



CCG – IMER 2019

"THEY SHOULD STAY IN THE NEIGHBORING REGIONS WHERE THEIR CULTURE IS"

A STUDY OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION THROUGH NATIONALISM AND
RACIALIZATION IN THE DANISH IMMIGRATION DEBATE

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0 Abstract

The immigration debate and the political landscape surrounding it in Denmark has become increasingly inflamed and polarized. Neo-nationalism and neo-racism has evolved and grown in Denmark, and media discourse has become increasingly Islamophobic. Several nationalist and anti-Muslim laws have been approved and enacted such as border control and the covering ban. Far-right nationalist parties have been formed and the political discourse, in general, has become increasingly nationalist. Since 2015, the Danish government has enacted 114 restrictions in the Aliens Act, which the government presents as a necessary means to get the immigration situation under control. Immigration plays a big role, both in politics, the public debate and in the media, and the immigration debate contains many emotions and worries. Therefore, we asked:

How is the immigration debate perceived in Denmark? What worries and opinions are connected to this topic and how are they rationalized?

For this thesis, 11 people were interviewed. These interviews, as well as the shared social experience (Hervik, 2003) between the respondents and us as interviewers, constitute the data. The research process was iterative, as we used the data to form the thesis. The analysis chapter is divided into four parts: The first concentrates on the immigration debate, the second on nationalist tendencies in the data, the third analyzes racism and racialization in the data, and the fourth analyzes how the post-truth era affected the data.

We demonstrate that the immigration debate has become increasingly extreme, and thus the idea of what is considered extreme has changed with it. Furthermore, we found banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) to be omnipresent in the data, as inhabitants of a nation are considered more entitled to a certain space if they were born there. This foundational understanding of the world was used as an argument for inclusion and exclusion, as it was seen as natural and logical that shared history and culture gives access to the benefits and resources available in a nation. Moreover, the respondents were affected by neo-nationalist political ideologies and felt a strong sense of national pride (Hervik, 2006). They used neo-nationalist rhetoric to describe *Danish values*, and while they did not agree on what these values entailed, they all agreed that certain values were unique to Denmark, which was used to determine whether other people should be included or excluded from Denmark.

This nationalist idea of what Denmark and the Danes are like led to the racialization of anyone who did not fit into this perceived category, which we found to primarily consist of Muslim immigrants and Muslim refugees. Many of the respondents had clear, racialized impressions of these groups of people and saw them as a homogenous mass, which was perceived to be in contrast to what they perceived as being Danish. Thus, the racialized ‘others’ were perceived in diverse, not mutually excluding ways: As incompatible with Denmark, and weak and poor people with no power or desire to control their own lives and as someone who wants to change the respondents' beliefs. In spite of the racialized understandings Muslims, refugees, immigrants and people from the Global South, all respondents distanced themselves from having racist attitudes or behaviors and considered racist an invective. Thus, the data indicate that it is worse to be called a racist than to be racist.

We demonstrate that the media is considered to be untrustworthy, and the respondents thought of themselves as someone who is able to see through fake news and misrepresentation of facts. They all consider the majority population too unaware or unintelligent to figure it out. The respondents perceived the truth to be something within themselves, as a gut feeling. As they refer to common sense as the source for their knowledge, they are unaware of the connection between hegemony and common sense.

Our study revealed that the respondents have neo-nationalist and neo-racist attitudes, as they perceive themselves as entitled to a nation, which is homogeneous and which they all describe in solely positive ways. People that do not belong to that category, the ‘others’, are racialized and perceived to be inherently different from the respondents and what they consider to be Danish. However, because the limits of what is extreme have changed, and because of banal nationalism and racialized social system embedded in the societal structures, none of the respondents consider themselves to hold nationalist or racist attitudes. This is reproduced and reinforced by the mechanisms of the post-truth era as well as confirmation bias.

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1 Introduction

All over Europe, far-right parties are growing louder and louder. The 2014 European parliament election showed a remarkable increase in EU skeptic politicians elected. The public debate has become increasingly polarized and the topic of refugees and immigrants seems omnipresent and unresolvable. This thesis examines the immigration debate¹ in Denmark.

In the 1960s and 1970s, many immigrants came to Denmark as there was a shortage of labor. Up until the late 1980s, the discourse surrounding these immigrants was largely positive. In the post-1989 world where borders were rearranged, neo-nationalist rhetoric began spreading and attitudes towards immigrants changed and became polarized (Hervik, 2006). This neo-nationalism emerged as Danes feared that joining the European Union would endanger Danish language and culture because Denmark as a small country would be overruled and suppressed. In the mid-‘90s Bosnian refugees came to Denmark and were granted asylum. This influx of refugees sparked debate and it was discussed whether the refugees were *real* refugees, whether they were grateful enough and whether they were compatible with Denmark in general. Much of this discussion ebbed out by the late 1990s as Somalis had taken the place as the center of a debate surrounding the dangers of a multi-ethnic society. The newspaper Ekstra Bladet published a campaign with the aim of questioning the presence of immigrants in Denmark, which was followed up by other papers. The anti-immigration debate grew and increasingly included anti-Muslim arguments as well. Muslims were thus already the prime enemy before 11 September 2001. While the terrorist attacks against The World Trade Center in New York further fuelled anti-Muslim sentiments in Denmark, they also provided a convenient argument for the exclusionary discourse regarding Muslims (Hervik, 2006).

