realize that they ‘hadn’t actually looked at her’. In a way, Leijla feels invisible at work: her colleagues do not actually see her, but have rather ‘constructed a face, based on prejudice’. The fact that they insist on her having brown eyes even when she tells them this is wrong, further illustrates how little she is not only *seen* but also *heard* by her colleagues. Seen against this backdrop, her interpretation that if they have never even looked at her, then they were probably not listening to her either without filtering everything through a ‘foreigner-filter’ seems plausible. For Lejla, this seems like a very pervasive experience. She feels that her colleagues are not interacting with her as

an individual, but rather with a pre-conceived image of 'a foreigner', and that they are doing this all the time. This seems to be an experience of continuous alienation at the place where she spends most of her day.

Phenotype clearly plays a central role in this story. Interestingly, the reasoning here is not that 'you are dark, so you must be a foreigner' (like we have encountered many times before in this thesis), but rather the reverse 'you are a foreigner, so you must be dark'. This just underlines the associational strength between having a dark complexion and being a foreigner, which apparently can function bi-directionally.

Alienation by Way of Language Competence

The next two quotes both revolve around participants' Norwegian skills. Camila, who was born in South America and grew up in Norway, shared the following with me:

> Camila: I have very often been told that 'oh, your *Norwegian* is very good!' I think that is weird. It's like they expected something else. Well, clearly they expected something else.
>
> Laura: Mhm. How do you react to that?
>
> Camila: I just say: 'Yes, thank you, you too'. And then they are like: 'Yeah, hm'. They are Norwegian, right, so it's taken for granted. Well, I grew up here, so I take it for granted, too, you see?

In this quote, the person complimenting Camila puts themselves in the position of someone whose own fluency in Norwegian is obvious and who is in a position to be the arbiter over Camila's mastery of Norwegian, which is not seen as obvious, not taken for granted, and even stands out as surprising. Camila's final statement of 'I grew up here, so I take it for granted, too' shows that for her, growing up in Norway and taking one's language competence for granted are tightly interlinked. Thus, when somebody does not take her Norwegian skills for granted and compliments her on them, it is like they assume that she is a foreigner in the country, and not someone who has grown up there, who obviously belongs and obviously speaks the language. It seems that when Camila is complimented on her Norwegian, what she hears is: 'You speak Norwegian surprisingly well, given that you are a foreigner'.

Hence, her resistance to the compliment is actually a resistance to being labelled a foreigner in her home country. This raises the question why her interlocutor would interpret her as a foreigner in the first place. Possible reasons for this may be her phenotype, her name, the fact that she wears a hijab, or maybe that the interlocutor knows her personally and is aware that she was born abroad.

The next anecdote, told by Elisabeth, who was born in East Asia and moved to Norway as a young child, whom we encountered above, also revolves around Norwegian language skills.

> Elisabeth: I was sitting in the library one day, studying, when a girl approached me and said: ‘Hi, I am taking a master’s degree and such and such. May I ask you some questions? I have some questions about language.’ I was super interested and thought ‘oh, that’s very nice. I like languages. I’m happy to help out with that’. And then she went straight to it. ‘What’s your native language? When did you learn Norwegian?’ And so on and so forth. (…) Can you read this out loud for me? And so on. She did a whole study, asked me many weird questions, and I understood that she asks these questions because she assumes something. She asks the questions based on the assumption that Norwegian is not my first language. (…) For example [asking me to] decode Norwegian words. (…) I don’t remember how I learned Norwegian, and then she asks me these kinds of questions, like ‘How was it to learn Norwegian? Did you think the letters were different?’ and all that. And I was like ‘okay…’. The weird thing was that next to me, there were two Americans and a Brit, and there were some Norwegians among them, and they were trying to have a conversation in Norwegian, and you could *hear so clearly that* they didn’t grow up with Norwegian as their first language. She did not ask them, but she asked me, and a guy with an African background. (…) It was only colored people (fargete), who looked different. I was like ‘you missed out on two Americans and a Brit, right’. I was *very skeptical* to the whole thing, I felt like sending an e-mail to her department and being like ‘you have master’s student who is really lost’ (…), darn it (…). In the end, I told her ‘you know what, I actually can’t help you with this because I don’t think I give you the right answers’. She was like ‘yes, yes, it’s fine’. And I was like: ‘But since I consider Norwegian my first language, I don’t fit your questionnaire’. She was like ‘it’s fine, and I would like for you to help me’ and I was like ‘the answers are going to be all wrong, when the premises are so wrong’. (…) ‘Good luck with your research!’. That was very, very weird, very weird. Very sweet, accommodating (imøtekommende) [girl], but I could see that she was only approaching those who were not from the West.

Similar to Camila’s quote above, Elisabeth experiences a situation where her counterpart assumes, based on her phenotype, that Norwegian is not her native language. Elisabeth even observes the graduate student’s way of selecting participants for her study, which seems to be to approach non-white people in the library, rather than people who are audibly non-native speakers. By posing her the questions on her questionnaire, and by insisting even when Elisabeth points out that she does not fit the criteria of the study, the student denies Elisabeth’s (linguistic) belonging to the Norwegian nation.

I would argue that the student’s practice of approaching people of color in the library enacts color-blindness. The kind of Norwegian color-blindness detected here can be explained in the following way: While phenotype and race are rarely talked about (at least directly), and their meaning often is denied (‘here, [white] is not quite a necessary expression’), phenotype can actually be acted upon surprisingly directly and nonchalantly – like the student does in the anecdote – without that being problematized. As long as phenotype/race is not articulated directly, the logical conclusion ‘non-white → foreigner’ is legitimate and does not raise eyebrows with many people. The kind of Norwegian color-blindness detected here is thus predicated upon the co-existence of three seemingly paradox elements: 1. Phenotype carries meaning (e.g. through the association ‘non-white → foreigner’). 2. There is little vocabulary to

talk about phenotype/race, and a quite active denial of phenotype/race as a category of difference. 3. There are actually more indirect, 'sanitized' manners of speaking about phenotype/race, for instance via 'ethnicity' (as discussed in the previous chapter).

This paradox is illustrated by the graduate student's behavior in the anecdote above. She feels comfortable moving around the library, singling out people of color, and asking them when they learned Norwegian and whether the letters were strange to them. Through her action, phenotype is made to matter. She draws on the fact that phenotype signals difference and non-belonging, without ever once mentioning phenotype (or race), thus enacting phenotype's meaning while conforming to societal norms of phenotypical silence. Color-blindness does not mean that phenotype/race does not matter, but rather that its meaning is not acknowledged (Doane, 2017).

Notably, both Camila and Elisabeth actually resist their interlocutors in the anecdotes they tell. Camila employs a kind of subversive humor and tells the majority Norwegian person who compliments her, 'thanks, you too!'. She demonstrates that she experiences the compliment as absurd by giving it back to the person who would find it equally absurd to receive. Elisabeth resists the graduate student by pointing out that she does not fit the study's criteria, by telling the student that she missed potential participants who actually are not native speakers, and finally by refusing to participate in the survey any further.

Both these quotes radiate a deep frustration with being *a priori* excluded from the linguistic and thus national community in what to the person performing the exclusion must have felt like an obvious and unproblematic manner that they may not have even been aware of (at least before meeting Camila's and Elisabeth's resistance).

Exotification

The next quote is by Samrath, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India. When we were talking about the term 'minority' and its connection with phenotype, Samrath offered up the following reflections:

> Samrath. I don't like the term 'positive racism', and I don't think we should use it, but I'll say something about it now. (…) People maybe consider this positive racism, right, [when people say about my kids] 'they are so pretty, their hair is beautiful, where is the father from[74]'. Right. Do you see what I mean? I would call that exoticism. If people come and visit my parents, and they are disappointed because it doesn't look Indian enough, it doesn't

[74] Samrath previously explained that when his partner, who is white Scandinavian, is out with their children alone, she has been asked several times 'where the father is from' based on the fact that the children are darker in complexion than her.

> smell Indian enough, it's not… - it's like fuck we live in Norway. Okay we have some Indian food and such, but we don't have an elephant in our basement. Do you see what I mean? (…) I think it's not positive that people think that Indians are so damn exciting. That is not necessarily positive. (…) I think it's unfortunate because exotification is a socially accepted, or a tolerated way to call others barbarians (…). That's in a way what it is. (…) That's maybe something people don't understand, and [then] they call me sensitive. 'But Samrath, why do you think it's a problem?' Right. 'Isn't that just a nice thing?' (…) I understand that it can be nice, I understand that even (…) many minorities think that's a nice thing to hear, but do you think that's healthy, do you think it's justifiable, do you think this is the way we should develop? Right. Because what you really are saying is that I am different from you, and we are exciting, [and that makes us] a bit inferior. Right. It's patronizing. I am scared that [my kids] will experience this. That's what I am most worried about. (…) What I am *not* afraid of, and not sensitive about, is that kind of 'fuck you, damn foreigner'. I don't give a shit, (…) I actually think that's quite okay. Because those people dare to be open about the fact that they are racists, right. That's fair enough.

Towards the end of the interview, Samrath summed up the effect of all the subtle differential treatment he has experienced throughout his life in the following way:

> Samrath: I was trying to explain this to someone who does not experience it, so I said: 'it's like being hit with a pillow, but every day, all the time'. Eventually you just *lose* it, right. It's not a problem to be hit with a pillow, right, it doesn't hurt, it's not uncomfortable in that sense. But if that is done to you *all* the time, in the end (…) you're fed up. (…) I'm not being constantly hit with a pillow [now], I felt more like that when I went to school and during college and such, (…) it was so much, people said so many weird things, (…) just so stupid.

Samrath emphasizes how problematic he finds the phenomenon that he calls 'positive racism' or 'exotification'. I would argue that there are two main aspects to this that he finds problematic. One is the inherent power aspect, and the other is the expectation that he (and his family) would be over-determined by their culture. Samrath points out the power aspect when he says that 'exotification (…) is a socially accepted way to call others barbarians'. The term 'barbarian' refers to a person who is not only deemed foreign, but also uncivilized and inferior. The use of this word points to a deep sense of alienation and denigration Samrath feels when he is at the receiving end of exotifying comments. He feels like he is made into a savage and he is deeply bothered by the fact that some people find 'Indians (…) so damn exciting'. This links back to what I wrote above about who has the power to include and exclude others from the nation (Hage, 1998). Even though the statements Samrath uses as examples here ('the kids are so pretty', 'their hair is beautiful') are positive when taken at face value, the dynamic implies a power difference and the statements are thus actually excluding and, in Samrath's own words, 'patronizing'.

Further, the expectation that his family should stand out in their cultural practice and 'have an elephant in the basement' is akin to saying that people expect Samrath's family to somehow be overdetermined by their ('foreign') culture. Even though they live in Norway, visitors to the family home are sometimes

'disappointed because it doesn't look Indian enough'. Samrath was born in Norway and is deeply rooted here; he is frustrated when people look at him and only see a dark-complexioned foreigner.

Finally, Samrath explains that his reflections are not a result of heightened sensitivity. People who do not understand the dynamics at play might see him as sensitive when he reacts negatively to exotification. Personally, he actually finds the latter worse than open xenophobia and racism ('fuck you, damn foreigner'), and is more worried about his children being subjected to it. In the final quote, Samrath uses the metaphor of being hit with a pillow to illustrate how many small slights accumulate and build up to a big frustration.

All the examples in this section speak to denigration, exclusion, and alienation many minorities experience in their everyday life. Whether the instance is devaluation of immigrant culture, the invisibility Lejla feels at work, alienating compliments about one's Norwegian skills, or the exotification that Samrath describes, all the quotes discussed here have in common that the exclusion is not made explicit, but rather lies just beneath the surface.

The stories revolve around a common theme of immigrants being 'less-than'. They draw on different dimensions of migration-related difference, such as culture, phenotype, and language, and weave them together. Often, these different dimensions seem to point to each other, such that phenotypical difference can lead to an expectation of cultural difference or non-native language skills. These links are often not made explicit by the actors in the stories, but they are made explicit when participants tell the story ('the girl in the library only asked colored people', 'they had never even looked at me, they just think 'yeah – foreigner, she has to be dark'). Participants thus articulate the unspoken underlying links and make explicit why they experienced these episodes as problematic or denigrating.

Another common theme in this section is that immigrants or minorities are *a priori* understood as exotic, different, less competent linguistically, and overdetermined by their culture. These are the underlying expectations and assumptions to which the examples discussed here speak. Due to the fact that the quotes in these section again draw on a set of common themes, and that each instance amounts to an actualization and enactment of these themes, Philomena Essed's concept of 'every-day racism' also seems fitting here. The examples discussed here are more subtle than those discussed in the first section ('garbage', 'go home'), but they nonetheless reproduce power differences and exclusion.

8.2.3 Discrimination against Muslims

In this section, I want to focus on religion as grounds for discrimination, and specifically on the effect of being Muslim or being read as Muslim. What is the experience of participants who are either visibly religious, or interpreted as such by others?

A 2017 survey by the Oslo Center for Studies of the Holocaust and Religious Minorities (C. Hoffmann & Moe, 2017) found that 34 percent of 'ordinary Norwegians' display marked prejudice against Muslims. While there is certainly overlap between general anti-immigrant prejudice and specific anti-Muslim prejudice, I want to devote a separate section to discrimination against Muslims.

Camila, an adult convert to Islam with roots in South America who wears a hijab, said the following about her experiences with discrimination:

> Camila: A lot of it is related to the head cover, actually. (..) One day at a bus stop, there was a lady who started insulting me. Both my girls were with me (…) and they got scared. And it was [my] head cover that was the problem. She was like: 'You have to take it *off*, you are in Norway!'. And I was like: 'Oh really, I didn't realize. I thought I was in Somalia'. (she chuckles). (…) But then again, there is a convent just around the corner from that bus stop, and I was like 'you know there is a convent just around the corner from the bus stop? All the ladies there wear long skirts and head covers, right. Do you have a problem with that, too?' (Imitates female voice). 'You foreigners…!'. Of course, she didn't listen, right, she just continued on about foreigners, and they have to take off their head covers. (…) So, I was like: 'I'm sure you wore a *skaut*[75] when you were little, or your mom did, or something'. She was old, right.

