“Loud Skin”

The Consequences of Racialization for Belonging and Self-Understanding in the Norwegian Context

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The title “Loud Skin”,
is the name of a spoken word poem
by slam poet and actor
Evelyn Rasmussen Osazuwa.
Translated from the Norwegian title:
“Høylytt hud”.

The title is used with the permission of the author.

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Abstract

This study analyzes how lived experience with racialization in the Norwegian context affects individuals' sense of belonging to Norwegianness and self-understanding. The analysis draws on phenomenological perspectives of race as an embodied experience, as well as theoretical concepts of racialization, double consciousness, and structural racism. The informants' accounts demonstrate how racialization is experienced as a continuous process of applying racial meanings to phenotypical traits. This influences all the informants' sense of belonging to Norwegianness and their self-understanding. Because whiteness is central to the ideas of Norwegianness, racialized individuals have to relate to a dynamic of inclusion and exclusion based on how they act and navigate belonging to the national collective. The informants navigate racialization in different ways. The first aspect contains two strategies of excluding or claiming one's identity as Norwegian. The strategy to exclude oneself from the Norwegian identity is a way of retaining the power to define one's own identity. While for others, claiming the Norwegian identity is a way of pushing the boundaries of what Norwegianness signifies. A second aspect that affects the informants' sense of belonging is communicating their experiences with racism out loud in a cultural context of colorblindness and colonial exceptionalism. Their lived experiences are not acknowledged by the majority of society, which perpetuates their exclusion from feeling Norwegian. Third, the lack of complex representation of racialized individuals and groups in the public has led to the informants' experiences of being treated by the majority of society as "others", rather than part of the collective. These factors affect the informants' understandings of themselves through a double consciousness. The findings of the thesis based on the informants' experiences accumulate knowledge about how they navigate racialization. The findings are analyzed against intersectional categories of gender, class, religious belonging, and sexual orientation. The informants' experience of racism as a social structure requires more research in different academic fields in the Norwegian context.

Keywords: racialization, belonging, phenomenology, lived experience, Norwegianness, social structure, racism

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List of abbreviations

BLM – Black Lives Matter

EU – European Union

FrP – Fremskrittspartiet (The Norwegian Progress Party)

MENA – the Middle East and North African region

NSD – Norwegian Centre for Research Data

NRK – Norsk rikskringkasting (The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation)

PD – Perceived discrimination

SIAN – Stopp Islamiseringen av Norge (Stop Islamisation of Norway)

U.S. – United States of America

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1 Introduction and research question

Addressing racial discrimination is an essential part of studying cultural change. Although Norway is known for ranking high on measures of equality, of being global peace mediators, and tend to address injustice internationally, racial prejudice within our own culture is a polarizing issue. The insurgence of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, starting in the United States (U.S.) and spreading globally in 2020, was an anticipated moment for many who experience racism. At the same time others were left perplexed, having thought that racism was a thing of the past. Countless personal accounts of racism in the news put racial injustice on the agenda in a contemporary, Norwegian context (Nyheim-Jomisko 2020; Birkeland 2020; Riaz 2020; Bergsmo 2020, and many more). What does it imply when a multitude of people come forward and tell their stories, of not feeling like they belong within the national collective? This study is a relevant contribution to understand the nuances of how racism is experienced. To combat racism there is a need for experiences of exclusion to be described and for the consequences to be acknowledged.

This thesis describes the experiences and reflections of six racialized individuals who live in Oslo, Norway. The data is collected through open-ended in-depth interviews with a phenomenological approach. Individual reconstructions of experiences with racism, as repetitive manifestations and ongoing processes, cannot be separated from informants' understandings of themselves. This thesis challenges the mainstream Norwegian understanding of racism as individual actions and strengthens the historical-cultural structural understanding of racism.

The cause and dynamics of racism have been studied in Norwegian social research for a few decades. Yet few studies explore the consequences of racism from the view of those who experience it (Haugsgjerd and Thorbjørnsrud 2021; Orupabo 2021). Already in 2004, social anthropologist Marianne Gullestad asserted that there was little academic interest in racism in Norway. When racism was discussed academically, the discussion's point of departure was a narrow scientific definition of racism with an emphasis on the individual rather than a structural definition (Gullestad 2004). The research on racism at the time focused mostly on "extremist and self-proclaimed racism" (Gullestad 2004, 183). While research in the last decade has documented that discrimination against racialized minorities happens in Norway, we do not know much

about how they respond to and deal with their realities (Orupabo 2021, 119). This thesis is founded on similar questions: What are the consequences of racism for racialized minorities? Based on the need for new knowledge about minoritized and racialized experience, the research question is as follows:

> *How does lived experience with racism affect racialized individuals' sense of belonging to Norwegianness and their self-understanding?*

The research question will be answered two-fold in the following succession:

a. *What are the informants' experiences and understandings of racism?*
b. *How does this affect their sense of belonging to Norwegianness and self-understanding?*

To answer these questions I first present the conceptual framework in chapter 2. I operationalize the central terms *race* and *racism*, *structural racism*, *racialization*, *double consciousness*, *intersectionality*, and *belonging*. I also present a brief historical contextualization and situate *structural racism* within the academic debate of whether this is a useful term in Norwegian social research.

Chapter 3 looks closer at the Norwegian context and conceptualizes *Norwegianness*. The chapter presents a history of racism in Norway in the last decades, introduces a critique of *the colorblind discourse*, as well as statistics on majority attitudes towards racialized people, and mental health consequences of racism. At the end of the chapter, I review how the BLM movement initiated a discursive shift in how racism is discussed.

Chapter 4 "Methodology" presents the research design. I present the phenomenological method and conceptualize *lived experience*. I discuss my positionality towards the research topic and the informants. I explain the data collection and analysis methods. Finally, I discuss the implications of translating minority experience to a mainly majority audience, and ethical considerations made towards the informants.

Chapter 5 answers the research question, *a. What are the informants' experiences and understandings of racism?* Here I present the informants individually, with examples of their experiences and how they understand the racism they have faced. This chapter centralizes the voices of the informants and my voice as a researcher is deliberately muted. The aim is to give the reader an understanding that serves as the basis for the analysis.

Chapter 6 and 7 answer the second part of the research question, *b. How does this affect their belonging to Norwegianness and self-understanding?* In these chapters, I have organized the findings into recurring themes that are relevant for the two categories, as a sense of belonging to Norwegianness, and self-understanding.

The final chapter concludes the thesis and looks at the implications of the research.

The scope of this thesis is limited to the Norwegian context in the lifetimes of the informants until the time of the interviews (from the 1980s until 2020). The Norwegian contextualization is centered on racialized immigrants and their descendants in Norway from the 1950s and onwards from countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Due to space limitations, the history of the systematic state-driven and cultural racism towards the indigenous Sámi population, the Romani diaspora in Norway, or the history of antisemitism in Norway is only briefly mentioned but not extensively presented.

1.1 Categorization of people

When discussing racism, there is an ethical dilemma in how people are categorized. While a racial categorization of humans is scientifically and culturally problematic, it is necessary to differentiate between people who experience racism and those who do not, to research racism. This relies on the use of *racism* based on a historical-cultural understanding. In this, it is understood that due to a history of producing racial meaning onto bodies that are not white, people who can be identified as white do not experience racism. Given this understanding, there needs to be made a distinction between those of us who can experience racism and those who cannot. In this thesis I have decided to refer to those who experience racism as racialized, referring to a process of constructing race onto bodies. In regular discourse, this is often referred to as *black* or *brown* people, or even *visible minorities* (Horst and Erdal 2018). While those who are referred to as *white* are also racialized, culturally, whiteness constitutes a normative position and eludes invisibility and neutrality in the Norwegian culture. This is opposed to what I call racialized bodies, who are noticed as different than the norm.

In this context, the reference to "minority" is meant as ethnic minorities in Norwegian society, and "majority" is meant as the white population[1]. I use the terms *minoritized*

[1] This is an artificial division, where in reality, there are *cross cutting cleavages* between these groups of people (Rokkan 1967). Cross cutting cleavages refer to how groups can be divided by different boundaries. Such as within what is here referred to as "minority" and "majority", where these populations could also be divided on their social or economic statuses, their politics, or religious divisions in society.

and *majoritized* (Gunaratnam 2003). Like racialization, these terms refer to the process of *becoming* majority or minority, emphasizing how belonging to these categories are not fixed and change according to cultural change over time (Horst and Erdal 2018). Someone who is perceived as a racialized minority in contemporary society can be incorporated into whiteness in the future, for example, as Spaniards and Italian people have experienced over time in the U.S. (Roediger 2006). Existing categories can also be deconstructed and new categories can emerge. I use the terms minoritized and majoritized inspired by Jdid, who aims to make power relations visible and to emphasize how the categories of minority and majority are constituted in relation to each other (2021). Because the categories of minoritized and racialized overlap in this context, they are used interchangeably to highlight either the minoritization or the racialization.

There is a dilemma of putting light on the discriminations of particular groups of people, and not essentialize them further in the process by over-categorizing them, to challenge the categories they face (Horst and Erdal 2018). Categorization is helpful to understand the consequences categories have. For example, as will be shown in this thesis, *black women* can face particular challenges and stereotypes that *brown women* might not face. Black women can experience similar discrimination because they are consistently stereotyped similarly by the hegemonic culture. There is empirical value in these categories, in that people find solidarity within their "identity groups". On the other hand, these categorizations can be seen as imposed on individuals by structures of society: A goal of antiracist and feminist work is to liberate people from their categories and let them live individual lives free to identify however they would like. "Black woman" becomes a *real* category only in the consequences of the cultural images of the category, not as essentially materially real for anyone who matches with the categorical description. In the same way, "race" is no more than a linguistic categorization until it is made real through its consequences, which will be discussed further along in the thesis (Alcoff 1999). These categories are not neutral and the point of this thesis is not to neutralize them but to show where the difference in experience exists based on racialization.

In the same way as I risk homogenizing racialized experience into a singular experience, I also run the risk of homogenizing majority-white Norwegians. There is a dilemma in simplifying the so-called majority culture while highlighting minoritized people's

experience of being simplified by the majority population. The reader needs to recognize that the "majority" category's main function in this context is to serve as an idea of what Norwegian culture as a whole reflects for the informants. It is not a nuanced presentation of the myriad of individuals who can fit into the category "majoritized". The theory of intersectionality applies to members of "the majority" as well, who can be categorized in ways that highlight systematic disadvantage. However, the nuances within majoritized culture will not be presented here.

Collectively we as Norwegians like to believe that society is *post-race* and truly *colorblind*. However, the normalized use and meaning of *ethnicity* go along a similar subtext as race has had before, without the negative connotations of racism (Sandset 2019). Sandset observes that the same "color lines" as implied in "race" are alive and well in Norwegian society (ibid.). The informants use black, brown, and white to refer to themselves and others. For the sake of closeness to the material, I use their terms in the context of their accounts, and "my" terms otherwise. The informants themselves are described the way they describe themselves, yet with regards to anonymization. The terms white, black, and brown are also used in the background chapters when referring to literature that uses the same terms.

1.2 Racism as a politicized phenomenon to research

To talk about racism is highly sensitized in Norwegian society. Andersson (2018) problematizes how research on politically sensitive issues is often politized to the point where the role as a researcher is delegitimized and intermingled with the role of a political actor. In the context of Norwegian social research, Andersson refers to research on migration and ethnic minoritized people as research fields characterized by strong polarization (Andersson 2018, 12). In this context, a debate centered around the threat of *identity politics* to the objectivity and reliability of academic research has risen in Norway (Gjerde 2021). Opponents[2] are arguing that qualitative research in the fields of gender studies and postcolonial studies is characterized by constructed problems that divide people into categories of power and privilege. They argue that the research in these fields is driven by political activism and that this is a threat to freedom of speech and academic freedom. Moss and Solheim observe how discourses on diversity are changing in the European context, from multiculturalism towards narrower

[2] See for example Kjetil Rolness, public speaker (Rolness 2020), Jon Helgheim, politician in Fremskrittspartiet (FrP) (Hammer 2021), Torkel Brekke, social science researcher (Brekke 2020).

monoculturalism, nationalism, and prejudice. In this context, the researchers observe how public discourses emphasizing “us” versus “them” are shifting, and how derogatory language against minorities is becoming more mainstream (Moss and Solheim 2021). As Andersson describes, and the mentioned Norwegian opponents of “activist research” are examples of, empirical research is readily reduced to personal opinion and ideology in the Norwegian context. Disagreements around the legitimacy and meaning of concepts related to racism research are also being fiercely debated in mainstream media (Among others, see: Brekke 2020; Stine H. B. Svendsen et al. 2020). Researching racism thus tends to be considered more biased than other types of social science research. On the other hand, it is important to note that anti-racist scholarship has been met with renewed interest, especially after the 2020 upsurge of the BLM movement internationally. This thesis is written within the described global and national academic context.

2 Concepts of race and racism

This chapter outlines the theoretical background of the thesis. I present an introduction to racism as a contested term academically, the working definition of racism, and several relevant concepts, *structural racism*, and a contextualization of the debate around the use of the term in a Norwegian context, *racialization*, *double consciousness*, *intersectionality*, and *belonging*. At the end of the chapter, I present a brief history of *biological* and *cultural racism*. In the Norwegian and European research context *ethnicity* is a term that has been used more than *race*, as a cultural shift away from the connotations of *race* to the Jewish genocide (Gullestad 2004, 177). To position the thesis in the international body of literature on *race relations*, I use the term race rather than ethnicity.

2.1 Race and racism

The term *race* has been defined in numerous ways throughout history and has been used in varied contexts. The term entered the English language in the early 16th century, and its meaning developed through encounters European travelers had with people in other regions of the world, from describing family lines to phenotypical traits (Rattansi 2020, 10). *Racism*, with the modern connotations of the term, arose in the 1930s as a response to the Nazi ideology of Jews as a distinct race from the *Aryan* Germans (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 38; Rattansi 2020, 1). However, racism as a process has been relevant and had deep infliction long before Nazism. The term now describes many different historical contexts and processes, some of which are presented in this chapter.

There have been different interpretations of racism. One consistent idea is the implication that some humans are worth more than others, based on physical identifiers (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 32). Führer uses *phenotype* as a reference to bodily characteristics associated with geographical origin/heritage, exemplified by "skin color, hair color, hair texture, eye shape etc." (2021, 13). She also finds that the way "skin color" is used in informal parlance in the Norwegian context is often a reference to phenotype rather than the actual color of the skin. Dehumanization based on a racial ideology that is based on phenotypical differences is a central idea throughout time and context, even though what traits are perceived as different from the norm changes through time. In *Working Toward Whiteness*, Roediger recounts how Italians, Polish people, and Jews were long defined as inferior racial groups in the U.S., and how they

gradually achieved whiteness through class mobility (Roediger 2006). It is worth mentioning that there are degrees of whiteness, where for example Eastern Europeans are racialized to some degree in the contemporary European context (Fox, Morosanu, and Szilassy 2012). How racism is legitimized is prone to change, from the extreme ideology of race based on biological inferiority to other more subtle expressions that create stereotypes based on cultural assumptions rather than just phenotype.

My working definition of racism is Garner's (2010). In this definition, racism must include: (1) a historical power relationship where groups are racialized over time, meaning that they are treated as if their characteristics are natural and inherent to the individuals of the group, (2) a set of ideas, an ideology, where humans can be divided into distinct races, with specific characteristics based on culture, genetics or both, and (3) through practices of discrimination, on a scale from racist slurs, in news stories, as violence, or even genocide in extreme cases (Garner 2010, 11). It is important to note that like any social relationship, different forms of racism are dynamic and specific to contexts, be it historical, political, cultural, or geographic contexts (ibid.). Since racism is expressed in different ways according to time and context, it is easier to talk about historically specific racisms (ibid.). Racism involves "attitudes, actions, processes and unequal power relations", and is present in a continuum of social relations, not only at the extreme ends of colonialism and ethnic cleansing (Garner 2010, 18).

The "social construction thesis" explains how race is a product of socialization (Delgado and Stefancic 2017, 9). According to Delgado and Stefancic race is not "objective, inherent, or fixed", and does not correspond to a biological reality (ibid.). There is a scientific consensus in relevant fields that race is a social rather than biological truth, sometimes marked by using quotation marks or italics around the term to enhance that it is used in the meaning of a construction (Rattansi 2020, 47). However, Alcoff importantly acknowledges that the lived realities of race are very real for people who are racialized. Race has cultural meaning and "power over collective imaginations" (Alcoff 1999, 15). Alcoff describes this as a *contextualism about race*, which acknowledges the reality of race while seeing that contemporary racial formations have the ability to change or be eradicated. It recognizes how racial beliefs and practices have varied across cultures, and how racialized identities are produced, yet that race is "as real as anything else in lived experience, with operative effects in the social world" (Alcoff 1999, 17). Through a phenomenological approach inspired by Alcoff, I see race

as “socially constructed, historically malleable, culturally contextual” and produced through social practice (ibid.).

The terminology surrounding *racism, structural racism,* and *racialization* have been contested in Norway as well as globally, in public debate as well as academic circles (Fredrickson 2002, 151). It can confuse as it is used to describe discrimination based on biological features as skin color, as well as discrimination related to culture and religion (Birkelund 2021). For studies of racism, it is necessary to operationalize these terms for a specific context, at a specific time, since the meaning and functions of race and racism change over time (Bangstad et al. 2021, 12).

2.2 Structural racism

Structural racism points to racism as a *social structure*. A social structure is a long-term observable pattern which an individual cannot alter, but where individuals have certain *agency*, a degree of freedom to alter or act on the structure (Garner 2010, 109). Other examples of social structures can be family, religion, law, and class. A structural lens[3] when studying race identifies patterns of action at social, national, and international levels that are hard to observe if only considering individual behavior (ibid.).

In Norway, the individualized and essentialized view of racism expresses itself as the idea that only those who outwardly admit a belief in higher and lower races can be seen as racist (Helland 2014). In an individualistic psychological paradigm, people who express themselves in a racist way are seen as socially incompetent and irrational (Garner 2010, 109; Helland 2014, 142). This tendency is something Fanon criticized early on, “The habit of considering racism as a mental quirk, as a psychological flaw, must be abandoned” (from Helland 2014, 142). Individualization causes racism to become a personal issue. It is something you do not want to *be*, rather than something that is structurally embedded in the collective history, with implications for perspectives on the world and the idea of races. According to Helland, the heavy individualization of racism underlines a general lack of complex understanding of the subject. Focusing on the structural realities of racism, all dominant group members are seen to benefit from racist ideology even if they are not themselves agents of racism, and one way this is

[3] The terminology of structural racism is contested and holds different meanings in the Norwegian context. The understanding of structural racism presented here is *not* meant as *institutional* racism – meaning racism carried out by institutions such as discrimination by law, in educational or health institution – unless specified.

expressed is having racialized people having to prove to majoritized white people that racism has real effects on their lives (Essed 1991). To observe the structures, there is a need to study the systematic social relations that influence racialized people's lives in more subtle and sometimes invisible ways (Midtbøen 2021, 107). It is relevant to look at racism as a social structure, involving "actions, motives, and conscious and unconscious practices", to understand how race inequalities persist and change over time (Rattansi 2020, 94). Seeing racism through a structural lens means taking the focus from the simplifying question of whether an individual is racist or not, and shifting the focus to the collective patterns in society that are reproduced through individual and social actions.

By seeing racism as an expression of *structural conflict* and power relations rather than the dualistic "good non-racists" or "evil racists", we can investigate how well-meaning interactions can cause feelings of not belonging when rooted in perspectives that feel othering to the receiver. While the purpose of this thesis is not to investigate the big questions of why racism is perpetuated and the psychology of the agent of racism, the structural understanding is foundational in the informants' accounts. They all use it as a way to understand and explain racism to themselves, as is presented in the findings chapters.

2.2.1 Using the concept of structural racism in a Norwegian context

At the time of writing, there is an ongoing public as well as academic debate on the term structural racism and whether it should be used in a Norwegian context. In many ways, the debate centers on the importation of terms from American contextual history of slavery and post-Civil War systemic segregation based on race in terms of the housing market, access to loans from banks, and more – i. e. "institutional racism" (Midtbøen 2021; Birkelund 2021; Erdal 2021; T. Brekke 2021; Orupabo 2021). The BLM movement in Norway has become a catalyst for looking at why some young protestors and racialized people in Norway prefer to use structural racism, as well as other "American" concepts on race relations, such as *white privilege*. Birkelund warns that a broad understanding of racism can encompass many phenomena that marginalize racially minoritized people and therefore conceal other factors that could give insight into minority-centered issues (Birkelund 2021, 84). Brekke criticizes the use of structural racism as a term that tries to do too much – describe, explain and condemn racism at once (Brekke 2021). According to Brekke, it does not manage to do so. He

argues that looking through a lens of structural racism hinders from asking open questions about the root causes of inequality (Brekke 2021). There seems to be general confusion on whether structural racism should refer to social structures or institutional structures, and where it is sometimes used interchangeably.

Midtbøen refers to research that proves discrimination in the Norwegian labor and housing markets, education institutions, health services, in meetings with the police and the public (Midtbøen 2021, 109). While this can imply that *institutional structural racism* fits the description of the Norwegian context, he argues that the possibility of socio-economic mobility from one generation to the next within ethnic minorities is high. This does not fit with the sociological focus on *a reproduction of inequality* as a factor of reproducing structures. Descendants of immigrants have high social mobility that more resembles their peers with Norwegian parents than their parents. Midtbøen implies that the Norwegian welfare system plays a role as an equalizing agent (2021, 110). At the same time, he reiterates that racism certainly exists in Norway, in different areas of life and society, as many studies have shown.

From this debate, it is clear that the study of structural racism (as institutional or social structure) is coming to the front in Norwegian social sciences. There is certainly a need to integrate the macro perspective on social relations a structural understanding provides.

2.3 Racialization

Racism as an idea and a practice shifts and expresses itself in different ways depending on time and geographical context. The racist beliefs that legitimized the transatlantic slave trade are different from the contemporary racism that affects equality in modern societies. The wide range of experiences within the narrow concept of racism shows the need for a dynamic understanding which takes into account the transformation of the concept (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 59).

Racialization points to the study of the process in which race becomes socially meaningful, rather than the study of race itself (Garner 2010, 19). It refers to racism as a social practice, and largely shifts the understanding from a micro to a macro level – from individuals as racist actors to societal structures enabling racism. It seeks to highlight how cultural connotations to a particular race have value-based categorizations that might confirm “us” as better than “them” (Gullestad 2002).

Taking the structural take on racism further, as a way to go beyond the discussions of individuals or institutions being racist or non-racist, racialization adds nuance to the understanding of racism (Rattansi 2020). According to Garner, racialization is the process of assigning racial meaning to a group or relation (2010, 19). The interpretation used in this thesis is that racialization is a conceptualization of racism as a process of constructing race, and applying that construct socially to individuals or a group based on their physical appearance (Essed 1991, 36). I use "racialized" to describe my participants because it describes the applied racial meaning to their phenotypical features, which without the social and historical connotations would be neutral or hold alternative meanings. While "white" is a racial category and is also racialized, its connotations in a Norwegian context are more neutral and seen as the norm. Racialization emphasizes the constructed meaning put on to race, also accentuating how its meaning can shift (Orupabo 2021, 118).

It should also be noted that when discussing power in race relations, there can seem to be an implication that if one party possesses the most power, the other party does not possess the power to resist, while this is not true (Rattansi 2020). As racialization builds on a social relation, it can always change, and resistance has always been present while racism has been perpetuated through history.

2.4 Double consciousness

Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) drew from his experiences as a black person in the U.S. and introduced the term *double consciousness*. Du Bois wrote,

> The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world, — a world which yields him no self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One feels his two-ness, — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder (Du Bois 1903, 3).

The theory of *double consciousness* explains how the racializing subject (white) cannot see the social world from the racialized person's perspective. However, racialized people in a white-dominated society can understand how they are seen through the majoritized perspective. This is due to the minoritized person's knowledge of

hegemonic social images influenced by the dominant discourse. Double consciousness is in this way a kind of "second-sight" for racialized people (ibid.).

2.5 Intersectionality

Racism is not an isolated phenomenon and must be studied in relation to other systems of oppression – especially gender and class oppression. All the mentioned gender and some explicitly mentioned class, sexual orientation, and religion as categories they understand and position themselves and the world within. I therefore see it as relevant to bring in as an analytical lens.

Intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw, to speak to the multiple social forces, social identities, and ideological instruments through which power and disadvantage are expressed and legitimized (1989). The theory of intersectionality was a response to black women being "theoretically erased" in a feminist discourse that centered on whiteness, and an anti-racist movement that centered on black men's experiences, leaving black women's interests on the outside of both movements (Crenshaw 1989, 139).

Intersectionality illustrates a shift from a single categorical axis, such as gender, race, class, to multiple axes that intersect and work together. The identity categories of gender, race or class can seem to merge with self-identity in day-to-day life due to the hegemony of these categories. Yet, they are socially constructed categories whose meanings vary across cultural and historical contexts (Gullestad 2006, 102). When talking about *racialized experience* in this thesis, an intersectional perspective is applied, where the informants' statements within intersections of gender, religion, and class are regarded as part of their *racialized* experience.

2.6 Belonging

Scales of belonging refer to how individuals may simultaneously feel belonging to more than one community at a time (Horst, Erdal, and Jdid 2019). This includes belonging to one or more national communities, but is not limited to belonging at a national level, and can also include local sites of belonging such as faith communities (ibid.). Horst, Erdal, and Jdid point out how focusing solely on belonging to the national state can override the visibility of identification with other communities. They emphasize that "belonging to national communities is situated within experiences and practices in everyday life, and operates alongside, belonging to other collectives" (Horst, Erdal, and

Jdid 2019, 80). This is the conceptual understanding of belonging as a scale I bring into the analysis.

In the context of this thesis, *belonging to Norwegianness* implies a personal sense of belonging to the cultural and national collective. Belonging is set up against a national scale of identification. I use an explorative approach to the informants' sense of belonging, and whether they feel belonging to different collectives simultaneously. Belonging is about falling into place in a group and is dependent on the group feeling inclusive. Belonging is also an embodied sense of fitting in somewhere. The focus on embodiment in phenomenology is drawn into the concept of belonging. The inclusivity and exclusivity of feeling belonging are discussed in the analysis chapters.

2.7 History of racism

Presenting the history of racism is essential to understanding how modern racism works and the legacy of contemporary Western societies. It is difficult to understand why discrimination based on phenotype has become normalized in most cultures, without understanding the history behind it (Erdal 2021, 88). In failing to consider the historical context[4], there is an undeniable risk of essentializing racism as only the overt, communicated, discrimination based on phenotype, in a vacuum and without positionality.

The start of European expansion in the 15th and 16th centuries represents a time of increased contact between white Europeans and other populations around the world (Garner 2010, 14). This was based, among many factors, on technological advancements of the time and interest in conquering land and collecting natural resources (ibid.). When the British established the Royal African Company in the middle of the 17th century, the transatlantic slave trade ascended. By the abolishment of the slave trade from 1807 in Britain, to the last colony to abolish slavery, the Portuguese in Brazil in 1850, 12,5 million Africans had been enslaved (Rattansi 2020, 16; Bethencourt 2013, 188). 26% of the enslaved people from Africa were sent to British

[4] Discrimination based on phenotype existed long before the starting point of the historical review presented here. The long history of racism is not within the scope of this thesis, yet worth mentioning. For example, forms of racism in a non-systematic pattern existed among ancient Romans and Greeks, in Islamic empires (634-1453) against black Africans, and as antisemitism among Christians in antiquity, to mention some examples (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 40). Fredrickson argues the impact of Western colonial racism has been greater than any equivalent for the formation of our contemporary culture (2002, 11). Because of the Norwegian contextualization of this thesis, I focus on the formation of modern racism from the time of European colonialism and up to the modern Western context.