This anti-Muslim narrative has been present and evolving ever since. In 2015 Denmark received an influx of mainly Syrian refugees seeking asylum from war and persecution (UNHCR, 2019). Although nationalist parties like The Danish People’s Party had been working towards stricter immigration laws since the mid-‘90s (Hervik, 2006), discourse rapidly became markedly more extreme and exclusionary. Since 2015 the Aliens Act has been restricted 114 (Udlændinge- og

¹ translated from the Danish *indvandrerd debat*. We use this term as an umbrella term, to cover both the public, political and media debate about refugees and immigrants in Denmark. Directly translated *indvandrerd debat* means immigrant debate, however, we have chosen to use immigration debate, as it captures the complexities of immigration as a whole as well as the individual immigrant.

Integrationsministeriet, 2019). By the time the government had made 50 alterations to the Aliens Act, the minister of immigration and integration, Inger Støjberg, celebrated this with a large layered cake, decorated with the number 50 and posted it on Facebook (Facebook, 2019). Besides tightening the existing Aliens Act, a number of new, exclusionary laws were proposed and approved. Even though Denmark is a part of the Schengen Agreement and has had open borders since 2001 (Svanevik, 2011), in 2016 the border control was temporarily reinstated following the influx of refugees in 2015 (DR, 2019). The temporary border control was extended multiple times and is still in place at the time of writing this thesis. In 2017 the covering ban law was proposed, approved and enacted. It contains racist and Islamophobic rhetoric and targets Muslim women who wear the niqab and the burqa even though there are only 100-200 women in Denmark who wear these Muslim full-face veils (Bruhn & Christensen, 2019). Following a media event where, among others, aforementioned immigration and integration minister Inger Støjberg problematized that a number of Muslims had denied a handshake in connection with the ceremony where they were given the Danish citizenship, it was approved in 2018 that the citizenship ceremony includes a mandatory handshake (Folketinget, 2019). Moreover, the integration benefit, that unemployed people with no Danish citizenship are eligible for, was lowered and confined multiple times, the so-called 'jewelry law' allowed authorities to impound any cash or objects surpassing the value of DKK 10.000 (Gormsen, 2019), and the government issued a plan to fight parallel societies and ghettos (Regeringen, 2018). Common to these laws is that they are designed to limit the possibilities for foreigners. They are written based on the assumption that immigrants will come to Denmark with the purpose of receiving benefits.

In 2017 a lawyer named Rasmus Paludan became a media sensation on the social media platform YouTube by posting videos of himself throwing the Qur'an on the ground² and making ultra-nationalist, racist and Islamophobic statements. He gained a following and created the party Hard Line (Stram Kurs) which, at the time of writing, was eligible for election at the 2019 parliamentary election (Redder, 2019). Since 2017 Paludan has furthermore toured through Denmark and visited areas of the country that have a high percentage of inhabitants who are immigrants or descendants from immigrants. On these visits, he tosses the Qur'an, puts it on fire and provokes onlookers and films any confrontation to post on his YouTube channel (YouTube, 2019). While Paludan is an

² According to Islamic law it is forbidden to let the Qur'an touch the ground as well as for a non-Muslim to touch it (see (Huda, 2019)

outlier and considered a freak who should be ignored, he is both a symptom of the nationalist discourse prevalent in Denmark. At the same time, he provides a convenient balancing act for political parties who have previously been considered far-right and nationalist such as The New Right (Nye Borgerlige) and The Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti). In comparison to Paludan, these parties now seem rather moderate and mainstream. Reactions to Paludan have been diverse but can generally be put into two categories. On the one hand, it is argued that he is an exceptional extremist who merely wants attention and should be ignored and that entering a conversation with him will only add fuel to the flame (Heeger, 2019). On the other hand, a common argument is that Paludan is a symptom of a public debate that has been derailed completely and that his growing popularity should be considered a warning sign (Brinkmann, 2019).

However, seen in the context of Brexit, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, fake news and alternative facts, Paludan might not be such an outlier after all. Journalists argue that we have entered the post-truth era (Ball, 2017; D'Ancona, 2017; Davies, 2017), where truth is not of importance, where anyone can broadcast their opinion of anything with no fact-checking and where one can exist in a Facebook bubble surrounded by a social media echo chamber. Where information is so abundant, that it does not matter anymore and where it becomes difficult to navigate and estimate liability (Mair, 2017).