Camila describes a situation in which she is verbally aggressed in public by a passer-by. The fact that she has her two young daughters with her puts her in an especially vulnerable position. In telling the story to me, Camila focuses most of her attention on the three different comebacks she delivers to the aggressor. First, she sarcastically remarks that she thought she was in Somalia. Second, she points out that there is a convent housing (veiled) nuns just around the corner. Third, she hints at the fact that female head coverings are not foreign to – but rather a part of – Norwegian cultural heritage by mentioning a traditional garment called 'skaut'. However, the woman does not listen to Camila and rather continues on with her tirade against foreigners.

Among participants in this study, it is specifically women who wear a hijab and are thus visibly religious, who report discrimination on religious grounds. The experiences of women who wear a hijab range from being harassed, like Camila describes above, to more subtle experiences. For example, Farida told me that

[75] Traditional headdress worn by Norwegian women (mainly married women) in the past. May still be worn together with the Norwegian national costume (bunad) today.

when she started wearing a head cover, many people asked her what had happened, and people stopped chit-chatting with her in the grocery store. Additionally, she reported:

> Farida: When I started wearing [a head cover] (…) my oldest [son] was like: 'Mom, everyone's looking at you! Don't you see that they are looking at you?' And I said: 'Yes, I see that, like, on my retina, but I choose not to [pay attention to it], I just choose to be proud of it.' (…) And I asked him 'are you embarrassed?' and he said 'no, I'm not embarrassed' – 'That is important to me, whether you are embarrassed or not. What other people look at, or don't, that's not so important'.

Farida's head cover engenders a kind of hyper-visibility, where 'everyone [looks] at her'. Farida only started wearing a hijab well into her adult years, so the change in people's reaction and demeanor was clearly observable not only to her, but also to her children. While Farida says that she notices the attention she attracts, 'like, on my retina', she chooses not to pay attention to it. She cares about what her son makes of the situation, but disengages from the element she cannot control (i.e. other people's behavior).

The kind of extra attention and harassment that Farida and Camila describe comes in response to their visible religiosity/Muslim-ness. In their cases, their head covers make them identifiable as Muslims. In the next two quotes below, there are other factors that mark bodies as 'Muslim'. Halima, who is Somali-Norwegian and has lived in Norway since she was a young child, said the following about anti-Muslim harassment she has been subject to on public transport:

> Halima: On the metro and on busses and such, people have thrown around comments (…) I'm not the kind of person to take on a fight, to tell them 'you know, why do you say this, and I'm not like that, and lalala', I just, I just ignore it, actually. [I have had] people shout 'you fucking Muslims', for example when there's Id, and there are *many* Muslim-dressed people outside, with *abayas*[76] and with the white *kameez*[77], and then there are these weird comments, but nothing more than that. That's not something I have – I have just learned not to take these things personal. Because if I do that, then I in a way just isolate myself from society. At least that's what I feel. And I isolate myself from the person I want to be, and the community I want to be a part of.

Halima's quote shows that another factor that can trigger hostile comments is when people wear traditional clothing, like *abayas* and *kameez*, which many people do on Muslim holidays. Even though the *kameez* is not per se a religious garment and could thus be interpreted as pointing to more of an ethnic or regional identity, it seems that it can still be read as a sign of visible Muslimness. There seems to be an associational link between being dressed in a traditional South and Central Asian garment and being read

[76] A robe-like dress worn by some Muslim women.
[77] A long shirt or tunic worn by both men and women in or from South and Central Asia.

as Muslim and thus the target for harassment. Halima's strategy for dealing with this kind of harassment is to simply ignore it.

The next quote by Samrath hints at yet another factor that can play a role for negative differential treatment. In this quote, Samrath, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, talks about his teenage years:

> Samrath: The parents of all the kids I was hanging out with really liked me a lot. One thing is surely because I was polite, well-behaved and those things, and then I surely also was a bit exciting, (…) and I also think I kind of became their diversity-alibi. Like 'my kid has a foreigner-friend', right. And the reason I think that is because (...) when I got older I had some female friends, (…) and their parents adored me, right until I got together with any of them (…). If I started a relationship with the girl, then all of a sudden it became difficult for the parents to relate to me. At that happened at least twice. (…) That's a kind of reality check where you *think* you are included, you think you are accepted and after many years, at the end of the day, it's not the case. And then you realize that you kind of start from scratch. Okay, (…) who are my friends, who are… - how are these families actually composed?
>
> Laura: Mhm. Like: how do they see me, in a way?
>
> Samrath: Yeah, absolutely. (…) I had never really been asked about my religious background before that. And then people began to ask: 'Are you Muslim?'. It was a lot about that. And I'm not. Before, I was only Indian, right. I only was exot-, just a foreigner, a minority, an Indian. It was fun and exciting, there was no interest in my religion, right. But as soon as I started seeing their daughter, they were like: 'Are you Muslim? What does the mean, and how does that affect us? And I was like: 'No, I'm not' (he laughs). But why are you all of a sudden curious about that? Right? I understand that it's about fear and anxiety and insecurity and… - of course at that age everyone wants to protect their children. It's just about where that was directed, right.

Samrath doesn't say so explicitly, but it is my interpretation that the questions as to whether he is Muslim are sparked by his phenotype. His parents are from India and he thus looks like he might be Muslim. When he was young, immigrants from Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim country, constituted one of the largest immigrant groups in Norway. A 'South Asian phenotype' is thus easily read as 'Muslim' in the Norwegian context.

By contrast, Ellen, a majority Norwegian convert to Islam who does not wear a hijab, says that she has not experienced discrimination.

> Ellen: I have not experienced it [i.e. religious discrimination] personally because I don't look Muslim. I think that's the reason. I think that the moment I for example choose to put on a headscarf (…) I would experience that discrimination. I do think so. I know several people who wear it and who have their own stories and experiences. (…) I do experience quite some prejudice about it, when it gets known that I am [Muslim], also among members of my family. (…) As I said, I think it's about visibility. Now, I look like an average Norwegian girl, and so I don't experience – so I'm sought after, maybe on the job market and in other arenas. But if I were to make visible that I'm Muslim, then I think it could be

> different, in some instances. I don't know the extent of it. I think it [depends] very much on who you meet, what kind of environment you are in, which jobs you apply to. Maybe the health sector, where diversity already is overrepresented, is different from if I had worked as an economist or something else.

Ellen explains the fact that she has not experienced religious discrimination by mentioning 'visibility' and that she does not look Muslim, but rather like 'an average Norwegian girl'. Specifically, she talks about the fact that she does not wear a headscarf, and that she assumes that she would be discriminated against if she did. She does not mention phenotype specifically in this quote, but I think her mentioning of 'visibility' and 'an average Norwegian girl' can be interpreted in this direction. Since she is light-complexioned *and* does not wear a hijab, nobody would read her as Muslim.

This fits what Vassenden and Andersson (2011) term 'faith information control'. Based on fieldwork conducted in Oslo, they argue that white individuals are assumed to be secular or neutral in terms of religiosity and can choose whether and when to divulge information about their religious beliefs and practices. People with a darker phenotype, in contrast, are usually assumed to be Muslim, unless they explicitly state the contrary. This finding thus underlines the associational closeness of non-whiteness and Muslimness. Ellen further states that the extent of discrimination also depends on the environment you are in, and mentions different sectors of work as an example. She expects less religious discrimination in the health sector, where she works, because there already is a lot of (ethnic and religious) diversity there.

Finally, those participants who are both darker in phenotype and wear a hijab, uniformly state that their visible Muslimness weighs more heavily than their phenotype when it comes to experiencing discrimination. For example, Farida states:

> Farida: I have become more conscious that I (…) wear a head cover, and that is a very explicit sign (…). Without the head cover, with just skin color, it's not such a big challenge, but having the head cover in addition, is an extra… - [I] become a clear target.

Farida points out that the head cover is the main contributing factor, but it also seems that the two are interrelated since she talks about 'having the head cover *in addition*'.

In sum, both phenotype, traditional clothing like the *kameez*, and religious dress (i.e. the hijab) are relevant in interpreting people as 'Muslim'. Recent years have seen a growing literature that deploys the concept of 'racialization' in an effort to understand anti-Muslim prejudice and discrimination and the processes that construct Muslims as a group that can be subjected to these (Gans, 2016; Garner & Selod, 2015; Meer, 2013). Based on the quotes discussed here, I would argue that the term 'racialization' is apt at capturing how different visible elements are interpreted together to determine who is or is not Muslim and how the ascription of that status in turn makes individuals the subject of discrimination and harassment.

Alexa Døving (2020) has raised the question whether the fact that the 'racist elements in Islamophobia' have not received enough attention in the Norwegian public debate has led to Islamophobic statements' meeting less sanctions. She argues that because hostility towards Muslims can be framed as 'fear of a Muslim takeover' or as criticism of religion, it is far more legitimate than anti-Semitism or biological racism. This argument underscores the importance of teasing apart the factors that contribute to a racialization of Muslims and the forms anti-Muslim discrimination takes. The quotes presented in this section provide an insight into experiences with anti-Muslim discrimination participants reported during the interviews and point to the racialization of Muslims in the Norwegian context.

8.3 Hesitation to Apply the Terms 'Discrimination' and 'Racism'

Even though this chapter has so far shown that participants reported numerous examples of negative differential treatment, they were actually often reticent when asked whether they had experienced racism or discrimination. Several participants initially expressed that they had never 'experienced anything', never been discriminated, or that 'other people have it worse'; yet, they followed this statement up by relating instances where they had been insulted in public space, or met prejudice at work. This contradiction between asserting that they had never been subjected to racism or discrimination, and their active relating of stories that fit that realm gives an indication that participants have a tendency to be careful or hesitant to apply those labels to their own experiences. In this section of the chapter, I want to explore that hesitation and possible reasons for it.

One reason for not labeling one's own experience as discrimination or racism is that it can be difficult to securely establish the motivation behind other people's actions. Some participants told me that even though they had reasons to be believe that they had experienced discrimination, it was often difficult to substantiate for a concrete instance. One participant[78] with a minority background (who has lived in Norway since she was a young child), for example, experienced that it took a long time before she found a job after graduating from university. Her impression is that this was at least partly due to discrimination. Nowadays, she works a public sector job where she helps recent immigrants find entryways into the Norwegian labor market, and she has the impression that some employers 'don't give a chance to people who look different, behave a bit differently, talk differently'. Some of them, she says, gladly have an immigrant work for them for free for a while through a job placement program administered by the public welfare agency that aims at helping participants find permanent jobs. She has the suspicion that some

[78] I don't mention the pseudonym here in order to anonymize as much as possible, given that the story contains details about her work place.

employers have no intention at all to actually hire one of their trainees for a regular job – which is a prerequisite for their being able to participate in the placement program – yet, they are happy to have rotating trainees intern with them for free as this provides them with free labor. She observes a pattern here that she considers discriminatory, but she finds it difficult to substantiate discrimination in any single, specific case.

Another reason for why participants might hesitate to label their own experiences as 'racism' specifically, is that they want to reserve this term for what they consider to be the most severe cases of discrimination only. For example, Elisabeth told me:

> Elisabeth: It is actually very difficult, because, well, I especially don't want to pull the word 'racism' too many times, in order not to water down the concept, quite simply. I have been subjected to, uhm, gestures, and various, like, 'ching-chong', and pulling back one's eyes, and such. I don't want to go so far as to say that that is racism, because there is much worse out there, but, in some way, I have gotten an understanding that this has to do with my ethnicity, right. That's what it is.
>
> Laura: Yes. So, you think 'racism' should be reserved for- (silence)
>
> Elisabeth: In terms of seriousness, yes, I think that (silence), uhm… Some people just think that it's funny to pull back their eyes and go 'ching-chong, ching-chong-ma-ma', or to ask 'do you know karate', or – and I'm just like 'karate is Japanese, right'. It's just like 'yeah, but haven't all [East Asians] grown up with karate?'. And I'm just like 'no'. (…) I wouldn't consider that racism, quite simply because for me personally it's not serious enough. But I understand that others can react to it and go so far [as to call it racism]. But I have heard about so many more serious things that I think that it would be unfair (dårlig gjort) towards them to water down… - that my – that the fact that somebody pulls back their eyes and makes weird sounds towards me, that that could be considered equal with what in a way is hard, brutal racism.
>
> Laura: Physical aggression
>
> Elisabeth: Yeah, well, it can also be verbal aggression, but that, uhm, it, yeah. Hm. (silence). So, uhm, it… So, I want to say that calling someone with an African background an ape and throw a banana at him, that's much more serious and much more (she laughs shortly) on-point racism than somebody looking at me and laughing and pulling back their eyes, right. I don't know. Maybe I have, uhm, become, too, uhm, yeah. Don't know. Accepting. I don't know. Very difficult, hm. But… I think it's difficult. I don't think that I have been subjected to racism, consciously. At least in the way I define racism.

Elisabeth reserves the term 'racism' for the incidents she considers the most serious only. She mentions the old, colonial trope of associating black people with apes as an example of what she deems 'real racism'. Her concern is that if the label racism is used for other, in her opinion 'milder', forms of racism, then it will be 'watered down' and lose its pungency. From this quote, it does not become entirely clear to me which parameters she uses to determine the seriousness of an instance, and why she ranks the examples she gives the way she does. Possibly, she looks at the banana/ape example as an example of a racism that is more 'biological' in nature, whereas the example with pulling back one's eyes and imitating

an East Asian language could be considered somewhat more ‘cultural’ – though I do not think the distinction is that clear cut. After all, the pulling back of the eyes is also a very clear, bodily reference. Another possibility is that she associates the term ‘racism’ with anti-Black or anti-African racism, specifically.

Elisabeth’s insistence that the term ‘racism’ should be reserved for the most serious instances only mirrors discussions in the Norwegian public and Norwegian academia about how racism should be defined and, by extension, which behavior can be labeled ‘racist’ (Bangstad, 2015, 2017). Elisabeth states that she prefers to adhere to a ‘narrow’ definition of racism in order not to weaken the concept and in solidarity with those who are subjected to what she considers the most severe forms of racism. While it seems that Elisabeth has a clear stance around what she considers racism and not, towards the end of the quote she also concedes that she is unsure, that she finds it very difficult, and she wonders whether she has become too accepting. Nevertheless, her final verdict is that she has not been subjected to racism in the way she defines it.