America (Bethencourt 2013, 188). Enslavement was at first made possible by local West African rulers who sold slaves to Europeans, as well as existing systems of slavery in many African societies (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 45). The African, Arab, and Ottoman systems of slavery had less of a rigid focus on phenotype as an arranging hierarchical basis, while this was a central part of European slavery in the Americas, where black Africans were slaves, and white Europeans were slave-owners (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 45). According to Rattansi, the wealth accumulated from enslaved people was crucial to the development of British cities such as Bristol, Liverpool, and Glasgow, and was significant in making Britain the world's highest-ranking industrial economy, political and military power (Rattansi 2020, 16-17). The dehumanization and enslavement of Africans were partly legitimized by a Christian ideology of saving black African souls by making them slaves to white people (Fredrickson 2002, 30, 51). This was combined with the idea that slavery "civilized the African" and was therefore a kind of education (Rattansi 2020, 17). European colonialism led to the reinforcement and development of a hierarchical understanding of people based on the phenotypical trait of skin color, from lighter to darker (Bethencourt 2013, 179).

According to Fredrickson, Enlightenment scientific thought in the 18th CE lay the conditions for the development of a science of racism in modern Europe based on physical topology (Fredrickson 2002, 56). While Enlightenment ideas were founded in rationality and systematic natural science over previous systems based on religious beliefs and superstition, it also paved the way for the pseudoscience of *scientific racism* (ibid.). Certain connections between ability, morals, and phenotypical traits that were constructed in this era can be linked to contemporary racist stereotypes about racialized people. Physical characteristics were systematized into classifications of humans into biological hierarchies and directly linked to psychological and moral determination (Skorgen 2002, 56). An example is the Swedish botanist and ethnographer Carl Linnaeus's descriptions of the human races where some stereotypes sound familiar today. "Europaeus albescens" is described as white, optimistic, smart, and innovative, while "africanus niger" is characterized as an opposite with their black curly hair and broad noses, and in being shrewd, lazy, and worriless (ibid.). Another example of categorizing white people as more human than others was exhibitions of colonized people in the context of displaying them as so-called savages. The tradition of human zoos emerged in Britain in the mid 19th century, from the famous *Hottentot venus*, Sara

Baartman in 1810 to the South African savage in 1899 (Qureshi 2011). Qureshi argues that human exhibitions contributed to viewing racialized people as commodities, for the entertainment and education of white people. Andreassen's *Human Exhibitions* describes how attitudes towards racialized people were formed in a Danish context, through more than fifty exhibitions of racialized people arranged in the Copenhagen zoo (2015). She argues that the "knowledge" produced at the time has remnants in contemporary imagery and language. Influential to the Holocaust, *racial hygiene* or *eugenics* theories formed a movement in several Western countries in the early 20th century (Skålevåg 2019). These ideas were central to legitimizing the Holocaust in the Second World War (Banik 2020).

The end of the Holocaust lead to massive defamation of scientific racism. The newly established United Nations officially declared in 1950 that there was no such thing as biological races (UNESCO 1950). Race as a biological concept lost ground in mainstream society and academia, yet the dehumanizing ideas of classical racism did not die out with the Holocaust and still affect modern societies (Saini 2019). Still, there was a shift after 1945 to a more cultural foundation of legitimizing racism in Western countries, often referred to as *cultural racism* (Rattansi 2020, 80). A consequence of biological racism becoming more taboo, was its general expression changing from overt to more covert forms and became harder to recognize in its everyday form (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 25). Fangen's research on Norwegian neo-Nazi groupings in 1993-4 shows that their rhetoric followed the general tendency of society to move away from the usage of race to use of vaguer terms such as *ethnicity* and *culture*, even though they expressed explicit racist views (Fangen 1999, 28). For example, she observed how they could give Nazi salutes and dress the part of a stereotypical skinhead, and simultaneously deny the Nazi label, or state that it was offensive to be called a racist (ibid.). In this way, the use of the right words could create an impression of trivializing and playing down their racist ideas (ibid.). In a few decades, it had become common knowledge that using race would lead to accusations of racism and that it was a social taboo to be identified with that label.

While contemporary racist rhetoric can drift between biological and cultural forms of understanding, modern Islamophobia is one expression that is predominantly based on cultural racism (Helland 2019, 91). Muslims or people who are assumed to be Muslims are attributed certain deterministic cultural traits and beliefs (see Garner and Selod 2015

for an account of how Muslims are racialized). Garner and Selod conclude that "regardless of physical appearance, country of origin and economic situation, Muslims are homogenized and degraded by Islamophobic discourse and practices in their everyday lives" (Garner and Selod 2015, 17). The *cultural imaginary* of Muslims has been widely commented on by Said in his influential postcolonial work *Orientalism* (1978). Said argues that over the last centuries, expert knowledge from the West has created an imaginary place, the so-called Orient, a vaguely defined area stretching from North Africa, through the Middle Eastern Region and covering most of Asia. This area, and particularly the Arabic-speaking parts have been misinterpreted by Western travelers who have later been considered experts on the Middle East in their home countries. The resulting discourse has powerfully reached the European masses and created an Orient which is a negative mirror image to the Western world (Said 1978). In this image, the Oriental man is a crook, and dangerous to European women. The Oriental woman is mysterious, subservient, and exotic. Orientalism consists of deep-rooted generalization of cultures, mixed with religion and phenotype, which have provided a cultural imaginary that can be argued to lie at the root of prejudice against Muslims in Europe today (Garner 2010, 161). As will be shown in the historical review in the Norwegian context in the next chapter, Orientalist imagery of "us" and "them" as opposites lay a foundation for contemporary conspiracy theories and the demonization of Muslims.

A critique of a historical presentation of racism based on European colonialism and the Enlightenment classifications of race is that it simplifies historical events. Critics stress that the power relations between European missionaries, colonized state leaders, cultures, institutions, and people were more complex than portrayed (Brekke 2021, 95-96). While a brief historical review as the one presented above simplifies for the sake of brevity, it is hard to argue that contemporary expressions of biological, cultural, and structural racism are isolated historical phenomena. They are not unrelated to the legitimation of European expansion and labor exploitation of racialized people starting in the 15th century. However, a valid criticism as Alcoff states is that a meta-narrative based on colonial history can potentially shadow the attention of "the everydayness of racial experience", where racialization is reproduced and operationalized (Alcoff 1999, 17). An understanding of race that includes both the historical processes that have shaped contemporary perceptions, as well as phenomenological descriptions of the

everyday embodied experience of racialization, supports a complex approach to understanding racism.

In this chapter, I have explained the concepts of *race*, *racism*, *structural racism*, *racialization*, *double consciousness*, *intersectionality*, and *belonging*, as well as historically and academically contextualized racism.

3 The Norwegian context

In this chapter, I situate the thesis in a Norwegian context of researching racism. After an introduction of the Norwegian context, I explain the concept of *Norwegianness* present in my research question. Then, I build upon the historical contextualization in the previous chapter with a continuation of a brief Norwegian history of racism. I present a dominating discourse on racism in Norway, the *colorblind discourse*. Lastly, I present a recent discursive shift in society with the global outbursts of the BLM demonstrations in 2020, before moving on to the next chapter on the conceptual framework.

The general understanding of racism in Norway is linked to the notion of biological races – since these ideas are most commonly seen as outdated, with historical links to the Holocaust, the majoritized population does not consider racism to exist in Norway (Svendsen 2014). In many ways, this understanding insists that the biological belief implied in race must be included if something or someone is to be deemed as racist (Bangstad 2017). According to Bangstad, denying the existence of racism has become a central part of the fight against racism (ibid.). This echoes Alcoffs description of a *nominalism about race*, which assumes that the biological meaning of race leads to racism, and by avoiding racial concepts current "sociological and economic determinism of racialized identities" can be solved (Alcoff 1999, 17). The Norwegian BLM protests of 2020 made clear that there are seemingly different understandings of racism by many who belong to racialized groups and other representatives of the majoritized population (especially younger generations), versus the general and longstanding understanding among the majoritized population. There is a paradox between "textbook knowledge about 'race' as a fictional, historical and foreign concept", and the fact that many experience racism "as a very present facet of contemporary Norwegian society" (Stine H. Bang Svendsen 2014, 10). Tisdel notes that racism has long been a polarizing issue in Norway, characterized by denial and blindness in the majoritized position (Tisdel 2020). Gullestad observed nearly two decades ago how representations of immigrants in the public realm that "do not underwrite majority hegemony" were "few and far between" (Tisdel 2020, 149; quote from Gullestad 2004, 182). Moreover, Gullestad found that there was a "public silencing of the anger of the racialized" (2004, 185).

> When they try to communicate their experiences to majority Norwegians, they are often told that they are "obsessed with skin color," "aggressive," or "too sensitive." The hegemonic majority perspective acts as a barrier against seriously discussing racialization and racism in the public realm (Gullestad 2004, 187).

Gullestad observed that while racism was a dominant topic in public debates, it was mostly in the form of denying its existence, while experiences with racism were seldom included in the debate (Gullestad 2004, 182).

Gullestad argues that this "widespread but unacknowledged majority perspective" is blind to the consequences of racialization and racism when they do not confirm the hegemonic majority ideas about Norwegian society (2004, 177). An example of this is the denial that people could behave in racist ways even if they "lacked negative, harmful, or hateful intentions" (Gullestad 2004, 185). Gullestad comments on the common understanding of racism as posed by anthropologist Lien as "acts with hostile intentions", and how this led to the conclusion that very few people were racist in Norwegian society because they acted out of good intentions, at the same time safeguarding "the hegemonic self-image of Norway as an innocent, non-racist society" (Gullestad 2004, 177, 187). This points to a common dismissal of racialized people's accounts of lived experience and the consequences of racism. It echoes that debates on multiculturalism and racism have been marked by majoritized perspectives and denials of racism despite the research evidence that racial discrimination happens. Gullestad's analysis points to "the fact that intentions are not negative does not necessarily imply that they are positive" (2004, 185). Similarly, Vassenden comments that being majoritized in Norway is to not be confronted with your racial position, and therefore take it (and the position of implicit power) for granted, as something unthematized, while racialized minoritized people are visible and live with a constant identity marker (Vassenden 2011, 160). Tisdel notes that the public discourse shifted following the racially motivated murder of 15-year-old Benjamin Hermansen (1985–2001), who was of Norwegian-Ghanian heritage, in January 2001. A second shift happened after the right-wing extremist attacks in Oslo and Utøya, July 22. 2011 (Tisdel 2020, 145). Following the 2020 BLM protests and many personal accounts of experiencing racism, the public discourse has shifted yet again, which is commented at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Norwegianness

What is associated with being Norwegian? This question has been raised by many social scientists in the last twenty years (Løvgren and Orupabo 2011; Gullestad 2002; Vassenden 2011 to name a few). According to Vassenden, there are several aspects of *Norwegianness,* and specific meaning varies according to context (2011, 157). One relevant aspect is *whiteness,* which becomes a contrast to the racialized in a white-centered social imaginary. Other aspects of Norwegianness according to Vassenden, are 1) citizenship, 2) ethnic boundaries and categories 3) cultural Norwegianness (Vassenden 2011, 160). Since the 19th century, "Norwegian national identity used to be defined in contrast to Danes, Swedes, and other Europeans who were white" (Gullestad 2004, 193). After numbers of immigrants from outside white majority countries started rising in the 1970s, whiteness has become an increasingly essential marker of being Norwegian (Gullestad 2004). The relation between Norwegianness and whiteness is not openly pronounced, but expressed in a shift of terms such as using *ethnic Norwegian* rather than race in colloquial language, which effectively describes race without the implications of a racist hierarchy. Führer's dissertation from 2021 reconfirms that skin color is still an important marker for who is seen as Norwegian or not and that "foreigner"[5] is associated with being racialized (2021). McIntosh argues that "racial concepts are difficult to recognize in places where strong taboos against discussions of race have existed" (McIntosh 2015, 311; Essed 1991). While the imagined community of Norway as a cultural entity is welcoming and inclusive, it is also reliant on Norwegian language skills and a willingness to be socialized in a specter of traditions (Erdal 2021, 90). Norwegianness is constructed in moral terms "that gesture towards the inherent goodness, equality, and democracy of 'basic Norwegian values', and yet leave these values largely undefined" (McIntosh 2015, 313). The Norwegian self-understanding has been associated with imagined cultural and ethnic homogeneity and egalitarianism (Vassenden 2011, 160). Vassenden argues that the Norwegian self-understanding is rooted in an ethnocultural understanding of national identity, founded in the imagined common genealogy, roots, history, shared cultural traditions and norms, as well as a civic understanding of the nation as a political community (Vassenden 2011, 160).

[5] In Norwegian: "utlending".

The boundaries of Norwegianness are not fixed, yet hold certain patterns of inclusion and exclusion (Løvgren and Orupabo 2011). Norwegianness often presents itself as something racialized minoritized people cannot claim on the same terms as majoritized Norwegians (Løvgren and Orupabo 2011, 6). The power of defining Norwegianness belongs to the majoritized who can invoke Norwegianness unquestioned (ibid.) A natural belonging to Norwegianness assigns an automatic position of power, where the "ethnic majority" can define what and who is deemed Norwegian (Løvgren and Orupabo 2011, 8). The ethnic majority appears as one natural group that does not need to prove their belonging (ibid). Racialized minoritized people have to make themselves Norwegian and continuously prove that they belong within Norwegianness (ibid).

In academic circles, the understanding that everyday micro reproductions of "us" and "them" mentality take part in ongoing racialization and ethnification has grown, while other parts of academia are more skeptical towards the notion that Norwegianness is a marker of differentiation (Løvgren and Orupabo 2011, 7).

3.2 Norwegian history from colonial exceptionalism to anti-immigration discourse

In recent years, Scandinavian participation in "colonial expansion, adaptation and contribution to a Eurocentric worldview and production of racial ideologies" has come further into scrutiny (Naum and Nordin 2013, 4). Even though Norway was never a powerful colonial nation, such as Britain or France, Norwegians took part in the Danish-Norwegian slave trade, and as mercenaries, adventurers, and investors (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 33). There is nothing that indicates that Norwegian attitudes towards racialized people were different from other Europeans' attitudes (Aas and Vestgården 2014). Human zoos were arranged in Norway, notably on the 100-year celebration of the Norwegian constitution in 1914. The so-called *Congolese village* (*Kongolandsby* in Norwegian) was populated by people of African descent, for Norwegians to come and look at (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 52). Norwegian Jews, Romani, and Sámi people experienced that their racialization led to differential treatment and fewer rights than majoritized Norwegians (Bangstad and Døving 2015, 33). The indigenous Sámi people of Northern Norway were subjected to a process of state-driven *Norwegianization* (1850-1980), meant to assimilate them in terms of repressing their language, culture,

and lifestyle in favor of the Norwegian. The policies were based on a *civilizing project*, echoing the rhetoric of legitimizing European colonization.

In disregard of the above-mentioned historical happenings, there exists a common notion of *Norwegian exceptionalism*, a self-perception as a small and historically poor country, "innocent of the crimes and legacies of colonialism" (McIntosh 2015, 312). The contemporary version of the national self-image is that of a nation which contributes as peace negotiators, with humanitarian aid, as well as being a general beacon of gender equality and solidarity (ibid.). McIntosh argues that this self-image conveniently disregards Denmark-Norway's maritime involvement in the transatlantic slave trade as well as the presence of Africans in Norway as far back as the 1600s, challenging the idea the first Africans arrived in the mid-1900s (ibid.).

Even though non-European people have had a presence in Norway since before the 1970s (Falahat and Cissé 2011), this was when the numbers of immigrants from all corners of the world started to grow steadily. Mainly happening as the result of increased demand for labor, as well as refugees fleeing conflict (Østby 2013). Norway has long considered itself an "ethnically very homogenous country", and immigration questions have been high on the political agenda since racialized people began immigrating more permanently to Norway, and in larger numbers (Østby 2013, 11). The population of non-European immigrants in Norway went from 60 000 to 387 000 in the period 1970 to 2006 (Østby 2006). In the 1970s, 5000 people from Pakistan arrived in Norway, mostly laboring men. As of 2021, there are 21 372 Pakistani immigrants in Norway, and 17 885 Norwegian-born with Pakistani parents (Norgeshistorie 2018). The biggest groups of non-European immigrant groups in Norway in 2021 are from Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, the Philippines, Thailand, and Pakistan (Norway 2021). However, the three biggest groups of immigrants in total are from European countries —Poland, Lithuania, and Sweden (Norway 2021).

Since non-European immigration started, certain religious and cultural groups have been increasingly subjected to the essentialization of harboring certain deterministic and unchangeable traits. Growing Islamophobia and "moral panic" on issues such as *hijab* and *forced marriage* reveal the rising concern on the integration of immigrants and their perceived inability to adjust to the "values of the West" (McIntosh 2015, 312). Conspirational *Eurabia* theories, rooted in the belief that Muslims in Europe have a continuous covert plan to conquer Europe and establish an Islamic caliphate, have

gained popularity. In an extreme example, these conspiracies are echoed in the manifesto of the Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who murdered 77 people on 22 July 2011 in Norway, based on believing Norway as a nation was a victim of a *multicultural project*, seen as an *ethnic deconstruction* attack against Norwegian nationalists.

According to Helland's analysis, the development of the Eurabia conspiracy rhetoric is closely related to the rhetoric on immigration of the political party Fremskrittspartiet (FrP) (2014). In 1987, the leader of the party, Carl I. Hagen, read a letter supposedly authored by Mohammad Mustafa at an election campaign meeting. In condensed form, the letter stated that on behalf of Muslims in Norway, Mustafa wanted to let Hagen know that Islam would be victorious in Norway, that mosques would soon be as common as churches, as Norwegians would be converted to Islam. It soon became public news that the letter was fabricated, but the influence it had done to scare could not be reverted, and FrP had the best election results in the party's history, rising as Norway's third-largest political party (Bitsch 2021, 33). Hagen maintained that it was not improbable that a Muslim in Norway could have written the letter. In this way, the Eurabia conspiracy was reproduced in Norway in a modern context (Helland 2014). The following leader of FrP, Siv Jensen, introduced the term *snikislamisering*, which can be translated into literally *sneaky Islamization*, meaning that Norway is being slowly *Islamized* by insiders, without "real" Norwegians noticing, yet again echoing the Eurabia theory (Helland 2014, 113).

The analysis of discourse and rhetoric becomes important in noticing covert cultural racism. While Jensen and Hagen are not outright saying that Muslims are dangerous for real, majoritized Norwegians and Europeans, the subtext is that every adjustment society makes towards including Muslims in Norwegian society, such as something as innocent as offering halal food as an alternative at the University of Oslo's cafeteria, is a threat to Norwegianness (Helland 2014, 113). Innocent examples become symptoms of danger, and the imaginary activated in the recipient is an image of *the dangerous Muslim*, as known from Said's historical analysis of *Orientalism*. Helland asks while FrP's rhetoric is clearly Islamophobic, is it racist? He argues that yes, this is an example of racism where race is not mentioned, yet the presentation is clear, of Muslims as one homogenous group that must be kept at bay and be discriminated against, or else they will definitely take advantage of and oppress "real" Norwegians and their culture.

Muslims are believed to have a unified culture that is frozen in time, in opposition to "our" modernity and democracy. Ideas of frozen genetics and culture interact to construct Islamophobic racism in Norway and Western countries today, naturalizing the weak class position of some minoritized people, as their poverty or lack of jobs become their fault, their failure originating in their "backward" ways.

Bitsch similarly shows that while anti-immigrant and anti-Islam rhetoric got more widespread through FrP, extreme organizations such as "Norway against immigration"[6] and "The People's Movement Against Immigration"[7], as well as neo-Nazi grouping such as "Boot Boys" and "Zorn88" were highly active in the 1990s (Bitsch 2021, 53-54). All in all, these sentiments were reaching larger parts of the working-class population, creating images of immigrants getting benefits from welfare that were not available for them, all the while plotting to establish a "backward" culture in their country (ibid.). The Norwegian Labor Party[8] had lost ground, and in 1991 the Labor politician Rune Gerhardsen tried to reach out to the voters that had gone over to voting for FrP (ibid.). He commented that the misuse of the welfare system by immigrants, criminals, and people on welfare had to stop and that society had been "nice" to these people for far too long (ibid.). Bitsch argues that Gerhardsen's "antiniceness campaign"[9] pushed the limits further for what was deemed acceptable to say about immigrants in the Norwegian public sphere. Gerhardsen and Hagen's frames of interpretation of immigrants as a homogenous group who could not reach Norwegianness, but who needed to show that they were loyal to vague "Norwegian values" (Gullestad 2002, 102-103). While Bitsch points out that fellow party members criticized Gerhardsen's campaign, she argues that the long-term consequences of the debates at the time were a shift in the public discourse that built higher fences between majoritized and minoritized people (Bitsch 2021, 55).

The narrative being produced is parallel to other forms of racism in the historical review in the last chapter. While times, contexts, and the content of racism change, the dynamics adapt to the same oppression based on phenotype.

[6] In Norwegian: "Norge mot innvandring".
[7] In Norwegian: "Folkebevegelsen mot innvandring".
[8] In Norwegian: "Arbeiderpartiet".
[9] In Norwegian: "antisnillismekampanje".

3.3 The colorblind discourse

For many, the ideal of "not noticing color" has been a strategy of anti-racism (Burke 2017, 859). Colorblindness is often seen as a "cherished ideal", as something worth integrating into personal identity and politics (ibid.). However, the criticism towards the colorblind discourse in international literature has been that it upholds racial inequality "by denying either its presence or its significance" (Burke 2019, 857). Rattansi notes that the colorblind view was grounded in an idea that all people "now operated on a level playing field", meaning that failure was easier attributed to an individual or community's deficiency rather than racial inequality (Rattansi 2020, 121, 123). Colorblindness asserts that racism stems from individual antisocial behavior rather than embedded in collective thinking. Therefore, it concludes that racism is not a societal problem anymore. Burke criticized colorblindness as a defense of the status quo, of individuals who believe they operate without bias, of those who believe "no one has any more significant privileges or disadvantages than anyone else" (2019; Rattansi 2020, 120-121).

In the Norwegian context, racism has been a taboo topic where one comfortably likes to believe that racism does not exist (Helland, 2014). Bangstad refers to two central rhetorical strategies of this denial, first, claiming that racism does not exist since the idea of race has become outdated, and secondly, that individually as well as on a societal level, we are *post-race* and *colorblind* (2017). The rhetoric has consequences for racialized minoritized people, and to deconstruct racism, there is a need for greater focus on the complex overt and covert ways racist worldviews are expressed in thought and speech, than what it has been in the public debate in Norway so far (Helland and Rønning 2014, 4).

The title of Helland's 2014 article *Racism Without Racists in Norway*[10], in many ways, sums up the counter-intuitiveness of colorblindness as a form of anti-racism. In its denial of racism as real outside the limited frame of intentioned, malicious racism based on biological ideas – being called out for racism seems to be worse or equal to that of experiencing racism (Helland 2014). This enhances the mentioned cycle of racialized people not being heard for their experiences of racism, upholding a hegemonic idea of a

[10] In Norwegian: "Rasisme uten rasister i Norge". Based on the title of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's influential publication on colorblindness, "Racism without Racists: Color-blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States" ([2003] 2018).

non-racist society (Gullestad 2004, 187). Helland and Rønning comment that as long as skin color and culture correlate with global and local class relations, anti-racism in the form of colorblindness helps to hide the causes of racism if racism is only seen as a result of irrationality and prejudice (2014, 3). While most people are against discrimination, many tend to disregard the complexity and invisibility of racist structures. In Führer's research on the social meaning of skin color in the Norwegian context, she found that majoritized participants were reluctant to talk about racism (2021, 109-110). She found that the participants were nervous to say something wrong, and felt that the rules of what one can say in relation to these topics change too often for them to follow. They were afraid to offend someone without intending to. Führer finds that race carries cultural meaning while it is to a large extent illegitimate to talk about in Norway (2021, 209). It is deemed that race "should not matter" and that the least racist thing is to acknowledge phenotypical differences at all (ibid.).

As Orupabo writes, we do not know enough about how racialized minoritized people respond to experiences of racism in the Norwegian context (2021, 119). The many personal accounts shared by racialized Norwegian youth following the BLM protests might only be the beginning of a more balanced focus on the causes *and* consequences of racism.

3.4 Majoritized perceptions of minoritized people

Outside the realms of anthropological analysis on the discourses on race and racism in Norway, statistical surveys give a general overview of the mainstream attitudes of Norwegians. *The Norwegian Integration Barometer 2020* measures attitudes to immigration and integration in Norway. The study shows that the population "is moderately positive towards immigration in general", but also divided on the issue. 63 percent agreed that "[m]any immigrants have a religion or culture that does not fit in Norway", at the same time as 60 percent believe that discrimination against immigrants could be an obstacle for integration. The study indicates that ethnicity and religious affiliation (especially to Islam) has taken over the category of skin color as a significant racial boundary (Elgvin 2021, 100). Respectively 2,3 percent and 6,9 percent believe people with certain skin colors are born "less intelligent" or "less hard-working" than others (Brekke, Fladmoe, and Wollebæk 2020, 126). On the other hand, when skin color is changed with ethnicity, there is a significant jump in numbers, as 7 and 19,5 percent believe other ethnicities are born "less intelligent" or "less hard-working".

Simultaneously, there is a rising awareness among the majoritized population that racism and discrimination does occur in Norway, even if there is disagreement on how widespread it is (Elgvin 2021, 99; Brekke, Fladmoe, and Wollebæk 2020, 80). These findings imply that it is seen as less taboo to judge others based on ethnicity than skin color. Ethnicity is associated with fixed culture, and skin color (meaning phenotype) is associated with race. Categorizing people in races is taboo in the Norwegian context, and while "ethnicity" is essentially used along the same lines, it is more acceptable to admit prejudice against ethnic background than phenotype (Sandset 2019). Research on job application processes shows that ethnicity, skin color, and Norwegianness are categories that matter to employers (Midtbøen 2015). Ethnicity thus signalizes what competency you have, much like race has previously done (Orupabo 2021, 118).

According to a public survey[11] on attitudes in the Norwegian population against Muslims by The Norwegian Center for Holocaust and Minority Studies (HL-center), negative stereotypes against Muslims are widespread in Norwegian society. Some of the numbers presented show that 34,1 percent of the population show pronounced prejudice; 47 percent believe the claim that Muslims themselves are to blame for the hate they receive; 39 percent believe Muslims are a threat to Norwegian society; 30 percent believe that Muslims want to conquer Europe; 27, 8 percent feel dislike against Muslims; 19,6 percent would not want Muslims as neighbors or in their friend circle. The last number illustrates a somewhat positive trend from the survey in 2011, where more people now could consider Muslims as neighbors and friends (Hoffman and Moe 2017, 7-8).

3.5 Mental health consequences of racism and the relevance for self-understanding

The Norwegian Institute of Public Health conducted a study on perceived discrimination within the immigrant population and its connection to mental health issues in 2019. Most of the countries of origin in the study were from outside the EU, except for Polish immigrants, who make up 13% of the total immigrant population in Norway (Straiton, Aambø, and Johansen 2019).