During a parliamentary debate (Folketinget, 2019) on 21 February 2019, member of parliament Kenneth Berth from The Danish People's Party asked member of parliament Pelle Dragsted from The Red-Green Alliance whether he could name a Western country that had successfully integrated Muslim immigrants. Taken aback from the question, he said: "Perhaps I should have grown thicker skin by now, by I am still shocked by those forms of racist statements, that include hatred towards an entire population" (Folketinget, 2019, 11:11). He is interrupted by the chairman of the parliament Pia Kjaersgaard who says: "I do not accept that statement. We do not accuse each other of that. We use a proper tone." (Folketinget, 2019, 11:11). Dragsted tries to defend himself by explaining why he considered Berth's statement to be racist but is again interrupted by Kjaersgaard, who tells him that: "one does not argue with the chairman" (Folketinget, 2019, 11:11). This brief interaction sparked a short but intense media storm, where it was discussed wildly whether it was undemocratic of Kjaersgaard to interfere and limit Dragsted's speech and whether it was appropriate

of Dragsted to label a statement racist. It was, however, barely discussed whether the statement was racist or not.

According to Tina Jensen, Kristina Wiebel and Kathrine Vitus (2017) part of the reason for the denial of racism in Denmark can be found in the general (self)perception of the majority population in Denmark, which consists of ideas of tolerance and open-mindedness. However, racism does exist and is evident in policies and public debates about immigration and integration. To investigate this paradoxical tendency, the authors take history into account, arguing that Denmark only played a minor role in colonialism and that this role is neglected in our historical narrative. Furthermore, when racism or discrimination is too obvious to deny, it is never recognized as a structural or collective problem. Instead:

(...) when racism or discrimination actually takes place, it is considered an individual act—driven by deviance or ‘sheer wickedness’— that we are unable to address collectively or as a reflection of systematic patterns of prejudice. (Jensen, Wiebel and Vitus, 2017, p. 51)

Jensen, Wiebel, and Vitus argue that equality in a Danish context tends to mean similarity, which is related to the idea of Denmark as a culturally homogeneous society. Thus, integration is generally understood as assimilation, and the perception of successful integration tends to be the individual’s cultural transformation to the idea of Danish culture and values. They find that structural and institutional racism is neglected and that there is a general perception of racism as prejudices held by a few ‘unenlightened’ people.

The nationalist discourse and exclusionary laws combined with the denial of racism are captured in the media and discussed in a broad term often referred to as the immigration debate. With this immigration debate follow omnipresent anxieties and a tense atmosphere surrounding the debate. We therefore ask:

How is the immigration debate perceived in Denmark? What worries and opinions are connected to this topic and how are they rationalized?

2 Methodology

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with our research design. The second part elaborates on the data collection process and the analysis process.

2.1 Research design

In this section, we elaborate on the research design we used for this thesis. The data we have analyzed consists of semi-structured interviews. In the first four segments of the chapter, we present our choice of the qualitative, iterative approach to the research, as well as the epistemological, ontological stance. Hereafter, we introduce shared social experience and the hermeneutical stance. We then relate our ethical considerations and how we aim to achieve reliability, validity, and generalizability. Finally, we consider and discuss reflexivity, account for the use of interviews as the data collecting method, as well as describing limitations and delimitations of the research.

Qualitative

We found a qualitative approach most suitable for finding an answer to the research question: *How is the immigration debate perceived in Denmark? What worries and opinions are connected to this topic and how are they rationalized?* Because the answers to this question are to be found in people's worries, emotions, and beliefs, we found a qualitative approach most suitable. It allows us to accommodate individual complexities, which can be found not only in the respondents' choice of words, but also in their body language, pauses, and facial expressions (Silverman, 2014).

Iterative

We take an iterative approach to the field. The research question is based on initial research on the concepts nationalism, racism, and post-truth, and on our general understanding of the immigration debate. The interview guide is based on these historical, theoretical and experienced understandings, but since the interviews were semi-structured we did not seek specific answers from the informants, but rather we allowed the respondents, to some extent, to shape the conversation as they desired. We did not approach the data with a hypothesis to test, but instead, we entered the field with openness to changing our understanding. Therefore, the research is iterative (Bryman, 2012).

Epistemology and ontology

As this thesis is concerned with investigating the perception of the immigration debate we do not seek any objective truth, but rather seek to understand the perspectives of the individuals interviewed. This is because we assume that such objective truths do not exist. Instead, we seek to understand the societal structures influencing contemporary politics through the emotions, thoughts, hopes and fears our respondents have about Denmark now as well as in the future. Thus, we have an interpretivist epistemological stance to the research. We accept that it is impossible to completely avoid biases. We are humans studying other humans and our understanding of a certain context will always be influenced by our own values, identities, cultures, and contexts. Therefore, we will attempt to account for our biases and consider them throughout the research to the extent possible (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). The ontological stance is a social constructionist perspective, as the research considers norms, values, cultures, and traditions socially constructed entities. Individual actors make sense of their surroundings differently, which affects how they produce, reproduce and influence it (Bryman, 2012). Thus, we do not view knowledge as something created. The knowledge we aim to obtain, and the knowledge the informants express is constructed (Andrews, 2012).