While Elisabeth thus prefers to apply the term ‘racism’ restrictively, other participants hold a different view as to how to weight the seriousness and importance of different experiences of exclusion. Towards the end of the interview with Samrath, during which he had already related many experiences of negative differential treatment, I asked him explicitly about his experiences with discrimination, and we had the following exchange:

> Laura: I usually conclude the interview – and I do that with everyone, independently of their background – by asking whether they ever experienced discrimination. But now we have talked so much about many different things that I’m not sure if it makes sense to ask [this question].
>
> Samrath: Well, you can interpret that based on what I told you. The only thing I can say is that yes, I have experienced that. Several times, all the time. And that doesn’t necessarily mean that those were, like, on-point racist slurs, which I have also experienced, but it’s also these small things. Also among those who are basically intelligent (oppegående) people. Which contributes to, right, something bigger. So that’s the type of discrimination which I (…) see a lot of, and which I think can be more… maybe more harmful than something else. Because ultimately this is what creates categories and outgroups. (…) So yes, that exists and I experience it.

Samrath says that he has experienced discrimination and for him, this includes ‘on-point racist slurs’ but also all the ‘small things’ that ‘contribute to (…) something bigger’. In Samrath’s view, the latter are actually more harmful than the former. A reason for this may be that the ‘small things’ are more

widespread and also found among 'intelligent/educated[79] people' who would never utter a racist slur. This means that these kind of harmful utterances more often stand unchallenged. Many people may not find them problematic at all. Contrary to Elisabeth, Samrath seems to think that these most subtle instances are the most harmful and problematic.

Both Elisabeth and Samrath's quotes are linked to a broader question, namely: what space is there to talk about experiencing that one's phenotype has played a role (in general) or to talk about discrimination and racism, specifically. I had a longer discussion about this with one participant, Rian, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, and would therefore like to include two longer quotes from his interview. The context for the first quote is that we were talking about how easy or hard it is to talk about 'skin color' and the role in plays in one's life. Rian, who has lived in the USA for several years, made the following comparison:

> Rian: I think Europe (…) lacks a language and a discourse which (…) the US has, uhm, I often think that in discussions it seems like the problem is so much bigger in the US, but I think that's not necessarily the case, I just think they are often much better at - . (…) And in some cases [the problem is much bigger], but I also think that they are much better- they have a discourse as you say, which is much more explicit, which Europe just doesn't have. Uh, and it's not just Norway, it's many countries in Europe that lack this. (…) And that's problematic because it of course limits how you can position yourself in every-day life. (…) You learn [the rules of] the game, you accept things the way they are, this is the way the game is supposed to be (…). And it's difficult for me to say whether this is (…) acceptable, there are things that are done in Norway every once in a while that I wouldn't see with my American colleagues, for example, but (…) that's how the mechanisms work, and I grew up with them, so I don't think it's so problematic anyway.

He says that there is little language in Norwegian for talking about skin color and the role in plays, and that this lack of language limits how he can 'position himself' and talk about his own experiences. Further, he states that since he grew up in Norway, he has learned the rules of the game, he has learned how phenotype matters and how he can and cannot talk about it. Because he grew up with the status quo, he accepts it and does not 'think it's so problematic anyway'.

Rian's comments about 'learning the rules of the game' fit with what Viviane Cretton (2018) has written about skin color and racism in Switzerland. She argues that in Switzerland, minimizing and trivializing racist remarks is a way for immigrants[80] to demonstrate that they have adapted to and are a part of their new home country. She calls this 'a specific way of performing Swissness in everyday life in Switzerland'

[79] The Norwegian term 'oppegående' does not refer to intelligence as measured by an IQ test, but more to the propensity for independent thinking and having an alert mind. It is hard to find an equivalent in English.
[80] She interviewed people who themselves had immigrated into Switzerland and that is why I write 'immigrant' here. Rian was born in Norway to immigrant parents. He is not an immigrant himself.

(2018, p. 852). I do not think that Rian made the statement about 'having learned the rules of the game' as a way of demonstrating his Norwegianness during the interview[81]. Yet, the way he intertwines statements about having grown up in Norway and thus 'knowing the rules of the game' with an acceptance of the status quo – even if that involves not being able to talk about his experiences – is still indicative of a process similar to what Cretton describes. It seems that for Rian, accepting 'the rules of the game' is an automatic and necessary consequence of his everyday incorporation and participation in the Norwegian nation.

According to Cretton, when migrants deny the existence of racism in Switzerland, they enact Swissness by reproducing dominant narratives of Switzerland as a raceless nation. While Rian's remarks about 'learning the rules of the game' are similar to some of Cretton's findings, he actually actively resists narratives of Norway as a raceless nation. Both in the quote above, and in general throughout the interview, Rian is quite conscious of the fact that skin color/phenotype matters. Even though he asserts that he has 'learned the rules of the game' and accepts the status quo, he actively opposes color-blind narratives during the interview. He explored these thoughts at a later point in the interview, where he returned to the fact that he finds racism and discrimination difficult to talk about in Norway:

> Rian: Especially in Norway, where it's not supposed to exist, right – there is actually no – it's actually not as – there is actually nothing there, as you said, there is no structural racism, there is no institutional racism. It's… it's… just in your head. (…) The discourse says that *it's not* (there). That's also my experience of the Norwegian pub[lic] – roughly speaking anyways, the common perception of how things are. A society with *little* racism, with… with, right, with high levels of meritocracy, with… and [yet not everyone] has that same experience. But then it's – then it's because you yourself have – right, then it's, it's in a way… yeah. So I don't know, it's this, this… I know that my mother has very clear opinions on this. (…) But they grew up in a slightly different – they fought a slightly different fight, and they have a different experience of things, and they have made different choices, and didn't get the same possibilities and such, so it's clear that it's a completely different – not the same preconditions either – so it's a completely different, a completely different… (….) We also lack the language, I think (…).
>
> Laura: Yeah, and maybe the flexibility to allow it, to be able to take it in that this maybe, in Norway – that this belongs to the realm of the Norwegian, too (sånt tilhører jo også det norske).
>
> Rian: mhm, yes.
>
> Laura: It's my impression that there is little room for this, and that
>
> Rian: There is little room, there is no self-recognition that this can be – that this actually also is a part of Norway – [because] it isn't, it's not supposed to be. (…) There is [also] this 'But I am not racist, and I'm not racist because I say this thing'. No, you *aren't* racist because you say this thing, but the statement can still have (…), right, it can still have racist connotations, or it can be problematic. (…) But there has been this (…) public, it's like (he sighs), a lot of people say that, uhm, they don't dare to say anything for fear of being

[81] Indeed, Rian was rather quite concerned with not wanting to fit any specific ethnic or national 'mold'.

> labelled a racist, and such. Which is a common argument. (…) Yeah, maybe, but that's also because (…) we have a tradition for saying that [being racist] is an unshakeable personal attribute, and *it's not*. That's not how it manifests itself. I think everybody [is racist sometimes]. Me too. In the course of a life. Uhm, not against myself (he laughs), but against (…) others. Why shouldn't I, too, be racist? I have prejudice too. (…) And I am a part of a system, too, so if it's structural, then (…) I, too, contribute to… (…) Well, if I am a part of the machinery, and I think that I *am*, and I play the game that is being played, then I will also unconsciously have – well, I hope – at least I'm not doing it consciously (he laughs), but, but I will also [be racist] ('så vil jeg jo også være det').
>
> I just think that we could have been more relaxed and taken the drama out of the situation. But it's very, very, very difficult with everything that lies in that concept. (…) Maybe we should remove the stigma from it (he laughs). (…) But I (…) also think that my parents experience that it is easier today than it was in the 60s, 70s, and 80s. That it's a, that, uhm, that… (he sighs). Not because society necessarily has become so much better, but because it's a, it's a, it's a… uhm (pause) (he sighs) (pause). I don't think it's expressed as explicitly anymore. In that sense you can maybe say that it has become – that it has become a bit better. But then again (…) my parents have told me some stories – and I won't tell them now – (…) where I thought: 'but this is, but this is just *beyond* anything.' That this can happen. And it's very, very, *very* difficult for me to imagine that things like this could actually happen today (…). You don't *do that*, nowadays. (long silence). And it's maybe a little, like, when [you] ask [me] whether, well, did [I] experience this and that, then there is this kind of expectation that it should be one of these very explicit – well, very visual (visuelle) expressions, or, well, graphic (billedlige) expressions (…) that everyone can understand, and that is completely… and it's not always that, right. Maybe there's less of that now than there used to be. Maybe. I don't know.

In this second quote, Rian mentions several additional reasons that make it hard to talk about racism: His first claim is that there is a societal discourse that says that there is little racism in Norway. Second, he explains that he perceives that there is a tendency to attribute racism to individual people. It is not seen as a structural force, but rather as an individual moral failing. This makes it harder to talk about because it shifts the focus onto individual racist 'perpetrators'. He disagrees with this view, espouses a structural perspective on racism, and states that he is affected by the same structures and also carries racial prejudice. Lastly, he states that racism has become less explicit over the past decades. He finds that this actually makes it more difficult for him to use the label 'racism' for his experiences. When I ask him during the interview whether he experienced racism, then he feels that there is an expectation that the experiences should be very 'visual' and 'graphic'. However, 'it is not always that'. Rian thus expresses that the fact that the term 'racism' creates an expectation of a visual explicitness makes it harder for him to voice his grievances and to use the term 'racism' in the way he feels is fitting.

Sindre Bangstad argues that in contemporary Norway it has become 'taboo in the public sphere' to apply the term 'racism' to anything but 'a very narrow biological definition of racism, which explicitly requires the existence and expression of ideas about 'racial' hierarchies' (2015, p. 51). Rian's references to 'visual' and 'graphic expressions' of racism seem to point in this direction. When asked where he 'experienced

this and that' (i.e. racism), he feels it should be forms of racism 'that everyone can understand', but he concludes that 'it's not always that'. Rian's quote can thus be interpreted as engaging larger societal narratives about which understandings of racism are more broadly accepted in society. His reflections thus point to the existence of narrow hegemonic definitions of racism that do not fit his own experiences.

Further, Rian compares his own experiences to his parents', who, according to him, have experienced a kind of racism that he qualifies as 'unimaginable today'. Possibly, what his parents experienced corresponded to the kind of 'graphic expression' that Rian feels is a societal prerequisite for using the label 'racism'. It may be that the comparison between his and his parents' experiences makes it harder for Rian to label his own experiences 'racism'.

In sum, it seems that there are many possible reasons for why participants may hesitate to label their own experiences as discrimination or racism. It might be that they find it hard to ascertain discriminatory behavior for a specific instance or it may be that they are afraid of 'watering down' the definition of 'racism'. It may also be related to the fact, like Rian explored, that many people find that there is little language and little 'space' to talk about discrimination and racism, and more broadly about phenotype in general. Rian linked this to wider societal narratives about Norway as a society with little racism, and to a tendency to attribute racism to individual moral failings.

8.4 Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter has covered a range of different experiences of discrimination and racism that participants reported. The first section discussed instances of openly hostile harassment by strangers in public space. Because these instances constituted repetitive examples of activation of group power, namely the power to decide who legitimately has a place in the nation, they were linked to Philomena Essed's concept of 'everyday racism'. A second section then discussed more subtle instances of alienation and exclusion. These examples combined phenotype with ideas about 'immigrant culture' and language skills and functioned by constructing minorities as culturally different, exotic, less competent, and not belonging. A third section focused on discrimination against Muslims. I discussed that the concept of 'racialization' can reflect how phenotype, traditional dress, and religious dress are woven together in an understanding of who is and is not Muslim and how this makes individuals the target for discrimination and harassment. The final section engaged participants' negotiations of which experiences can and cannot be labeled racism. It linked these negotiations to prevalent narratives according to which Norway is a society with little racism and to a tendency to attribute racism to individual moral failings.

This chapter has shown that discrimination follows and reproduces patterns of legitimate belonging to the nation. There are different markers of difference based on which people interpret who does or does not belong legitimately, such as phenotype, language, clothing, and cues that point to being Muslim. In this context, phenotype can often function as a symbol pointing to otherness and to an 'immigrant'-status, especially when little else is known about a person. This chapter has shown how phenotype is intertwined with other migration-related categories of difference, but also how it can become a symbol for those. It can, for instance, create expectations that a person would not speak Norwegian (as the quote by Elisabeth showed) or that a person would be very different culturally (as the turn of phrase 'we don't have an elephant in our basement' by Samrath showed).

Moreover, phenotype does not need to be mentioned explicitly; it can also be an underlying factor in an experience of discrimination or racism. When Valentina was told 'there are so many immigrants now in Frogner', her phenotype was not mentioned, but since it was the only factor that suggested she may be an immigrant, it was clearly the 'motivation' for the comment. Further, the example where Elisabeth was selected for participating in a survey on language learning based on her East Asian phenotype exemplified how exclusion or alienation can function in a color-blind manner by being, at the same time, based on phenotype while remaining silent about it. In other words, it is okay to act on the assumption that non-white people are 'foreigners' as long as this is not articulated explicitly.

Phenotype has played a role as a marker of difference throughout this chapter. In Norway, there is an idea that if minorities are subject to differential treatment, this is due to their culture (Bangstad, 2015). The examples discussed in this chapter have shown that phenotype also matters and that phenotype and culture are often woven together. The analysis of experiences of discrimination has proven to be, in this chapter, a good starting point for understanding how constructions of otherness function and which role phenotype plays in these. It functions as a symbol of being a foreigner who does not belong to the nation.

9 Systematizing Phenotype

9.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters have established that phenotype carries meaning both for understandings of who is 'Norwegian' and who is an 'immigrant' and for experiences of discrimination, which themselves are rooted in an understanding of non-white people as not belonging to the nation. What has not been explored so far is which phenotypes are read as respectively 'white' or 'non-white' in the Norwegian context. This chapter will continue exploring phenotype as a marker of difference by attempting to understand what could be called phenotypical/racial categories and the boundaries between them. I am not concerned here with categories of speech that are deployed (like 'white, 'brown', and 'dark-skinned', which have already been covered), but rather with how phenotype is categorized and assigned meaning. If phenotype matters differentially, then what are the boundaries between different categories?