Perceived discrimination (PD) is described as the perception or experience of discrimination by an individual, not about whether it is discrimination as defined by the

[11] With 1575 respondents.

law, or whether it was intentional discrimination or not (Straiton, Aambø, and Johansen 2019). PD could occur at institutional or personal levels, and in blatant or subtle forms. From previous studies, it is known that "PD is associated with an increase in depression, anxiety and psychological distress as well as a decrease in well-being" (Straiton, Aambø, and Johansen 2019, 2). The more frequent PD occurs, the higher the risk of mental health issues. PD exposure in the long term is associated with poorer general health. In this Norwegian study, 26,5 percent of participants reported PD due to immigrant status. Within this percentage, "PD was more common in younger age groups; 36.3% for 16–24 years compared with 19.6% among 45–66 years". There were no significant differences in gender and PD. Financially, those who experienced PD were more likely to be poorer than those that did not. Especially interesting for this thesis is the finding that "sense of belonging" to both Norway and their country of origin affected levels of PD, where "those with no sense of belonging were most likely" to experience PD, 40,7 percent. They also experienced lower levels of trust in others (Straiton, Aambø, and Johansen 2019). These findings are relevant for comparison, even though three of my participants are not immigrants, and those who are came to Norway as young children and have lived here most of their lives. Except for one informant, they all have two immigrant parents (Gabriel's mother is Norwegian and majoritized). A growing body of international research points to the same; "racism, bias, and bigotry make their way into the body's cells, changing the body in fundamental and destructive ways that are passed down through generations" (LePera 2021). Elgvin comments that the discrepancy of experiences minoritized and majoritized people have in meeting with public institutions such as the police, could be related to the bias found by Baumeister et al., that negative experiences tend to stick stronger than positive ones (Elgvin 2021; Baumeister et al. 2001). One of the themes for BLM protestors in Oslo was the relenting suspiciousness many racialized men report in meetings with the police. Research from The Police University College has shown that young racialized men are in fact "disproportionality stopped and questioned by the police" (Solhjell et al. 2019). Overall, research shows that immigrant populations who experience discrimination are more likely to have mental health challenges than the majoritized population.

3.6 A discursive shift in 2020: Black Lives Matter

The murder of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin on May 25 2020 in the United States, evoked mass protests against police brutality and racism against racialized Americans, especially those of African heritage. The movement rapidly spread to other countries, including Norway. Amid the coronavirus pandemic, protesters flooded the streets in solidarity with the BLM movement. While support for the protesters was extensive, so was the contempt, often publicly justified with concern over protesters possibly breaking the rules of social distancing (Røsvik and Quist 2020). The public debate was suddenly full of young, racialized Norwegians sharing their personal experiences with racism in Norway (see, among others: Nyheim-Jomisko 2020; Birkeland 2020; Riaz 2020; Bergsmo 2020). The accounts told stories about being made to feel different, like a suspect, and to be continuously reminded that they did not belong (Midtbøen 2021, 106).

The following debate has been polarized and characterized by colorblindness, but also an open attitude to understanding and conversing, as well as young racialized Norwegians trying to find their voices in the public realm on a taboo topic. The debate has also been characterized by discussing academic terms and the so-called importation of American terminology. Orupabo commented that the BLM movement enforces an academic debate about racism which leaves the narrow understanding that this does not apply to "us" in egalitarian Norway behind (Orupabo 2021, 117). The personal accounts recurrently describe a subtle and structural character of racism, which incites a wider academic investigation into racism (Orupabo 2021, 116-117). Several researchers point to the repeated experiences of not being considered Norwegian "enough" as a powerful force for racialized youth who are born in Norway and have lived here their entire lives to join protests (Midtbøen 2021; Erdal and Strømsø 2020; Horst et al. 2013). While they take part in education and professional life on the same level as majoritized Norwegians, not enough racialized people experience a correlation between their identities and how they are perceived and met by the majority for it to be of concern (Midtbøen 2021).

One of the debates following these events concerning freedom of speech was spurred by protests by the organization Stop Islamisation of Norway (SIAN). SIAN's right to demonstrate publicly was questioned by opponents, who argued that they were a hate group who demonstrated at the cost of Muslims and racialized people's safety in public

spaces. This was met by the argument of free speech and the right to have unpopular opinions. Among others who defended SIAN's right to protest was parliament member and spokesperson on matters regarding immigration Jon Helgheim, from the political party FrP on his Twitter account (translated from Norwegian): Freedom of speech does not exist to protect the nice opinions everybody agrees with. Freedom of speech becomes important when the statements are provoking, unreasonable and idiotic. Sometimes it hurts to stand up for the freedom of speech (Helgheim 2020). Elgvin suggests that this particular discourse around freedom of speech has a function in safeguarding the cultural hegemony of some groups to the detriment and exclusion of others (Elgvin 2021). He further suggests that this debate form might contribute to making a proportion of the Muslim population shy away from the public debate on religion, blasphemy, and freedom of speech when they experience that their position is meeting excessive resistance and ultimately being silenced (Elgvin 2021, 103). Empirical patterns are indicating that this particular debate is rooted in the exclusion and conservation of cultural hegemony of the ones who are already most free to speak in public (Elgvin 2021, 104). Many initiatives by individuals and institutions have pushed for change in the discourse around racism since the BLM demonstrations. Some examples from institutions that have worked to create awareness around racism are the Norwegian Broadcasting's (NRK), the Munch Museum, and Oslo's public library Deichman. NRK produced "Hev stemmen" ("Raise your voice"), an hour-long show with Norwegian artists, both minoritized and majoritized, who talked about how racism affects them and what can be done about it, a year after the BLM demonstrations. The Munch exhibition *Call Me By My Name* contextualized the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch (1863-1944) concerning colonial and anthropological descriptions of racialized "others", and connected it to the contemporary "racism debate". The main public library in Oslo has arranged a series of panel discussions about racism after the BLM demonstrations, with themes such as, how does the library deal with racist language in children's books? Why is there so little diversity and representation in the publishing sector? How can we use an antiracist vocabulary? Fredrik Solvang, distinguished journalist and adoptee from South Korea, and author and actress Tinashe Williamson, talked openly about their experiences with othering and racism on Norway's biggest talk show *Lindmo*, to an audience of approximately 700 000 (Jerijervi 2021). There seems to be a conscious effort in many instances to bring these themes to the front of the public discourse. It is too soon to see whether this shift is contemporary or more

permanent, but it shows progress in expanding knowledge about racism as a topic nonetheless.

In this chapter, I have contextualized the thesis in a Norwegian context, by presenting Norwegianness as a conceptual category, going into modern Norwegian history of racism, describing what colorblindness in the discourse on race implies, and looking at studies that describe majoritized perceptions of minoritized people and the potential mental health consequences of racism. In the next part, I go further into the conceptual framework for the analysis.

4 Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methodological process of the thesis. The chapter starts with a section on phenomenology and the operationalization of *lived experience*, followed by a reflection on my positionality towards the research material and the informants. Then, I explain the data collection process and process of data analysis. Finally, I reflect on the translation of racialized minoritized experience to a largely majoritized audience and reflect on ethical considerations towards the informants.

4.1 Phenomenological approach

Phenomenology is concerned with the study of phenomena through individual experience of being, situated in an intersubjective, culturally, and bodily constituted world (Schwarz and Lindqvist 2018, 4). It seeks to understand how the external world is interpreted through consciousness. An individual's subjective perception of truth and reality is the focus in phenomenology, believing direct awareness as perception is all the knowledge one can depend on, rather than there being an objective truth (O'Leary 2017, 149). Phenomenology attempts to describe experiences that are taken for granted and to look at the inner structures of how the mind makes meaning of them (Bentz and Shapiro 1998).

My use of phenomenology draws on the work of philosophers with a "phenomenology of race" (Ahmed 2007, 150). This includes the work of Frantz Fanon ([1952] 2017), Sara Ahmed (2007), and Linda Martín Alcoff (1999).

Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the body as a primary site of knowing the world, and as entangled with consciousness. We exist within the body and perceive through the body, what is described as "the flesh of the world" (Merleau-Ponty and Lefort 1968). Fanon elaborates Merleau-Ponty's concept with his concept of a "fact of blackness", explaining how the experience of inhabiting a "black body" can be shared by others who experience the same meaning ascribed to their bodies ([1952] 2017). Merleau-Ponty's concept of *body schema* is also elaborated by Fanon. Fanon describes how his *body schema* is replaced by a *historical-racial schema* which determines how he is able to move "in a spatial and temporal world" (Fanon et al. [1952] 2017, 91). How his body moves as a racialized person is a result of implicit knowledge of his place in the world, rather than out of habit (ibid.). I use Iversen's interpretation of Fanon's historical-racial schema. She writes: "Before the black person can experience his body as his, he

experiences it as a black body, in relation to the body that appears to be neutral (which in reality is the white body)" (my translation from Norwegian: Iversen 2017, 35). The consequence of repetitively being interpreted and met as a racialized body, shapes the subjective understanding of himself. In describing his lived experience Fanon stresses the heaviness of carrying a historicity of what being black meant,

> I was responsible not only for my body but also for my race and my ancestors. I cast an objective gaze over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, slave traders, and above all, yes, above all, the grinning *Y a bon Banania* (Fanon et al. [1952] 2017, 92).

He writes that he sees himself in the third person, through a *white gaze*, and sees himself through the history of representations and associations to his "ethnic features". The "founding fathers" of phenomenology stressed how the world is understood uniquely through the individual. Fanon furthers this understanding of phenomenology to how a group can experience the world in similar ways as a result of similar experiences of the body schema of racialization. The white gaze defines the racialized person and influences how the racialized person experiences the world.

Ahmed's analysis of Fanon's phenomenology in developing her theory on a *phenomenology of whiteness* described how bodies work in the "familiarity of the world they inhibit", where "doing things" depend on how the world is available as a space to be able to "do things" (Ahmed 2007, 153). The racial-historic dimensions exist beneath the bodily realm and become part of the embodied experience (Ahmed 2007, 153 on Fanon). She writes,

> As Fanon's work shows, after all, bodies are shaped by histories of colonialism, which makes the world 'white', a world that is inherited, or which is already given before the point of an individual's arrival. This is the familiar world, the world of whiteness, as a world we know implicitly (…) Race then does become a social as well as bodily given, or what we *receive* from other as an inheritance of this history (Ahmed 2007, 153-4).

Her phenomenological description of *whiteness* refers to habitual ways bodies orient themselves in the world, rather than a reference to the color of the skin (Schwarz and Lindqvist 2018, 5). It refers to certain ways one inhabits the world, "a question of what is or is not within reach, what is available to perceive and to do 'things' with" (Ahmed 2007, 154). Ahmed describes *orientation* as a point of departure, how we begin and proceed from here, where the "world unfolds", a "zero-point of orientation" (Ahmed

2007, 151). One's orientation describes what shapes the world around, and that which "you come in contact with is shaped by what you do" (Ahmed 2007, 152). In this way, the orientation of bodies is shaped by their occupation in "time and space" (ibid.). Those who feel at home, are able to extend their bodies in space, while the opposite, not being included in the norm of whiteness means being reminded of one's body being out of place, not having room to extend (Ahmed 2006). In the thesis, I draw on Ahmed's understanding that through phenomenology, one can understand how racialization shapes what bodies can do (Ahmed 2007, 150).

How has phenomenology shaped this thesis? The framework of phenomenology has primarily influenced the shaping of the research questions, by focusing on the informants' experience and understanding as an empirical site, the data collection, and the focus of the data analysis. The interview questions have been focused on an embodied, subjective experience - such as "How do you relate to stereotypes related to your appearance? Are you actively trying to avoid doing something that might associate you to this stereotype or vice versa?" (from the appendix, interview guide). I sought to preserve the complexity of the informants' descriptions of feeling, ranging from anger and frustration, guilt and fatigue, to belonging and not belonging, sometimes simultaneously or with ambivalence. In the analysis, the experience of body and consciousness cannot be disentangled, and the body is implicitly present in how racialization is experienced. Descriptions of the mind-experience should be understood as that of carrying a racialized body in the world. In this way, the body's *orientation* is the starting point of experience (Ahmed 2007).

Many of the most notable works on race and racism are phenomenological accounts of lived experience, as well as fictional novels that vividly describe the experience of racialization[12]. Descriptions of the inner experience of racialization allow readers to better understand and partly live through the racialized perspective of another. Through a phenomenological lens, personal accounts of experience retain the complexity of the theme at hand, yet are still digestible to a wide public and generate new knowledge. As a researcher, I am inspired to follow that path in an academic context, using thick

[12] For example, authors in the international context who have shaped both phenomenology and race studies are James Baldwin (1955), and the already mentioned W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) and Frantz Fanon ([1952] 2017). In a contemporary Norwegian context Camara L. Joof (2018), and Sumaya Jirde Ali (2018), Yohan Shanmugaratnam (2020), Zeshan Shakar (2017), Guro Jabulisile Sibeko (2020) have been central in providing descriptive accounts of racialized reality.

descriptions to create a wider, more complex understanding of racialization in a Norwegian contemporary context.

4.1.1 **Lived experience**

I have applied a phenomenological approach to interviews and in shaping a research design that centralizes the voices of the informants and their lived experiences. The notion of lived experience is essential to the phenomenological method. Merleau-Ponty describes experience as the relation through which the world appears meaningful (Merleau-Ponty and Welsh 2010, 247). In this thesis, lived experience is meant as individual knowledge about the world gained through direct experience and the process of interpreting those experiences. How one event is interpreted can be seen as connected to an accumulation of lived experience. How an event or interaction is remembered and understood can convey something about social dynamics and power relations (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011). Lived experience is a result of subjective reflection, and is sometimes disregarded by some for its lack of objectivity (Gullestad 1996). However, subjectivity is valuable for exposing connections between individual lives and social contexts.

In a desire to describe experiences of racialized individuals in a Norwegian context, there is an unease of running a risk at reinforcing a new fixed category of experience, for critical studies on race to "be complicit with its object" and simplifying racialized experience to a unified experience (Ahmed 2007, 149). This thesis tries to start to understand what the experience of racialization can look like and is a foundation to build upon, not a conclusion on a whole experience for a wide and multifaceted minoritized group in Norwegian society. Experience in itself cannot ever be fixed or *objectifiable* but is always open for reinterpretations for the informant as well as the researcher through time and new experience (Schwarz and Lindqvist 2018, 4). This means that time has allowed the informants to interpret their experience in new ways, and that reinterpretation never ends – their lived experience might be different years down the line after accumulating new experience. Still, their contemporary experience now is just as valid, as it conveys something about the present-day context as well as about the changes in experiencing racism in Norway during their lifetimes.

4.2 Positionality

In the process of collecting data and writing, critical reflection on my position towards the themes and people I am researching has been essential. A qualitative approach in itself is "a *situated* practice", where the researcher is biased and has some sort of position (Stanley 2020, 7). Haraway problematizes the notion of objectivity as a false belief in the ability to detach oneself from the research conducted, without personal biases or uninfluenced by the research canon (Haraway 1988). I find this to be especially relevant when taking on a phenomenological approach where the goal is to highlight personal lived experiences.

My academic interest in race relations as a field of study started as a bachelor student of Development studies, through studies of decolonization and the cultural heritage of Western colonialism. While studying for my Master's degree I attended a lecture on "Cultural Racism" by Laura Führer at the sociology department of the University of Oslo, which inspired me to write a term paper on the same subject using an autoethnographic method. I analyzed a couple of personal experiences and whether they corresponded with the definition of cultural racism. After the BLM demonstrations started in Oslo 2020 with the following public debate, I wrote an opinion piece in the Norwegian newspaper Klassekampen encouraging a more nuanced use of terminology when discussing racism (Kaur 2020). A short time after that, I joined journalist and friend Hans Skjong on his documentary film project exploring how racism is understood and experienced in contemporary Norwegian society. The lack of knowledge on what it meant to be racialized in Norway I observed between minoritized and majoritized Norwegians in the public debate inspired me to take on research that could begin to mend a gap in understanding.

Conducting this study as a racialized Norwegian minoritized person myself, I have experienced a sense of kinship and trust in most of the interviews that elicited sincerity from the informants. It became a theme in all interviews, brought up by the first informant himself, and subsequently added as a question to the interview guide: "Did it affect the interview that I am racialized?". According to Essed, research among equals is valuable in fostering a non-hierarchical relationship with "shared experiences, social equality, and natural involvement with the problem" (Essed 1991, 67). Several informants in this study explicitly stated that they could not have had a similar open conversation had I been a majoritized Norwegian researcher. These informants stated

they would have felt they needed to explain too much around the topic, with a fear of the researcher judging them or not having a basic understanding of their experience. Me having an insider status seemed to make it easier for the informants to talk freely since they assumed that I understood them, would not be offended, and would handle what they shared thoughtfully. The non-hierarchical interview setting provided a free space, where the informants could even allow themselves to talk in a generalizing manner about majoritized Norwegians, as an emotional expression of showing dissatisfaction with a situation. These emotions were later often nuanced by expressing positive relations to friends, a partner, family, colleagues, or others who are majoritized. The ability to express themselves freely, based on a vague feeling that I would understand the complexity of their emotions, seemed to allow for honesty from the informants' side.

The possible limitation of having an insider status is the risk of taking information that is seen as natural for granted, for example assuming that informants have experienced alienation in a form that is recognized by me as a researcher before the interview has started. Overall, I believe blind spots were avoided with open-ended questions designed to withhold assumptions of their experience. I believe my positionality in this context has generated more nuanced, honest, and therefore accurate data. An ongoing critical reflection of the findings at all stages of analysis has been a way to distance myself from the data, see it from different angles and observe connections in the interview material.

4.3 Data collection methods

In the data collection process, I have conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on personal experiences around racism and belonging among six racialized individuals living in Oslo. The interviews took place in my home in Oslo, physically, or digitally on video-call due to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions during October and November 2020.

4.3.1 **Sample**

A list of the informants with their pseudonyms, their age at the time of the interviews, and their parents' area of origin, in the order of age:

Name	Age	Area of origin
Selma	27	Middle-Eastern/West-Asian
Mona	29	East-African
Gabriel	31	Majoritized Norwegian mother and West-African father
Shirin	33	Middle-Eastern/West-Asian
Noor	34	North-African
Leon	39	East-African

Table 1. List of informants.

The informants were chosen through the snowball method of building a sample on referrals from one informant to the other, as well as through student colleagues who referred me to their acquaintances when hearing about my project. Due to the sensitive nature of the interviews, I do not disclose how I found the informants as it could risk their anonymization. When sampling, my only criteria was that the informants were racialized and minoritized, had lived most of their lives in a Norwegian context, and that I did not know them personally. The intention was to draw a variation of informants in a small sample and detect similarities and differences in their understandings and experiences of the same phenomenon. Reaching complete saturation of experiences with racism would have required an unattainable number of interviews and was not the goal of the thesis. Relevance for the field, rather than representativeness has been the aim. Another factor was the time restraints of the project period. After six interviews, I decided to stop looking for more informants, at a stage when some perspectives were being echoed, yet distinctions between existing accounts showed some diverging experiences. The limited amount of informants provides more space to delve into their individual accounts, instead of doing a surface-level analysis of a bigger amount of data.

All the informants are within a similar age group, ranging from 27 to 39 years, and grew up in Norway within the same changing context in terms of racialized minoritized people. Moreover, all the informants are well educated and successful in their professional lives. There are differences in gender (two men, four women), sexual orientation (Shirin identifies as gay), and the countries and cultures of their parents vary. Noor is a practicing Muslim and wears a hijab, and Leon is Christian. Selma, Shirin, and Gabriel have Islamic heritage and identify with some cultural aspects such as celebrating holidays without necessarily being religious, to different degrees. Mona

did not mention religion in her interview. They have grown up in different parts of Norway, some in multicultural areas and others in more homogenous majoritized areas. Currently, they all live in the capital city of Norway, Oslo. Two informants, Shirin and Leon, are public figures through their work, both of which touches on topics of racism. While they both have given consent to take part in the study without being anonymized, I have chosen to anonymize them at the same terms as other informants, while being aware that details in their accounts can make them identifiable. This is further discussed under the part on ethical considerations.

All the informants were "familiar with the idea of problematizing racism" (Essed 1991, 4). Through interviews, it became clear that the topic was something they had reflected extensively on in their personal lives as well as integrated into their politics. Their reflections and similar understandings of racism as structural influence the analysis and findings. Since the goal of qualitative research with a small sample is not representativeness but the relevance for deeper understanding, I do not consider this a methodological problem. Their experiences with being met as racialized had forced them to reflect on themes such as their place in the collective Norwegian identity, belonging, and exclusion. While it was not intentional to choose people who had a lot to say on the subject, it could have been just as interesting to interview someone who reflected upon racism and belonging for the first time openly with me, it was intriguing to hear from informants who had a lot to share. This in turn allows for the thick descriptions a phenomenological study seeks.

4.3.2 **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews allowed space for the informants to share relevant information and talk in a free flow, while also giving me a structure throughout the interview to ensure I asked similar questions to all the informants, making the data more comparable.

Interviews were conducted in Norwegian. Four interviews took place in my home (Gabriel, Mona, Selma, and Leon), and two through video calls given regulations to socially distance in the pandemic (Shirin and Noor). Physical interviews provided closeness and trust that made the conversation more natural as well as emotional. It was significant to create an environment that felt trustworthy, which meant that I as an interviewer at times took part in the conversation by reacting, showing empathy, or responding. Inviting the informants into my home, sharing a cup of tea, and talking

before the interview were all part of the context that stimulated the conversation. The informants often stayed after the interviews, giving me a more holistic understanding of their feelings, experiences, and motivations, making thick descriptions more available. While the digital interviews did not lack description and openness, they felt more formal than the physical interviews. Lack of direct eye contact, due to digital lag that at times interrupted the flow of conversation, might to some degree have affected how much data was elicited from the digital interviews.

The interview guide was designed with open-ended questions and to stimulate thought processes for the informants. The interview began with questions about age, whether they were born in Norway or had immigrated, and about their parents' country of origin. The interview guide consisted of thirteen main questions with several sub-questions regarding understanding and experiences of racism, relation to being Norwegian, childhood experiences, relations to majoritized Norwegians, representation, and how it feels to talk about personal experiences of racism. While I followed the guide during interviews, I essentially followed up on interesting aspects of the informants' previous answers and adapted questions to the setting and personality of the informant. When dealing with a delicate and sensitive subject such as experiencing racism, it is particularly important to give the informants the space needed to elaborate their explanations and to describe vague incidents (Essed 1991, 62).

4.4 Data analysis

4.4.1 **Transcribing and translating interviews**

The recorded interviews were transcribed in full in Norwegian, using the F4 transcript program. While transcribing, I wrote accompanying notes on the themes I found were most relevant in that they were repeating themselves or most important to the informant. I outlined sentences I found particularly relevant in bold font so that they would be easier to locate after transcription. After transcribing, I listened to the recorded interviews and proofread the transcriptions.

The quotes used in the thesis were translated from the Norwegian transcript of interviews. I focused on getting as near translation of the Norwegian and included original words where the culturally specific meaning could not be translated.

4.4.2 **Coding interviews and processing data for analysis**

I used NVivo software to code the interviews to explore themes and links as suggested by O'Leary (2017, 326). To avoid decontextualization of the material, the same text was coded into several different themes that fit. By looking through the text of an interview, I could then see how different themes overlapped a section of the text. The coding process was abductive; meaning it was deductive and inductive. It was deductive in that I had four organizing main themes driven by the research question; understanding of racism, self-understanding, Norwegianness, and belonging. The rest of the coding was inductive, as I created themes based on the interview data. I coded in two sessions, where the first session created new codes based on the findings in the data as I went along. The second session made sure that the data from beginning to end were coded with all the codes created in the first round. In total there are 59 codes and 840 references to the interviews.

To avoid reduction of the complexity of the material, I stepped away from coding and looked at the interviews in full, individually. I highlighted the most compelling parts that seemed the most relevant to answer the research questions, and made composite summaries of each interview, as suggested by Groenewald in a phenomenological method (2004). I then organized the summaries so that the information related directly to the informants' lived experience and understandings of racism, which formed the next chapter where I present the informants' experiences and understanding of racism. This allowed for a foundation of thick descriptions where the informants' voices are centered. It has been a conscious choice to frequently use quotes from the interviews rather than paraphrasing, to provide a directness to the data material. When paraphrasing I have attempted to stay as close to the informants' wording.

Chapters 7 and 8, the data analysis, were shaped by the themes that had come up most frequently during the coding process. The coding influenced what themes are highlighted in the analysis, and NVivo was used to draw out relevant quotes for the different themes. The notes from the transcription process and the summaries of interviews were organized and used under the relevant titles in the analysis.

4.5 Translating racialized experience to majoritized readers

While writing this thesis my goal has been to center marginalized voices and experiences. As I have written, I have become increasingly aware of the potential reader and how the material will be received. I think of the politicized context in which I am writing, as a racialized, minoritized Norwegian, to an audience of mostly majoritized Norwegian academics of an older generation than myself and those I am writing about, with a different experience of growing up in Norway, their perspectives on how multicultural Norway is and works. While I have tried to center the informants' voices, the research design has undoubtedly been influenced by the mentioned majoritized reader in mind. Research should take complicated matters and try to translate them into something that can be understood more widely. Writing this thesis has been an exercise in translating embodied racialized experience to be categorized and understandable to someone unfamiliar with it, yet maintaining the authenticity, complexity, and subjectivity of the accounts. It has been challenging to write with this imagined reader in mind, as I have tried to balance the goals of the thesis – describing undocumented ordinary experiences of racialization without removing too much complexity, and maintaining a sense of coherence – to be understood by the majoritized reader and not brushed off as precisely what many of the informants fear, as offensive to the majority population or ungrounded in reality. In this way, the writing of the thesis itself has been a practice in working from a racialized consciousness of being used to having to convince an (imagined) majoritized person to take me seriously as someone who can talk from experience as a racialized minority.

I am aware of trying to avoid offending the reader by implying any sort of blame on them as a possibly majoritized person when they read the somewhat uncomfortable accounts of the informants' experiences. On the other hand, I want the documentation present to be valuable for others who share experiences similar to the informants, who potentially will feel understood and seen by the accounts. My main challenge has been situating myself at the intersection of translating experience to be understood and appreciated by majoritized Norwegians, and for racialized Norwegians to agree and recognize the experiences being clarified. All the while being truthful and considerate towards the informants who have lent me their time and personal information.

4.6 Ethical considerations

As a researcher, I am responsible for ensuring that the informants have been given accurate information about the project and their involvement, that the project does not induce harm on the informants, and ensuring confidentiality and anonymity (O'Leary 2017, 70). All the informants have given written consent by signing a consent form approved by Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD). The consent form was sent to the informants as they were contacted about the interview (see appendix). The informant's consent has been recorded, and they are informed that they can withdraw their participation at any time. They were also asked for consent to record the interview. While most of the informants expressed little concern about being anonymous, I ensure anonymity by changing names, professions, places they live/have lived are anonymized, and the country of their parents' origin is generalized to regions.

Writing about personal experience and details about a person's life makes it difficult to ensure complete anonymity. After writing up the data analysis, I realized that it was difficult to ensure the anonymity of especially Shirin and Leon, due to their work on racism being available publicly. They share details about their experiences with racism that can also be found elsewhere. I discussed this with each of them, and they both said it was unproblematic for me to use their names and all the information they had provided. I also contacted NSD to enquire about how to navigate this issue. NSD confirmed that as long as I had the consent of the informants I did not have to anonymize them. I chose to keep the same level of anonymization as the other informants, as a way of ensuring some privacy. I also did not feel the need to use their full names, occupations, or countries of origin to further describe their contexts, as I felt the data spoke clearly on its own.

5 Lived experiences and understandings of racism

This chapter presents the six informants' understandings of racism. This is crucial to understanding how they think and talk about the phenomenon, as well their experiences with racism. The presentations focus on giving a "reconstruction of the inner world of experience of the subject" in line with a phenomenological approach (Groenewald, 2004).