Shared social experiences

Although we take a social constructionist stance to ontology, we do not limit our analysis to that of social constructions. We operate from the stance that some social constructions are more significant than others and that one must consider the experiences that come from these social constructions. By considering social experiences we aim at taking an inclusive approach to analysis and allow room for data that cannot be pinpointed through the analysis of language and social constructions only.

As our data gathering is in the form of semi-structured interviews, we are interested in the use of language, as we think language holds much information about a person's cultural background and beliefs. However, as our goal is to understand the complexities of values and opinions, there might be information that is not explicitly uttered through verbal communication during the interview. Within the context of the interviews class origin, age, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, marital status, lived experience, and many other factors influenced and enriched the interviews and will, therefore, to the extent possible, be included in the analysis of the data (Hervik, 2003). Consequently, we

consider experiences through the notion of the shared social experience that takes place between us and the respondents in the interview situation, as well as relationships and experiences related to this (Hervik, 2003).

We had previous relations and interactions with most of the respondents which provided us with detailed impressions of their personalities and opinions. In all cases, a specific power dynamic influenced both us as interviewers and the respondents. The different dynamics between the participants in the interview provided us with the opportunity to investigate shared social experiences. Through reflexivity, we try to account for our own position within this thesis and in the interview process. We wish to increase transparency by elaborating on personal biases and positions we are affected by, because, as Berger (2015) argues, “*reflexivity is a major strategy for quality control in qualitative research*” (Berger, 2015, p. 219). We, therefore, do not seek to eliminate biases, but rather to acknowledge them as far as possible and to include them in our analysis.

One aspect to reflect on is our position as students in culture, communication, and globalization specializing in ethnic relations and international migration. Firstly, as social scientists, we are likely to sympathize with disadvantaged groups in society, in this case with refugees and migrants. As we are aware of this tendency, we continuously remind ourselves to be critical of our empathic emotions, and similarly, we approach feelings of hostility with curiosity. While we cannot discard any immediate emotional reactions, we can be aware of them and handle them with caution. Our motivation for investigating the perception of immigration policies and the debate surrounding it, was our own curiosity about and dissatisfaction with the political climate in Denmark. We take a socialist approach to politics, which influences the premise of the thesis. Lastly, as Hervik (2003) argues, the traditional use of reflexivity focuses too much on the author and thus overlooks the background and reflexivity of the respondent. As elaborated above, we include shared social experiences and thus consider the reflexivity of the respondent in the analysis of our data.

Hermeneutics

The main aim of this research is not to explain, but rather to understand the informants, and we, therefore, apply hermeneutics as a method to interpret meaning in the arguments, values, and beliefs of the informants. In line with the interpretivist epistemology and social constructionist ontology,

the data and analysis will be influenced by our preunderstanding of the research field (Berg-Sørensen, 2013).

The research process can be understood through the hermeneutic circle (Berg-Sørensen, 2013). This process is a continuous movement from our preunderstanding of the field, for instance, our assumptions and ideas about the informants before the interviews, and the understanding of meaning that we acquire when interacting with them. Likewise, our understanding of the field develops as we read studies about the topic, converse, or observe media coverage and the representation of Islam, Muslims, refugees, and immigrants in political debates. Thus, our understanding of meaning is affected by the context, as well as by each other, and the development exists in the interplay between components and the entirety (Berg-Sørensen, 2013). Although a definitive truth does not exist, some aspects of knowledge and understanding are more truthful than others. By taking shared social experiences into account and approaching the field with a hermeneutic approach, our aim is to get as close to the meaning of the interviews as possible (Juul, 2012).

Ethical considerations

Throughout the research process, we have considered ethical questions both before, during and after gathering the data. We have taken into account that the immigration debate tends to be heated and that these topics hold passionate feelings and worries for many people. Therefore, we attempted to suspend judgment temporarily to the extent this is possible. Although we did not directly express our own opinions about the topics and introduced the research in a neutral manner, we were transparent about the aim of the research and interview data, as well as the agenda of the interviews.

All respondents were informed about the research beforehand, and they knew about the focus on austerity policies, racism, integration, refugees, democracy, fake news, and freedom of speech. Based on this knowledge, they consented to be interviewed. We chose to anonymize all respondents as far as possible, by giving them all pseudonyms and deleting all references to geographic locations and other personal details. We did this to make the respondents less vulnerable and to respect their trust (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). We find that anonymization has a large impact on the data because the respondents felt safer and were willing to share more beliefs and experiences without being concerned about the reactions from others.

Another factor we were highly aware of is our relation to the respondents. While some of the respondents were unfamiliar to us, we had a relation to others, either as acquaintances, family members, or friends. In the latter cases, we are aware that the information we acquired during the interview is confidential, and thus we cannot include it in later conversations.