The international literature on ethno-racial difference shows that ethnicity/race functions quite differently in various contexts around the world. For instance, in the US context, this kind of difference is understood as being ordered into a number of more-or-less well-defined 'racial groups'[82]. The Brazilian context is, in contrast, characterized by a much more flexible system of categories, where color, race, and class intertwine, and individuals are not definitely assigned to the same category over the course of their life (Dixon & Telles, 2017; E. E. Telles, 2014). Against this backdrop, I want to attempt to systematize how phenotype functions as a category of difference in Norway. The analytical question that guides the chapter is: Can phenotype be thought of as functioning as a system of phenotypical categories, and if so, what does this 'system' look like? Importantly, the aim of this chapter is in no way normative, i.e. I am not arguing that phenotypical categories *should* be understood as bounded or be named. Rather, I am attempting to be precise and to tease out how phenotype functions differentially, since I am arguing that it does.

[82] The US census distinguishes between five 'races' (white, black, Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander) (U.S Census Bureau, 2017) and 'Hispanic' as an additional, ethic category (Humes, Jones, & Ramirez, 2011). In common parlance, it may be more common to differentiate between 'white', 'black', 'Latino', 'Asian', and 'Native American'.

9.2 Boundaries

9.2.1 Dichotomy

In order to start answering the question about where the boundaries between different categories are perceived to be in Norway, I would like present this quote, in which Samrath, who was born in Norway to immigrant parents from India, describes precisely that.

> Samrath: I am relatively light, but I am still dark, and when I even can be categorized as black, right, (…) that's a bit weird. [Regarding] the terms black and white, I think that you are either non-colored, then you're white, right. Like you [, Laura]. Not matter if you're born abroad, that's completely irrelevant, you are white. You have your advantages of being white. Right. While my buddies from Vietnam and me (…) we are non-white. (…) It's the same category, there are many different colors that we can use, but it's *not* white. Right. That's how bloody easy it is. (…) White and non-white. (…) I know that in other countries, in South Africa, you distinguish between colored and Indian and black (…). Here I feel that (…) you're either white or you're not.

Samrath suggests that phenotype functions in a dichotomous manner in Norway, with the two over-arching categories being white and non-white. In other words, the main dividing line is whether you fit a Nordic/European[83] phenotype, or whether you do not. Even though Samrath recognizes that there are 'many different colors' in the non-white category, he argues that there are no clear and bounded racial groups like in some other geographical contexts.

As has been discussed previously, there is a strong ideational link between having a dark phenotype and being a foreigner, and between being light-skinned and being Norwegian. In light of this, it makes sense that phenotype as a marker of difference would be characterized by a fundamental dichotomy, where a person is either understood as white, and hence presumably Norwegian, or not[84]. Evidence from other European countries, such as Italy (see Antonsich, 2018; Stanley, 2015), Switzerland (see Cretton, 2018), France (see Fassin, 2014), Germany (see Müller, 2011) shows that in these countries, too, phenotype and ideas of (ethno-)national identity are intertwined. Based on a history of relative phenotypical homogeneity, they are understood as 'white' nations, which affects who is seen as automatically belonging and who is not.

In this context, being read as non-white makes one what Sara Ahmed (2000) has described as a 'body out of place'. The examples discussed in the previous chapter on discrimination showed that a non-white

[83] I will say more about the relationship between whiteness, Nordicness, and Europeannness below.
[84] I will nuance this fundamental dichotomy further down.

phenotype is read to signal non-belonging and that many participants have experienced exclusion and harassment based on this.

9.2.2 Gradations and Place-Specific Ideas

Yet, the functioning of phenotype is Norway is not only characterized by a dichotomy. The following quotes give additional clues as to how phenotype is structured. Asked whether she thought people in Norway were treated differentially based on their skin color, Camila, who was born in South America, stated:

> Camila: I do think darker people are treated a bit differently. But [when I say this] I think of, uhm, even darker… - because I'm technically *dark,* too, but [when I say this] I think of even darker people.

This quote suggests that in addition to the fundamental dichotomy (for one has to be non-white in order to be treated differentially at all), there are still gradations on the non-white side of the color-line. The fact that Camila searches for words that allow her to describe these gradations shows that there is relatively little language for this difference in Norwegian.

When asked the same question – i.e. whether she thought people were treated differentially based on their skin color – Elisabeth, who was born in East Asia, answered the following:

> Elisabeth: Yes, definitely. I think so. I have personally experienced that (….) the same person [interacting with] different kinds of people – that the tone is automatically nicer with somebody you consider Western, and then the tone is a bit different when (…) the person is not Western. I think people react differently. I think some people have a tendency of speaking more nicely to Norwegians or Europeans, and then I think that maybe the same person thinks that – I don't know if that's conscious or unconscious, but I've seen that, that it was a different tone with complete strangers, but your tone is different, depending on whom you meet.
>
> But I also think that some groups are more of a target than others. I have an (…) East Asian background. I actually don't think that I'm experiencing it as much as someone with a South Asian background, or an African background. I think Pakistanis, Indians, Sri Lankans, Africans, whether it's North or South of the Sahara, dark-skinned people from the Caribbean, Latin America – I think many of them experience a completely different world than me. Because people have certain images of the East (…) which are different that certain images people have of Central Asia, South Asia, and parts of Africa, the Caribbean, and America, or South America. (…) I think that many people think that East Asians are – they have heard that they maybe are more hardworking, they have heard that they are like this and that, that they value higher education, for example; their work ethic is emphasized. When you talk about East Asians as one big, big, big group, then I think it's mostly about ideas, what you hear about the East, what you hear about other places. More *recently*, there haven't been as many conflicts in the form of war in large parts of East Asia, compared to the other places, and economically we know that many countries in East Asia

> are actually doing quite well. And then people are in Norway for different reasons, whether they are here due to work and education, or whether they sought asylum.

According to Elisabeth, the amount of discrimination depends on stereotypes and received ideas about specific places. Hence, while there is a general white-non-white dynamic in place, there are also gradations and specificities. Elisabeth mentions the stereotype of East Asians being hard working and smart, which is a prevalent stereotype not only in Norway but also elsewhere. Hence, even though defined, racial categories are not in use in Norwegian common parlance, there are still pre-conceived notions about people from specific geographic origins.

9.2.3 A White Person is a White Person is a White Person? On Boundaries and Context

The fact that there is a dichotomy of white and non-white raises the question what the boundary between these two categories is and how stable of a boundary it is. How does a person have to look to be placed on the white side of the color-line? To what extent can the same phenotype be read in different ways?

In order to start answering these questions, I would like to provide another quote from Samrath, who above postulated that there was a white-non-white dichotomy, and who placed himself on the non-white and me on the white side of it. During the course of the interview, Samrath talked about his children a lot[85]. Among other things, he told me several times that they were dark, and wondered how they would be read and treated by others throughout their life. He also explained that his partner is very light-complexioned and that she had repeatedly been asked where the children's father was from when she was alone with the children, because the children are much darker than she is. After he had referred to them as 'dark' several times, we had the following exchange:

> Laura: I usually try not to talk myself about how participants and their children look, but now I almost have to (…)
>
> Samrath: Just ask. You don't think they look -
>
> Laura: I don't think they look so very dark.
>
> Samrath: Well, they look like *you*. They are as light-skinned as you are, with dark hair. But your looks aren't very common in Norway, are they?
>
> Laura: No (…)
>
> Samrath: No. To put it like this: if you place their mom beside them, they look very weird. That's what…
>
> Laura: But if you put them on my lap…
>
> Samrath: Nobody would give it a thought.

[85] The children were present during the interview, but too young to follow the conversation in any way.

> Laura: (…) When I say 'I'm from Germany', nobody would…
> Samrath: Then they're Germans
> Laura: Yeah, right. They don't look….
> Samrath (to the kids): She thinks you're German, is that what you are?

This quote illustrates that the meaning of phenotype is contextual since Samrath feels that his children appear differently when seen together with me than with their light-complexioned mother. When they are with her, the children's phenotype points to their dark, (perceived) 'non-Western' father, whereas they could be read as central European if seen together with me. This shows that the color-line is not very well defined in Norway. Some people and phenotypes (black people, East Asians, South Asians) are definitely non-white, whereas others (like me and Samrath's children) can be read and interpreted in different ways, based on other 'clues' like one's accent, one's name, or information about one's parents. When people know that I am German, my looks are read as white. When people know that Samrath's kids have a father of Indian heritage, they are/can be read as non-white. Thus, the interpretation of phenotype in the borderland between white and non-white is context-dependent. The contextual information can be provided in different ways, and by different clues. With Samrath's children, their light-complexioned mother provides the contextual information that makes people deduce that the children's' father is probably not from Europe. With other people, it could be their name, their accent, or signs of visible religiosity that are interpreted as non-European. In all these instances, these additional clues (or factors) signal Europeanness or non-Europeanness and thus give meaning to the phenotype itself.

What is especially striking about the example of Samrath's children is that his base assessment was that I was white and that his children were dark. When asked directly, however, his first comment was that his children were actually phenotypically very similar to me. This apparent contradiction can be explained by the fact that for certain phenotypes in the borderland between white and non-white, context is crucial.

Another quote can shed more light on how phenotypes in the borderland between white and non-white can be interpreted differently. During the interview with Iman, whose background is from North Africa, Iman told me the story of how a colleague of hers had used the slur 'pakkis' to describe somebody. While the term 'pakkis' originally comes from the word 'pakistaner' (Pakistani), Iman told me that it is often used more broadly for anyone who looks 'foreign' or 'dark' and explained that 'that can be me, it can be someone from India, Italy, Spain, South Africa, it can be… you name it'. Indeed, when confronted by Iman about why she used the term, her colleague explained that she only used the word to convey that the person in question was dark. Iman and the colleague then had a longer back-and-forth about how to

describe people's phenotypes and origins where Iman tried to convince her colleague not to use slurs to describe other people. In the end, Iman said:

> Iman: 'But if you are to describe a French person, you just say 'French', even though it can be a person with dark features. (…) [And she was like:] 'Ah… okay'. We discussed back and forth like that, but she at least learned that you describe people in a different way. You don't say that [i.e. 'pakkis'].

It is interesting that Iman's final argument against the use of the term 'pakkis' is that a French person would be described as 'French' '*even though it can be a person with dark features*'. This argument also seems to convince her colleague who finally says 'ah, okay'. According to this argument, a French person would not be described as 'pakkis', but a Turkish or a Tunisian person might be, even if they do not necessarily differ much in complexion. The same 'dark features' are hence understood differently, depending on the origin they are assigned to. This mirrors what Samrath said above about his children being read differently depending on whether they are seen together with their mother or with me. Hence, the same phenotype is interpreted as not mattering if it is attributed to a French person, whereas it is read as a symbol of cultural and religious difference if attributed to a person of, e.g., Turkish origin. The same phenotype is interpreted differently, based on whether it refers to a geographical context with an assumed small or large 'cultural distance', and possibly religious difference, to Norwegian culture.

This quote shows that the same phenotype sometimes seems in need of naming ('pakkis') and sometimes not ('you just say French'). When does it need to be named? I would argue that phenotypical difference that is read as non-European is interpreted as more relevant than phenotypical difference that is read as European. Non-European phenotype is assumed to imply (larger) cultural and value differences, and hence seems more relevant to name. It becomes 'something else'. When a phenotype is considered non-European, it becomes more relevant to name it, independently of whether it actually is all that different from a European one.

This illustrates how ideas about whiteness and non-whiteness are intertwined with ideas of Europeanness and non-Europeanness. This goes so far that non-Europeans can be read as non-white by virtue of the context, even if they actually are light-complexioned. In chapter 6 ('Categories II') I discussed a quote by Berit, who stated that she considered Southern Europeans white, even if they resembled Arabs phenotypically and that she also thought that whiteness was about culture. Based on an idea of cultural whiteness, all of Europe could, according to her, be said to be white, even the parts in which a darker phenotype is more prevalent. Populations from outside of Europe, however, would be excluded from a culturally understood whiteness, even if they were light-skinned.

I would like to add another quote by Berit here, which sheds further light on the way she draws boundaries between Europeanness and non-Europeanness, and on the role phenotype and culture play for this distinction. This quote is taken from the part of the interview where we discussed Norwegianness and what makes you perceive someone as Norwegian.

> Berit: But there are people from Afghanistan with blue eyes, so if you removed language and culture, and only considered looks (utseende), then you could… Then there are people *there*, and from other regions, who you wouldn't think… There are population groups (folkeslag) in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and some other places actually, who are blond and blue-eyed. Not exactly light blond, but more of a medium blond. So if you take away culture and language, and only consider looks, then you could have… But usually, it's a combination. You hear it from how they speak, and you see it from how they are dressed, maybe.

There are several incomplete sentences in this quote, leaving some need for interpretation. I read her statements to mean that if one only considered phenotype, then one might read some people in Pakistan and Afghanistan as white and/or Norwegian. She also provides some additional clues that play a role for determining whether someone is, in fact, white/Norwegian or not, namely culture, language, and dress. While she at the beginning of the quote several times alludes to the fact that light-complexioned people from Pakistan and Afghanistan might be read as white, she seems to reach a tentative conclusion at the end, stating 'you hear it from how they speak, and you see it from how they are dressed, maybe'. Her conclusion is that contextual clues help determine that even though some people in Afghanistan and Pakistan may look white, they actually are not.

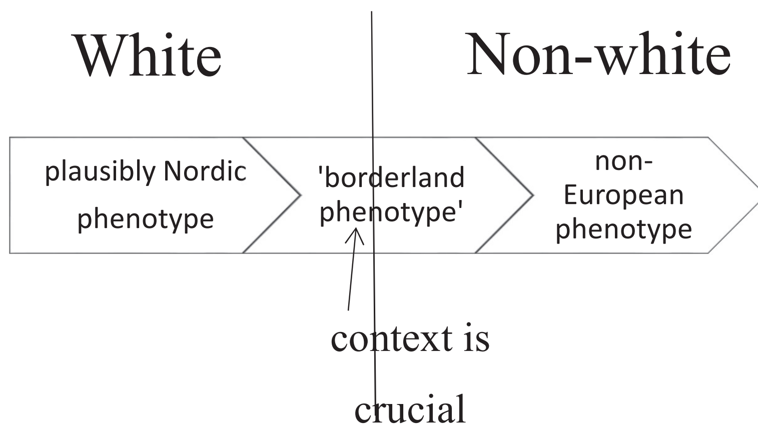
Following this logic, a light-complexioned person can be determined to be non-white by virtue of contextual clues, which can actually overrule phenotype. Despite the fact that human coloration / phenotype forms a continuum, a logic and language of whiteness versus non-whiteness institutes a boundary here, however unstable and porous of a boundary it may be[86]

Hence, some people are phenotypically in the borderland between white and non-white and can be read one way or the other. I would argue that this can be understood in terms of a spectrum (see illustration below), where people on the one end of the spectrum have a phenotype that I would call 'plausibly Nordic' (i.e. very light-complexioned). People who are plausibly Nordic in appearance are white and European beyond any and all doubt. In the middle of the spectrum is the phenotypical borderland. People placed here, who may be e.g. from France, Greece, Morocco or Turkey, could be read as white/European or non-white/non-European. Contextual information is needed to determine where they fall on the white-non-

[86] The boundary between 'white' and 'non-white' is notoriously unstable and there are many documented examples of this especially from the US context (Irish; Italians; possible change in status for people from the Levant / North Africa) (Bonnett, 1998; Strickland, 2008; Twine & Warren, 1997).

white divide. The fact that people in this borderland part of the spectrum are not plausibly Nordic, makes their whiteness and Europeanness (slightly) ambivalent and in need of clarification. The fact that some 'ethnically Norwegian' participants in this study have been asked where they are from, and been told that they do not look Norwegian, illustrates that delineations of this spectrum do not map neatly onto ethnicity or nationality. Even 'ethnic Norwegians' can have a phenotype that is not 'plausibly Nordic', and people from outside the Nordic region can look 'plausibly Nordic'. I want to emphasize that the figure presented here is not intended as an endorsement of the manner in which phenotype functions, but rather an attempt to analyze it and be as precise as possible.