This chapter responds directly to the first part of the research question, *what are the informants' experiences and understandings of racism?* The aim is two-fold, to present individual experiences and perceptions of racism, and to lay a thick foundation for later analysis on Norwegianness and self-understanding.

5.1 Gabriel

Gabriel is 31 years old and grew up in an upper-middle-class, white-dominated area of Oslo. His father is from West Africa and his mother is white Norwegian. He has a master's degree in the social sciences and a full-time job in Oslo. When asked how he understands racism, he answered that his interpretation of racism is negative differential treatment or attitudes based on skin color, ethnicity, or cultural background,

> The worst and most dangerous racism is not the one we talk about and observe, it's the one that hinders you in getting a job, or when the media talks about these and these people in different ways and so on. You can feel powerlessness, anger, sadness, anything […] how I feel depends on what kind of racism, where it comes from, who I'm with, do I have a reason to – can I react there, or am I creating a bad atmosphere if I react.

He feels that voices like his are not listened to in regards to what it means to be racialized in Norwegian society, "[…] the point is that I have a master's degree, I'm black, I've written many pieces and articles on [racism]. I have a [West-African] father. It's just that if I don't know anything about it, then it's…". He thinks about the premises for talking about racism in the public sphere, and how there was a bigger focus on racism the months after the BLM demonstrations in June 2020,

> How often haven't people who are non-white tried to speak about this, but when white people decide to put it on the agenda, then it's put on the agenda, and it's completely natural because who are the journalists, the leaders, the middle managers, who are in the boards, unions, who does it consist of, it's not bus drivers or those washing the toilets at Ullevål stadion, who sets the debate because the debate would've looked very different.

In his view, racialized Norwegians are not represented in positions of power, something that is reflected in which topics are deemed important enough to gain the public's attention. He briefly wonders if he sometimes reads racism into neutral situations because of this perspective and says that it can feel like a disadvantage to see racism everywhere. At the same time, seeing connections in representation, positions of power, and history is also something that provides perspective. "You see situations in a bigger context. It makes it easier and maybe harder to accept".

Experiencing racism and differential treatment has affected him emotionally and his social relations,

> I am sick of it, I get irritated, I become crasser, I have become like that, just cut people out, I can't do it anymore. And judging. Not charming features, but I'll admit it. One of the reasons behind my annoyance is that no matter how much fundament [to understand] you have, you are questioned on your opinions. I will never have the last word in a case that is about what it is like to have a cabin because I do not have a cabin. At the same time, I do not get the last word on racism. So I become tired.

He has felt that others can be suspicious of him, for no other apparent reason than how he looks, "I've gone with donation boxes for fundraisers, [in accusing tone] 'you're in the campaign?' No, no I just took the box and I'm going home to my mom and dad, like, what? Or accused of stealing smokes. You know that people first and foremost see your skin color and see you as untrustworthy". He remembers an incident from his childhood, when he was playing football on a team with kids from his neighborhood who were majoritized, mixed with kids from the Eastern part of Oslo who had a mix of different backgrounds, many of whom were racialized. He remembers that the coach commenting on the last match, said they shouldn't have let the "nigger"[13] in the middle position off that easily", and the racialized kids on the team from East Oslo commented with shock,

> 'What the hell is he saying', like that. […] They looked at me, like are you kidding, and it wasn't like I didn't know about injustice, but I didn't have a problem with [the coach] saying that. And that's like, so fucking symbolic, that the one mixed or black boy in a white environment with only white people around him, doesn't react to the nigger-word at a young age […] you're living in a white context and internalize the same thoughts and attitudes.

[13] In Norwegian: "neger". From now on referred to as "the N-word" outside of direct quotes.

He generally did not think much about racism growing up and felt like he fit in and had good friends. He had a shift of experience and understanding when he started studying in different city at university. He felt like people were excessively impressed by him. He assumes few people can imagine he has a higher education, works for a political party, and has a network in political circles. "You see, they don't believe it? That's fine, at the same time as I have so much more in my head than many might think […] It probably varies a lot, but I think they underestimate me, I'm sure." He feels affected by stereotypes like assumptions that he is less intelligent.

> Even though I was the first at school every damn day, I did everything, yet people were so damn impressed. I didn't understand how you're impressed when the nerd in the class is doing well. I do not understand that. Admittedly, I had a style of dress that made me look really hippie, but there was something about how you were met. There were very few black [students] there, at the university, to this day I can say who was not white on campus.

He and his friends at the time often made jokes about skin color, but as it kept going he laughed less and less,

> And if I did not laugh, there was a strange atmosphere. That made me think, hm, why... is everything right here? […] I have also become more aware of it and feel more reflected and not least a little more proud and less afraid of becoming unpopular or speaking up. […] 'So why aren't you laughing, is something wrong?' It is just not fun, nothing dramatic. […] Maybe you can't expect more from white, 20-year-old girls from Bærum[14], now I'm fucking foul, but I mean, the world is complex, there are some nuances of oppression and discrimination that white Bærum people from the upper-middle class do not understand, and it's not that strange. I don't know what it's like to grow up in a refugee camp, I've never even been to one. I realized there that hair and skin color are pretty important for how I'm met.

While he feels like there are things majoritized Norwegians do not necessarily understand, he likes talking to other racialized people about experiences with being racialized,

> It's really nice to talk about it with people who are not white. Sincerely. So I think that's really smooth. There is almost something therapeutic about it. It's better to talk to you than a white psychologist. Because anyway, the white psychologist does not know how it is, how it feels. Do you understand?

[14] Bærum is a municipality bordering the western part of Oslo. Bærum is one of the most affluent municipalities in Norway, and its population is predominantly white, majoritized.

Racism also affects his relationships. He mentions his Norwegian aunt, who he says loves him, but who he thinks has "fucked up beliefs". Every family dinner, she goes on about "how bad and stupid Somalis are". He is sick of it, and says these kinds of relations make him feel less and less connected to majoritized people,

> Just because I've put up with so much in recent years and, for example a friend, who says nigger and paki[15], why do you say that in front of me? What do you not understand? He calls and tries to make contact […] you are out of my life. So I know I'm a little unreasonable, but I need to be, I haven't been awful to him, I haven't hurt him, I just want a life where I don't have to hear nigger and paki and stuff. Just let me be. And that's really not much to ask for […] I judge white people often and I expect much less from white people, I can get much angrier at dark[16] people because I expect much more from you. I have a hundred million more expectations of you than a white lady, anyway.

He comments on what he has said during the interview, that he has been an unpolished and honest version of himself, "now I have said things that may be less academic, I'm just trying to put into words some feelings. So I kind of tried to be honest, not polish it so much, because […] when I write or debate, I'm very proper, right".

5.2 Mona

Mona is 29 years old, grew up in one of the bigger cities in Norway, and now lives in Oslo. When we start the interview, she smiles and laughs, yet appears nervous and guarded. She explains that it feels vulnerable to talk openly about these things with a stranger, "I don't talk about this very often. So I get self-conscious on how to formulate stuff". She is used to thinking about racism, not putting it into words. At times, the discomfort is explicitly visible in her body language and voice. She contemplates the questions before she answers. She fluctuates between expressing hurt and vulnerability and then laughs at some of the things that come up. When I ask her how she understands racism, she says that she feels "it is something massive and structural, that it is our history, and unfortunately I think it is in all of us, we are all marked by living in a racist world", and that small experiences compile to form greater impact on a person's life. When I ask her if she has experienced racism, she laughs in a resigned manner. She has, yet she did not understand that she was experiencing racism when she was younger. In

[15] In Norwegian, slur: "pakkis".
[16] In Norwegian: "mørk".

hindsight, she sees it as racism. She has felt a complex range of feelings linked to this, contradictory feelings at times,

> Everything from being sad, or embarrassed, feeling ashamed, to getting angry, upset, and sometimes I don't have the energy to take it in, and sometimes I just feel, numb, you think, no, I have no energy in reserve today. So it's the whole range really. [...] I think the shame comes from the fact that you want to, even though I know it's not my fault, it's like I want to take it away. I want to take away what is unpleasant, I want to take away the situation that arose, I almost feel a responsibility, it is not on me, but I often feel that I am made responsible. […] If I pull myself out of it and think about it purely theoretically then I know it's not, but how it feels, yes, I can often feel responsible.

I ask her how this sense of responsibility affects her.

> Oh, it's a heavy responsibility, not nice, and I don't think it's very healthy to feel responsible for what others inflict on you, and I think it can contribute to creating a distance, to society at large, since I feel so misunderstood, and I feel not seen. I feel I am being misinterpreted and that no one takes responsibility, it is just me who has to clean up, for lack of a better expression. […] It's such a delicate balance, I'm not allowed to be too emotional, because people for some reason imagine that if you show emotion, then, you do not make sense, then you are not reflective and smart, at the same time as... racism is about emotions, extremely emotional, within everything that is actually happening, since there are people in Norway who do not feel that it exists, that is, they say that racism does not exist. And then I also feel, racism exists regardless of what you feel, because it's actual processes that happen, but at the same time it is extremely emotional when you first become aware of it and see things and understand things in a new light, then it's almost impossible to take your feelings out of what you're standing in, and I feel I have to be such a cold person to explain it to people, because if I get upset or show emotion it's so easy for them to dismiss me, the way you overreact, you're too emotional and... Yes, that's the balance, because it's emotional for me, not for them. After all, for them racism may just be something theoretical, something they have studied for example, and which is awful, but they have no other relation to it than that this is awful.

She speaks with patience, yet I sense a frustration behind her words. She says that the dynamic she describes has forced her to observe herself from the outside in all kinds of situations, being perceived in ways she does not recognize herself in. An early example of overt racism was when she was sixteen and on the bus home from a cinema trip with friends. A majoritized man, considerably older than herself, placed himself on the seat next to her. He asked her how much she cost for a night. She felt shameful and did not want to tell anyone about it. At the moment, she managed to tell him to sit somewhere else, but she has carried the incident with shame. Even now, while telling me about it

years later, she feels ashamed, even if rationally, she knows it was not her fault. Later in the interview, she mentions that she hesitated to tell me about this incident, she felt a bit embarrassed, or that I would find it "a crazy story". At the same time, she saw it as important to share even if it was embarrassing. She thinks about how helpless and sad she felt at the time like it was just another one of those things that happened to her and nobody else, that no one around her would relate to it if she told them. She knew the same thing had happened to her mother before. At the time, she did not understand that it was not her fault; she says she lacked the analytical tools that would now explain why the man saw a young black woman and assumed she was a prostitute. She says that even though she had friends and people who cared for her, there was a distance based on negative ideas people had about black people in society. Growing up in a majoritized environment, she was often the only racialized kid anywhere,

> It's not about the people being white, it's the setting where whiteness is the norm, so it's not about the individual. […] The university for example, even if the students aren't all white, it's the university as setting and space – whiteness is the norm, so to go in there and suddenly be me, I can't imagine that completely? I think it is a lot about my background, being from a white place, I think many who look like me who have grown up in more multicultural environments don't carry that as much, but I have learned it in its most explicit form, the most extreme version, because it was really only me, only me at school, only me at handball practice, only me at work, only me in the neighborhood, and that makes me think about it more.

At school, she was told by a teacher that she took up too much space,

> And I believed in it, but in hindsight, I have seen that there was really no difference between us, me and the others, but my existence, was just too much for some teachers. […] I feel like I was not allowed to be stupid and young, and explore in that way. And that I was perceived as very aggressive, I was told that it was too aggressive and... And I felt I was made responsible almost like an adult. The others in middle school were only told to take it easy, not too much talking and giggling, […] I was told to change my personality, and a child can't do that.

She has been told multiple times that she is perceived as scary, and asks, "Am I really frightening, or is it about you being afraid, is that really my fault?". When she asks them what they perceive as frightening, she commonly gets the same answer, "yeah, but you are so aggressive and have such an attitude". When this happened one time at work, she thought to herself, "but I don't, I know that I don't have an attitude at work, because I've lived all my life curbing this so-called attitude [sighing laughter] I know that when

I am at work I do not have an attitude. She says colleagues she has never talked with tell her she has "an attitude".

> Well, one person had only worked there for two weeks and claimed I had an attitude, I thought, I do not believe that. And, I have experienced being reprimanded because I have spoken up when people have said things I think are racist, and then I have been met in a very like, tempered way. I have also experienced with [clients at work] who may be men, grown men, older than me, from [her country of descent], who do not quite tolerate that I'm standing there. So you get it from all sides, that somehow as a black woman you should preferably not take... do not talk, do not exist […] well I do speak and exist, but it must be done in such an agreeable manner.

She says people in her childhood had their idea of what a black woman is. "That they are angry and snap all the time and, and in a way it becomes true, if people are going to annoy and provoke because they think it's so entertaining when she gets angry, then I get angry, so that makes them right!" Her peers would comment on black people they saw on TV, and she felt the distance grow bigger, yet she also felt unable to say something about it to those friends.

> Because people are not aware of their own racist thoughts, they do not understand that they have them, and I didn't dare teach them that what you're saying, I understand that you do not mean it, but it actually comes from a racist point of view, the sentiment you express there is actually racist. It took so many years before I was able to express such things, it has probably also helped to create a distance from people around me, but it is not gone even though people have become adults and more aware of how they express themselves, that risk is there, it will always be there.

Things got better when she moved cities when she started studying; she describes a feeling of realizing her bubble did not reflect the whole world. Overall, she has good relations with majoritized Norwegians in everyday life, but there are exceptions. At the time of the interview, she is looking for a new job. She feels like the job search is a constant reminder that she is racialized. She feels like job hunting is difficult for anyone, but made more difficult by being racialized, as long as she is not looking for work involving "something multicultural". I ask if these reflections come from experience or if it is based on experiences other racialized people have shared about job searching. She said,

> No, my own experiences. Because it took a long time before I realized it was actually true. I experienced that I wasn't called into [job] interviews, and experienced being on interviews where they spend fifteen minutes talking about how your Norwegian is so good, right, (he he) and looking for a place to live, […] most of the times I was invited to a viewing, it was people who ... somehow had a pronounced positive relationship with Africa, like 'I have lived in Kenya!' [interviewer laughs] Yes, you see, completely absurd like that, yeah, 'I've worked in an orphanage in Uganda', I'm like yeah, great... While others don't invite me, and I know if we had met we would've probably had a nice time. But I think they just cannot see further than my name. And that's a problem in housing searches and job searches, and that's... Yeah, it's my personal experience that I now know is true. But fortunately, not all of everyday life is around these, vulnerable situations.

We talk about how much space these topics and experiences take up in her day-to-day life. "There is a strength and almost security in knowing that I am not crazy, what I feel is completely real, it happens around me". However, it gets exhausting at times and Mona tries to switch off and focus elsewhere,

> I don't feel like it takes up so much space, but maybe more space than I want it to, because things happen, nothing terrible, but there may be a comment that reminds me of it, or people can ask me a question, which isn't meant to hurt, but which I may find unpleasant, and then I'm in that space again. Then I have to consider, do I want to share this with anyone? Then I just talk it out, and we're done, or I don't want to, because I don't want to inflict it on everyone all the time.

Mona seems to get tired and I ask her how she is feeling. There are a lot of feelings running through me now, she says.

> I've talked so much about so many serious things, you probably think I'm just negative and angry all the time [both laughing]. But no, that... I don't know. I just think this is very important to talk about, and that it is in a way a practice - when I say things out loud it almost makes me see it in a new way, and I think that is very important. […] It's both nice, and painful. […] I feel... Yes, how important and illuminating, just talking about myself and my own life is actually illuminating, to see things in a different perspective. And as I said, I don't go around thinking about this every single day, I don't, reflect on how it was when I grew up, it's not something you take time to do. But I have certainly become very aware of how important it has been, that your upbringing, for example that I think it is difficult to call myself Norwegian, I think that is very much because of my childhood, and it is important to reflect on it. Especially if, as it is for me, I really want to be able to say, without any hesitation, I am Norwegian. And then it is important to look back a little and, yes, where does that hesitation come from

5.3 Selma

Selma is 27 years old and born in the Middle East. She works as a social worker. Her family came to Norway when she was a few months old. The family moved back when she was quite young, before returning to Norway a few years later. She has lived in Oslo since she was a teenager. I start the interview by asking her what her understanding of racism is. She says it has gone from a naive and general understanding of discrimination on the individual level based on ethnicity. Now she understands it as more structural.

> Something that makes things a little harder for you. As if you're rigged for failure... Based on, ethnicity. […] There is racism that people do on an individual level, for various reasons, but then there is the racism that is imprinted in us. It's the racism that I just grew up with, it's a part of me. Where I am both racist and others are racist towards me. I have thought of all the heroes in my life, all the movies I have seen, all the magazines I have read, how my mother and father have glorified the West and Western ideals, how it is internalized in all of us. How racism is also expressed in a kind of self-hatred. And going a little past that, 'so where do you really come from', it's just like, yeah, okay, we'll just let people ask about it. And inclining towards, is it something we have started to inherit automatically, are we wired a little racist, because it has been going on for so long? […] In a way it's in the framework of our lives, in working life, in education, in the curriculums, in books, on TV, on radio, it is everywhere.

She believes it makes life harder based on phenotypical differences. I ask her if she has experienced racism, to which she says she absolutely has. I ask her how it has felt. She feels like it has given her somewhat of an "internal handicap".

> Some of the racism I have experienced has made me feel like I don't [sighs] feel that I can demand anything, I don't have that sense of entitlement. And it's a bit like, a lot of the racism that I've experienced has been between the lines, not very visible, it's not like people scream at me, get back to where you (heh) came from.

She has tried to understand why certain interactions bother her so much.

> Why does this question bother me, why did this conversation bother me? Or this job interview or this situation at work bothered me more, I see that, because I think about it but the others don't. It affects my self-image, it causes me a lot of shame, really.

She talks about where the feeling of shame comes from. Over time, she has experienced that she is often perceived as threatening. "So I have taken it in in a way, how can I behave differently […] I look, just the way I look I seem much bigger, much more robust, in one way or another?" She says one voice in her head tells her she is

overreacting, while another acknowledges that others skewed perceptions of her actually hurt and affect her. The consequences are,

> It's like a constant struggle, it creates an inner turmoil […] And really, I would like to not be so divided inside me, I would like to be a little more on level so that things coincided more, but they don't. Also, it's a bit like, things are hidden for me too and, things I feel, I don't understand where it comes from all the time. So it's kind of a little uneasy in there, always. I think that's what affects me the most.

On the topic of childhood, she is happy she went to a multicultural school as a kid, as she did not feel very different there. When they moved back to Norway, she started a school in a wealthier majoritized area of Oslo. "But I thought more about poverty than my skin color," she says. However, she also recalls her group of friends all being "the foreigners". She did not think much about racism at that time. When she started university to study social work, she says she was faced with a lot of colorblindness.

> Much of the curriculum was top-down, for example in cultural books, in the minority perspective on child welfare, for example. And if you were to learn about culture and such, ABSOLUTELY the entire curriculum was based on the helper being white and the client being brown. There were no books I could read that was about, what can I expect, when I go out into the field? Absolutely nothing.

Once, at a seminar on diversity (she says diversity sarcastically), the students were given a task to study what it feels like to be different.

> It was a bunch of white girls, who put on a hijab, had liquor store bags and just like that 'oh we actually saw people looking at us and NOW we know how it is' [rolls her eyes]. No lecturers said anything, and I responded that you cannot SAY that you know what it is like to wear hijab because you did it for two hours and got looks? But that marks me as the one who is offended by everything. It's kind of where it started to dawn on me. Everyone was supposed to be so very anti, non-racist, and 'we are going to help people', but they just hung out with their white friends, my group again were the foreigners and outsiders somehow. While the future social workers sat together, pretty and blonde and, in a way, had their own pre-drink parties and were COMPLETELY, COMPLETELY shielded for who they were going to work with. I think that was when I started getting angry. That was when I started thinking like, racism, racism, isn't this racism? That segregation, isn't this that? That appearance determines whether you are in or out? And the fact that all of us find people who are similar to us, we study 'the others', who are not similar to us? So yes, that shift happened there, I started to see it, sort of, hidden racism. […] Before, I could say it was because I was poor, that I couldn't afford Louis Vuitton. But now, exactly the same as on [name of high school]. Only now it's happening here. What is it about then?! Because I know all of [these students] are broke (laughs).

She feels like she has to prove her complexity. She tries to prove it if it is in relation to people she cares about.

> So, for example, I'm together with a white man, he's a bit traditional, and I get a feeling, have you characterized me, as that woke anti-racist lady, who is not nuanced? Who isn't able to see nuances, and is a one-sided bulldozer. And that makes me feel like I need to show that I have also reflected on these things, it's not just that because I saw it on Instagram, that I say it. And it's actually that racist... or, it's hard for me to understand that people I care about are racists. He's really not a racist, not like that, but he can say racist things, and he has racist attitudes, which are expressed from time to time. Before I was with another white guy, like every time I, and it was before BLM, before white people knew they should be aware of their white privileges, every time I made him aware of his white privileges he got angry. And it's a bit like, again, how do I justify being with someone like that? So it's more in the close relationships that racism really becomes difficult. For everyone else, I can just, fuck you, sort of, at the end of the day.

She thinks it is difficult to talk through these things with people who do not understand,

> I must be aware that this is very personal to me, it is not very personal to [her partner]. And there is a distance that will always be there. Sometimes I experience it as a bit of grief. In the same way that I experience it as a bit sorrowful that I cannot share jokes in Arabic with my best friends because they speak another language, it's the small distance that will always be there.

She believes it is her responsibility to accept the distance in understanding,

> So I have to keep in mind that when he and I discuss racism, […] I can't always expect that somehow, he can't take it as close to heart because he doesn't have the same experiences. […] Even though I experience racism and he doesn't, I do not, in a way, it is not right that I should have the first right to emotional support, all the time, in everything I say. I think it's a good thing that... He could just be with a white lady and not have to deal with all this. And he doesn't. Although he's traditional, and he's not, like, an outspoken racist, but he votes Liberal[17] for example, that is a big problem for me. […] It's an issue, but he doesn't understand that it's an issue for me. He doesn't seem to understand that my life is political. While his is not, in the same way. For him, it is about some advantages and some disadvantages. For me, it's about life and death.

I ask her how she feels that her life is more political.

> When they choose to collaborate in a government that is racist, it downgrades my life, it makes me have fewer benefits, I become much less secure when crime and migration are SO closely linked [in political discourse], it is a real danger for us. And you think, yes, we live in peaceful Norway and blablabla, but it doesn't always have to be that way, things can change. Not to

[17] Venstre – The Social Liberal Party in Norway. Here, Selma refers to the party's former coalition with The Conservative Party of Norway – Høyre, FrP and the The Christian Democrats - KrF.

> catastrophize, but people have to take it a little seriously? Little by little, little by little, the discourse is turning ruthless, and it's more dangerous.

She feels a form of responsibility, that it is her fault for feeling bad, for reacting to others' comments about her. At the same time, she thinks other people have a responsibility for how they act, that good intentions are not necessarily enough.

> Good intentions are in a way, Sylvi Listhaug[18] also has good intentions, because she has a completely different worldview than I have. She is seriously trying to save Norway. Anders Behring Breivik, did he not really have good intentions? […] I don't give a shit about the intentions of people. It's a responsibility. People have a responsibility for what they say, and intentions are not enough. Surely there were good intentions to preaching Jesus Christ in Africa, there were good intentions? They wanted to save black people from damnation (laughs) it is completely absurd that intentions should really have anything to say. […] At what level are we talking here - we have no clear definition of what good intentions are. We have no... what worldview do you base these intentions on?

On the other hand, she remembers someone with good intentions who helped her family integrate into Norwegian society. She remembers a helpful neighbor who she called aunt growing up, who would knit traditional sweaters for her and her siblings, help her mother bake cakes for birthdays, which her mom would burn time and time again. "And she wasn't like an outspoken 'I am an anti-racist and I will save you!' it was just cozy, aunty behavior somehow. And that gave my parents an extra prod, to really like Norway. Human encounters like that." She says that majoritized Norwegians have also defended her and that she has a lot of friends who are majoritized. Still, she says she feels a bit embarrassed about having a majoritized partner. She says she feels it is looked down upon by men of her cultural background.

> It's a bit like being pressured by both parties - it's both like, okay, so you're with a white man, what's wrong with us? So damn much, but I'm not going to go into that now (laughs). On the other side it's, oh you're so Norwegian, you're even with a white man, so both those things, and honestly it's completely coincidental that I'm with him. In any case, it is uncomfortable to be reduced to brown woman, white man.

She is not interested in being accepted as Norwegian or by Norwegians. She says she wants to seek more acceptance from people like her than from majoritized people. "Like, don't accept me, I'll be fine". She says she is sick of running after the approval from those who are able to include her into what feels Norwegian. "It's a way of taking

[18] Current leader of FrP – Progress Party

care of myself," she says. At the end of the interview, she explains the ambiguity in trying to understand and verbalize her experiences of racism and alienation, and says, "I think you may not know exactly what I mean by everything I say. But maybe that's because I don't entirely know what I mean either".

5.4 Noor

Noor was born in Norway with parents who originate from a North African Arab country and grew up in two different multicultural areas of Oslo. She is 34 years old. We meet through video conference, as she is working in the Middle East at the time of the interview. Noor wears a hijab and has light skin. Her understanding of racism is based on her experiences with it, as a form of discrimination coming from someone who believes they are superior on the background of skin color or religion. Her experience with racism has been,

> prejudice against Muslims but it has also been very racialized, in that, Muslims in Norway have been a fairly new phenomenon that came with immigration, and in that way it is a combination of racism that both affects me as a second-generation immigrant, or immigrant, as the racists would call me, combined with being a visible Muslim. So it hits twofold, what I have experienced.

She reflects on her upbringing and says she never felt excluded growing up, and thinks it could be because she grew up in a multicultural environment. "I think you feel a sense of belonging to other minorities because you have that in common, what stands out about you. We found our community in being different. […] The ethnic white [kids in the neighborhood] came from a [working] class background that also made us feel a sense of belonging with them". She reflects that this might have been different had she grown up in a place where none of the kids had a different cultural background. She gives an example of racism from her childhood when she and neighboring children often played outside, and a neighbor would come out on her balcony and yell at them, "fucking monkeys, go back to your home country". She says, "in my kid's brain, I understood that she said that because we were brown. Many of the kids were darker". There was a shift, from more immigrant-related racism to Islam-related racism, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in 2001. "And the same neighbor I remember once came to me and said 'you rats, you Muslims, you (heh) are like rats, you just multiply', and used the terrorist attack in the U.S. as an excuse to call me a rat, that was when I was 17 years old". The shift was clear to her at the time,

> The shift was very clear. From constantly having the perception that, uh, the white majority sees you as less worthy, or oppressed, there was a lot of focus on female circumcision and coercion and so on. Yes, so I could in a way identify with that [kind of] racism by following the media and newspapers and stuff, but that shift was very clear to me, and what I then experienced.

She started wearing a hijab around the same time as the terrorist attack, and she feels it might have amplified her experiences of other people's perceptions of her around that time. In her first job at a supermarket, her boss would repeatedly comment on her hijab,

> Do you have to wear that on your head, he often used to joke about it. There was also an older man that I remember, who came and was going to buy something and just laughed at me. That was really uncomfortable since I had been wearing the hijab for a year or two, so it was quite new to me and, and as a young person you are quite insecure about your own appearance, so both having to grow up with that insecurity and in addition be laughed at, by older men. I remember it was very difficult (heh).

When she applied for a job at a fast-food restaurant, she had a similar uncomfortable encounter with the men who interviewed her.