Reliability, validity, and generalizability

Traditionally, reliability in a research context is understood as whether the result of a study can be reproduced by others at another time. However, for the methods chosen for this thesis the reproduction of results does not constitute a sufficient gauge of reliability. As elaborated above, the knowledge we gain from this research stems from the unique shared social experience that is influenced by a myriad of complex factors such as values, history, understanding, and power dynamics. Furthermore, throughout the interview, all participants can undergo development and change their perceptions about discussed topics. We welcome this development as it provides us with information about the understanding of the respondent and their thought processes and values otherwise lost or overlooked. These mechanisms make it impossible to recreate the interview. The validity of a research thesis is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions drawn from the analysis (Bryman, 2012). We obtain integrity through this chapter, as we present in detail the methods we have used to arrive at the conclusions presented in later chapters.

In terms of generalizability we are inspired by Fredrik Barth (1994): “*Any existential human problem will have found diverse solutions, which must be worth knowing about, thinking about, and comparing*” (cited in Hervik, 2003, p. 177). We thus aim to use the specific to arrive at conclusions about the general. In this, we are inspired by Stake (cited in Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008) and use our interviews as instrumental case studies. We use the data to provide an insight into more general questions, meaning that the respondents’ statements can be seen as a way of understanding public opinion on austerity policies, refugees, and immigrants in general. The data creates a basis for analytical generalization of the field, because we carefully consider and evaluate to which degree one study can provide a guide to understanding of a broader context.

Interviews

As the aim of this thesis is to examine and understand opinions on racist policies, nationalism and immigration policies, we found semi-structured interviews to be a useful method, as they allowed us to consider the topics discussed in depth and enabled spontaneous subject changes if the possibility presented itself during the interview. As we took an iterative approach we wanted to be open to new discoveries during the interviews and not limit ourselves by having clear expectations of the content of the interviews. We conducted conceptual interviews where our aim was to present certain statements, concepts or situations and ask the respondent to describe them and to elaborate on their opinion and understanding of them. We did this, as this is a helpful tool for gaining knowledge about what they perceive as being natural, normal and appropriate. It also allowed us to detect contradictions in their statements (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008).

In total we had 11 respondents; seven individual interviews and one group interview with four participants. The individual interviews allowed us to go into depth and pursue statements that piqued our interest or to change the direction if the respondent came up with something unexpected. The focus group allowed us to get a sense of which topics are considered controversial and highlighted agreements and disagreements in a way individual interview could not (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008). It also provided us with insight into how the subject of immigration policies is discussed among friends.

Limitations and delimitation

For this research, a significant limitation was the limited time frame. Had we had more time, we would have taken advantage hereof by interviewing the same respondents more than once and would thus have gathered more in-depth data. This would have allowed us to gain even more knowledge and information about their values, beliefs, and emotions regarding the immigration debate.

This thesis is only concerned with the perception of immigration policy in Denmark. Though similar in Europe, immigration policies can vary greatly from nation state to nation state. Furthermore, even though we are critical of both the notion of national culture and nationalism in itself (see 3.1), there may be differences in the perception of such policies due to cultural differences, history and media coverage. During the writing of this thesis, the next parliamentary

election was announced. We had conducted the interviews previous to this and therefore chose not to include it in the thesis, even though it may potentially make an impact on the perception of the immigration debate.

Delimitations of frequently used terms

Throughout the thesis, we use terms, which have different connotations and definitions. Therefore, we elaborate on the definitions and use of terms, which is included in the thesis:

The Global South: The notion refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, also sometimes referred to as the Third World. However, rather than focusing on development and cultural differences, the use of Global South emphasizes geopolitical relations of power (Dados & Connell, 2012).

Immigrant: We use immigrant when referring to people coming to live in Denmark permanently. We apply this word instead of *migrant*, because we use the word with a basis in the Danish context, as this is how *immigrant* is represented in the data.

Immigration debate (translated from the Danish *indvandrerdebat*): We use this term as an umbrella term, to cover both the public, political and media debate about refugees and immigrants in Denmark. Directly translated *indvandrerdebat* means immigrant debate, however, we have chosen to use immigration debate, as it captures the complexities of immigration as a whole as well as the individual immigrant.