Figure 9.1 *Schematic overview over 'plausibly Nordic' and 'borderland' phenotype in relation to whiteness and non-whiteness.*



The categories and boundaries I have described here apply to what I have observed in Norway. From my own (personal, anecdotal) experience, I would say that they probably look slightly differently in other parts of Europe, where the borderland between white and non-white is moved further away from the most light-complexioned end of the spectrum, and where other phenotypical markers, like facial features, are relatively speaking more important. Here, too, the functioning of phenotype is inherently contextual, not strictly defined and dependent on other clues (language, name, religion).

The consequences of being read as white or non-white are important. The previous chapter about discrimination has shown that individuals experience discrimination and harassment based on their phenotype and based on how the latter is interpreted together with other markers of migration-related difference.

In sum, phenotype functions in a dichotomous manner, where some people are read as white and some are not. In addition, there are gradations and specific ideas about specific geographical areas that the

phenotype points back to, so that different non-white phenotypes are read in different ways. Finally, the color-line has its own borderland where certain phenotypes can be read as either white or non-white, based on context. These contextual factors can be a host of things such as one's name, or a European origin that makes a non-Nordic phenotype register as central or southern European (and thus 'white'). The precise meaning and functioning of phenotype are thus context dependent. Phenotype carries meaning, even if it is not common to verbalize this.

The concept of 'plausible Nordicness' and its borderland are not meant to replace 'whiteness', but rather to explain and tease apart 'whiteness' specifically for the Norwegian context. Differentiating between phenotypes that are 'plausibly Nordic' – and hence white *a priori* – and phenotypes that are in the borderland – and hence in need of contextual clarification to be determined as white or non-white – allows for a context-sensitive explanation of how whiteness is read and understood in Norway. Crucially, this explanation takes into account how phenotypes in the 'borderland' are interpreted in light of other components of migration-related difference.

It has been argued in the European literature on phenotype/race (Cretton, 2018; Müller, 2011) that in European countries, phenotype/race operates through and with nationality. My discussion of the way Norwegianness and whiteness intertwine demonstrates how this works and supports this argument. I would, however, add that in addition, whiteness also signals Europeanness more broadly, which is similar to how whiteness functions in the US[87], and how an understanding of Europeanness as whiteness emerged during the European colonial project. White Europeans with a 'borderland' phenotype are still afforded the privileges that come with white Europeanness. There is thus a dual functioning of whiteness, where it, on the one hand, intertwines with the respective nationalities in Europe, while it, on the other hand, signifies Europeanness more broadly.

Like race, whiteness can be considered a 'floating signifier' (Hall, 2017). Sara Ahmed (2007) has argued that whiteness has less to do with phenotype than with signifying a position of power or a certain orientation in space. Even though the idea of whiteness is phenotypically malleable, transcends the bodily, can be filled with different contents, and has included and excluded different population groups over time, it is still read onto bodies, resulting in their differential treatment. Whiteness is about more than phenotype, but it still points back to it. What whiteness looks like and how the boundaries around it are constituted differs in various time periods and geographic locations, but it still ties back to and operates

[87] Populations who trace their origin to North African and the Levant constitute somewhat of an exception here. They are considered 'white' in the US census (even though they are arguably not of a geographically 'European' origin) (U.S Census Bureau, 2017); they have, however, in more recent times and especially after 9/11 increasingly been racialized as 'Arab'.

through a phenotype. Whiteness in all its variants (plausible Nordicness etc.) is read onto the body based on a certain phenotype.

9.3 Intersections

This section will further explore how different markers of difference can be interpreted together. Based on two longer quotes, it investigates how participants actively draw on different categories of difference when assigning phenotype meaning and interpreting it.

Zahra

Zahra's background is from Iran; she has lived in Norway since she was a young child. She grew up in an immigrant-dense neighborhood in the Grorud valley, in Oslo's outer East. She describes that she was happy growing up there and that she felt a strong attachment to her place of residence. She went to elementary and middle school in the neighborhood where she lived, and when the time came to apply for high school, she chose a prestigious high school in Oslo's inner West End as her top choice. That school has a business focus and many students from wealthy backgrounds (with parents in leading positions in Norwegian finance, for example). Based on her grades, she was admitted to that school and started attending it. However, she felt that she did not quite fit in at the high school and she described a number of incidents where classmates were hostile or openly racist to students with an immigrant background. In the following, longer quote, we explored how difference and otherness functioned at her high school, compared with in the neighborhood in the Grorud valley where she grew up.

> Laura: I want to explore what you were saying about… you talked a bit about things that have to do with both skin color and ethnicity. For example, you said that you think that the fact that you didn't quite 'fit in' in high school wasn't actually about looks (utseende) or about you not being from Norway originally, but that it was more about [you being from the Grorud valley] and such
>
> Zahra: Yeah, that's what I thought. (…)
>
> Laura: Do you think a quote-unquote 'ethnically Norwegian' girl from [your neighborhood in the Grorud valley] would have met the same thing?
>
> Zahra: Well, at the time I think it was a bit like that. [It boiled down to] being from [my neighborhood in the Grorud valley] (…), the Eastern part of Oslo, and specifically the Grorud valley, at the time. (…) For sure at that school, where there was such a big East-West mentality. So that was absolutely the case, I think. I don't know how it's now, but at the time: I think so. Because (…) the Grorud valley was much more in focus then. It has always been in focus. (…)
>
> Laura: When you talked about [your high school], you used the word 'white Norwegian' a couple of times. (…) Maybe I misunderstood you, but I kind of got the impression that being white and Norwegian played a role in the context at [your high school], but when you spoke about [your neighborhood in the Grorud valley], if someone was white and

> Norwegian and lived [there], then you wouldn't have pointed it out. Because it in a way didn't…
>
> Zahra: Because it didn't play a role. (…) When I think of [my neighborhood in the Grorud valley], I don't think of racism, I don't think about discrimination, in a way, even though that also existed. (…) People were called 'pakkis' (…) or 'chipper' (…) for Vietnamese people, (…) or 'potato', or whatever. (…) But still, that was just for 'fun', quote-unquote. (…) And that's why *background* didn't play a role, but at [my high school], it suddenly became… (…) When the girl in my class was called 'pakkis' by [another girl], and she was from *Turkey*, then it suddenly became... And that [was not said] in a joking way, but in a *negative* way, so suddenly it became imp-, suddenly it became – how do I put it? Not important, but it became (silence). That's how the categorizations emerged. And [in that context] it comes natural for me to also say 'white Norwegian', or 'dark Norwegians', (…) or where they originally are from, or their family is from. While [in my neighborhood in the Grorud valley] it wasn't so important where people were from, so I don't relate it back to… which country, and those things, to the same extent, I think. (…)
>
> Laura: So, when you say 'white Norwegians', you reserve that term in a way for a group who has social power (sosial makt)…?
>
> Zahra: Yes.
>
> Laura: … economic power over other people
>
> Zahra: Yes!
>
> Laura: Which you didn't experience people [in your neighborhood] has to the same ex- . Now I'm starting to analyze a bit, in a way.
>
> Zahra: Yeah, I know (…) But, well, I don't think (…) there was a need to call people something, and (…) categorize them in [my neighborhood], so I've never thought about the term, in a way. But [at my high school], it was more like (she breathes deeply). Yes, those who had power were the rich, white Norwegian kids, in my experience. And then I put them in that category. So yes, maybe it's because I look at them as having power. They are the ones who are at the top of the hierarchy. In my mind, it's still the *white*, the heterowhite person who is on top, and then you have the gradations (rangeringene) downwards. Yeah.

In this quote, Zahra argues that both context and the intersection of different categories of difference play a role for which labels and categorizations she finds meaningful. Specifically, she finds that skin color and ethnicity/immigrant background take on a different meaning in the context of her high school than in the context of her residential neighborhood. Arguably, the contextual factor that holds most importance here is social class. Whereas the neighborhood where she grew up is mostly working class, her high school could be described as upper middle class with a predominance of economic capital. In the context of her high school, Zahra finds it meaningful to name 'white Norwegianness', because she perceives it as intertwined with social status and economic power. In the context of her neighborhood, however, it does not make sense to her to categorize and name 'white Norwegianness' because it does not come with the same kind of power. Elsewhere in the interview, Zahra describes a great degree of solidarity and a strong local sense of identity in her neighborhood. Even though there is also social inequality in that

neighborhood, with some people living in single family homes and others living in apartment blocks, the economic differences are much smaller compared with Oslo's West End.

Alexandra

The next quote that sheds a light on how different categories of difference are interpreted together is from the interview with Alexandra, who is originally from South America and has lived in Norway since she was a young child. When I asked her whether she thought skin color played a role for how one is treated, she answered:

> Alexandra: Yes, I think so. But I think that it has the greatest significance in combination with behavior and language. And how Norwegian one presents, in a way. (…) You know, how you look at a person is much about – right, you see the cool, Pakistani teenage boy on line 5 Vestli, [going] to Stovner[88], right, who [she imitates an Eastern Oslo youth accent] 'talks like this, right'? Who is cool, right, and is wearing a lot of bling-bling, and has his hair gelled back. And then you have the Pakistani boy who attends Cathedral school[89], right, who wears glasses, is very quiet, talks very properly and does his homework. The impression they give is maybe about more than just their skin color and their hair color and such, I think. You have the adopted, super-Norwegian kids, who just ooze some kind of arch-Norwegianness (…), even if they are dark-skinned. Yeah, it's that mix [of factors].

Alexandra draws on many different elements in explaining how she perceives the significance of skin color. She mentions dialect, educational attainment, personal grooming and style, class background, and behavior / personality. She uses these factors to create to ideal-type characters who both have a Pakistani background, but who are very different otherwise. She implies that they would be read and treated differently by others. Likewise, she explains that some dark-skinned 'adopted, super-Norwegian kids' 'ooze some kind of arch-Norwegianness'. Hence, she argues that other factors can 'offset' skin color.

Both Zahra and Alexandra draw on an intersectional understanding of categories of difference. The term 'intersectionality' describes the understanding that categories of difference such as race, class, gender, age, disability, and sexuality do not operate separately, but rather mutually co-constitute one another (Carbado, Crenshaw, Mays, & Tomlinson, 2013; Collins, 2015, 2019; Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectional frameworks are further rooted in an epistemological understanding that emphasizes power relations. The knowledge projects that spring from intersectionality are generally concerned with investigating patterns of power and oppression. According to Patricia Hill Collins, intersectionality can be understood both as a

[88] This is a metro line that runs from the center of Oslo all the way to the outer East End, to the end of the Grorud valley.
[89] A prestigious public high school in the center of Oslo that has very high grade requirements for admission.

field of study, as a an analytical strategy, and as a 'critical practice that informs social justice projects' (2015, p. 1). Zahra's quote especially highlights that she understands the intersections of certain categories of difference as locations of social power. Alexandra's quote is less expressly concerned with power, but illustrates how ethnicity/phenotype/race can be mediated and offset by other intersecting categories of difference.

The quotes by Zahra and Alexandra can also help nuance the systematization of phenotype that was attempted above. Their quotes illustrate that the same phenotype can be interpreted in different ways, based on other intervening factors among which class holds a prominent place. In Alexandra's quote, both the boys she uses as examples have a Pakistani background, but they are still interpreted very differently based on their clothing and grooming style, personality, and social class background/aspirations. In Zahra's example, being 'white Norwegian' is a position of power in need of naming in one context, but not in the other. Whereas I argued above that phenotypes in the 'borderland' are interpreted differently based on other contextual clues, the examples presented here illustrate that this is also true for phenotypes outside the borderland. This is not necessarily a contradiction; neither of them argues that skin color/phenotype is irrelevant. Rather, both participants focus on how phenotype and ethnicity interact with other categories of difference. This serves as a reminder that phenotype/ethnicity/race are not generally perceived and interpreted as a stand-alone, but always in combination with other cues and categories of difference.

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to systematize how phenotype functions in the Norwegian context. The functioning of phenotype is characterized by a fundamental white-non-white dichotomy, gradations in color, place-specific stereotypes, as well as a phenotypical 'borderland' where context is crucial for interpreting phenotype as either white and European or non-white and non-European. I situated this borderland in between a 'plausibly Nordic' and a 'non-European' phenotypical category.

The chapter concluded by drawing attention to how phenotype intersects and interacts with other categories of difference. This discussion offered some perspective on the fact that categories of difference do not operate in isolation and explores how phenotype intersects with, for instance, social class.

10 Conclusion

This thesis has investigated how phenotype functions as a category of difference in Norway. Specifically, it has sought to address the following two overarching research questions:

- Which meaning does phenotype carry as a marker of difference and as a category of difference in Norway today?
- What does phenotype mean for understandings of Norwegianness and migration-related diversity?

It has thus examined the role of a category of difference that has so far received little attention in Norwegian sociology. The findings from the different analysis chapters can be summarized as four main findings.