> What sits with me from that interview was that I was asked: so how would you have reacted if a male colleague had given you a hug or been a little physical? […] Today one would think of me too[19], and whether that is something a woman as an employee should accept? So I said no, it was not okay, and saw that they were not interested in me, and asked them, will my hijab be a problem? And then they said yes. So then I went out and just thanked them for the interview. It was like, why was I asked that question? Are visible Muslim women more difficult? […] There is another dimension, using a hijab, which is often overlooked a bit when talking about discrimination, that one is also discriminated against based on gender.

Experiences like these, never made her doubt her choice of wearing a hijab.

> I think it has a kind of opposite effect, for some the pressure may be too strong, so you take it off, but for others like me, […] it became a way of resisting, becoming even more determined to wear it, and with pride in a way, that it really became part of my identity.

The examples point to a general feeling she has, "that there's an idea that as a Muslim woman one should accept more". She tells me a personal story, about how she used to be in an abusive marriage. She ended up going to the police to press charges against her husband when the policewoman she met at the station told her they did not have the resources to take her complaint. Shocked, she argued for her rights as a Norwegian

[19] International movement on social media that started in 2017, where women spoke out about harrasment that had become a naturlized part of the lives of many.

citizen by law and was eventually let in after a lot of hassle. She had to use her Norwegianness to get the help she needed.

> Incidents like that make me think, are our rights as visible melanin-rich and Muslim women not as strong? Because you're seen as... That there is a basis of, prejudice around our acceptance of patriarchal violence, that it is not so dangerous that we are subjected to that violence, that it is just... no I do not know, it just makes me think…

The case was severe and her ex-husband was taken to court. In court, she was at one point asked by a co-judge, "'Yes, isn't [violence against women] quite common in your culture, where you come from?' If that isn't structural racism, then what is it? […] If I had been white, I do not think they would have had the same reaction." After the court case, she was referred to conversations with a specialist,

> The first thing she does is she gives me a booklet made by the MiRA center[20] made for immigrant women and says that I should contact them, 'maybe they can help you'. Violence in close relationships is a societal problem, why did she reduce it to... I interpret it as her reducing the situation to an immigrant woman who has experienced violence from her husband.

This is difficult for her to share. "I have very strong impressions of racism or prejudice in the system, how we miss out on the same rights as white women... that one does not have the same access to help as others." As she gives more examples of institutional experiences she has written down and prepared for the interview, including an experience at a gynecologist's office where she asked me to turn the recording off, she says she struggles to find the right words to describe what she feels around it.

She describes certain freedom of blending in, now that she lives in a Middle Eastern country,

> It is very strange to say, but I feel such freedom, in being in a country where I do not look so different. And I know that they look at me as different, I'm the foreigner here too, but to somehow not be seen as visibly different, it's a freedom, you can be anonymous unless you open your mouth and they hear that you are not from the country. Yeah, I feel that at least the first weeks after returning to Norway... I feel those looks that make me feel we're made to be so different, which fills the room when I go into a cafe, or wherever.

[20] MiRA is a resource center for immigrant and refugee women in Norway.

5.5 Shirin

Shirin came to Norway with her family when she was a few months old from a Middle Eastern/West-Asian country. Today, she is 33 and has a leader position at a local community center in Oslo. She is knowledgeable about racism, both on personal and political levels. Her understanding of racism is of a system that originates in European colonization, where a hierarchy of color, with white people at the top, was manifested. She also understands it as expressions of that history, as entrenched into society in structural and cultural forms that affect the way we think of and see each other. She understands everyday racism as an expression of structural racism. She has experienced all forms of racism but points out that now that she is living a "middle-class life", she experiences more of the everyday kind than the more brutal manifestations racism can have. She describes an early incident,

> Growing up in [rural place in Norway] and our house was tagged with KKK and... […] when you have lived a few years you see certain patterns, you understand that this is connected. They are all expressions of the same thing. Which is that I have been othered and not seen as much as a human or as much as a normal person as the white majority is seen as.

I ask her how the racism that she has experienced has felt. She says it has depended on what phase of life she is in, that as a child there was an explicit fear connected to racism. "Because when we settled in Norway, we experienced quite a lot of the explicit form of racism, where our house was vandalized, and it was very obvious racism. […] I realized that being brown could put me at risk." Now, she feels more anger, she feels strongly that she has to do something about the racism she observes in society. She prefers the term racialized because it points to the process that makes her brown.

> I wouldn't have been brown if it had not been relevant. Like, what ears I have is not relevant because that is not how we measure people. And I think that racialized refers to that. It says something about the position we have in society and what about us has been made relevant. And to be more precise, everyone is racialized, but I'm not racialized as white. I don't like being non-white, that's the worst I think. That it is measured against the normal, the normative starting point, which is what it in fact is.

Her family moved to Oslo when Shirin was still young, and she thinks going to a multicultural school made her feel more oblivious to her brownness after having lived rurally, where her family was very noticeable as racialized. Still, she was always attentive to how the media talked about the area she lived in and the people who lived there with a negative lens. In high school and university, she was confronted with a

certain shame in herself in her brownness and background. Shirin now lives in a multicultural part of Oslo and reflects on how there's a narrative of resourceful (and often majoritized) families wanting to move away because there are too many minoritized (implicated: poorer) people moving in. "And what, qualitatively, is it about me, and us, that makes it not good enough?". Growing into adulthood, she has felt increasingly proud of being brown and having a different cultural background than Norwegian,

> It allows me to see the world from another perspective, and it opens up a lot for me, at the same time as I know that it is linked to challenges. It's not something I would've changed. So when we were going to have children, I was committed to having a brown donor. So it's not something I would opt-out of.

She tells me that she and her partner had to seek a private clinic to access a sperm donor who was brown, as the option was not available at public hospitals. Private treatment cost over 100 000 NOK. "It indicates that we don't have equal health rights when it comes to treatment, because in the allocation of donor sperm, they tend to give donors who are similar to partners".

She is more focused on the consequences of racism than the intentions of those who perform it. Although she also gives examples of times it felt easier to play along, like when an elderly woman stared at her and a friend in a grocery shop a few days earlier,

> And I stare back because I have started to do that, I say hello, anything you're interested in, and she's like, oh! you are so pretty, where do you come from? Are you from the Philippines? Where I just, no, we come from Oslo. Well no, but you're from the Philippines, aren't you? I started to play along since she was kinda old.

Shirin sees a close connection between racism and class. She knows what middle-class culture is, she understands the codes. She says, "I know how to act Norwegian. I know how to act white." She can pass quite unnoticed in many settings, she says, unlike her father, who is soon to be retired. She observes him as someone who cannot navigate culture and norms like she now does automatically. She thinks that is how she has acquired a leading position at work. As she now has a stable personal economy, unlike in her childhood, she still feels certain shame in being seen as poor and working class. "I remember it so strongly and it was so imprinted from childhood, to be brown was to be poor, I never saw people who looked like me who lived in villas. Neither on TV nor in books or real life".

5.6 Leon

Leon is 39 years old and works in a creative field where representation and racism are some of the main themes of his work. His parents are from East Africa, and while he was born in another Nordic country, he moved to Norway with his family as a child. He understands racism as a belief in yourself as superior, "I see it as something that is some of the worst experiences for human beings, because it is very humiliating, and it takes away your worth as a human, it simply dehumanizes you." He has experienced a lot of racism. He sees it as a connected global issue, and shares examples of being stopped by police in the U.S. while driving and had a gun pointed to his head, and of the time he was in Brazil and was accused by police of kidnapping his white Norwegian friend and travel companion. Still, he feels like not all Norwegians are aware that racism exists in Norway as well,

> I remember I had an interview and they asked if there is racism in Norway, everyone thought I would say no, but I said yes and everyone just 'huh?! Yes, well tell us, where do you find racism?' Somehow, you can't... you have to feel on your body, all the ugly looks you get, the fact that you don't get to enter nightclubs, the fact that you have to change your name to get a job, should go without saying that it's a big problem. That there are very few black people who are in leadership positions here, who even have to have a doctorate and even then they do not get, fucking… sorry, they don't get a job that a person with a bachelor's degree has, things like that, we must always outperform to get one step further.

As a child, experiencing racism would instill fear in him, but now the injustice of it generates anger. He's sad that we have not progressed further as a society. He grew up in Eastern Oslo at a time where the area he lived in was becoming more multicultural but was still characterized by working-class majoritized Norwegians. When he was younger, experiencing racism made him feel unwelcome, vulnerable, lonely, and in many ways, he felt he was worth less than others. "You're standing there very alone and no one stands up for you, no one defends you, no one speaks for you, you stand there alone". Now, he focuses more on standing up for himself as an essential way to deal with racism. "You get more respect when you verbally strike back, you show that you do not stand for it or tolerate it or accept it". When he points out racist remarks, he says people react with shock, "Many of them are startled, shocked, become like, 'no it was not how I meant it, I have many black friends and, I have been to Africa before' and try to defend it in that way and explain it away". In his work, he had a depiction of a black man saving a white woman from a white man. It is the one thing he has made that

generated the most complaints. “So here you can see how primitive society really is […] it could not be possible, they went completely bananas […] they have it posted on a [extremist] right-wing page, so it looks like he *just* beats white people, right.” When he was 13, he went with his football team to play in a Danish cup.

> I was the only black person there and there were a lot of Nazis in that area, and so I was very nervous at that age. But when you get a little older you think, these football coaches knew this, and they should have come to me and said ‘we got you, we’ll protect you, don’t be afraid and if something happens come to me’, nothing like that at all! (laughs a little resigned).

The coaches didn’t care, he says. They just wanted the least amount of responsibility possible. He remembers some boys coming up to him and saying in a threatening way, “oh, we have a nigger here”.

> It is not easy, and it is not something that can be easily explained either, you have to feel it on your body. Also, you see your parents have experienced it, everyone! It just goes on generation after generation, and we still ask ‘is society racist?’ Well, the only way one can answer that is, do you think a dark kid can grow up without experiencing racism? And if the answer is no, then it goes without saying, there you have the answer, then society is racist, systematically racist.

He tells me more about encounters with the police. He laughs with resignation when he explains how much the police have stopped him.

> I had three jobs, saved up to buy a car, first year, stopped 18 times. By the police. ‘Where have you been? How have you been able to afford this car?’ And what they did on purpose was to stop you in public places, get you out of the car and search you, so it doesn’t matter if they didn’t find anything, I was not a drug dealer so they never found anything, but it puts things in people’s heads when they see you stopped on the street with your hands on the hood [of the car] like you see in films. So was stopped all the time. I told my mother and she never believed this. She said you’re exaggerating, I said no I’m not. Then I remember my mother had a Norwegian friend visiting so I drove them to the bus stop. My mother is sitting in the passenger seat and her Norwegian friend is sitting in the back, with dark windows. Then we are stopped by the police, right away aggressively, ‘where have you been, out with you right away’, and then the Norwegian friend comes out and shouts at them, what the hell is this, what kind of behavior is this, and those boys looked like they had been caught red-handed, and said that’s not how we meant it, and she said yes we’ll get your license plate number, we will report, this is pure harassment and stuff like that. Then I said to my mother, there you have it, well, your friend stood up for me, she understood it, you did not understand it but maybe you understand it now. […] You merely do not feel welcome, it is very much like a paranoia state. Especially when you were young, and you have to be very careful with your surroundings, because the police are supposed to protect you and be available if you need it, but then it's the other way around.

> Recently not so long ago I had a rental car, a civilian policeman comes and wonders what I'm going to do with the car, I say I'm going to drive it, (laughs), he says, yes you're not trafficking drugs in it then, because many drug dealers use a rental car to drive drugs from A to Z. No, why should I do that? No, you know there are many like you[21].

He doesn't have a negative opinion about the police force as such, he just doesn't trust them after his experiences, "That's it." As a black man, his experience is that he is perceived as a threat by a majority of people. His first memory of racism was from when he lived in another Nordic country and he and his friends were playing outside a local church during Easter. The priest came out and asked if they could help organize a play, to which they agreed and Leon was appointed to play Jesus. As the play started, he heard mumbling in the audience, loud enough for Leon to hear someone say, "What? A negro as Jesus?", "What is happening to this country?". He says, "THAT'S when you find out you're not [nationality], or Norwegian if it was in Norway." He hadn't thought of himself as different in any negative way before that incident.

While agents of racism can be seen as ignorant by many, Leon says,

> You can't be ignorant and let it affect people and take away their dignity and opportunities because you are ignorant. You have a responsibility to stay up to date and be informed, within certain limits of course. That you are ignorant should not come at the expense of my future, my livelihood.

He experiences that being successful in his work has changed the way some people treat him, and how hard stereotypes hit him. "I get away with much less [racism] now […] because I've become known in large parts of the world and they look a little more up to me, but if I had been a tram driver, for example, it would have just been – he's just a nobody, quite simply." He sometimes feels like a mascot or representative of successful integration.

> The success he has had now is because Norway has laid down these conditions and such, so he is one of us. […] Successful in integration, you know, Leon, you know, he has done well in both Norway and the U.S., that's what we want, this kind we want. And that's not how it works (laughs).

[21] In Norwegian: "sånne som deg".

People are generally nicer to him than before. “It has a use for them, image-wise, that they can point to, see we are not racists, we have a black man here, he makes [his work] that we like and there you can see, Norway is not racist”.

5.7 Main findings

In this chapter, I have presented the informants’ experiences with racism, as well as their understandings of what racism is and how it works in their lives on an individual and societal level. The goal has been for the reader to get to know the informants as individuals, with individual experiences that shape their understandings and reflections.

When asked about their understanding of racism, all the informants understand racism as something *structural*. Noor’s explanation is not directly structural, but later in the interview, she argues that her personal experiences with racism in job interviews, workplaces, health services, and judicial processes are signs of structural discrimination. Most of the informants also explain that they had a different understanding of racism growing up, as individual discrimination based on skin color (referring to phenotype). Their structural understandings incorporate history, culture, and language as factors that shape individuals in society, and create associations and meanings to racialized bodies. The historical and structural understanding helps situate their tangible day-to-day experiences as common patterns of othering, and not as unique for them as individuals.

Their experiences with racism are individually different – yet many of the reflections around the experiences and how they have been affected by racism have similarities. In the next two chapters, the informants’ reflections are discussed in relation to the main themes of the research question. This chapter is to be understood as a backdrop to the remaining chapters, and as a reminder of where the informants are “coming from” when being referred to in the following text.

6 Norwegianness: How lived experience with racialization affects belonging

In this chapter, I discuss *how lived experience with racism affects racialized individuals' sense of belonging to Norwegianness*. I argue that ongoing experiences with racism affect the informants' sense of belonging to Norwegianness in several ways. The informants navigate their Norwegian identity in relation to their experiences of being included or excluded in the national collective. The main themes emerging from the interviews related to belonging to Norwegianness are: (1) navigating difficulties in defining one's nationality as Norwegian, (2) talking to majoritized people about racism in a colorblind and historically exceptional society, and (3) the experience of one-dimensional representation of racialized people as a further alienating experience, creating difficulty in claiming a Norwegian identity.

6.1 Claiming the Norwegian identity

In this section, I argue that ongoing racialization causes difficulty for the informants to define themselves as Norwegian with as much ease and "natural" belonging as majoritized individuals. The underlying message in the racism the informants experience is that they do not belong, making it difficult to define themselves as Norwegian. Some informants identify with parts of Norwegian identity. A majoritized individual might not identify with all that is conceptualized as being Norwegian, but can choose to accept and reject parts they feel fit. As the informants' accounts show, they feel that minoritized people lack the power of definition over their Norwegianness. They have to fit into certain criteria, which depends on a range of ideas about what being Norwegian involves, to be accepted or rejected as Norwegian. While belonging can be a complicated issue, I find that a feeling of distance from Norwegianness can simultaneously cause stronger belonging to other sites and groups of society. There is an implied vulnerability in not fitting into the national collective and seeking belonging elsewhere.

When asked about how they relate to being Norwegian, all the informants had previously reflected on the barriers to claiming a Norwegian identity when describing themselves. Two main aspects are worth analyzing. (1) The informants use their skin color (referring to phenotype), and one uses her religious belonging to Islam, as reasons that prevent feeling belonging to Norwegianness, and (2) The informants do not feel

that they have the power to define whether they are Norwegian or not, while they feel that majoritized Norwegians are able to include or exclude them from Norwegianness through messages communicated intentionally or unintentionally.

When Gabriel is asked if he is Norwegian, he automatically says he is and argues by saying that he thinks in Norwegian, and knows who Oddvar Brå[22] is, only to doubt himself as he is speaking. In the same sentence, he turns completely, saying, "I can never be Norwegian", then hesitates and says, "I will never try". He explains that while he sees himself as Norwegian, others have questioned his belonging to Norway throughout his life. He says he cannot ever be Norwegian because he is black, and still, in his father's country he is seen as white, "I'm as white in [father's country] as I am black in Norway". This anecdote shows how racialization is socially and culturally changeable. It shows how racialization is a process of constructing race within a cultural context, that race and the assumptions it raises are relationally produced (Garner 2010). It is not Gabriel's definition of where he belongs, but how he is categorized by others that affect how he is treated. Gabriel says he does not want to be a part of a national community that stigmatizes "Muslims and black Africans" when those identities are reflected in his family.

Gabriel's thinking reflects not feeling accepted as Norwegian because of how his racialized body is seen as essentially non-Norwegian in majority discourse. Whiteness is ingrained in being perceived as ordinarily Norwegian, no questions asked, while being racialized as non-white is an ambivalent state of belonging that needs to be proved. He says he can never fully be Norwegian, as he has experienced questions on how Norwegian he is throughout his life. He feels that these questions are rooted in how his body is perceived in Norwegian culture. Several researchers argue that a regular requirement of being seen as Norwegian is being white (Vassenden 2011; Führer 2021; Gullestad 2004; McIntosh 2015 and more). Gabriel is tired of wanting to be included when constantly being reminded that he is excluded. Yet his first reaction was to say that he is Norwegian, before reflecting on why he feels like he cannot claim Norwegianness. It is as though he would be Norwegian if he only felt fully allowed to and if it was his identity to choose. In one sense, Gabriel feels a sense of belonging to Norwegianness, in another sense, he feels that he is not welcomed into that identity.

[22] Norwegian former cross-country skier

Feeling distant from Norwegianness stimulates a stance of not wanting to *try* to be Norwegian. This also implies that being Norwegian is something he has to *do*. The experience of self-definition is echoed in Shirin's account more explicitly. Shirin says,

> I… I'm not Norwegian. No. Or, like, I can't be bothered, or it used to be a lot more important to me before, but now, there's that anger or that fuck you attitude I have, I can't be bothered to… negotiate my identity anymore. I don't want it to be up to people whether I can be accepted as Norwegian or not, so I've just… I don't have the need anymore to define myself as Norwegian.

Shirin says she does not want to negotiate her identity "anymore", she has closed off the option of being Norwegian because it gives her more power to self-define. However, she goes on to say that stating she is not Norwegian can make some majoritized Norwegians offended, they insist that she is in fact Norwegian, while she insists she is not. She says, "So still, I don't fully have the power to self-define even though I take it, but I have it because I don't let it be up to them. Sometimes I give in because I don't have the energy to… discuss". While she is explicitly welcomed into being Norwegian by some majoritized Norwegians, she does not want to identify with it. Individual majoritized Norwegians establish collective norms and have the power to include or exclude. Vulnerable and tiring, navigating one's identity and sense of belonging feels like a demand from other people and only subsequently an internally driven quest to classify and identify. She resists the notion that she does not have the power to define where she feels belonging. She has to negotiate identity and self-expression to feel included by others. I understand this discussion on self-definition reflected in several of the accounts, as the informants feeling that their identities are not allowed to be fluid and complex, but must be made comfortable and comprehensible for others. This is a sentiment all the informants have in common. However, unlike the others, Leon expressed a need to not categorize himself at all; he simply wants to be seen as "a human, who by chance is dark-skinned". Like Gabriel and Shirin, he argues that calling himself Norwegian is difficult "when you're not a hundred percent accepted in society". Even if he has experienced racism and being questioned from childhood, he does not think that the exclusion of racialized minoritized people represents the majority of Norwegian society. Leon says he also feels that calling himself Norwegian would take away another part of his identity rooted in his parents' culture. He says, "You're kind of in a no man's land", with one foot in his parents' country and one foot in Norway. He feels as though he is being dragged in opposite directions - "Politicians on the right and left sides drag you to one side, no you're a hundred percent Norwegian, and the other

says, no, you're a foreigner, why can't I just be Leon (laughs)". Assumptions made based on his phenotypical traits and the mixed messages he has received on inclusion and exclusion cause confusion that drives him to find a separate definition that is his own. Participants in Horst's study from 2018 mirror Leon's multifaceted feelings of belonging. Belonging is often regarded in a binary and fixed way, while individuals can feel belonging to different degrees to different sites (Horst 2018). The fixed way of regarding belonging determines the language used to talk about belonging, and thus their sense of being (Bulhan 2015). Can racialized individuals on the same terms as majoritized individuals define their complex and layered identity, and still belong within Norwegianness? From the informants' accounts, it seems as though they feel forced to negotiate and explain their identities and sites of belonging. It is as if their very existence in Norway is confusing, because of their minoritized and racialized bodies being perceived as different, and not fitting into neat categories of singular national identities.

The informants express an ambivalence of desiring to feel belonging but not feeling included and therefore excluding oneself as a form of gaining control and define themselves. This ambivalence is seen in Mona's account, who is one of few the informants who expresses a desire to identify as Norwegian, but still feels like she cannot claim the identity because she is not accepted by all as Norwegian. She finds it embarrassing to admit she wants to call herself Norwegian, because she, like the others, has experienced exclusion in the form of racism. In her account in chapter 5, this exclusion can be seen as not feeling understood based on her experience of being racialized in general, and based on being the only black person in her childhood area. This shows that racialized individuals cannot enter the imagined Norwegianness without being included by those who hold a natural place within the Norwegian realm. As Führer describes,

> 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 (2021, 206-207).

Selma however, expresses with a tinge of sarcasm that she finds it nice that majoritized Norwegians pretend not to see the color of her skin, "I think it's kind of cute!", she says

and laughs. She says that while she believes the good intentions in ignoring skin color (implied meaning: phenotype), she does not want to be naïve, "When shit hits the fan, I know I won't be the first to be saved. I'm aware that I am Norwegian when I do well and a foreigner when I don't". As Führer describes, Selma's phenotypical traits are assumed to be overdetermined by an inferior culture. Selma links a naivety to the believing she is truly Norwegian. I interpret this as not feeling safely confided within the Norwegian identity, as if the rules of inclusion can at any time be changed and that she can be excluded again. In this way, it is safer for Selma not to cling too hard onto the identity of Norwegianness. She feels Norwegian because of factors such as having a Norwegian passport or paying taxes in Norway, but says that it is hard for her to "vouch for[23] being Norwegian". Selma refers to not seeing color as "cute". I interpret it as a reference to the discourse of being colorblind – and that she does not believe that majoritized society cannot see that she is racialized, but it is "cute" in the sense that it should not matter in terms of being included. Still, she does not feel safe, as if that inclusion sits with strings attached. She is aware that doing something negative, for example committing a crime, would mean she is no longer considered Norwegian.

Noor is the only one of the six who firmly says she is Norwegian. She adds that it is important to her, as it has not been natural within her family to say they are Norwegian. She says that her siblings' children, who are third-generation Norwegian and do not speak their grandparents' languages, say that they are from their grandparents' countries of origin, hyphenated to include all the countries they come from. Noor says she feels it is important to make them aware that they belong in Norway from early on. She had an encounter that made an impression on her as a child, which she now reflects on helped her feel more Norwegian. She was five, talking to a neighbor, an older Norwegian woman about the upcoming European Union (EU) elections. Noor was interested in politics and society, and asked her neighbor what she would vote – should Norway join the EU or not? The woman asked her, what would you vote for? Noor says the woman said, "'because you're Norwegian, you can vote too', and that was the first time someone told me I was Norwegian. And that influenced me". However, she has not always felt secure in her Norwegian identity and has always navigated around what to say when asked where she is from. Childhood experiences emerged as a theme in the accounts in chapter 5, as experiences that lay a foundation for a sense of belonging to

[23] In Norwegian: "stå inne for".

Norway. An interesting point was that those who had grown up in multicultural areas with other racialized children felt more included and had a feeling of unity, where they did not question their phenotypical traits as different from the norm as much, as those who grew up among mainly majoritized Norwegians, Mona and partly Shirin. They felt more like outsiders in their childhoods because of their racialized bodies and cultural backgrounds being distinct, different. They both expressed the importance of living in multicultural areas when they have children themselves. What sticks out in the experience of being one of many racialized kids with different cultural backgrounds is the feeling of not sticking out, being "normal", having peers with whom you can express yourself without having to hide cultural aspects, the feeling of being understood. They did not question their belonging because it was a given, they fit in. It is the feeling one can assume most majoritized Norwegians have, not having to think about their Norwegianness because it goes unchallenged. This feeling of belonging lays a foundation for knowing that they belong in a community as an adult. The informants who felt belonging in their multicultural environments growing up were faced with questioning their sense of Norwegianness at a later stage when they realized their belonging was questioned by a wider collective. These messages come as signals from news media about immigrants, at Noor's first job, at Gabriel and Selma's encounter with university life. While Gabriel did not grow up in a multicultural area, he felt he belonged and had a happy childhood. Yet, he reflects on ways in which he sought representation in becoming a fan of black football players, even if the player was the least talented one, or how Gabriel reflects on blindness to derogatory terms, such as in the story of his racialized teammates' reaction to their coach's use of the N-word in chapter 5. This shows that there are different ways of seeking someone or something to belong to.

All six informants navigate their belonging to Norwegianness in individual ways, but it is interesting, yet not surprising, that they all feel the need to navigate it in the first place when asked in the interviews. It shows that it is not given for them to be included in the Norwegian realm. Both externally and internally they are driven to define themselves as either/or, and including nuance into their social identity and cultural belonging is difficult because they feel pulled in opposite directions. Choosing not to identify with a nationality, such as Leon wanting to only be "human", or with their parents' countries of origin feels like an attempt to self-define, while still not being fully allowed to. They

are challenged both by majoritized Norwegians who would like to include them into Norwegianness, yet experiences exclusion from other representatives of the same collective, such as those who explicitly would prefer they did not live in Norway because of the idea that racialized bodies do not belong in their understanding of Norwegianness. Thus, admitting a stance of accepting exclusion from Norwegianness still may lead to alienation. It is hard to stand safely within or outside of the label of being Norwegian. When Noor defines herself as Norwegian, she says it might come from her stubbornness. Calling yourself Norwegian seems to require a hard stance in claiming a place at the table, and claiming belonging as righteously yours. In both cases, in claiming a non-Norwegian identity or as Norwegian, there seems to be a sense of a conscious personal choice – as well as a pressure from constantly being defined by others. Some of the ambivalence in claiming Norwegianness is explained in this quote from Gabriel,

> I have a Norwegian passport, so I'm Norwegian, but I think you can be several things at the same time. I think it's problematic, that people are not seen as Norwegian because they are not white. At the same time, many non-whites do not want to be called Norwegians, because many white Norwegians often pick at them and do microaggressions and so on.

The feeling of distance comes from experiences with racism, which excludes them from feeling a safe belonging to Norwegianness. In the complication of their belonging to Norwegianness, many of the informants talked about other sites of belonging.

6.1.1 **Alternative sites of belonging**

When the informants discussed how they navigate around Norwegianness, their belonging to other sites and categories emerged as a topic. Some of the informants feel an explicit belonging to Oslo and specific boroughs, and with other racialized people, and for one informant, belonging to the queer community, which as a side effect made her feel more included in Norwegianness.