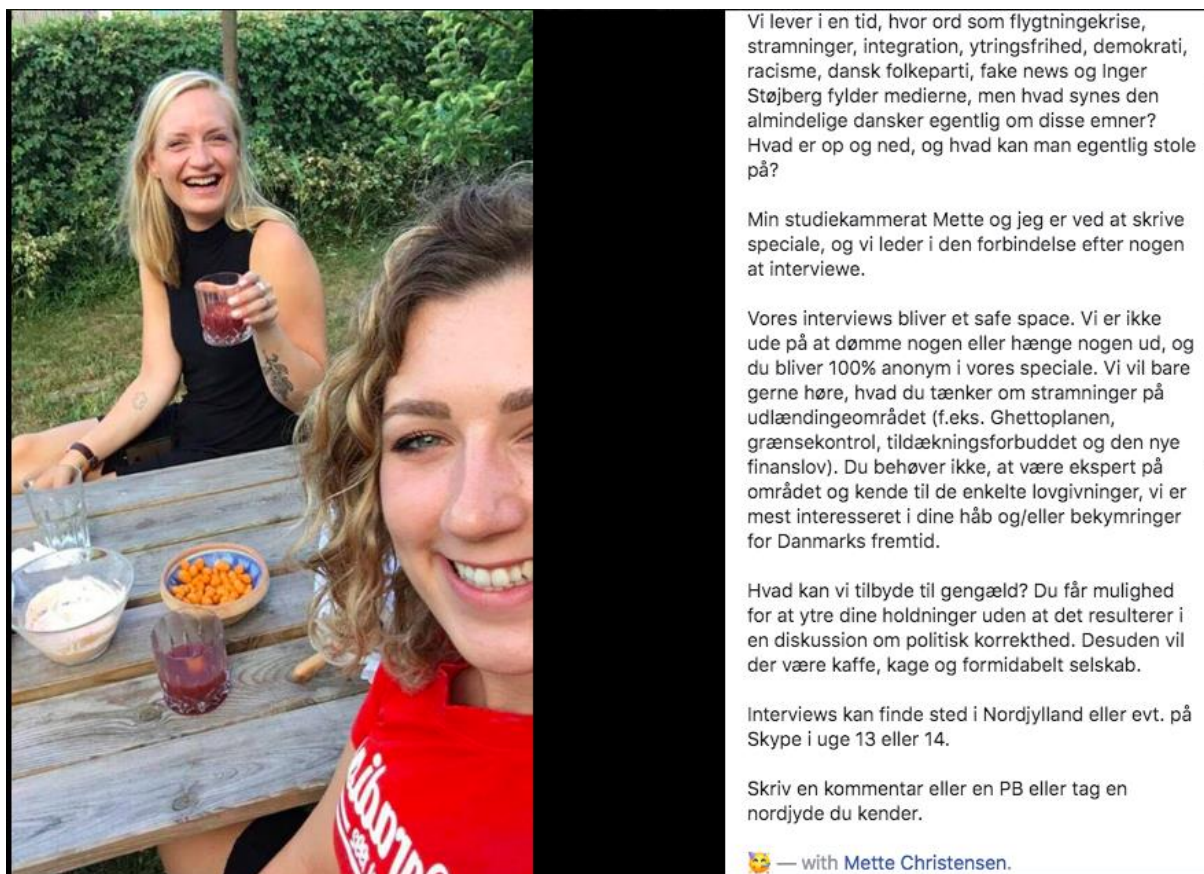
Integration: The use of *integration* in the thesis is not theoretical, but rather it is used to represent the respondents' understanding of the word.

2.2 Data collection and analysis process

In this section, we account for the recruitment of respondents, the preparation of the interview guide, conduction of interviews, and lastly the analysis process.

2.2.1 Recruitment of respondents

First and foremost, we used our private social media accounts to recruit possible respondents. This was because we wanted to talk to people who had opinions about immigration policy and the public debate surrounding it. We wrote a somewhat vague and consciously positive description of our thesis when making our appeal for volunteer respondents. We emphasized our own curiosity and will to learn and understand any opinions on the topic of immigration policy. The post, furthermore, promised that respondents would remain anonymous and that the interview would be a safe space. We promised the respondents cake and coffee, which we initially thought was a detail, but all except two respondents mentioned as a reason for participation in the interview.



This picture and text is copied from Nina Svane Bruhn's Facebook page

The caption reads:

“ We live in a time where words such as refugee crisis, tightening of the Aliens Act, integration, freedom of speech, democracy, racism, Danish People's Party, fake news and Inger Støjberg

dominate the media, but what does the average Dane actually think about these topics? What is up and what is down, and who can you actually trust?

(...)

Our interviews will be a safe space. Our aim is not to judge anyone or call anyone out, and you will be 100% anonymous in our dissertation. We just want to hear more about what you think about the limitations of immigration policies (i.e. the ghetto plan, border control, the covering ban, and the new national budget). You do not need to be an expert on the area and know the specifics of the policies, as we are mostly interested in your hopes and/or worries about the future of Denmark.

What can we offer in return? You will get the opportunity to utter your opinions without this resulting in discussions about political correctness. There will also be coffee, cake, and awesome company. (...)"

We both posted this on our respective Facebook accounts. The post was shared more than 20 times and generated more than 20 comments. We had about ten direct messages concerning interest in participating in interviews, and through these posts, five of our interviews were scheduled, including a focus group interview. We made sure we selected respondents who were of different ages, genders, political opinions, and education levels. These different circumstances were likely to provide the respondents with diverse outlooks on life, which we wanted to capture in our data.