10.1 Main Findings

10.1.1 Phenotype is Interwoven with Ideas about the Nation

Chapters 5 and 6 discussed a range of categories that situate individuals vis-à-vis the nation and that describe ethnicity and phenotype/race. This discussion shed a light on how phenotype is interwoven with ideas about the nation and how this is expressed implicitly or explicitly through the use of different categories. Chapter 5 found that the national-belonging categories – Norwegian, immigrant, foreigner, and minority – are multilayered and that they generate a lot of discussion among participants. These categories all convey a core meaning and in addition a range of associations that are largely unarticulated but fairly consistent across participants. Importantly, all these categories convey a phenotypical association that constitutes an important but under-communicated dimension of these categories. Notably, participants who themselves differ phenotypically from the majority population (including majority participants with 'dark features') expressed this phenotypical association more clearly than light-complexioned majority participants. Moreover, minority participants reported that they often feel excluded from Norwegianness on the basis of phenotype and that the terms used to designate a minority background often carry negative connotations.

Contrary to the national-belonging categories, there was less discussion about the *meaning* of categories that describe ethnicity and phenotype/race. However, their *use* proved more controversial. This was especially the case for categories that refer to phenotype/race. For instance, participants reported that they

would rather use a 'replacement', like saying 'ethnically Norwegian' instead of 'white'. Interestingly, the categories 'dark' and 'dark-skinned' where the least controversial among all phenotypical/racial categories, with 'white' and 'black' being most controversial. A possible explanation for this differential appraisal is that 'white' and 'black' are perceived as racial categories and thus as taboo, whereas 'dark' and 'dark-skinned' are perceived as mere phenotypical descriptions that are not racial in the same way and are hence considered more acceptable. Since 'race' is an illegitimate category in common parlance in Norway, categories will be deemed illegitimate if they are understood as 'racial'.

The meaning of the category 'ethnically Norwegian' was found to revolve mainly around ancestry and phenotype. Even though some participants criticized it for its excluding potential and for instigating a boundary between 'true/white Norwegians' and 'passport/non-white Norwegians', it is overall a category that is widely used and considered legitimate to use. This speaks to the fact that this boundary is legitimate to express as long as phenotype/race are not mentioned explicitly. The racializing function of the term 'ethnicity' in common parlance in Norwegian will be explored further below.

While chapter 5 showed that phenotype is a latent, unarticulated aspect of how 'being Norwegian' and 'being an immigrant' are understood, chapter 6 illustrated that many participants find it unacceptable to use categories that express phenotype/race explicitly. These two findings need to be understood in concert. Seen together, they signify that phenotype carries meaning for who is understood, respectively, as 'Norwegian' or as an 'immigrant', *but* that phenotype/race must not be spoken about explicitly. Possibly it is precisely because phenotype should not be named that other, seemingly 'color-free' terms like 'immigrant' are used instead to convey phenotypical/racial meanings. While national-belonging categories can legitimately be used, the fact that their phenotypical dimension is not explicitly voiced conceals the fact that they exclude non-white individuals from automatically belonging to the nation.

10.1.2 Phenotype Interacts with Broader Ideas about 'Ethnic Diversity' and Difference/Otherness

Chapter 4 found that throughout their life course, minority and majority participants have had different experiences with 'ethnic diversity'. As a consequence, they experience their own belonging differently, speak differently about diversity, and are in general familiar with it to different degrees. To a substantial degree, the 'minority experience' is about being 'the other' and being conscious of one's one 'otherness'. Majority participants generally seem aware of this 'minority experience' to a small degree only.

While ideas about 'immigrant culture', 'ethnic diversity', and phenotype are not intrinsically related, findings in this thesis suggests that they are connected by association. Since understandings of who is

Norwegian and who is an immigrant are tightly intertwined with phenotypical assumptions, phenotype to an extent functions as a symbol of cultural and religious difference. Chapter 8, which focused on discrimination, discussed how phenotype intertwines with ideas about 'immigrant culture' and language skills, and how minorities are thus constructed as culturally different, exotic, less competent, and not belonging. The chapter also showed how different markers, such as phenotype, traditional dress, and religious garments are interpreted together to read people as 'Muslim'. Based on these findings, it can be argued that an important way in which phenotype matters in Norway today, is that it functions as a bodily signifier of 'ethnicity', which in turn often carries deterministic and essentialist notions of expected behavior, values, culture, and, in some cases, worthiness. Phenotype thus affixes ethnic and cultural difference to bodies that are read as non-white. It intertwines with other migration-related categories of difference, but it also becomes a symbol for them.

Chapter 9 explored specifically how phenotype interacts and intersects with other markers of difference. It found that the symbolic meaning of a non-white phenotype to an extent can be offset – or on the contrary heightened – by factors such as social class, dialect/sociolect, and place in Oslo. Based on the finding that participants found a general division into white versus non-white socially meaningful, the chapter also attempted to tease out the boundary between white and non-white. It found that there is a 'phenotypical borderland', where contextual information is crucial for whether individuals are interpreted as either white/European or non-white/non-European. This borderland can be described as being situated between a 'plausibly Nordic' and a 'non-European' phenotypical category.

10.1.3 Phenotype and Broader Understandings of Otherness Single People out for Discrimination

Chapter 8 examined experiences of discrimination and racism reported by participants. It found that discrimination and exclusion follow and reproduce patterns of legitimate belonging to the nation, as well as ideas about the inferiority of immigrants and immigrant culture. As mentioned above, instances of discrimination often draw on several markers of difference at once. Importantly, phenotype can be grounds for discrimination without needing to be explicitly mentioned. This finding goes against dominant Norwegian narratives that require biological racial categories to be explicitly mentioned in order to categorize a statement as 'racist' (Bangstad, 2015).

Chapter 8 also examined experiences of openly hostile harassment by strangers in public space. It found these examples to draw on a repetitive activation of group power, specifically the power to decide who legitimately belongs to the nation, drawing on Ghassan Hage's (1998) concept of the 'white nation

fantasy' and Philomena Essed's (2002) concept of 'everyday racism'. Finally, chapter 8 discussed to what extent participants label their own experiences as 'racism'. It found that this is linked to ideas about what 'real racism' is as well as to prevalent narratives of Norway as a society with little racism and of racism as an individual moral failing. These findings suggest that the possibility ethnic minorities have to label their own experiences to an extent depends on which definitions of racism are accepted by the majority. This topic is thus affected by power relations, specifically by the power to define racism.

10.1.4 Insecurity and Anxiety around Language

The themes of insecurity and anxiety around categories and language was present throughout most analysis chapters. Chapters 5 and 6, which both focused on categories, started exploring insecurity and worry about mislabeling others or being perceived as offensive or racist. This worry was present regarding all categories that were discussed, but was especially marked regarding phenotypical/racial categories. I argue that the fact that it is unclear whether these categories merely describe a person's phenotype or whether they reference a racial hierarchy compounds these worries. The worry that explicitly articulating phenotype might be racist also points to the existence of a norm of color-blindness. There is a strong societal narrative that argues that phenotype 'should not matter'. By articulating phenotype – for instance through using phenotypical/racial descriptors and categories, one concedes that it matters and this suggestion breeches the color-blind norm and narrative. How easy or difficult participants found talking about phenotype depended partly on their own standpoint and experience. I have also noted that the fact that insecurity around language is rather prevalent in the data material may be partly attributable to the fact that participants skew towards highly-educated and favorable to immigration.

Chapter 7 focused on exploring color-blindness and investigated specifically why many majority participants do not feel comfortable talking about phenotype. Participants reported a lack of exposure and competence, a lack of insight into how phenotype/ethnic diversity matters, and a fear of saying 'something wrong' and offensive. The chapter further discussed how the terms 'skin color', 'looks' and 'ethnicity' are used in Norwegian common parlance to refer to phenotype. Whereas 'skin color' is rather explicit, but relatively little used, 'looks' is much more indirect and used much more frequently. Finally, 'ethnicity' is an ambivalent term that on the one hand refers to ancestry and on the other hand to phenotype/race. This duality allows the term 'ethnicity' to at the same time signify and disguise phenotype. It is also by far the most common term used. This makes it central for the functioning of color-blindness in Norway. Because phenotype/race is considered controversial or even 'taboo' to talk about, it is often communicated in the sub-text rather than directly.

I will now return to the sensitizing concepts discussed in the theory chapter.

10.2 Returning to the Sensitizing Concepts

Investigating 'phenotype' has proven to be a productive port of entry to investigating visible bodily difference in this thesis. While the term 'phenotype' is apt at labeling the physical and the bodily, other, theoretical concepts are needed in order to theorize and make sense of how these visual markers are interpreted and acted upon. The concepts of 'race' and 'racialization' can explain dynamics in the data material that would otherwise be hard to grasp and explain. The fact that a differentiation in 'white' versus 'non-white' resonates throughout the material can be understood in reference to the category of 'race' as one that was constructed during the colonial period in order to instate and maintain differentiations between European/non-European, civilized/backwards, superior/inferior, and Christian/heathen.

10.2.1 Race

As a category of difference, 'race' has since taken different shapes in different contexts. As discussed in the introduction, in Norway, 'race' has historically been made relevant in relation to the Sámi indigenous minority (who used to be understood as 'a different race' / non-white), in relation to other national minorities, and in relation to missions and mission publications, which were an important source of information about other continents and their inhabitants to 'ordinary Norwegians' for long stretches of time. However, in the decades after the Second World War the term 'race' fell out of use. Hence, when non-European labor immigration became more prominent from the middle of the 1960s, these migrants arrived in a seemingly 'race-less' society. The empirical material that forms the basis of this thesis, however, illustrates that ideas of European/non-European and white/non-white still are socially significant in Norway today. This is less a question of individual morality, and more a question of how ideas of whiteness/non-whiteness are baked into understandings of national belonging and normality. These understandings shape interactions and experiences, where minority participants experience negative differential treatment, exclusion through language, and being treated as 'the other'. The concept of 'race' can account for these dynamics in the material.

When considering the interrelation between phenotype and nation and the prevalent understandings of 'ethnic diversity' more in general, the data material is characterized by a binary mode of categorization. Understandings of who is 'truly an immigrant' seem to revolve around categorizations of Western/non-Western, European/non-European, and white/non-white. These binaries also form the core of the idea of

'race'. As discussed in the theory chapter, 'race' can be understood and defined in different ways, which has led Stuart Hall (2017, p. 64) to call it a 'floating signifier'. It is important to keep in mind that definitions of 'race' thus reflect the spatial and temporal context where they were formulated. My intent in regarding 'race' and other concepts as 'sensitizing' was precisely not to be beholden to any one pre-defined definition of race, but rather to let empirics take precedence over theory.

Regarding my data material, I find it most productive to think of 'race' as a relational category that sorts people into Western/non-Western, European/non-European, white/non-white based on shifting understandings of in- and out-groups. Importantly, these binary categorizations imply an idea of superior/inferior that need not be articulated explicitly. These historical binary understandings still seem alive and echo through the interview material in this thesis, even though the term 'race' itself is not in use and no formal racial taxonomy is in place. A dark phenotype still conveys associations of non-belonging and participants report having experienced discrimination based on their phenotype. The understanding of 'race' that has emerged from the material in this thesis is that of a historical power relationship which leads to white people being met as 'blank canvases' and non-white people being met with prejudice. These understandings can be traced back to the colonial period and to historical racial classifications, notably also of European minority groups, such as Sámi, Jews, or Roma. This history suggests that phenotype is still interpreted according to very old schemata.

This finding holds even if there is no explicitly racial vocabulary today. The fact that a number of seemingly 'color-free' or 'race-less' categories like 'immigrant' still carry racial connotations speaks to this. Historical racial understandings seem in operation, but not very close to the surface in terms of how explicitly they are expressed. Arguably, some of the anxiety, silence, and confusion expressed by the majority participants in this sample speaks to the fact that 'race' has been removed from people's active vocabulary, but that racial ideas still influence how non-white minority populations are understood today. Paradoxically, the white majority population does not perceive 'race' as being in operation because they do not see themselves as 'raced'. From this position, it becomes logical to argue that 'race does not exist here'.

I thus conceive of 'race' not as something that people are or have, but as a theoretical concept that can help to grasp a particular, powerful ordering of in- and out-groups. 'Race' is about how people are understood and treated. This understanding is similar to the definition by Alana Lentin that was presented in the theory chapter. She writes (2008, p. 490):

> Rather than the standard conception of race as an outdated and discredited mode for hierarchically classifying human beings along biological lines, I am thinking about race as a more abstract signifier for separating human groups socially, politically and

> economically. As such, culture, ethnicity, religion, nationality and (but not always) skin colour can all stand for race at different times.

The field of phenotype/race is settled to a very limited degree only in Norway. There is no one nomenclature that neatly sorts individuals into different 'races'. However, many people do have associations with population groups from different continents, and the fact that the n-word has not completely disappeared further shows that old racial ideas still linger. On the other hand, the racialized categories that I have found deployed in my material are 'ethnically Norwegian', 'immigrant', and 'foreigner'. These categories are not always used in the racialized sense; for instance, 'foreigner' can also be used in the legal sense of not holding Norwegian citizenship. The concept of 'racialization' is useful to describe the fact that categories like 'immigrant' are often used exclusively to refer to non-white, non-European immigrants. The category has acquired this meaning over time, and this meaning is by no means inherent in the category itself. There thus seem to be two tendencies shaping the field of racial meaning in Norway. On the one hand, continent-based ideas about racial groups still seem to linger in the background; on the other, the racialized categories that are deployed most revolve around dichotomous ideas of white/non-white and Norwegian/foreigner. These two parallel dynamics illustrate to which small extent the field of phenotype/race is settled in Norway.

10.2.2 Racialization

The concept of 'racialization' denotes the understanding that social relationships can become infused with 'race' over time (Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017, p. 65); as such, it turns one's attention to processes. In this thesis, I have not examined processes over time; hence, I used the participle 'racialized' to signify the (provisional) *outcome* of a process of racial infusion. The literature on racialization (Gans, 2016; Keskinen & Andreassen, 2017; Murji & Solomos, 2005b) has helped me to think of 'race' not as a 'thing', but as the outcome of a process. Tony Sandset (2012, 2018) and Eileen Muller Myrdahl (2010b, 2010a) have written about historical racialization processes in Norway, focusing on the second half of the 20th century. Much further research can still be done in this domain. For instance, an investigation of how the term 'ethnically Norwegian' gradually became an everyday term starting during the 1990s, promises to be insightful. Moreover, more research should be done on the racialization of Muslims in Norway (Bangstad, 2014; Døving, 2015). Internationally, research on the racialization of Muslims is a growing field (Garner & Selod, 2015; Meer, 2008, 2013; Moosavi, 2015; Yurdakul & Korteweg, 2021). Since the main focus in this thesis is on phenotype as a marker of difference, I only touched on religion/Islam intermittently. However, Muslimness clearly is an important dimension of contemporary understandings of racialized otherness in Norway. This deserves further investigation.