When Selma says she does not want to call herself Norwegian, she adds, "I really own that I am from Oslo, it is much easier for me to say I am an Oslo citizen, not so easy for me to say that I am Norwegian". Shirin, as the only one who does not want to be identified as Norwegian, says, "I feel a sense of belonging to Oslo, that is, I am an Oslo person[24], I also feel a great sense of belonging to subcultures, to the queer, because I am

[24] In Norwegian: "en Oslo-person".

queer too. So much more that kind of local and subcultural affiliation is what I feel". They both feel a local belonging rather than a national belonging. Oslo is a multicultural city, where 33,75 percent of the population are immigrants or children of immigrants (from Scandinavia, the rest of Europe as well as other parts of the world), up against 18,51 percent for the country as a whole[25]. Many of the informants who grew up among other racialized children have said that they felt like they belonged among their peers. This sense of belonging to Oslo could indicate a division of urban and rural places, between multicultural areas versus homogenous majoritized areas. Research on ethnic diversity in London has shown that co-ethnic density has a positive relationship with the population's sense of belonging (Finney and Jivraj 2013, 3339). This especially applies when people live in neighborhoods with a high proportion of residents from their own ethnic background (ibid.). While more research needs to be done on belonging within racialized groups in the Norwegian context, the findings from the UK might be comparable.

An interesting experience of Shirin's is that being queer has given her easier access to belonging to Norwegianness. She says, "Because then I'm one of them, at the same time […] with the assumption that being queer is not accepted in my own family". Shirin's experiences that being part of a queer community and identifying as queer have provided a more open door to be included in the realm of Norwegianness. Being tolerant of the queer movement has gradually moved to become part of what is seen as contemporary Norwegian values (Mellingen 2013). In the last few decades, the fight for queer rights in Norway has for example manifested in the right to equal marriage for same-sex partners and less stigma in being queer. There is an awareness that being queer in many parts of the world, especially in religious or conservative contexts, is taboo and even dangerous since it is often illegal. It seems as though the consequences of those general understandings manifest as assumptions others have of Shirin. People can assume that her family is not supportive of her being queer, based on other assumptions on her phenotype that she is Muslim, therefore the assumption that her family must have conservative values. This assumed exclusion from her family eludes sympathy and a desire to include her into the queer community, where on one level she is seen as distancing herself from her parents' assumed conservative culture and as

[25] Data retrieved from Statistics Norways' website tool "Statistikkbanken", titled "Innvandrere og norskfødte med innvandrerforeldre". Retrieved 10.10.2021.

moving closer to Norwegian values, where openness to queerness now lies. This way, she experiences that she is more easily accepted as "more" Norwegian by being queer. Her inclusion is based on essentializing assumptions related to her racialized body. The inclusion in the Norwegianness of the queer community relies on two assumptions: that racialized minoritized people face repercussions from their family for their sexuality, and that being able to be openly gay is a trait that is seen as Norwegian, thus not non-Norwegian as her racialized looks imply. Her inclusion into the group both relies on racialized assumptions about her family and a contrasting assumption of Norwegianness as valuing equality. In research, this phenomenon has been referred to as *homonationalism* (Puar 2007). Homonationalism refers to how certain nationalist Western groupings use the relatively recently emerged culture of being tolerant towards homosexuality as a symbolic case against Muslims and other groupings who are assumed to be homophobic. A study on how widespread homonationalist attitudes are in the European context finds that 3,3% of Norwegians show homonationalist attitudes (Freude and Vergés Bosch 2020, 1302). Puar finds that heteronormative ideals are now being accompanied by homonormative ideals that replicate Orientalized beliefs of racialized people. In the Norwegian context, there is little research on homonationalism and how it relates to racism, except by Røthing and Svendsen (2011). Homonationalism intersects with Shirin's experience of inclusion into Norwegianness based on her queer identity.

All of the informants felt a sense of belonging to other racialized people of different heritage, religions, and cultures in Norway. This was because of a common understanding or experience of being similarly stereotyped. Yet, informants said that racism happened from one "ethnic group" to another as well, where people with lighter skin tones held racist beliefs of people who were darker than them. Gabriel thinks that there is a difference in the politics related to his skin color and mine (referring to the researcher, who phenotypically looks South Asian). He refers to the historically grounded racial hierarchy, where being white is considered being at the top, and being black the lowest on the rank, with every other shade ranked in between. Several studies support Gabriel's understanding of a hierarchy within racialized minorities in Norway, and that there are similar hierarchies in most countries (Bangstad, Nergård, and Grung 2021, 37). Findings from studies on attitudes towards minorities show that the most common prejudice is against people with African heritage and/or Muslim backgrounds

(Hoffmann and Vibeke 2020). This means that some racialized minorities are more likely to experience negative attitudes and racism than others (Bangstad, Nergård, and Grung 2021). There is a clear sense of shared understanding between minoritized people. For example, Noor talks about how she does not mind if other racialized people call her "foreigner" but would take issue if a majoritized person called her that. For her, like the others, the identity markers "Norwegian" or "foreigner" are about having a sense of ownership, as well as the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion from wider society. Since Noor feels included among other "foreigners" it holds the meaning of a collective identity they share as racialized minoritized people in Norway. She says it does not necessarily hold the meaning of being from another country in that context, "it would be unnatural to call myself [foreigner] in a context with only ethnic white Norwegians, that would feel like exclusion". This navigation between identities shows complexity and duality in belonging to several in-groups simultaneously. An example of in-group trust of understanding is the interviews themselves. Most of the informants said they would answer differently if I were white. Gabriel said,

> Because, you just, you know what it's like not to be white, and it follows you wherever you go […] There is something implicit. This is probably how white people have it now and then when they talk about immigrants and stuff like that, or, oh, we're not allowed to say anything anymore, we are not racists.

He implies that I have an embodied understanding, similar to his because I have experience with carrying a racialized body in the same socio-cultural context. He also implies and partly ridicules, that "white people" are struggling with seeing their privileged positions as holding the normative position in deciding what matters and not. An example is recent debates on racism and the issue of free speech where some representatives of majoritized culture believe it is getting hard to maintain free speech in a climate where "everything" is considered racism (Gjerde 2021). Gabriel classifies him and me as one of a common collective, and the imagined "white people" discussing difficulties in navigating sensitive topics such as racism as another collective, where he and I are not included. In the next quote, he describes that racialized minoritized people have something in common, and points to how it is unproductive to not work together across identity markers, while he also admits having racial prejudices himself,

> I still feel I have more in common with an Arab than a white man. […] All in all, we are all on the same team, including white people, but everyone who is not white experiences something in common. […] I must admit, that when I see minorities talking shit about each other, then I can think like if you do not understand how stupid that is, then ... […] But I also have prejudices against other minorities.

The sense of belonging and expectations of solidarity between racialized groups is not a straightforward matter, but there is an agreement among the informants that they have shared experiences of Norwegian society that many majoritized Norwegians do not have to see or experience. It comes down to an embodied knowledge of what one can and cannot do as a racialized person, meaning there is an understanding of what the reactions could be if one acted out of the expected and assigned roles.

The informants also discussed the perceived strengths of having two cultural backgrounds and different scales of belonging (Horst, Erdal, and Jdid 2019). Noor thinks it is important to be proud of one's identities in the plural, and that she should not have to give up her cultural roots to be Norwegian. Selma says that while being a racialized person in Norway means "you have to answer to everything", she described the strength of community with other's who experience similar things, and how rich it feels to be part of several cultures. They both understand it as having several identities at once. Horst (2018) writes that belonging can be felt in different ways from the traditional binary way of citizenship and nation. An individual's feeling of "being at home", the political aspects of belonging, social inclusion, and exclusion are some ways of understanding belonging. The informants' accounts are manifestations of nuanced ways of belonging, and scales of belonging (Horst, Erdal, and Jdid 2019). Their sense of belonging to other sites is relational to their belonging to Norwegianness. While feeling ambivalent towards defining oneself as Norwegian when met with barriers of exclusion, the informants feel part of society in other ways. The focus in the interviews with the informants was on their experiences of racialization, which unsurprisingly provided data of how the informants are distanced from those who do not understand the racism inflicted upon them or take part in reproducing structures of racism. This should not be misinterpreted as the informants feeling alienated from all individual majoritized Norwegians. Many of them have majoritized partners, friends, colleagues, and family. Their sense of belonging or lack of belonging to Norwegianness comes from a holistic experience of being othered.

6.2 Talking about racism in a colorblind context

The ideas of colorblindness and historical exceptionalism incite a fear for the informants of not being taken seriously when speaking up about racism, something which affects their sense of belonging to Norwegianness. In addition to the risk of not being taken seriously, this dynamic perpetuates the invisibility of racialized experience, as well as an emotional distance between minoritized and majoritized.

All of the informants shared experiences of talking about racism with majoritized Norwegians. They all shared that talking about racism can be difficult because of the sensitized and politicized nature of the topic in society and as a vulnerable topic personally. The struggle to be heard about experiences of racism affect the informants' sense of belonging to Norwegianness in two main related ways, (1) the informants feel that their experiences of racism and alienation are not seen as valid in "majoritized society", (2) this causes an emotional barrier that makes it increasingly difficult to talk about racism the more they feel their lived experiences are not acknowledged.

The informants had become used to being hesitant to bring up racism with majoritized Norwegians. It had been uncomfortable in the past - majoritized Norwegians would often become self-defensive or distance themselves from the informant if they were being told that their actions or words were racist. Therefore, the informants avoid using specific words in conversation with majoritized people about racism to be heard and not dismissed. These words are described as triggers to be avoided, such as calling someone racist, seen as a derogatory term. Mona exemplifies this barrier of talking about racism. She has repeatedly experienced that what she says is taken personally, that people distance themselves from her or break contact if she has pointed out that she found what they said problematic. Using the word racist is,

> The worst you can call anyone, I am very careful with that, I never say YOU are racist because that makes people be like, no I'm not because I work for Norwegian People's Aid… […] so I'm very careful in saying, what you SAID was racist, or what you DID was racist, because, in my perspective that is what it's about, very few people go around thinking, I am racist.

Here she navigates around the individualization of racism, knowing that it is taboo to be racist, consciously saying that *words* or *actions* have racist sentiments rather than a person having those traits intrinsically. It is down to the person who experiences racism to also explain and be careful not to accuse others when speaking up. Mona knows speaking up risks her relations with people, so it is not cost-free. Gabriel echoes Mona's

sentiments, yet differently from Mona, not when pointing out racism acted out by others, but in sharing his experiences of racism with others.

> I feel like a lot of white people get defensive when you talk about this, and it's always 'oh, but not all white people', ah, I'm so tired of it. Ah. Just... Yeah. […] At times I can't be bothered anymore. Putting up fights.

Gabriel says that he does not have to navigate how he speaks about racism when he is talking to me. He feels like he knows where I am coming from, "even though I know very little about you, I imagine that there is something that allows you to ask me questions and you are good", as an answer to me specifying that I am asking personal questions and he has the right to not answer if he is uncomfortable. He says he wishes "Norway could know that", that there is a security in talking to a fellow racialized minoritized person about racism. He wants majoritized Norwegians to understand how racism works and feels, but he does not want to have more conversations that end up with defensiveness rather than listening from the other part. There is a barrier for him and the other informants in having to explain racism to majoritized people who get defensive because it gets emotionally tiring. Helland describes similar dynamics of conversations about racism being a threat to the self-image of Norwegians as non-racist (2019). Gabriel says that the words, "racism, discrimination, oppression, these are such harsh words, they evoke strong connotations", and so he must talk about it in "an abstract and distant way" which is difficult. Mona commented that the research interview was a way for the both of us to "practice speaking about this", while "no, or very few white people learn to speak about this, so when I try to have a conversation about it many people feel attacked, even if that is not my intention". She thinks it would be beneficial for racialized minoritized people to explain racism to majoritized people because that is how they can learn and understand. At the same time, she feels like it should not be her responsibility, as the resources that are available to her in the forms of books, documentaries, and lectures are available to anyone interested in learning. It seems as though talking about racism is tiring and comes at a personal risk. At the same time, it is a way of influencing collective thinking about racism, one individual at a time.

There seem to be two opposing experiences that perpetuate a feeling of distance from Norwegianness for the informants. There is a clash between how the informants want their experiences of racism to be validated by the majority, and the majority's inability

to validate those experiences because doing so would invalidate their own experience as a "non-racist" person and society. In this context, a majoritized person acknowledging their own racism puts at risk their personal and national self-image as colorblind and exceptional. This dynamic creates frustration for the informants in that their lived experiences are not being recognized and they also have to navigate to safeguard the majoritized person's feelings. When the experience of minoritized people is consistently and actively not listened to or recognized, it seems to cause feeling of a distance from majoritized society and feelings that wider society does not care or understand. Not being listened to perpetuates the invisibility of racialized experience, as well as an emotional distance between the minoritized and majoritized. Mona exemplifies how it can be hard to find the balance between taking a battle or to try ignoring incidents that make her feel alienated as a minoritized person. Mona sings in a choir with a majoritized Norwegian friend of hers, where the group chooses international songs to perform. A few weeks earlier, a Spanish song was proposed by two women Mona described as "white-passing, if they hadn't opened their mouths you wouldn't know they weren't from Scandinavia". The song they proposed was about a "negrito, meaning a small… yeah", Mona says. She thought it to be strange, to be in an international choir that should have space for all kinds of people to use racial slurs. "I experienced it as a bit excluding. It's not like I'm gonna start crying [he he] but I find it strange that they chose this song, that the director of the choir never questioned it". Turns out one of the women who proposed the song had thought along similar lines as Mona, who said,

> "Even though some people might find this word problematic, I just want you to know in the Dominican Republic it is not a bad thing, and I call my sister this all the time", she's white and said, "I say it with the uttermost love". And the choir leader just like, okay, let's sing that one! Then I just thought [sighs loudly] it's just so tiring, it's not like I'm heartbroken and go home to cry, but it's so tiring.

A central theme emerging is the feeling of not being understood causing feelings of exhaustion. She did not want to think about the dynamics of racialization and whether or not to talk about what was bothering her. She knew that most of the people present would not understand the nuances in how repetitive alienation has affected her sense of belonging, and how this smaller incident was on some level confirming and perpetuating the feeling of distance. Speaking up would also mean breaking the norm of accepting colorblindness, implicitly acting as if all are equal, in the sense of "sameness" (Gullestad 2002). If all are equal (the same), no one should be offended by "negrito",

because the choir is not excluding, it has dedicated itself to pronounced inclusivity. In Mona's lived experience of racism, she knows that "negrito" has dehumanizing associations that have been associated with people who resemble her. The word on some level implies a whole history of what bodies like hers have been and still to some degree are associated with.

In the following quote, Mona discusses a situation separate from the choir example, on how to navigate this feeling when the experience is more emotionally draining. She says, "I feel I have to be pedagogical, and it costs quite a lot to get into a situation that is so emotional for me and not at all emotional for the other", echoing Selma's account in chapter 5. Already here, the power dynamic which is felt by her but invisible to the majoritized person because of their lack of lived experience of being racialized, makes the encounter emotional for her on a different, personal level than for the other. She continues,

> maybe, because they do not understand what they have started, […] then I have to either choose, okay, I will explain to this person, why what they said was problematic, why what they did was problematic, or do I want to just pull away, but then I can feel, oh, it was a battle I should have taken. It costs quite a lot both ways, no matter what I choose it costs something. And sometimes I'm happy with the choice I made, sometimes not, sometimes I think why did I bother to... go into it. Why could I not just have had fun?

She has to make a series of choices, rooted in opposing interests. She wants to address what was problematic to her as a way of defending herself and expressing her beliefs. She risks a reaction of not being understood by the majoritized person or the person self-defending, which makes her feel tired and emotionally burnt. Yet, by ignoring the incident completely, she will feel as though she should have reacted and stood up for herself. By ignoring it, she would be protecting the other while hurting herself. She feels trapped in this anticipation of being misunderstood and therefore hurt that her reality as racialized was denied yet again. She also says that by choosing to confront racism she feels like she has to "disconnect from all my feelings" because showing how emotional it is for her will mean losing her credibility in the other person's eyes.

Selma describes that navigating to be understood or explaining racism to others affects her sense of integrity.

> It becomes vulnerable. I have to be vulnerable if I am to incite the right feelings in others to make them see me as a human and not a threat. That requires something. It's a bit like, well it's not my fault that they are racists, why should I take responsibility for converting them? At the same time, I know that is what works. And what it requires of me is to compromise with myself. […] I feel like I'm degrading myself, like I'm lying down flat, a bit like a dog, sort of. If the dog lies flat and lets the other dogs smell on them, then there will be no fight, they can even become friends in the end. But the act of lying down flat is unpleasant and humiliating. So that's what it requires of me. I don't always have the energy, I don't always want it... I really don't want it. No, I never want to, but I do it sometimes.

The image she evokes of the dog that lies down and makes itself vulnerable to be investigated by the other dog is strong. It indicates the humiliating feeling of navigating to make oneself softer and more approachable to be listened to and considered. Yet she knows that communication is key to challenging someone's prejudice. She questions why she has to do it. Several other informants brought up the same question, is it their responsibility as racialized people to explain why they are as complex, as human as anyone else?

One of the recurring themes in the interview material was how discourses of colorblindness caused a feeling of distance for the informants from majoritized Norwegians. The informants sense that racism is a sensitive and taboo topic to talk about for majoritized people who do not know how to navigate it. As described, pointing out racism tends to be seen as an accusation on both the individual and national self-image, where equality of all is a core value. This is mirrored in the Norwegian historical self-image as separated from colonialist practice and the racist ideology that followed it (Gullestad 2006, 145, 147). The informants are faced with racism in various forms throughout their lives and consequently have to spend time thinking about how to navigate it. On the other hand, most majoritized Norwegians naturally do not need to navigate racism nor think about it, as they do not meet it.

According to Leon, (majoritized) Norwegians are shy of conflict and do not believe there is too much racism, to begin with, "I don't blame them, because they're not exposed to [racism]". This makes it hard for majoritized Norwegians to intuitively understand their position of power to include and exclude into Norwegianness. The idea of equality and not seeing color as a variable for differential treatment is wrongfully misunderstood in mainstream colorblind discourse (Burke 2019). It is misunderstood when it leads to ignorance around the very real ongoing consequences of being so-

called different in a white majority society. It seems easy to dismiss individual accounts and examples of racism as isolated happenings, or one and another "crazy person" who does not understand how to behave. This discourse ends up delegitimizing the particular experiences minoritized people have of being racialized systematically and as a continuous process, on personal and structural levels.

Gabriel has a deep feeling that majoritized people do not understand the toll of speaking about racism,

> I just wonder if white people really understand. We aren't doing this to complain, we're not talking about it, we don't write articles, we aren't activists to complain, because it is [funny], it is because it affects us negatively. How can I feel part of a community that does not recognize the challenges, when I feel it.

This feeling of not being understood when talking about racism is a driving factor for not feeling belonging to Norwegianness.

6.3 Representation in news media and pop culture

All of the informants felt there was a lack of representation in news media and pop culture that portrayed racialized people in complex ways while they were growing up. One-dimensional or non-existing representation of racialized people in Norwegian news media and popular culture perpetuates an alienation from Norwegianness for the informants.

Selma has experienced repeatedly being questioned about happenings in the news that have no other link to her than the news in question being about another racialized person. For example, she is confronted with questions at work when attacks by extremist Islamist terrorists happen in Europe. Selma says that she was asked about the beheading of a teacher in Paris who was targeted for presenting drawings of the Prophet Muhammad in class (BBC News 2020). She says,

> The consequences for me are that once again I have to somehow vouch for, yes, I do believe in freedom of speech. […] At work, people will often discuss such things with me, as if I am somehow against freedom of speech […] as soon as something comes up that can be related to me in the media, then I have to vouch for it or answer for me and everyone else. There is such an extreme imbalance, between being Norwegian and having done something criminal, and not being considered Norwegian and having done something criminal.

Selma feels as though she is put in similar categories to extremists or other racialized people as if there is no nuance and all people who are not white are heterogeneous and culturally determined. Noor echoes Selma's sentiment of feeling like a representative for a group of people. She laughs in a dispirited manner when I ask her, and she says she "always" feels like a representative. She says, "How I act, what I do, will affect what people associate with being a Muslim. So yes, there is a lot of pressure, it has been like that throughout childhood, that you feel that you are always made responsible, for something bigger than yourself". The informants tend to feel like a representative of "immigrants", of their cultural group or religion. This is a common sentiment expressed in recent research, for example by Horst and Lysaker (2021). An informant of theirs says: "It is civic engagement to have to represent a whole nation in a good way, and women in a good way and Islam in a good way" (Horst and Lysaker 2021, 80). Noor has also felt like she needs to make up for misconceptions about Islam. She says she "took a role in explaining what Islam says". For example when her schoolbooks had a subsection under "Islam" called "Women in Islam", she reflected that no other religion had a section on that topic,

> As if it were a special category for Muslims. I always had to argue against that category, referring to my own experiences. I remember it said in one book that Muslim women could not divorce unless the man was impotent (ha ha) and then I always had to […] use examples of my own [female family members] who were divorced and it had nothing to do with impotence (ha ha).

There is a general feeling in the informants' accounts of being reduced to stereotypes or not being described as fully human as the typical white, Western person is in news media or pop culture. Gabriel finds it frustrating. He feels like "white men can do whatever they like […] they are very seldom taken to represent anyone but themselves". He becomes a bit worked up and laughs, and says that there will be a show about Harald Eia's[26] cat before "we talk about something that is about non-white people!" His exaggeration and reaction reflect a frustration. He feels like,

> Honestly, people just don't give a fuck, that's what I think. People have enough with their work and husband and wife and children, I do not think they have a hidden agenda to keep black people out […], but I think people just don't care. That's probably it…

[26] Norwegian comedian and sociologist.

He sees patterns that he thinks are "crazy". Such as the word "snikislamisering"[27], becoming a legitimate concept to use in public political discourse without consequences of losing credibility among numerous voters, "when you're using a concept that plays on Norwegian Muslims wanting to take over the country". Mona is convinced that lack of representation affects everyone, "regardless of how you look, or how much or how little melanin your skin has". She talks about how her social media feed has recently (in October 2020) been full of videos of violence and murders on black people, especially originating from the United States.

> I've seen so many reports where they're filming dead, black bodies, in a way I think, they would NEVER have done it if it was a white person lying floating in the sea, NEVER. But for some reason, we are so okay to see that blacks and browns suffer and die, and that is completely within limits.

She feels like there is a lack of empathy, a sign of black people having less inherent worth, different from how white bodies are portrayed. "We haven't gotten rid of it, a white life is worth more than a black life, we have not got rid of it, I think that it's visible in the media often". She feels like media representations implicitly send out a message that she is less worthy of integrity than majoritized people. Like Mona, Noor also believes representation "has real effects, not just on how you see yourself, but how [negative] associations linked to Islam create negative associations in people when the words 'Islam' or 'Muslim' show up". She says this affects day-to-day life, always being talked about as a problem, "it will become a problem". She speaks of it as self-fulfilling prophecies that are driven by people critical to Islam or immigration with a racist undertone rather than critical thought. She remembers an exam in tenth grade, where the majoritized guard that followed her and her also Muslim friend for a bathroom break. Out of nowhere, he asked them, "yeah, so what will happen with you after school, are you gonna get married off and have kids or what?". This made her question where those expectations to her that the guard had come from when she was a fifteen-year-old school girl and felt like anyone else her age. She noticed lower expectations in other areas as well. Racialized classmates were advised by teachers and advisors to take vocational training rather than pursuing an academic career, "because there have not been high expectations for young people with a minority background", partly because of the way Muslims and foreigners are spoken about.

[27] As explained in chapter 3.2.

On the other hand, Selma describes feeling a sense of belonging when she feels represented or sees racialized people being portrayed in a complex way. She says,

> And I always get so happy when I watch, like the commercial that was with a Somali family, a long time ago, was one of the first times I saw, well, foreigners on TV. I often think that we should have been more represented in series, films, commercials, and debates that are not about being multicultural. […] I would like to have us in ordinary settings, as a protagonist in a film that is not about [being multicultural], not about my dad killing me if I marry a Norwegian boy. Would have liked to see us in more normal settings. Or else it becomes like, people expect you to always comment on being multicultural in Norway.

A strategy several of the informants employed was avoiding the news. There was a point where Shirin stopped listening to the news, "Because I was so fed up with hearing news of terror or immigrants or whatever... all that negative focus". Representations of racialized people as static and simplistic make her angry. She says it is not about being opposed to different views, it is just exhausting listening to old discourses being repeated, "That we have to pull ourselves together, that it is our fault, blaming everyone with an immigrant background, for how unwilling we are to integrate as if it were a one-way process".

There is a feeling of being essentialized because of their phenotypical appearance, the racialized body as a fixed subject, feeling like a representative for others who look like them in the simplifying eyes of the majority society. The essentializing and stereotypical narratives have consequences for those who feel put in narrow boxes. Yet, when they try talking about it, majoritized people quickly feel essentialized as racists, not realizing that stereotypification happens on another and continuous scale for racialized groups, where lack of balanced representation makes it hard for many to imagine diversity among racialized individuals. While the informants feel they have to represent their "group", they also feel that their "group" is not represented in nuanced ways in society. Eide and Simonsen have done extensive research that confirms that minoritized and racialized people have been consistently represented in negative ways (2007). The sentiments of the informants in this study were reflected in the descriptions of the informants in Horst's report on Somalis in Oslo. The negative representations of Somalis as a homogenous group in national news media affected the informants negatively (Horst et al 2013, 143). For example, they commented that when someone committed a crime the way it was phrased in articles or on TV indicated that they did not belong to Norway, but when a racialized person was successful, the language was

more inclusive (Horst et al. 2013, 144). This echoes Leon's experiences presented in chapter 5, where he noticed a difference in how he was seen when he became successful in his career. It also reflects Selma's awareness of only being included as long as she behaves "well", presented in the last section on claiming a Norwegian identity. The next section further discusses the findings presented in this chapter.

6.4 Navigating belonging to Norwegianness

This chapter has shown how the informants navigate when defining themselves within Norwegianness, the barriers of speaking about racism to majoritized society and how that affects their belonging to the collective, and how they experience a simplified representation of racialized people as distancing to Norwegianness.

Erdal reflects on why the question "where are you from?" can bring up insecurity in some racialized minoritized people. She argues that they do not have the power of defining how they belong to Norwegianness and might experience repeated questioning on their belonging which majoritized people do not encounter (Erdal 2021, 89). More than the question itself is the difficulty of naturally belonging for those who are born and raised in Norway (ibid.). A sense of belonging can only occur in *dialogical dependence* – meaning that external validation of the internal identity is needed. If there is no one to recognize their Norwegianness, it is hard to be understood as part of the collective (Erdal 2021, 90). As this chapter has shown, identifying with being Norwegian is not straightforward for the informants. It requires reflection and active decisions in what to answer to the question of "where are you from?" to self and others. Moreover, when majoritized society signals that they do not belong it is not just up to the informants to feel belonging. The informants belonging is one side of the coin, while the interplay of inclusion and exclusion is another. As children, those who grew up among other kids who also had a separate culture in their home and school did not feel alienated in their locality, while Mona felt alone as a racialized person among mostly majoritized people. These findings fit with Erdal's description of dialogical dependence. This is also reflected in the difficulty some of the informants have in defining themselves as Norwegian or not – many feel somewhere in-between or like they cannot claim what they are not actively included in.