We made similar posts in the youth groups of the political parties the Danish People's Party and Venstre - The Liberal Party of Denmark. In these posts, we did not include the photo of ourselves and slightly shortened the description. We chose these two groups as a starting point and decided to look for respondents within other groups as well depending on the success rate of the posts we had already posted. We scheduled two interviews with people from the Danish People's Party and had no responses from Venstre - The Liberal Party of Denmark. We also asked a family member to participate in the interview. We did this because this person had often uttered opinions, differing from ours, about these topics at social functions. He, therefore, knew that we had conflicting opinions, but we assured him that the interview had the purpose of understanding his point of view rather than discussing it.

2.2.2 Preparation of the interview guide

Prior to the interview, we made an interview guide (see Appendix A). As we approached the interviews as semi-structured, conceptual interview, we structured the interview in terms of the concepts that we wanted to discuss with the respondents.

We started with relatively easy, introductory questions about the respondent's everyday life, which both had the purpose of getting an impression of the respondent and of getting them talk and feel comfortable with us. Then followed questions about the actions of the respondents in terms of participation and activities relating to discussions about refugees, immigrants, and politics. With these questions, we still remained in a comfortable area of the interviews, where it was not required of the respondent to reveal any information that could be deemed sensitive, vulnerable or personal, yet a little more challenging than the introductory questions. The last part of the interview constituted the largest part and contained the most controversial topics. We introduced this part of the interview by showing different photographs relating to the questions asked. These photographs were chosen from a total of seven photographs depicting:

1. Refugees on the motorway in southern Jutland, 2015
2. Muslims praying in front of Christiansborg, March 2019
3. Policewoman hugging niqab-clad woman, August 2018
4. Loyal to Familia gang members smoking and greeting each other in an urban area, n.d.
5. Pia Kjaersgaard tells Pelle Dragsted off in the Danish Parliament for calling another MP's statement racist
6. Inger Støjberg with a cake celebrating the 50th tightening of the Danish Aliens Act, 2017
7. Inger Støjberg shaking hands with a man who just received the Danish citizenship

The interview guide itself did not change throughout the interview process. We did, however, omit the question concerning political correctness and outrage culture, as it confused respondents during the first two interviews conducted. If the respondents themselves brought the words up, we asked for their understanding of them.

2.2.3 Conducting the interviews

We introduced the structure of the interview and explained the content of our interview guide briefly. We did this, both to remain transparent and to ease into the interview process by starting out as the ones who were talking. As our topic was only superficially described in the recruitment post on our social profiles, this also helped narrow the scope of the interview and focus the respondent on which topics we were interested in.

Prior to the interviews, we had looked at the content that the respondents had shared on their Facebook walls to see if there was any content related to immigration policy, refugees, etc. Peter, for instance, had posted a number of articles related to the large number of refugees coming to Denmark. Therefore, we chose to show him the photograph of the refugees on the motorway, as we suspected he had a strong opinion on this topic. We did not want to provoke any specific statements with these pictures, but we did want to ensure that respondents started the more controversial part of the interview by talking about something which we thought they felt sure in their opinions. We also showed photographs to avoid having to say any words about the situations depicted. We were interested in their interpretation, emotions and views on the situations showed, without creating too much of bias by describing the situations in certain ways. In the example of the motorway, multiple respondents discussed whether they were refugees or migrants. By calling the people in the photograph either refugees or migrants, we could have risked a biased reaction from the respondent.

When we wrote the Facebook post asking for respondents we did not anticipate the number of positive responses we received. It was, therefore, in-depth for us to schedule a number of interviews and continuously evaluate whether we had a sufficient amount of data to make an in-depth analysis without risking being overwhelmed by the amount of data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008).

2.3.4 Analysis process

We transcribed all of our interviews. We have chosen to transcribe almost all of the words said during the interviews; however, whenever the conversation drifted towards something off topic, we have excluded it from the transcription. It is clearly marked whenever this is the case. For the coding process, we used the program Nvivo 12. The first round of coding consisted of a thorough read-through where we looked for themes and patterns. These themes and patterns could be inspired by the theory presented in chapter 3, but we also made sure that we coded other themes that

emerged from the data. We then read all of the material collected under each code and made further sub codes or moved existing codes to become sub codes to other codes. We then organized all codes according to a preliminary analysis structure and read through codes one last time to evaluate, rearrange, add and delete codes. A comprehensive list of all codes can be found in Appendix J.

We wrote down initial, overarching themes and findings that had emerged during the coding process and structured the analysis into four parts, beginning by elaborating how the respondents perceive the immigration debate in Denmark (see 4.1). From this, we develop how nationalism can be detected in many of the statements made by the respondents (see 4.2). This leads to an analysis of racism (see 4.3). Finally, the analysis is tied together in an examination of how the post-truth era affects the statements and opinions of the respondents (see 4.4).