Importantly, an analysis of ‘race’ in the Norwegian context needs to take into account how the term ‘ethnicity’ is deployed in every-day speech to convey an idea of ‘race’. When the term ‘ethnic minority’ is only applied to non-white people of non-European origin – and not to European immigrants, for example – this shows that people find a division into European/non-European and white/non-white socially meaningful. It further points to the fact that the terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘ethnic minority’ do a lot of work in this context. As discussed in chapter 7, the term ‘ethnicity’ can in everyday speech convey an idea of phenotype/race, while at the same time hiding this connotation, since the term also denotes country background and ancestry. For this reason, I have argued that social scientists writing about Norway need to pay attention to this duality and have suggested that it might be fruitful to substitute the term ‘ethnicity’ by its respective components, origin/ancestry and phenotype/race in order to create distance from ‘ethnicity’ as a category of practice.

The fact that many participants found a white phenotype to be an important component of the category ‘ethnic Norwegian’ also underscores that this term differentiates ‘white Norwegians’ from ‘brown Norwegians’ more than it differentiates ‘ethnic Norwegians’ from ‘ethnic Italians’ or ‘ethnic Swedes’. Indeed, it is not common to use the latter two terms or to designate other European origins as ‘ethnic’.

The term ‘ethnicity’ is somewhat ambivalent in use and inherently points to *both* phenotype/race *and* ancestry/origin. This makes it a somewhat slippery category. The way in which the term ‘ethnicity’ can express phenotype/race without naming it explicitly also needs to be seen in concert with the finding from chapter 8 that it is legitimate to act upon the assumption that non-white individuals are ‘foreigners’ as long as phenotype is not named. Saying ‘ethnic minority’ instead precisely allows to imply phenotype without naming it. This finding strongly suggests that the term ‘ethnicity’ performs a racializing function in every-day speech in Norwegian. ‘Ethnicity’ is thus an important category of practice to study when examining ‘race’ in Norway.

10.2.3 Whiteness

The concept of ‘whiteness’ grasps one particular positioning in a racialized society and the ideas that come with that positioning. It is tied to certain phenotypes that are read as ‘white’, but at the same time it transcends the phenotypical. In the data material in this thesis, it becomes clear that having a light/white/Nordic phenotype means being automatically accepted as legitimately belonging and not meeting discrimination based on assumed non-belonging and cultural inferiority. It also means not being assumed to be overdetermined by one’s culture or religion. The associations whiteness produces are that

of a civilized, secular, and progressive individual. These associations transpire as the reverse image of the discrimination stories in chapter 8.

I find Ruth Frankenberg's tripartite definition of whiteness as 'a standpoint', 'a location of structural advantage', and 'a set of cultural practices' (1993, p. 1) meaningful in relation to the data material. 'Whiteness' can be understood as a standpoint in the sense that majority participants have little knowledge about the minority experience. As discussed in chapter 4, when majority participants think about 'ethnic diversity' in the workplace, they think about whether cultural differences have created conflict or misunderstandings. While cultural differences certainly are a part of what characterizes the 'minority experiences', there are important other constituting parts to it. Being interpreted as non-belonging, being represented as a problem in the media, and experiencing harassment and discrimination are also a part of the 'minority experience', and it is into this part that the 'white majority' as a general tendency has little insight. Seen from a white standpoint, being a minority revolves around cultural and religious differences. The second point of Frankenberg's definition, 'location of structural advantage', is meaningful because being white and Norwegian means not facing the kinds of discrimination, exclusion, and harassment that were discussed in chapter 8 and not having one's belonging to the nation questioned as discussed in chapter 5 and 6.

I have less to say about the last element in Frankenberg's definition, 'a set of cultural practices'. Some starting points for thinking further about the cultural aspects of 'white Norweiganness' would be the cultural associations with Norwegianness presented in chapter 5, such as skiing, outdoor activities, and cabin life as well as associations having to do with being (culturally) Christian. Some minority participants actively argued against using these cultural items as benchmarks for Norwegianness, even if they themselves shared these values. It would be worth exploring further how different understandings of 'cultural Norwegianness' play a role for drawing boundaries around Norwegianness. Further, a quote by Alexandra in chapter 9 served as a starting point for exploring the idea of 'presenting Norwegian'. This presupposes ideas about being culturally 'white Norwegian' and that it is possible to take on and perform this. This, too, could be an interesting starting point for further investigations into 'cultural Norwegianness'. Importantly, in the Norwegian context – like in many other European countries – whiteness is bound up with and amalgamates with national identity. Yet, at the same time, it also transcends the nation as a reference point and refers to ideas of Europe and European culture.

Another defining characteristic of 'whiteness' as described by Frankenberg (1993) is that it is often unnamed and thereby invisible. The discussion in chapter 6 demonstrated that naming whiteness in the Norwegian context is regarded as controversial by participants, and that many prefer to opt for replacement terms like 'ethnically Norwegian' instead. The general discomfort with categories and the

worries about saying 'something wrong' and being perceived as racist can be interpreted as uneasiness with one's own racial situatedness. It can be speculated that some people sense the power dynamics governing this field without fully knowing how to navigate them, for instance in terms of which categories to use.

Finally, this thesis has explored which phenotypes are read as respectively white and non-white in Norway. Even though Frankenberg's concept of 'whiteness' transcends the physical and the visual and revolves mainly around *the consequence of being white*, whiteness is still something that is read onto bodies. Hence, some bodies are read as white, while others are not, and it can be relevant to explore how boundaries are drawn between these two categories. Chapter 9 attempted to 'systematize' the functioning of phenotype, exploring among other things how contextual information is crucial in interpreting phenotypes that are neither 'plausibly Nordic' nor clearly non-white, and hence placed in a 'phenotypical borderland'. This analysis underlined how whiteness replicates an idea of Europeanness and, more implicitly, Christianity, since Muslim names or visible signs of Muslimness are interpreted as 'non-white'. These details are important, for even though the idea of whiteness is phenotypically malleable and transcends the bodily, whiteness is still read onto bodies, resulting in their differential treatment.

10.2.4 Color-blindness

As noted, the term 'race' gradually fell into disuse during the decades following the Second World War in Norway, like in many other European countries. This was, however, not accompanied by a thorough societal grappling with and deconstruction of the category; rather, the concept simply became taboo (Lentin, 2008). As discussed above, it seems, however, that the idea of 'race' is still perceived as socially relevant and that other categories take its place and become stand-ins for race, such as 'ethnicity minority' or 'immigrant'. 'Race' thus moves into the sub-text and into the realm of associations. This leads to a language that is seemingly 'race-free', but de facto infused with racial meaning. This resembles the concept of 'color-blindness' that was discussed in the theory chapter.

Yet, I would argue that the way I have used the concept of 'color-blindness' throughout this thesis differs from how Ashley 'Woody' Doane (2017) uses it. The commonality among his and my use is that we both use the term 'color-blindness' to refer to the fact that race is expressed in seemingly 'race-less' ways that persist even though explicit racism is seen as illegitimate. However, Doane's approach is more holistic than what I have been able to do in this thesis. Doane is concerned with color-blindness as a racial ideology and a structural phenomenon; as such, his interest includes for example how race is neglected as a factor in explaining economic inequality. My project has been narrower, as I have explored color-blindness in

the sense of a taboo around naming phenotype/race, which then is expressed through other categories. By implication, the absence of a racial language means that race cannot be taken into account when explaining economic inequality, but this has not been the focus in this thesis.

I have found that in Norway, phenotype/race is to a large extent seen as illegitimate to talk about, all the while it carries a lot of meaning. This is coupled with the idea that phenotype/race 'should not matter' and that it is by extension 'least racist' not to acknowledge phenotype at all. Several expressions like 'multicultural' (flerkulturell), 'minority-language', 'immigrant', end 'ethnic minority' then convey phenotype/race without acknowledging this link explicitly.

More research could be undertaken into how exactly color-blindness is articulated in Norway, both in the every-day sense that I have begun to explore in this thesis, and in the broader sense of investigating mechanisms that create inequality. It would also be interesting to explore how anti-racist activists deal with this lack of language around both race and racism (cf. the discussion in chapter 8), and which choices they make so as to be able to voice their points of view.

In the US context, 'color-blindness' is an important concept for explaining the persistence of racial inequality even after important legal progress was made during the Civil Rights Era. Doane (2017) accounts for this history in his text, and it would be interesting to attempt to write out such a history for the Norwegian context. The excursus on (phenotypical and) racial meaning-making in the introduction could be taken as a starting point for such a history, which would need to address treatment of the indigenous Sámi minority, racial knowledge conveyed through missionary publications, racial knowledge in connection with emigration to – and for some return from – the USA, and racial policies during Nazi-German occupation, to name just a few. Arguably, the period after the war and the onset of non-European labor migration deserve special attention, as this is the phase when race went 'underground'. Crucially, such a history would see the partly articulated racialization of today's immigrant and minority populations as a continuation of that history. Interestingly, during the era of the Civil Rights Movement, which is an important time period in Doane's account of the development of US-American color-blindness, Norway was home to very few migrants. This underlines that while histories of colorblindness in the USA and Norway share some commonalities, the actual timelines also differ substantially.

Doane further describes some 'racial events' that 'highlight the conflicts and tensions that exist in the racial order' and 'bring issues of racism and racial inequality into the public eye and trigger debates regarding causes and solutions' (2017, p. 980). These are interesting events to study because they allow a peek beyond color-blindness. In terms of 'racial events' that occurred in recent Norwegian history, the terror attacks of 22 July 2011 committed by Anders Behring Breivik, the Bærum mosque shooting and

racist murder of August 2019, the way covid-19 has unequally affected people of color in Norway, and the anti-racist demonstration in the wake of George Floyds murder, could be considered as such. It would be interesting to explore these specifically as 'racial events' in the sense Doane describes them, as this approach promises to generate insight into different racial narratives that circulate.

10.2.5 Racism

I now want to turn to the last sensitizing concept, racism. Based on the data material, I consider it important to account for how ethnicity is racialized and not to consider the use of an explicitly racial vocabulary or of old colonial tropes as a prerequisite for deeming something 'racist'. As discussed in chapter 8, hegemonic ideas about racism in Norwegian public discourse often require precisely this (Bangstad, 2015). This idea also resonates – albeit in a milder form – through some academic definitions. For instance, Garner's definition contains the formulation '**A set of ideas** [*ideology*] in which the human race is divisible into distinct 'races', each with specific natural characteristics' (2010, p. 11 emphasis in the original). To the extent that my material contained accounts of racism, these accounts were not directly built around such a clear – or clearly expressed – racial ideology, which not only postulates the existence of 'distinct races', but also allocates them 'specific natural characteristics'. One could of course debate to what extent these attitudes are prevalent without being clearly expressed, but my material does not provide a solid basis for engaging this debate. Overall, it thus seems more fruitful to explore how racism functions precisely *without* referencing this kind of explicit racial ideology.

The concepts that proved most productive here were Philomena Essed's (2002) 'everyday racism' and Ghassan Hage's (1998) 'white nation fantasy'. The fact that Essed's concept focuses on the everyday and that she stresses how recurring events point to an underlying structure made it both applicable and useful. The concept proved apt at explaining both repetitive stories that focused on harassment in public space and at exploring how experiences of denigration, exclusion, and alienation draw on multiple markers of difference to construct minorities as non-belonging, culturally inferior, and overdetermined by their culture. Without Essed's understanding of 'everyday racism', these experiences might seem to be disconnected individual events. However, Essed explains that the recurrence of such events, both in the life of one individual, but also at the aggregate level across individuals, points to the fact that all these individual instances draw on an underlying racial ideology. In all these instances, the racist acts then serve to express or to activate group power.

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has drawn attention to how racism makes use of particular *frames* (i.e., dominant themes), *styles* (i.e., 'peculiar *linguistic manners and rhetorical strategies* (or *race talk*)' (2015, p. 1365

emphasis in the original), and *racial stories* that support and transport it. Exploring these specifically for the Norwegian context promises to be an insightful undertaking and a possible avenue for future research. Especially since racism in the Norwegian context mostly evades an explicitly racial language, it would be important to analyze the frames, styles, and racial stories through which it functions. This could allow to build further on Essed's concept of 'everyday racism' and flesh out how it concretely manifests itself through speech.

Both Bonilla-Silva and Essed argue for a structural understanding of racism. The data material in this thesis has allowed for a focus on individuals' experiences and on their accounts of interactions with others. As Essed explains, 'everyday racism' as experienced by individuals is structural because it draws on collective power and actualizes racist ideology. The fact that understandings of belonging to the nation are infused with whiteness and that these seem virtually omnipresent certainly speaks to a structural quality. However, there are other domains of structural racism that this thesis has not been able to explore, relating for instance to economic inequality or to policing practices and the judicial system. These could be interesting arenas for future research.

Essed's argument that 'everyday racism' functions through the activation of group power also ties in with Hage's concept of the 'white nation fantasy'. Hage (1998) argues that in states that are conceived of as 'white', the white majority feels like that arbiter over who can legitimately reside in the nation. When discussing experience of harassment in public space in chapter 8, I argued that the stories presented there can precisely be understood as instances of this. Hage's concept thus serves as a clarification of what kind of group power specifically is being activated and to what end.

The theory chapter also contained the definition put forward by Alexa Døving and Sindre Bangstad in their book 'What is Racism?' ('Hva er rasisme?'). They (2015, p. 16 my translation) define racism as 'a generalization that assigns certain properties to people, on the basis of their belonging to a specific group, and the fact that these properties are defined as so negative that they form the basis for an argument to hold members of the group at a distance, to exclude them, and, if possible, to actively discriminate against them'. Chapter 8 in this thesis, which focuses on experiences of discrimination and racism, was built solely around the acts of discrimination described by the targets/'victims'. I do not know which 'properties' the 'perpetrators' assigned to their target, though of course one could attempt to infer them from the stories themselves. Some of the stories, such as when a participant was called 'garbage', or when another participant experienced someone saying 'there are too many immigrants now in Frogner', which was accompanied by spitting, do not leave much to the imagination as to which negative properties are assigned to groups of people and form the basis for these acts.