The ambivalence of belonging is also influenced by scales of belonging. The informants find belonging locally, and with other parts of their identity than nationality. Selma says

she would not be the one waving a flag on Norway's national day, but she loves Oslo of all her heart. The informants can temporarily forget that they are seen as distanced from majoritized society until they are again reminded that they do not fit into what is considered Norwegian. What is considered an "Oslo citizen" is ever-changing, while being Norwegian is still strongly associated with being white. Maybe it is easier to identify with Oslo as a city, as the most multicultural city of Norway, where the informants see themselves and their experiences mirrored? The informants feel like they belong more in parts of Oslo that are more multicultural. There is an implication that it is easier to be at ease in a multicultural environment. It also indicates that it is more difficult to belong as a racialized minority in rural or homogenous settings, where one has to conform to whiteness to a higher degree.

The informants' experiences are characterized by feeling alienated and that being racialized does not fit with being Norwegian. Yet, discourses on colorblindness and exceptionalism create a barrier to acknowledge that being met as a different "other" over time affects a person's sense of identity. Every incident of reproducing racialization is seen as a confirmation of the previous exclusion from the majority. The informants' sense of belonging described in the previous chapter and here, is characterized by concrete experiences with racism that felt alienating. For example, Noor's neighbor yelled racial slurs at her as a child and referred to her as a "rat" after the 9/11-attacks. On the other hand, there are examples like Selma's neighbor who helped her parents feel at home in Norway or Noor's other neighbor who explicitly made her feel Norwegian. It can be argued that when Shirin chooses not to identify as Norwegian even though someone insist on her being Norwegian, that the dialogical dependence is present. However, it seems like Shirin's experiences with racism and alienation from Norwegianness are embedded in her sense of identity. It is difficult to alter her identity at the whim of how others want to see her, as Norwegian or as non-Norwegian.

Løvgren and Orupabo display how the statement "I am Norwegian" also means that Norway is mine – it holds a sense of ownership to the nation and being Norwegian. It also means that the "I" belongs to Norway. There is a sense of community and belonging in the statement. To exclude from the boundaries of what it means to say "I am Norwegian", there needs to be a core of authentic Norwegianness with a set of characteristics (Løvgren and Orupabo 2011, 7). There is an ambivalence in defining

oneself as Norwegian when feeling excluded from Norwegianness, and being unacknowledged when speaking about own experiences of racism. While Noor knows she is not perceived as Norwegian, that her racialization but also her choice to wear religious attire distances her from Norwegianness, she is the only one of the informants who still insist on defining herself as Norwegian. In this way, Noor is shaping what being Norwegian can mean, and claims the power to self-define. This reads as a demonstration of having the agency in choosing where she belongs. Shirin essentially demonstrates the same when she does the opposite as Noor. She chooses *not* to be defined as Norwegian. Noor wants to define herself as Norwegian *despite* the othering she has met from majoritized society and discourse, and Shirin chooses the opposite. This shows that there are different empowering ways to relate to self-identity and defining belonging. Still, when Shirin says that she does not want to try to be Norwegian "anymore", it implies that there was a point where she would have wanted to. As the analysis has shown, it is not just the struggle to define oneself as Norwegian that creates distance from Norwegianness for the informants. Their sense of belonging to Norwegianness is also affected by feeling unacknowledged when describing their racialized experience to a majoritized audience. Having to fight to be heard makes the informants feel tired, defeated, and alienated from majoritized society. At the same time, the informants admit that they think majoritized Norwegians just do not understand, that most people are not intentionally excluding. For example, Gabriel says that he thinks "they" just do not care, and Leon does not "blame" majoritized Norwegians for not knowing better when they do not meet racism themselves. However, they are ambivalent on the topic. Mona says that the resources available to her are available to everyone ready to listen, that it should not be her emotional labor to do for others. There is an understanding among the informants that talking about racism is taboo and an uncomfortable topic for majoritized people to discuss or listen to, and is met with self-defense rather than active listening. It seems to the informants that majoritized people are afraid of being accused of racism and all that is associated with that accusation.

These findings echo Helland's descriptions of a colorblind Norwegian context (2014). The informants' experiences fit with the description of racism as a taboo topic to discuss in the Norwegian context. There is a clear contradiction in the Norwegian national self-image as "good" and "equal" and the racism that exists. The consequences for the

informants of colorblindness is mainly that their racialized experience is covered over as illegitimate, as the ideology of a post-race society dominates. This also corresponds with considering "equality" as "sameness" in the Norwegian context (Gullestad 2002). Colorblindness indicates a sameness, that everyone is treated alike, corresponding to their behavior towards others. The informants' accounts show a different reality, of being treated differently according to stereotypes on culture, religion, and phenotype. Horst shows similar findings, in that "many Norwegian-Somali youngsters lack a sense of belonging in Norway, even though their daily lives are very much grounded in Norwegian realities" (Horst et al 2013, 152). Considering the ethnic "sameness" of Norwegian identity, their participants respond by reproducing an "imagined otherness" (ibid.). The informants in this study do something similar when they claim a distance from Norwegianness.

Not acknowledging racialized people's experiences and not wanting to admit that racism shapes the lives of racialized people is a privileged stance. Gullestad had similar findings almost twenty years ago,

> When they [minoritized people] try to communicate their experiences to majority Norwegians, they are often told that they are 'obsessed with skin color', 'aggressive' or 'too sensitive'. The hegemonic majority perspective acts as a barrier against seriously discussing racialization and racism in the public realm (Gullestad 2004, 187).

The language used (or rather avoided) to talk about racism, ideas, and images of whiteness and racialization are connected to the idea that Norway is a homogenous society (ibid.). Racialization in this context is considered a new phenomenon rather than connected to a history of racism, which makes interconnections and a holistic overview invisible (ibid.). While racialized people might not have more of an overview of how dynamics of racism work, they implicitly know how whiteness works, as people who exist outside the boundaries of whiteness (Fylkesnes 2019). While the boundaries of whiteness are less visible to those who are included, the informants see the blind spots in majority discourses that concern them, for example, debates on immigration, ideas about Islam, stereotypes that shape how they are seen. Being white is being equalized to belonging to Norwegianness, of being allowed to be Norwegian without negotiation. This attitude is present implicitly and explicitly in the informants' accounts. As an attempt to move closer to Norwegianness, one of the mechanisms some of the informants have deployed in the past is physically trying to make themselves fit better

into what is associated with being white. Mona says that she straightened her hair and used lighter makeup. However, these are practices she has discontinued, and all the informants express the importance of feeling proud of how they present themselves, of their cultural backgrounds, and how they look.

The findings in this chapter surround how the informants navigate to adapt to majoritized views on them, adapt to be heard and not dismissed, adapt to not be seen in stereotypical ways, navigating between demanding belonging when feeling excluded or choosing not to belong to Norwegianness, all while trying to express their individuality and not lose themselves in the processes of adapting.

6.5 Main findings

The dynamics of exclusion and inclusion of racialization affect the informants' sense of belonging to Norwegianness. The informants navigate how they relate to Norwegianness in different ways. For some, it makes sense to identify as Norwegian, while others feel more empowered by not defining themselves within Norwegianness. The scale of belonging is not fixed but is something that is affected by how included in Norwegianness the individual feels. Part of their sense of belonging is belonging to local sites, which seem easier to identify with than the national collective.

Talking about racism is deemed risky to social relations in a context of colorblindness and a national self-image of colonial exceptionalism. At the same time, explaining how racism works and affects racialized people seem to be considered a way of dealing with racism in society. Yet, consistently not being acknowledged for racialized experiences of exclusion perpetuates a feeling of distance from Norwegianness for the informants. Navigating how to talk about racism is characterized by speaking in ways that uphold their credibility and not being seen as emotionally irrational. The informants are forced to deal with the racism they face by navigating in one way or another. Not being met with understanding from majoritized society, whose main strategy of anti-racism seems to be denying the existence of racism, is a barrier to the informants when dealing with racism. The informants' experience of not being represented in complex ways is linked to the stereotypes they face in day-to-day life. Being perceived through stereotypes limits the view of what racialized individuals are capable of. The lack of representation signals that they are "others" – not included as part of the national collective, rather put on the margins of society.

7 Self-understanding: How lived experience with racialization affects self-understanding

In this chapter, I discuss *how lived experience with racism affects the informants' self-understanding.* The informants tend to see themselves through a lens of double consciousness. They are aware of stereotypical depictions of themselves as racialized people, as "immigrants", "black men", "Muslim woman" and so on, alongside their own, more complex understandings of themselves. This divide of being perceived in a simplifying form causes an internal conflict. Further, racialization affects how the informants orient their bodies, how their bodies are met with assumptions and stereotypes, and affects how they behave and adapt. In addition, their racialized experience affects and intersects with different parts of their social identities, such as class, gender, religious and sexual identities, and the intersectionality of these identities influences the informants' understandings of "self".

7.1 Double consciousness

Du Bois' influential essay *Strivings of the Negro People* (1897) describes the emotionality of the double consciousness he inhabited as a black American man. Having a double consciousness implies seeing oneself through the majoritized perspective, a simplified and stagnant image with little likeness to one's sense of self and abilities. While Du Bois wrote this essay more than a century ago, and in a different socio-historical context, his theory of double consciousness is relevant to the interview material. The process of racialization causes the informants to see themselves through a double consciousness, where the second consciousness is seeing how they differ from the hegemonic idea of what a Norwegian person looks and acts like.

Selma says she forgets she is racialized until she is reminded by remarks or differential treatment. She says she realizes,

> Ah, oh! Look at me! I look like a Muslim! I look in the mirror and I just see a woman. I see myself, in a way. And I'm nothing special, I think. But then there are people who, when they talk to me, I realize that, oh damn, you see me as a Muslim, as a brown person […] there is a dissonance there, you think I should be a dutiful dentist, but then I'm the opposite. And there's this clash […] where I am confronted with the gaze of others. But I forget that.

First, she sees herself through her own individuality, how she knows herself to be. Second, she is reminded through interactions with others how she is seen through the

lens of majoritized culture. She realizes, again, because this has happened repeatedly, that the way she looks, her phenotypical traits, and the assumptions that she is Muslim, generate certain expectations. She is expected to be a dutiful, quiet, and studious type, a common stereotype of minoritized women of Asian heritage. When she is reminded of her otherness, the stereotypes of her that break with how she acts and feels herself to be, it makes her mad. She says it would be nice to "live in this utopia of mine", where she forgets she is seen as different and blends in a multicultural Oslo. She says she does not go around thinking of herself as different, but when she is reminded it is as if she is reminded of a reality that exists outside of her own. It is a reality she understands and knows her supposed role in, but there is a dissociation between her reality, and the reality of majoritized culture where she plays a role she has learned through the gaze of others.

When asked how she feels about this rupture between herself and how can be seen through a "white gaze", she first says that it does not affect her to be seen as an "other", but then says it depends on her mood. She says,

> If I feel great, then no one can influence me. But if I'm a little vulnerable from before, maybe I've been through a breakup, or my mom yelled at me or whatever, and someone also fires off a comment that makes me feel different, then I get that feeling - why can't I just be a fragile little blonde that everyone wants to protect? Why do I have to be so damn controversial in the way I look?

She refers to a "fragile little blonde", characteristics she believes she is not associated with. She is somehow made to feel her looks are controversial and that she does not elude the same sympathy and protection majoritized Norwegian women do.

Selma also feels she has to monitor herself to fit in and uses humor as a way of dealing with being othered. She says it smooths over episodes that bother her, as a way to "put people in their place without seeming angry". She tries to avoid seeming angry, for example at work she feels that immediately puts her in a category of being easily insulted[28]. It is important not to be put in that category, because it means that, "your words stop carrying value". Selma exemplified this with an episode at a Christmas party at her workplace. While she was drinking a beer, a majoritized colleague came over,

[28] In Norwegian, formulated by Selma as: "krenkorama"

> ‘Oh, shit! You’re drinking a beer?!’ And I’m like, yeah, why are you so surprised? ‘No, I'm just thinking that people like you...’ And I just said: Yeah, because you would’ve been much less surprised if I had come here with a bomb around my waist and shouted ‘Allahu Akbar’ and blown you to pieces. And then people laugh, and he just... But yeah, that's what you meant, isn’t it?

Here she refers to another stereotype she faces as having a Muslim background, *or* simply corresponding with what a Muslim “looks like” stereotypically. Her colleague assumes she does not drink alcohol as he assumes she is a practicing Muslim. Christmas parties with a free flow of alcohol have in many ways become constitutive of Norwegian work culture. Indirectly, the colleague being shocked at her taking part in this seemingly typical Norwegian practice implies that he has assumed she is unlikely to take part in majoritized culture, based on her racialization and assumed religious belonging. Her looks imply a non-Norwegianness to him, an image of her she is familiar with. By now, she expects majoritized people to see her through a majoritized cultural lens where she is stereotyped rather than being met without judgment. She has learned that humor as a coping mechanism works to give her power in a humiliating and alienating situation. She tactically avoids showing the anger she feels, because she knows aggression is expected of her, stereotypically through this second consciousness on how he sees her as a Muslim. So, she can face stereotypes of being a dainty dutiful Oriental woman, and in a different setting be associated with extremist, aggressive Muslims. She wants her words to carry value and tries to adapt so that her colleague will take her seriously and understand his ridiculousness and ignorance. She is strategic in not just communicating to him that his behavior is essentializing and wrong, but using humor as a way to tell him off without losing power in the situation and keeping the mood light enough. Her double consciousness allows her to know what imagery is connected to her “type”.

Another example from a work setting is when colleagues who Selma does not know well ask about her parents, where they work, what language they speak at home. She wonders why she is being asked these questions that no one else is getting,

> I don't even live at home. I don't go around to Nils, who is 40, and ask what his parents work with?! It's just like, it's COMPLETELY irrelevant? So, why are you asking me these questions? That digging, they really just want to know why I speak Norwegian so well. What is it... are you adopted? Why do you know who DeLillo's[29] are? These kinds of questions, it's like... it's degrading […] what is the REAL reason you ask, what is it that you really want to get to, it's those hidden intentions that bother me. Just ask - why are you so well-functioning [Norwegian: "oppegående"]? (laughs) It's a bit like that.

Again, she is reminded of how her colleagues assume that she does not know the cultural codes, that she is not Norwegian in similar ways to them. She says it would have been different if they were friends or had at least talked about anything else before the questioning began. She thinks she loses the power to define herself when she is constantly seen as a representative for a group. She says, "It is impossible to break away from it. No matter how complex you are, no matter how much of an FrP-er[30] you become, you will always be, first and foremost, a foreigner". She says it would have been nice not to be a representative, "and just be me". She wonders what people had thought of her if she "removed" her brownness. These experiences feel so ingrained in who she is that she wonders who she would have been without others defining gaze on her. "I cannot get away from it, really, I can't detach myself from how I look and just be like that, just be another hipster in the street. I can never be that". There is a strong emotionality to what she is saying. It expresses frustration and hurt of feeling misunderstood and simplified by wider society, and feeling like it is impossible to get past it. It also shows how the double consciousness of always being able to see oneself from the majoritized perspective makes it clearer how embodied racialization is. She cannot separate her body from being racialized, and just be, without the connotations her body gives to strongly defining cultural imagery.

For Noor, debates and discussions around Islam in society have affected her sense of self more than direct experiences with racism based on explicit racialization. Seeing how Islam as a whole was being demonized and Muslims stereotyped and seen as opposites to "Western values", she often felt a responsibility to explain what Islam was for her. When the school curriculum and narratives around her religion did not make sense to her, she asked questions, as described in chapter 6. This affects her in other

[29] Famous Norwegian music band. In this context it signals her knowledge about Norwegian popular culture.
[30] Meaning here: advocate for anti-immigrant politics.

ways as well, for example, her clothing choice in the summer. She is conscious of the colors she wears and actively avoids dark colors. With a sarcastic tone, she says that it is important that she does not look too warm because that incites questions for people. "The more colors, the happier I look, the less unsafe do I look! It's a bit sad to think about, but I know from experience that people smile to me more when I wear brighter colors". She says she thinks all the negative stereotypes and focus on Islam make Muslims more conscious about their religion, which in turn might make them more religious. This is because "you have to get acquainted with your religion and immerse yourself in knowledge to be able to spar back, so I don't know if it made me even more religious, but at least it made me more aware of my faith". In this way, she has an understanding of how she is understood, coming from how she is treated based on collective ideas of what a "Muslim woman" is. This is a double consciousness where she knows what to expect in the forms of racism and exotification based on how she looks. Yet, she has not internalized that gaze and has a sense of who she is om ways that are different from the stereotypes of her. She describes that being a minority can feel like "being constantly attacked, so you seek refuge in something higher than yourself, so yes, I would say that it has strengthened my faith". The feeling of being attacked can be interpreted as the constant fight against stereotypes that are put on her, that she feels are not accurate to who she is, and that limits her agency to be a complex individual.

Gabriel uses the term double consciousness himself at one point, and describes it as "how I have to understand how I see myself, *and* how the white man in the street sees me". Mona and Gabriel both say they commonly experience that people assume they cannot reflect or be smart, inflicted with negative attributes like being stupid and lazy, where people are "very surprised" when that is not the case (quote from Mona's interview). The mentioned stereotypes he faces have shaped his understanding of himself, "while I do not understand myself any better by being discriminated against, or knowing that I can be discriminated against", he can understand why he reacts to certain things. Knowing what it is like to be black or brown means having an understanding that majoritized people lack. Gabriel says, "It is obvious that you have an understanding that very many, for example, white men do not have". He says these experiences have made him more reflective. In a sense, seeing himself through a double lens has given him a deeper understanding of himself.

7.2 The embodiment of racialization

From the accounts presented in chapter 5 throughout the text until this point, the embodiment of racialization has been intrinsically present in the informants' accounts. As Selma realizes when she is reminded by others, "I look like a Muslim!", she remembers that her body is defined within rigid categories she might not identify with. Her lived experience of being racialized is closely connected to the body she inhabits and how that body is met in a cultural context of vague colorblind or even intentional racism, as well as Islamophobia.

Central to the embodiment of racialization is the visibility of the informants because of their phenotypical traits that are seen as non-Norwegian. Several of the informants, Gabriel, Selma, Shirin, and Mona, mention the invisibility of whiteness, that being white is the norm. It feels notable to be racialized. The embodiment of racialization is experienced through being seen as different from the norm, being noticed first because of your body, racialized, secondly as the person you are within that body. The primary experience of embodiment of racialization is being met as racialized, rather than as who you believe yourself to be. How is this different from anyone being perceived as their bodily appearance first, as attractive or less attractive, as strong or weak, then as their personality once a relationship is taken further? Mona exemplifies the determination of a racial schema with how she feels *on* her body that she is the only racialized person in the room, or how she is noticed when she enters a room. She describes it as something that has grown out of the repetitive experience of how her body is met as different,

> I think I learned to see myself from the outside, to analyze myself, when I enter a room I think about how it is experienced by all the white people sitting in the room. I also take on this responsibility of not being too much, not being too confrontational, I shouldn't speak too loudly, I shouldn't be too aggressive. And they're just sitting there relaxing and never thinking about how I see them.

She sees this behavior as necessary as it has made her fit in in many contexts, as described in this and the two previous chapters, but she also sees it as a curse she wants to get rid of. She says,

> I think of how black I can be, should I just be completely invisible? […] How should I speak to be respected (he he), how should I speak to be perceived as trustworthy and not just an angry black woman, I have learned that, out of necessity, at the same time as it is very sad I feel that it has helped me. […] There's this responsibility, I have to be careful of how I am around others so that there's room for me too, and if there is no room for me then it is my fault because it is I who failed to behave according to the codes that exist.

She refers to the "room" that exists for her versus for others. She feels it when her body has space to just exist as it is, or not have that space. She feels expectations of her behavior and wants to adapt or oppose those expectations. She does not feel free to be naturally in the imagined space with only majoritized people, she has to navigate what her being there with her body means to them and how she can make others and herself comfortable as if her existence is a burden to the room she finds herself in. Further, she reflects on how she would have behaved differently if she did not feel this responsibility to adapt to majoritized people's levels of comfort. She says she would want to take up more space, to share more of herself. She has often been told that she is very private, which makes her think, "it's not my fault (he he), it's a consequence of how I feel I have to be". Now, she has accepted that it is how it is and that she can avoid people who make her feel that way, that she does not have to change her whole personality to prove herself as smart or reflected. She says she is learning to let that feeling of responsibility go. This is an example of how Mona has learned how her racialized body is met, and how she has subsequently adapted to be less visible, to blend into the expectations of whiteness. This is also an example of double consciousness, on how the embodied experience of continuous racialization has led her to thinking of herself as she expects majoritized people to perceive her. How does this affect how she understands herself?

Several informants described how they adapt to "behave Norwegian" or "behave white" (quotes from Shirin's interview). This seems to be used as a way to fit in, create an illusion of belonging for personal gain such as in professional settings. Shirin says she can socially pass as Norwegian or white "in most rooms" because she is fluent in Norwegian, understands cultural references, and also knows how "middle-class life is, how to talk to middle-class people". She calls this the ability to "commute culturally[31]". Here, she connects whiteness and Norwegianness to something beyond the concretely embodied racialization, to categories of class and culture as ways into inclusion. She

[31] In Norwegian: "pendle kulturelt".

does not describe the adaptation process as something that generates a sense of belonging to Norwegianness, and neither as something that is essentially *her*. It is more a sort of performance that seems necessary to benefit her in terms of her job and in relation to middle-class majoritized people. However, she also says that she is conscious in not changing the way she speaks too much to retain her sense of self – "I swear and I talk a little the way I want to even when I'm at work, or at university, and in other white rooms". Mona commented on how she used to physically try to "make" herself more white by straightening her curly hair and putting on lighter makeup. These changes made her feel like majoritized people treated her as more digestible and harmless. She says that she thinks that she "can perform whiteness a bit more" if she wanted to, that it is available for her if she tried. She says that she now looks up to women who keep a natural afro, "who says, no, I am black, and if I want to be very black today I can be, and I am not worth less for that reason". It seems as though *performing whiteness* compromises with both Shirin and Mona's sense of self to some degree, and that they actively try to find a balance between adapting because of a felt necessity and feeling true to themselves and who they feel they are.

The motivation to adapt seems to be the opportunity of an easier presence in what is felt as "white spaces", and avoid the discomfort of being seen as not belonging. There is a dissonance between feeling like they belong because they have grown up in a Norwegian context with Norwegian (most often) being their primary language, and the experience of the body being perceived by a majoritized collective as "other", a strange culture or language. While most multicultural racialized Norwegians probably exist somewhere in-between Norwegianness and their culture of heritage, these nuances in identity and belonging are not attributed to their bodies, which are simplified or stereotyped if they do not take action themselves in performing whiteness, or Norwegianness, or class-belonging.

Gabriel and Noor exemplify how they actively choose not to adapt where they feel physical adaptation might have made it easier for them to be closer to the idea of what a Norwegian person looks or behaves like. Gabriel talks about the way he dresses and keeps his hair, which he says can elude stereotypes about weed-smoking and unhygienic upkeep. However, he says that when his football team from a majoritized, affluent area of Oslo, played against kids from the other side of the city (majority racialized and

working-class area), he was also seen as one of the rich, white daddy's boys[32]. How he is perceived can change according to other factors than his appearance and racialization alone, as with being seen as white in his father's country of origin. However, as described in chapter 5, he has felt the stereotypes affect how he has been met at university specifically, but also elsewhere in society. He feels that the way he looks, the way he dresses but also the racialization of his body, affects how he is treated and perceived. He has often felt underrated, and that few people would guess he has higher education and is politically engaged. Similarly, but differently, Noor's choice to wear a hijab and present herself as a visibly practicing Muslim has consequences for how she is treated and perceived. It is similar to Gabriel in that they both choose to dress in ways they know distance them further from what is typically perceived as Norwegian. Yet, it is different in the even stronger symbolism and politicization associated with the hijab in contemporary Norwegian society. By many, the hijab is seen as controversial, oppressive to women, and in an orientalist tradition as the opposite of "Western values". While she has felt that the racism she experiences is most often connected to her wearing a hijab, she has never considered taking it off. She is willing to experience uncomfortable encounters and devaluation to be able to express her sense of self and her values through her bodily appearance. Several times during the interview she implied the importance of her hijab to her identity. She said the societal pressure against her wearing a hijab rather led to the opposite, that she felt even more strongly about keeping it. In this way, her choice in keeping the hijab despite negative perceptions is a way for her to choose her understanding of herself over an adaption to whiteness or Norwegianness to blend in and go unnoticed.

The experience of being a racialized minoritized person is essentially an experience that starts from the bodily realm. It is from the phenotypical differences one experiences being made different. Learning that they are seen as different effectively works as a double consciousness where they balance their "self" and how it is strategically best to adapt to Norwegianness, given their knowledge of what a Norwegian is "supposed to be". There is a split between popular cultural images and (mis)representation of minoritized people, often based on essentializing stereotypes, and their inner experience of self, identity, and personality. The racialized and minoritized experience is an attempt of mending that split, wanting others to see them as complex individuals, or on the other

[32] In Norwegian: "pappagutt".

side trying to give up controlling how others see them and accept a certain feeling of alienation from wider society. While the informants find pockets of belonging or have relations to individuals who see them as they feel they truly are, on a structural societal level, they feel essentialized as types in an ongoing process of racialization.

7.3 Intersectionality and racialization

> Identities and selves are not timeless, context-free, abstract, and fixed, but vary according to context, cross-culturally and over time. (…) Identities and selves therefore vary according to socially structured categories such as gender, age, and social class (Gullestad 2006, 102).

To understand how racialization affects self-understanding, it is necessary to look at the intersections of race with other categories. The informants' experiences are characterized by the categories Gullestad mentions in the quote above. Gender, social class, and religious belonging to Islam stood out as categories to explore further.

Shirin says she believes racism is quite specific in "how it strikes us". She says, "I'm exposed to a completely different kind of racism than my Somali friend, but also different from my father", referring to a generation gap, the time of immigration to Norway, and language and cultural knowledge. Further, she says, "There is something about the stereotypes that are created and are specifically aimed at certain groups and subgroups". According to the informants, gender, class, and sexuality influence their racialized experience. This empirical grounding supports that the informants have a structural understanding of the racism they face as targeted at certain stereotypes, and as systematic rather than random.

The intersectional perspective is clear in the specific differences in the informants' accounts from chapters 5, 6, and 7. Leon and Gabriel, as racialized black men have experiences with the police that the female informants do not mention. Leon says he feels that he is seen as "more threatening" than others, and Gabriel says that he is seen as "scary". They also experience being seen as less educated or resourceful than they are. This corresponds with the general debate about racialized men, how they are portrayed as potentially dangerous and often wrongfully suspected of crime and drug dealing (McIntosh 2015).

Gender plays in how the informants experience racism in more ways than one. Mona, as a racialized black woman, has experienced being blatantly sexualized and assumed to be a prostitute at a very young age. Both misogynist and racist stereotypes about African

women play into this assumption. She has also been told she is scary, takes up too much space, and that she comes off as aggressive. This is related to stereotypes about black women specifically as inherently angry. Mona also reflected on the challenges she has observed black men in her life face that are different from hers. Throughout her life, she has noticed how she and her male family members are treated differently and have different challenges when it comes to racism. While she has had comments about being intimidating, black men experience this to another degree, with a common assumption being that they are scary, but also actually dangerous. She brings up the example of police brutality disproportionately affecting black men in the U.S., based on sincerely believing that black men are a threat. She thinks the persistent discourse on black men as dangerous has convinced people even in Norwegian culture. Yet, she says,

> There is no truth to that fear. Because... the notion that blackness is so dangerous […] it's bullshit. If nothing else, whiteness is more dangerous, [...] this whiteness that determines so much, that's what the [standard] narrative is, it is what determines who I should be and who you should be, and at the same time they also decide that we are dangerous - when will we be allowed to say something?