However, chapter 8 also covered many stories that were more subtle and that would have been harder to account for based solely on Døving and Bangstad's definition. Among other things, the chapter explored how episodes of discrimination and racism often draw on multiple markers of difference and that the racist message can lie 'just below the surface' without needing to be spelled out explicitly. Døving and Bangstad's definitions certainly has its strengths; I just found it harder to use for the more subtle experiences in the data material.

Chapter 8 also engaged participants' own understandings and definitions of racism. Some of them felt conflicted as to whether they could label their own experiences 'racism' in a way that pointed to the fact that they felt beholden to narrow definitions of racism that are hegemonic in Norwegian public discourse. Contrary to this, one participant, Samrath, especially argued that 'subtle' or even 'positive' instances of racism affected him more negatively than explicit, verbally violent ones. All of these instances point in the direction of there being a recognition gap, where many minorities do not feel that their experiences of discrimination and racism are recognized and validated by the majority, especially if they frame them as 'racism'. This is an issue that points beyond the confines of academic discourse and into how the term 'racism' is used in public discourse and common parlance.

The term 'racism' has a dual function as both an academic and an everyday term. Academic definitions of racism often seek to explain racism in addition to defining it, or at least to make the definition easy to integrate into an explanation of the phenomenon. Everyday definitions often seek to express individuals' life realities in such a way that they are recognizable for others who have had similar experiences. Further research in the Norwegian context might seek to explore to what extent the two can converge for the Norwegian context, and how academic definitions of racism can become most sensitive to people's lived realities.

10.3 Norway as a European Case

The way phenotype functions in Norway can be compared to other European contexts. Norway is similar to other European countries in that most of Europe stopped using racial categories and an explicit terminology of 'race' during the decades following the Second World War (Goldberg, 2006; Lentin, 2008). David Goldberg (2006) argues that Europe has made race into a taboo and at the same time reified it into something that always belongs to an elsewhere or to a bygone time (such as South Africa under Apartheid, the Southern United States during the Jim Crow era, or Germany under Nazi rule). According to Goldberg, this makes it very difficult for European nations to understand race as a contemporary category of difference. There is still a tendency in Europe to think of race as an outdated, pseudoscientific

biological category. This ignores how present-day understandings of race function through ideas about culture and religion. Consequently, phenotype and race are silenced as categories of difference and the majority populations in many European countries do not relate to them as difference-producing (Garner, 2006; Goldberg, 2006; Lentin, 2008). The UK constitutes an exception here in that compared to the continent, the term 'race' is used more commonly in public discourse and common parlance. In addition, the UK census also collects statistics on ethno-racial belonging (Morning, 2008). However, Miri Song (2018, p. 1135) still finds a preference for 'ethnicity' over 'race' among British academics as well as public institutions like the Office for National Statistics.

More recently, color-blind narratives have been challenged by racial minorities in different European countries (Ahmar, 2020; Haidari, 2020; Kazim, 2020; Murray, 2021; Ohanwe, 2020; Onishi, 2020a, 2020b; Safronova, 2020; Steyerl & Terkessidis, 2021; Today.it, 2020). In several European countries, phenotype/race has been increasingly on the public agenda. In Germany, two racially motivated shootings – in Halle, Saxony-Anhalt, on 9 October 2019 (Eddy, Gladstone, & Hsu, 2019) and in Hanau, Hesse, on 19 February 2020 (Ewing & Eddy, 2020) – as well as the revelation of right-wing extremist and racist networks among the police and the military (Bennhold, 2020a, 2020b; Schuetze & Bennhold, 2020) put the topic of racism on the public agenda. After both shootings, minority organizations demanded that German majority society make a serious effort to make visible how widespread hate against racialized minorities is and to combat it effectively (S. Hoffmann, 2019; Topçu, 2020). Moreover, it was pointed out that hatred toward Jews, Muslims, people of color, and women often interrelates, as was the case for both the attacks in Halle and Hanau (Haaf, 2020; Kaiser, 2020; Köhler, 2020).

France is also currently witness to intense public battles around the issues of racism and Islamophobia. One the one hand, minority associations, the student union Unef, and a number of anti-racist academics demand that French majority society recognize racism and take steps to combat it (Onishi, 2020a, 2020b; Onishi & Méheut, 2021b). On the other, conservative academics and politicians as well as the president are casting these demands as going against the values of universalism, republicanism, and secularism (Mahler, 2021; Onishi, 2021; Onishi & Méheut, 2021a). According to this view, nobody should make demands based on 'particularistic identities'. This argument echoes how anti-racism in many countries is denounced as built on divisive identity politics. Moreover, in February 2021, the French government launched an investigation into academic research that is accused of being 'imported from the US' and of supporting 'Islamo-leftism', like postcolonial theory, intersectionality, and race research (Onishi, 2021; Onishi & Méheut, 2021a). 'Islamo-leftism' is a controversial term that is mobilized by some in France to accuse left-leaning or anti-racist academics of being 'soft' on 'political Islam', over-focusing on Islamophobia, and thereby propping up Islamism. These examples demonstrate that – in different ways –

racism is on the public agenda in several European countries right now and that there are ongoing societal negotiations around it.

Another commonality shared by European nations is that whiteness interrelates both with national identities (Cretton, 2018; Fassin, 2015; Müller, 2011; Stanley, 2015) and with a more general idea of Europeanness (Blaagaard, 2008; Goldberg, 2006; Lentin, 2008). This duality speaks to European history.

While Norway thus shares some commonalities with other European countries as to how phenotype and race are articulated, there are also some elements that set it apart. The language around 'ethnicity' is particular to Norway, or at least not found all European countries. In Italian, German, and French, for example, the term 'ethnicity' is not a common term like it is in Norwegian. As discussed above, the term 'ethnicity' functions as a vector for phenotype and race in Norway. This is not to say that phenotype and race do not matter in European countries that lack 'ethnicity' as a common-sense category; these dimensions are just conveyed differently in those languages. As discussed above, what is particular with the way 'ethnicity' is used in Norwegian, is that it at the same time allows to articulate and to conceal 'race'.

Another particularity, and one that is shared with Norway's Nordic neighbor countries, is that racial meaning-making regarding non-white minority groups must be seen in context with the historical treatment of Sámi and national minorities. This history speaks to the continuity of an idea of inferiority of groups that are understood as non-European and non-white. Understandings of race, Europeanness, and whiteness underpin both of these dynamics. Another element Norway shares with its Nordic neighbors, is the narrative of colonial innocence (Keskinen et al., 2009). In the Nordic region, the denial of race as a difference-producing category is propped up by the idea that race could not possibly matter because it is entirely foreign to the region since no countries here had colonial empires or slaves. This is related to an idea about Nordic 'goodness' that is posited as antithetical to racism. However, the different Nordic countries have also seen their public discourses develop differently with regard to this topic in recent years. Notably, Sweden has seen more societal and academic focus on racism and a more progressive public debate. Finally, another difference that sets Norway apart from continental Europe, albeit possibly a less significant one, is the finding that only a very narrow phenotypical range is seen as 'plausibly Nordic'.

10.4 Final Remarks

In comparison to some other West European countries, post-war immigration to Norway started late and at a slow pace. Due to this, the population share of descendants of immigrants, i.e. people born in Norway

to two foreign-born parents, is also – at currently 3.5% - comparatively low. It is expected to grow in the future. Generational effects play a role for which topics immigrants and their descendants, respectively, are most concerned with and this is in turn reflected in public and political discourse around immigration and integration. While the first generation of immigrants as a general tendency is concerned with arriving and making it in their new country of residence, their children are rooted there in a completely different way. They speak the language fluently, attend school there, and are familiar with cultural codes and institutions. They also often have different expectations as to being included as fully equal citizens and members of society. For this reason, this generation is often more concerned with matters pertaining to identity, inclusion/exclusion, and discrimination/racism. In Norway, as noted in the introduction, these topics have become more and more visible in the media and in literary contributions over the past years and they became particularly visible in the aftermath of the murder of George Floyd in May 2020.

Of course, descendants of immigrants are not only concerned with racism and questions of symbolic inclusion in the nation. Material and economic concerns are also important. These are outside of what I set out to address explicitly in this thesis; in addition, due to a skewedness towards highly-educated individuals among minority participants, material and economic concerns did not take much space in the interviews. With a different sample, it would have been possible to address intersections between class and phenotype/race to a greater extent.

Nonetheless, with a growing group of descendants in the future, the question whether Norwegian identity can be decoupled from a narrow phenotypical range will only grow in importance, as will questions of discrimination and racism. In order to understand Norwegian society, it is crucial to understand phenotype and race as difference-producing categories. This need will only become more pressing in the future. I hope that this thesis has made a contribution to understanding these topics.

I want to end with a quote by Philomena Essed (2004, p. 132):

> Freedom to think critically is the oil of knowledge production, the most basic condition for scholarship. But once you acquire through study and research, in-depth, documented, comprehensive knowledge of racism, there is no way back. One cannot undo critical knowledge. There is no way not to recognize racial and other injustices once you have learned how to see them. One can only hope that critical knowledge be used fearlessly, but with wisdom – with respect for one another as human beings.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Denne intervjuguiden er ment som en samtalestarter og skal brukes fleksibelt.

- Kan du først presentere deg selv for meg?
- Er du eller dine foreldre født utenfor Norge?

Oppveksten / barndommens boområde

- Kan du fortelle meg om området der du er vokst opp? Hvordan ville du beskrive det?
- Var de fleste i dit nabolag etnisk norske, eller var det folk med forskjellige bakgrunner?
- I ditt nabolag, spilte det en rolle om man hadde innvandrerbakgrunn? På hvilken måte?

Skoletida

- Hva er ditt første minne fra skoletida?
- Var du glad i å gå på skole?
- Var det (andre) barn som hadde et annet morsmål enn norsk i klassen din?
- Husker du en begivenhet fra skolen der det spilte en rolle, eller stod frem, at noen hadde norsk bakgrunn og andre ikke?
- Husker du når du skjønte, for første gang, at du var norsk, og andre ikke var det, eller hadde foreldre som ikke var det? **Eller:** Husker du når du skjønte, for første gang, at noen så på deg som ikke-norsk?
- Hvordan var det for deg å ha ikke-norsk bakgrunn på skolen?
- Føler du at etnisk og kulturell bakgrunn hadde betydning for hvem som ble venner med hvem på skolen, generelt sett?

- Hva forandret seg med overgangen fra barneskolen til ungdomsskolen?
- Og fra ungdomsskolen til videregående skole?
- Hvor mange år har du gått på skole? Har du gått på videregående? Hvilken spesialisering valgte du?
- Hva gjorde du etter at du ble ferdig på skolen?

Jobb

- Hvordan endte du opp med jobben du har nå?
- Trives du i jobben?
- Hvordan ville du beskrive den sosiale atmosfæren på jobb?
- Har du kolleger som har ikke-norsk bakgrunn? Kan du huske en situasjon der det har spilt en rolle?
- Tror du at det at du har ikke-norsk bakgrunn har spilt en rolle når du har søkt på jobb, eller for hvordan du blir møtt av andre på jobb?

Foreldrerollen

- Tenker du / dere å bli boende i Oslo i de neste 3 – 5 årene?
- Ditt barn vil vokse opp i en flerkulturell og mangfoldig by. Hvordan tror du at det kommer til å påvirke ham / henne?
- Er det ting du bekymrer deg over når du tenker på ditt barns framtid?

Spørsmål om kategorier for å beskrive etnisitet / identitet

- Siden jeg er opptatt av etnisitet og tilhørighet vil jeg gjerne vite hvilke begreper og uttrykk folk bruker for å omtale seg selv.
- Bruker du 'etnisk norsk' eller 'hvit' for å snakke om deg selv eller andre? Ville du reagert hvis en annen kalte deg for det? (evt. referere til at disse begrepene blir brukt i media)
- Hva betyr det for deg 'å være norsk'? Hva forbinder du med det?
- Hva forbinder det med begrepene 'innvandrer', 'utlending' og 'minoritet'? Synes du de er positive, negative eller nøytrale? Bruker du disse for å omtale deg selv eller andre?
- Bruker du noen andre ord eller kategorier for å beskrive deg selv?

Erfaringer med diskriminering

- Har du noen gang i ditt liv opplevd diskriminering (uansett hva 'årsaket' var)?
- Tror du at utseende/hudfarge er avgjørende for hvordan folk blir møtt og behandlet av andre i Oslo?
- Ville du brukt ordet 'rasisme' for å betegne noe av det du har opplevd?

Siste spørsmål:

- Er det noe du vil legge til? Noe jeg har glemt å spørre om?

Appendix 2: Information Provided to Participants

UiO : Universitetet i Oslo
Institutt for sosiologi og samfunnsgeografi

Forskningsprosjekt Universitetet i Oslo

Vil du være med på en intervjustudie?
Jeg vil gjerne invitere deg til å bli med i en intervjustudie med foreldre i Oslo. Jeg er interessert i identitet, etnisitet og tilhørighet blant småbarnsforeldre i Oslo, derfor vil jeg gjerne intervjue deg og snakke med deg om forskjellige livsfaser– fra barne- og skoletida til i dag.

Hva går dette ut på?
Intervjuet vil ta mellom halvannen og to timer. Hvis du har spesielt mye å fortelle, eller det er enklere for deg, er det mulig å ta intervjuet over to møter. Jeg ønsker å ta opp samtalen elektronisk for å huske det du sier hvis det er greit for deg. Jeg har taushetsplikt. I min avhandling blir alt du sier anonymisert slik at ingen skal kunne se at det er du som har sagt det. Opptakene blir slettet når undersøkelsen er over (i desember 2020), og jeg beholder bare en anonymisert, skriftlig versjon. Totalt vil jeg intervjue minst 40 foreldre som bor i forskjellige bydeler i Oslo.
Din deltakelse er helt frivillig og du kan trekke deg underveis, også etter intervjuet. Du kan selvfølgelig nekte å svare på enkeltspørsmål.
Det er mulig at jeg kommer tilbake og vil ha et oppfølgingsintervju senere. Dette er selvsagt også helt frivillig.

Har du spørsmål om studien?
Du kan kontakte meg på l.m.fuehrer@sosgeo.uio.no eller tlf. 40205456.

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