Here she turns the perspective on whiteness as the problem, that it is from a white collective imagination that the idea of "the racialized person" is born. She challenges the stereotypes of black people as intimidating and especially black men as dangerous. Gabriel and Leon's accounts echo Mona's observations of stereotypes of black men.

Experiences of female informants being perceived as "Muslim women oppressed by Muslim men" can be related to research on *femonationalism*. Femonationalism refers to how nationalist movements promote Islamophobic policy under the pretense of protecting oppressed racialized and Muslim women from oppressive Muslim men (Farris 2017). It describes how an otherwise gender-conservative nationalist ideology co-opts feminist concepts to marginalize Muslim men. Shirin, Selma, and Noor are all from Muslim family backgrounds, and phenotypically they can be assumed to have origins in the Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) region. Especially Selma and Noor talk about assumptions of them being controlled by their conservative parents or being suppressed as Muslim women. This is even more clear for Noor after she starts wearing the hijab. Noor's experiences at her first job at a supermarket, in a job interview as a young adult, and how she was treated before, in, and after being in the courtroom as an adult in an abusive marriage, were all based on assumptions made of

her as a Muslim hijabi. The experiences are repetitive, they reflect how Muslims and Muslim women, in particular, are represented in culture, history, and media, as a fixed stature. Most of the racism she experiences and talks about is rooted in stereotypes about women in Islam. Religion, as well as gender, therefore becomes an important intersectional marker for her experience of racism. Farris shows how ideas of Western exceptionalism on the oppression of women translate into xenophobic ideologies that perpetuate racism.

Class is an underlying topic in several informants' accounts. Selma says that she thinks discussing class is missing in the current debates about racism. From her job as a social worker, she observes how cultural differences are often brought up as a factor of bringing up racialized children differently, while she thinks the underlying difference is often class-related. She exemplifies this with how immigrant parents who belong to the working class, who might not have read the educational child-rearing books on how eye contact is important for a baby, are described as having a different culture. She thinks we should acknowledge that immigrants belonged to different socio-cultural classes in their societies before being "working class" in Norway. Immigrants represent a diverse group with different levels of education and different norms from their home countries. Selma thinks of a class-conscious perspective, where one takes into account not only the class position of immigrants within Norwegian society but also where they come from in their countries of origin as a marker. She uses her own family as an example, who emigrated from metropolitan cities. One of her parents is a published author in their country of origin and comes from a different socio-economic background than many other immigrants who emigrate from rural settings or with lesser opportunities for education. In this, Selma points to a homogenization of racialized immigrants and assumptions of being similar and starting from the same positions. As a social worker who sees majoritized colleagues working with minoritized clients, she observes that cross-class consciousness and understanding are as important as cross-cultural understanding, not to fall into traps of blaming cultural differences for all that is "wrong" with immigrants.

Shirin observes the intersection of class and racism from a different angle. In the section on the embodiment of racialization, it is interesting how Shirin describes being able to "perform class". She connects performing middle-class with whiteness and implicitly being an immigrant as being working class, which was her situation growing up.

Learning to “commute culturally” has helped her become successful and has meant upward class mobility. She is conscious of class as an issue related to racism throughout the interview. However, she also sees how class is ignored when it can explain issues we face with integration and stigmatization as a society. She thinks racialized immigrants are often blamed (indirectly or through media reports, in discourse) for not wanting to integrate. One example she refers to, is how she observes that housing policy is rarely talked about in regards to schools with a high percentage of racialized children. The schools in her neighborhood are characterized by pupils frequently moving schools, affecting the school environment negatively. She sees the explanation to this as a class problem related to the large concentration of municipal housing in the area that requires low-income families to move often. Effectively, she says, “class also affects the classroom environment”. She thinks class-conscious perspectives like this are lacking when it comes to analysis in media outlets and the general debate. “When they talk about it, they talk about it as if the fact that the children are racialized is the main reason why the school is not up to standard”. It makes her angry and annoyed that these situations and racialized children are seen through a simplified and degrading lens. Bringing up the nuances of how class influences racialized immigrants, is a way to shed light on the complexity of issues regarding the integration of immigrants. It counter-balances the one-sided discourses on racialized immigrants as problems in and of themselves.

Finally, Shirin’s account has also shown that sexual orientation can influence dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in surprising ways. As discussed in chapter 6, on belonging to Norwegianness, being queer has become more acceptable in Norwegian culture, and protecting queer people’s rights has become more accepted. Shirin’s experiences of racism in the queer community, based on assumptions on her and her family, are interesting. While being queer internationally has been, and still is, often a category of exclusion, Shirin has experienced it as something that has made her seen as more Norwegian. This shows how different categories of identification can influence each other differently. With gender categories, it is not necessarily a privilege to be male if you are also black and your masculinity signals danger within the social relations you engage in. An intersectional lens shows how sexualization and misogyny women face across phenotypes can be adapted to also include racism. It shows how one can become blind to class as an analytical tool when one has “commuted” beyond a working-class

life situation, and look at integration from solely a culturally determined standpoint. Signifiers such as religion and sexuality also influence how one experiences racism and what kind of racism is directed at the individual. All of these examples are ways different systems of oppression intersect and play together.

What all of these categories have in common, is the experience of being put in categories, such as gender categories, along with racial categories, and being essentialized based on those identifiers. This happens to the degree where one starts internalizing the categories and identifies with that group – "black man", "brown queer woman" – because of their common experiences of stereotypes. The constructed categories reiterate themselves with common experiences within the groups, but also because embodied signifiers (gender appearance, phenotypical traits, religious symbols, etc.) are culturally entrenched in imagery that leads to said stereotypes. This brings up the dilemma of reinforcing categories while working to deconstruct them (Horst and Erdal 2018). While colorblindness does not end racism but only denies its existence, there is a need to see the categories of difference since the consequences of racial categories on racialized people are tangible. At the same time, overidentifying with racial categories endangers perpetuating a naturalistic belief in "race" as real, when the goal of antiracism should arguably be to lessen the distance between people across "categories".

7.4 Historical-racial schema and racialized orientations

In this discussion, I connect the analysis in this chapter to Fanon's historical-racial schema and Ahmed's understanding of a racialized *orientation* ([1952] 2017; 2007)

The process of being racialized, of having racial ideas put on one's body and being "othered", through repetitive incidents, has become a pattern the informants recognize and learn to navigate within. They have come to understand how they can expect to be met as racialized and minoritized people in Norway, what questions on identity and belonging they will indirectly and directly be asked. This has forced them to reflect on their sense of belonging and identification vis-à-vis images of Norwegianness where whiteness is inherent. How to carry their bodies as racialized bodies has become inherent knowledge, rather than habit, as Fanon puts it. They have repetitively experienced being met as their racialized bodies first, where their skin is burdened by a *historical-racial schema*. The informants' experiences of how their bodies are met

versus bodies that fit in *whiteness* are distinguished by feeling predetermined, as representatives of other bodies that can be compared as the similar phenotype. Their bodies are situated in a historical context of how "their" group has been presented, and those stereotypes have developed into contemporary ideas that characterize the racism they experience. They experience that white bodies are allowed to be blank canvases, waiting to be filled with individual meaning. The informants' bodies feel heavy from carrying fixed meanings. Their bodies represent what is not necessarily theirs, but become theirs because they have to learn to relate to it, to even identify with it. Noor feels she has to be able to spar back in case someone spreads misinformation about her religion, so she makes sure she is knowledgeable. Shirin and Leon deal with racism as a subject in their professional lives, grounded in a feeling of necessity to inform others, to understand their place in the world and how racism affects people. In this way, they seek to influence racist structures of culture and society. They also feel that racialized Norwegians need representation and that diverse stories should be heard. This need can be linked to the shift all the informants went through in their understanding of racism. A structural understanding helped them situate their own experiences as part of a pattern, rather than their individual challenges. The informants have experienced feeling responsible for their "race and ancestors", the historical baggage of the *white gaze* upon them, much like Fanon describes ([1952] 2017, 92). They navigate the world through subconsciously learning how to most strategically *orient* their bodies in the world. What is strategic orientation is different for the individual. Some of the informants described perform whiteness as a way to gain personal benefit in professional settings or in relations with others, to be deemed competent or be included. Examples are Mona who straightened her hair and experienced being better liked, how Noor automatically changes the way she speaks to be more proper Norwegian or Shirin on how she "commutes culturally" through cultural codes and references. In these ways, they orient themselves in favor of being included in majoritized culture and hopefully blend in more, as they experience standing out with their bodies in "white spaces", as the term Mona uses. Some of the informants show how they actively choose not to adapt to be included in Norwegianness, and learn to take the consequences of being treated like they do not belong. They create an orientation to the world based on actively choosing what they know is distancing them from inclusion. Gabriel wears his hair in dreads even though he feels he is met in a certain way, and Noor is not willing to remove her hijab to be included. Mona says she feels brave keeping her hair is natural rather than

straightened. These are ordinary ways of expressing personal preference and self-identity that for racialized people can mean "choosing" being met with prejudice. The dreads and the hijab becomes part of their historical-racial schema. Within that choice of denying adaption, they can still choose to orient themselves to be met more positively in the eyes of majoritized society. For example, when Noor dresses colorfully she is met differently than when she wears dark colors. Knowing the stereotypes and activating a *double consciousness* makes her understand that she is associated with religious conservatism and oppression when she dresses in black as a Muslim hijabi. A lot of literature describes similar experiences among other racialized people in the Norwegian context. Participants in Horst's study describe experiencing that "the reaction to the hijab can be a major obstacle for women, bringing more negative judgment on them from the first meeting", similar to Noor's experience (Horst et al. 2013, 38). I would argue that belonging within whiteness, there is a greater space to orient oneself in the world in a myriad of different ways. Majoritized people can be sorted into all sorts of categories. The space for racialized people is more limited, according to the informants' experiences. Minoritized racialized people are by default "outsiders", and have to *do something* to be included, or defy changing themselves and meet the consequences of being excluded to a higher degree. Racialized minoritized people have to make themselves Norwegian and continuously prove that they belong within Norwegianness (Løvgren and Orupabo 2011). This also shows how racialization plays into dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and cannot be analyzed isolated from other phenomena it has consequences for, such as the informants' sense of belonging.

Orienting themselves as racialized in the world has consequences for the informants' self-understanding. They navigate around the questions of compromising their body language, their voices, how much space they take up in a room, to make majoritized society comfortable with their physical presence. This is a way to orient oneself to belong by being included. Choosing to defy conforming their bodies to be whiter, or lighter, not a nuisance to the room also means risking being excluded. Mona has unlearned what others have told her about who she is – that she is frightening, that she is too loud and takes up too much space, that she has an attitude. Yet, it requires actively declaring that she does not see herself in those descriptions. According to Mona, this characterization of her has come from different people at different stages in her life, often without her *doing* anything in particular. Feeling misunderstood simply by

existing is alienating. When the excluding party are members of the majority, their gaze on her also alienates her further from feeling belonging to Norwegianness. The internal sense of belonging requires an external confirmation that one belongs. Orientation in its essence is about how the internal sense of the body interacts with the external world, and how the two blend into one interconnected internal/external experience. The informants feel a divide in their internal understanding of themselves and how the external body schema represents them in the world. They feel they have to represent bodies that are perceived as similar to the majority. In this way, adapting to whiteness is not only something one does for oneself but also the representation of the group. In this chapter's analysis, double consciousness represents the disconnect between an internal and external consciousness. From consciousness, the body adapts to how it is perceived. The interaction of double consciousness, of a body that navigates between adaptation and defiance, and of intersectional experiences related to other categorizations than racialization, all come together to shape the informants' understandings of themselves. When Shirin is asked if racism has affected how she sees herself, she says that it is like water for a fish – "I can't see how I can tread away from society's gaze on me, that's just how it is".

7.5 Main findings

Through the experience of racialization as a process of racial ideas being associated with their bodies, the informants form a double consciousness. This awareness plays into how they orient their bodies in the world. By performing whiteness some informants learn to orient their bodies in ways that lead to inclusion. However, this can be self-destructive to their integrity, and it is considered important to carry their bodies with pride. The informants are not willing to consistently compromise their outward appearance to fit into the standards set by Norwegianness. An intersectional lens on racialization demonstrates that racism is influenced by other categories of identity. The experiences that individuals have in common in the intersections of their identities, construct group identities such as "black man", or "Muslim woman". They orient to be included or choose actively not to comply with the ideas of Norwegianness. This has implications for their understanding of where they fit in because having to work towards inclusion rather than naturally belonging feels alienating.

8 Conclusion

In this thesis, I have studied the research question,

How does lived experience with racism affect racialized individuals' sense of belonging to Norwegianness, and their self-understanding?

The informants expressed that there is a need for them to define themselves in relation to being Norwegian. While they have personal feelings of how they want to define themselves, they feel influenced by the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion to the national collective. Their experience is that they are largely defined as non-Norwegian, the main cause being the importance of whiteness to Norwegianness. How they identify with being Norwegian (or not) is a consequence of an experience of being allowed or disallowed to define themselves as Norwegian. They navigate between desiring to belong and not wanting to belong. Giving up identifying as Norwegian is not necessarily experienced as a defeat, rather it can be an expression of power – in defining one's own identity. On the other hand, defining oneself as Norwegian can also express the same power, and at the same time contribute to redefining what the boundaries of Norwegianness are. Either way, the informants do not naturally feel like they belong within Norwegianness. How they identify is something they have to actively choose, and which is influenced by being excluded through the experience of racialization.

While experiences with racism affect how strongly the informants feel they belong within the national community, their sense of belonging to local communities is stronger. They feel more included in their neighborhood and local communities with shared identities or experiences. This includes relations and a sense of belonging to individual majoritized Norwegians, as partners, friends, and colleagues.

The difficulty in communicating personal experiences with racism, or pointing out racist behavior, affects the informants' sense of belonging to Norwegianness. It is difficult to talk about racism because it is a sensitized subject in an environment where colorblindness and ideas of Norwegian exceptionalism are taken for granted. The informants do not feel like they can accuse someone of acting out racism, as it is taboo to "be" racist. This dynamic makes the informants hesitate to talk about racism out of fear of being dismissed or damaging social relations. The informants navigate around the topic in different ways, for example by talking about racism in a way that evades

any accusation, or by trying to ignore racist behavior. The informants find it stressful to confront racism, yet ignoring it causes internal discomfort. They have to navigate how they communicate racism carefully to be heard and acknowledged for their experience. The consequence is that it becomes the informants' responsibility to explain how racism affects them in an environment where their experience is often dismissed. There is a clash between majoritized ideas of colorblindness and the informants' experiences and understanding of structural racism. This results in a gap of understanding that makes the informants feel further distanced from being Norwegian.

This distance is perpetuated by feeling like their "ethnic group", or racialized immigrants and citizens in general, are misrepresented in the public discourse. They experience that portrayals of racialized people as "others", one-dimensional or in stereotypical ways, have direct consequences for them. A consequence is being met with the same stereotypes that are portrayed in news media or pop culture. They also feel like they become representatives of their "groups" when they are met by majoritized society. The experience of being stereotyped in public discourse becomes part of the informants' racialization. This is an alienating experience that distances them from feeling belonging to Norwegianness.

Through repetitive racialization, the informants become aware of certain stereotypes of people who look like them. Throughout their lives, they have discovered patterns of how they are racialized, which tells them how they tend to be seen in the gaze of majoritized society. Their double consciousness creates a dissonance between how they experience themselves, and how they feel seen by majoritized society. While the informants in this study are conscious of the stereotypes others have of them, arguably it still affects how they orient themselves in the world. Their bodies are racialized through a historical-racial schema that in turn influences how they carry themselves in the world. For example, Mona feels as though her body takes up too much space when she enters a room with only majoritized people, that she is noticeable in a way the others are not. Being told that she took up too much space and had too much of an attitude from a young age and up until her workplace as an adult, influences how she orients herself in the world. While she is aware of this, it is still difficult to demand space or as she phrased it, "be black". In this way, the experience of being racialized can influence one's bodily orientation and sense of self.

The informants do not experience racism as an isolated phenomenon, but as something that relates to other categories of their identities, such as gender, class, sexual orientation, and religious belonging. Some of the informants talk about how the racism they experience has shifted in shape and frequency as their class belonging or visibility (in terms of fame) has changed. Leon says that as he has become more acclaimed in his field, he has experienced less racism. His fame produces an individuality that replaces the stereotypes he usually faces. Shirin reflects on something similar when she discusses class. She defines her childhood family as working-class and her current situation as being part of the middle class. With this shift, racism has become more subtle and less frequent. It seems as though her middle-class orientation makes it easier for her to fit into society. It seems like "removing" the degradation of being "low class" can change how one experiences racism. These findings imply that more research should be done on how racism is experienced differently according to class mobility and individual professional success.

The findings in sum relate to the informants' understandings and experiences of racism as structural. They experience racism as a repetitive structural pattern, in which they can predict how they are met in certain situations. This structure can be described as an external pressure that influences them to internalize the stereotypes they are met with. The pressure is formed by the accumulation of many individual encounters and messages that have signalized to the informants that they are largely excluded from being Norwegian. The informants feel it is impossible not to relate to this structure, and that it shapes their sense of belonging and their self-identification. In this way, the informants are forced into a double consciousness, where they must both be conscious of how they understand themselves and how they are understood by majoritized society. The findings are ways in which the informants navigate this forced relation. They do this using different strategies, for example by reacting in ways that alleviate the pressure of being racialized. An example is how the informants define themselves as Norwegian or non-Norwegian. It is a negotiation within themselves, where the goal is to lessen the pressures of the structure of racialization. They use their personal agency by defining where they belong and how they identify. Defining as Norwegian or non-Norwegian are both results of an internal negotiation where the goal is to be as free from the pressure of the structure of racialization as possible. There is a strategy of risks and rewards in how they navigate, by actively reacting or being passive to racism. An example of

actively reacting is how Selma uses humor to call out racist sentiments. The risk of talking about racism is that it can negatively affect social relations to the person that is "called out". By using humor she makes the other party understand that what they said made her uncomfortable, without risking the relationship. She reacts in a way that allows her to be more comfortable in the situation and therefore alleviates the pressure. It requires a conscious strategy to react in a way that evades social consequences. When Mona reflects around whether it is right to point out racism or easier to ignore it, she says that the passive reaction risks as much discomfort and internal conflict as actively talking out would risk an external conflict. In this way, she is affected negatively either way. There are also signs that the informants actively try to influence the structure of their racialization. An example of this is when Selma says that it helps to educate majoritized individuals on why something is understood as racist. While there is a reward in influencing the structure in some way, it is also something she feels is humiliating and tiresome. The informants' accounts show how difficult it is to navigate within the structures of racialization. They navigate by trying to alleviate the pressure of racialization – or try to influence the structure that racializes them at the expense of their personal comfort.

The findings in this study of the informants' experience of "a long-term observable pattern" of racialization, can be understood as a social structure of racism (Garner 2010). While the informants have to relate to the structure, they have certain agency to act on or alter the structure (Garner 2010). The informants' accounts show how collective patterns in society are reproduced through individual actions to form a racializing structure. In the academic context, it is relevant to situate these findings in the current debate of the use of the concept structural racism in the Norwegian context (chapter 2.2.1). Haugsgjerd and Thorbjørnsrud ask Norwegian social science researchers whether the concepts structural racism and racialization serve to understand relations between majority and minority populations (2021, 78). These concepts have been suitable to describe how the informants experience racism. The conceptual lens of structural racism and racialization produces knowledge about the continual processes of exclusion and inclusion, leading to more complex understandings than limiting studies of racism to explicit racist acts between individuals. A study of structures goes further than focusing on individuals' intentions of perpetuating racism (as requested by Gullestad, 2004). Here, a structural theoretical perspective is used to focus on the

consequences of racism in terms of belonging and self-understanding, but it can be used to study other repercussions of racism. Additionally, Haugsgjerd and Thorbjørnsrud ask what the limits, challenges, or problems can be with a structural approach. I find that a challenge in an approach that focuses on structure is that the research contributes with ambiguous answers. Definite answers are useful in developing policy and enacting change. However, a structural approach may give a more complex and representative description of the lived experience of racism. In the current polarized context of discussing racism, a more nuanced understanding of how racism is experienced is needed to create cultivate insight between minority and majority populations.

This study is limited in its scope and sample to answer the questions of how structural racism can be empirically proven, and how to separate structural racism from other phenomena (as asked by Haugsgjerd and Thorbjørnsrud 2021, 79). Further research using similar and different methods should be conducted to answer these questions. Additionally, more research is needed to advance the findings of this study, to explore patterns in how racialized individuals cope with racism. In psychology, it can be studied by further exploring the mental consequences of having to navigate racializing social structures. As Straiton, Aambø, and Johansen find, experiencing perceived discrimination over time is linked to poorer mental and general health (2019). This in itself is necessary to research further as a public health issue. Also, by understanding what explicit patterns can be found in how individuals cope with racism than presented in this study, new findings could be used to recommend policy changes. More research using similar methods with different and larger samples, as well as studies using quantitative methods should be conducted to map a comprehensive understanding of how structural racism functions and what the consequences are. Although this study cannot conclude broadly on how structural racism works in the Norwegian context, it is clear that the informants use strategic mechanisms to navigate the structure, which indicates that there in fact is a structure worth studying further.

Finally, where do we go from here? By drawing historical lines to how racism has developed as an ideology and practice from legitimizing colonial expansion and up until the contemporary context, it is clear that battles have been won over and over. Racism has at all times been met with political and social resistance. The global BLM demonstrations against racism in 2020, and the succeeding rise in attention on racial injustice can be interpreted as a hopeful shift in attitudes and understanding. It is

important to continue listening to racialized experience and acknowledging that racism is a challenge both majority and minority populations need to solve collectively. This is to make sure that the coming generation of all kinds of Norwegians feel included and at home in society and have the freedom to express themselves without restrictions.

Appendix

Appendix A: Consent Form **Date: 14.10.2020**

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet «Erfaringer med rasisme, tilhørighet og fremmedgjøring blant norske melaninrike personer»?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å beskrive dine erfaringer med å være norsk melaninrik person. I dette skrivet gir vi deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål
Formålet med prosjektet er å beskrive opplevelser av å være norsk og melaninrik med personens egne fortolkninger av temaet. Dette er beskrivelser som sjelden kommer frem i offentlige debatter i Norge. Det er liten forståelse i allmenheten for hvordan det er å være norsk og samtidig ikke se ut som majoritetsnordmenn (lys i huden med skandinaviske trekk) og hvordan man møtes i offentligheten som minoritet. Et eksempel på en slik erfaring er å oppleve forskjellsbehandling basert på hudfarge. Prosjektet har som mål å utforske felles og forskjellige opplevelser av det å være melaninrik i Norge, om det er likheter eller forskjeller basert på kjønn, alder eller andre indikatorer, og hvordan informanter tolker rasismen som rammer dem. Prosjektet er en masteroppgave.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?
Kristian Bjørkdahl, postdoktor ved Senter for utvikling og miljø er ansvarlig for prosjektet. Harmeet Kaur, masterstudent ved Senter for utvikling og miljø ved Universitetet i Oslo gjennomfører prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du blir spurt om å delta i denne studien fordi du er en norsk melaninrik person som har vist interesse for å delta i prosjektet.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Som deltaker i studien vil du delta på et eller flere intervjuer. Intervjuene vil foregå som en samtale mellom forskeren og deg, hvor forskeren har forberedt spørsmål som setter i gang samtalen.

Intervjuet/ene vil vare i omtrent én time, men kan variere og tilpasses dine behov. Intervjuet vil tas opp som lydopptak, som vil slettes etter masteroppgaven er levert til Universitetet i Oslo.

Det er frivillig å delta
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger
Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Kun student, Harmeet Kaur, og prosjektansvarlig, Kristian Bjørkdahl, vil ha innsyn i dataen som samles inn.

Navnet ditt vil anonymiseres. Opplysninger om din alder, etnisk/kulturelle bakgrunn, religiøse bakgrunn og tilknytning til Norge vil muligens brukes i oppgaven.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?
Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes, etter planen ved innlevering i mai 2021. Etter prosjektslutt vil lydopptak fra intervju slettes.

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

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,
- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,
- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og
- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?
Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke.

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

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?
Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- Senter for utvikling og miljø ved Harmeet Kaur, harmeetk@student.hf.uio.no, eller Kristian Bjørkdahl, kristian.bjorkdahl@sum.uio.no.
- Vårt personvernombud: Anne-Line Sandåker, a.l.sandaker@sum.uio.no.

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

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Harmeet Kaur	Kristian Bjørkdahl
(Masterstudent)	(Prosjektansvarlig)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet «Erfaringer med tilhørighet og rasisme blant norskfødte med ikke-vestlige foreldre», og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål. Jeg samtykker til:

- ☐ å delta i intervju
- ☐ å delta i skriftlige øvelser som dagbokskriving – hvis aktuelt
- ☐ at opplysninger om min alder, etnisk/kulturelle bakgrunn og tilhørighet til Oslo publiseres.

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet.

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix B: Interview guide (translated from Norwegian)

Note: The interviews were semi-structured, and relevant follow-up questions were asked after each answer. New questions were sometimes added after an interview.

Start with: age, born in Norway or when did he/she come to Norway, parents country of origin.

1. What is your understanding of racism? Do you feel that you have experienced racism? How did it feel? Has it affected your understanding of yourself?
2. What is your relationship to being 'Norwegian'?
    - What do you identify as (nationality/term)?
    - What is your relation to that question? ('Where are you from')
    - Do you identify with terms such as 'foreigner' (utlending), 'immigrant' (innvandrer), 'Norwegian', or 'Norwegian with a hyphen'? If so, do you feel that you use that identification because of others need to categorize you or does it come from your own need or feelings of belonging?
    - Does being called any of this evoke emotions in you?
    - What do you want to be 'defined' as?
3. How has it been for you to grow up as a racialized (melaninrik) minority against the majority?
    - Do you feel a sense of belonging? What do you feel you belong to?
    - Did you feel at some point in your childhood that others saw you as different?
4. How do you experience that majority Norwegians experience you?
    - Based on what experiences - why do you think so?
    - Do you feel somewhat flattened/one-dimensionalized in the majority narrative? Do you feel that you have to prove that you are a complex human being?
5. What do you think about intentions, when an incident is perceived as racist by the recipient but was not intended as such by the sender?
6. Do you feel stereotyped based on external characteristics? How do you relate to stereotypes related to your appearance? Are you actively trying to avoid doing something that might associate you to this stereotype or vice versa?
7. Do negative and positive/complex media presentations of people like you affect you? How does it affect you? Why do you think it affects you?

8. Do you feel like a representative of a group? Is it a strength or a burden or something else? If you win/lose in something, do you feel that it will be attributed to your ethnic background?
9. Do you experience it as positive to be racialized (melaninrik) in Norway?
    - Have you had positive meetings with majority Norwegians when it comes to conversations about racism? How did it evolve?
10. Have you wanted to look like majority Norwegians/be whiter? What do you think that comes from?
11. Do you find it difficult to talk about these topics with others?
    - Is there a difference between talking to different people?
    - Do you want to talk about this with someone?
    - What are the barriers?
12. What is your relationship with other ethnic groups? Is there a sense of community or a hierarchy, or something else?
13. How do you feel after talking about this with me?
    - Do you feel that you have expressed yourself well, in a way that reflects your feelings and experiences?
    - Would the conversation be different if I were white? Alternatively, of the same ethnicity/culture as you?

Follow-up questions:

- How does it feel?
- How would you describe that experience?
- Have you thought about this before this interview?
- Has it affected how you understand yourself?
- Has it affected your sense of belonging?

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