3 Development of the theoretical framework

This chapter includes an account of previous, influential research done on the topics of nationalism, racism and the post-truth era. We relate this to our research and develop our theoretical framework, which we will use for analysis of our data and answer our research question. As we are interested in how the immigration debate is perceived in Denmark, we have found the concepts of nationalism, racism, and post-truth to be useful. Both nationalism and racism are established concepts with many years of research constituting the evolution of the concepts, and resulting in many nuances and perspectives on core issues. Post-truth, however, is a fairly new concept. In 2004 Ralph Keyes argued that we had entered the post-truth era (Mair, 2017). Contributions to the post-truth literature have been predominantly authored by journalists while there have been only a few academic contributions (Mair, 2017). Therefore, this chapter begins with a chronological account of the development of the study of nationalism, which will lead to the examination of the study of racism and racialization, as we argue that there is a strong correlation between the two areas of research. Lastly, follows an elaboration on research on the post-truth era. This segment will include accounts of research on how knowledge is obtained and evaluated, how knowledge is connected to white supremacy, and whether academic contributions on agnotology and propaganda can add anything of interest to the discussion on the post-truth era.

3.1 Nationalism

This thesis includes two different perspectives on nationalism. The first perspective is the development of the study of nationalism. We will elaborate on how the perception of nationalism has developed from its being seen merely as a top-down political ideology to its being studied as something that unconsciously forms the general public's way of thinking in established nations, and which is simultaneously a top-down and bottom-up reproduction of nationalist structures and thought processes. The second perspective deals with how nationalism is actively being used as a political ideology in established nations. The literature presented in this segment is in no way exhaustive but has been chosen to illustrate some of the most significant contributions to the study of nationalism in a European and Nordic setting.

Early Nationalism

Before World War I nationalism and the study thereof was considered part of the process of building nations and was, therefore, part of the study of history (Breuilly, 2006). Marx, Durkheim, and Weber all discussed the topic but treated nationality as a given element. Karl Renner and Otto Bauer viewed nationalism as being inherently bad and a threat to the socialist Habsburg Empire (Breuilly, 2006).

In *Nations and Nationalism* (1983), Ernest Gellner argued that nationalism is rooted in the industrial revolution as it changed society drastically in terms of cultural, political and social organization and that nationalism always originates from the state. Influenced by Marxism and, though rejecting the idea that class is the principal source of identity and conflict that leads to socialism, Gellner operated from a viewpoint of the possibility of objective scientific knowledge (Gellner, 1983; Breuilly, 2006).

In 1907 Otto Bauer argued that nationalism came with the industrialized society and, furthermore, argued that each nation has a character of its own. This character is not necessarily constant and may change over time as: “The members of a nation are linked by a community of character in a certain definite era: in no way is the nation of our time linked with its ancestors of two or three millennia ago.” (Bauer cited in Breuilly, 2006). With the argument of the national character, Bauer thus distances himself from the view that nationalism is a top-down mechanism rooted in the government.

Anthony D. Smith (1991) changed the perception of nations and nationalism from being limited to being a political ideology, but argued that this was influenced by the cultural phenomenon known as the *national identity* which was a “multidimensional concept, and extended to include a specific language, sentiments and symbolism” (Smith, 1991, p. vii). He argued: “Nationalism provides perhaps the most compelling identity myth in the modern world, but it comes in various forms. Myths of national identity typically refer to territory or ancestry (or both) as the basis for political community.” (Smith, 1991, p. viii)

Because members of the nation feel strongly connected to this national identity, some of the most: “bitter and protracted ‘inter-national’ conflicts derive from competing claims and conceptions of

national identity” (Smith, 1991, p. viii). Smith thus challenges the notion of the national character, as he describes it as a myth.

The discursive turn

In 1983, Benedict Anderson described the nation as *Imagined Communities*, which was also the title of his book. It was a central contribution to the study of nationalism. He discussed nationalism as a way of thinking about the nation rather than as a political ideology. The national identity, as described by Smith (1991), and the national character, referred to by Bauer (1996), are described by Benedict Anderson (1983) as unifying factors. He, however, does not see these unifying factors as the actual source for the unification of the nation but considers the fact that the members of the nation perceive or imagine them as similarities that should result in the unification of the nation. Imagined communities are thus:

an imagined political community – and imagined both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. (Anderson, 1983, p. 49)

This imagined community has its roots in unifying factors such as a long historical and mythical past, religion, language, and culture into which its inhabitants will try to fit, but which will also transform and assimilate as the population changes. Thus, the key takeaway is that the nation is built on an imaginative community, where its inhabitants believe that sharing a language and a history unifies them. Anderson argues that the homogeneity of the members of the community is essential for the survival of the nation. With this book, Anderson introduced the idea of the nation as a social construct, which is actively reproduced through imagination.

With the concept of imagined communities, Anderson (1983) initiated the so-called discursive turn in which also Billig (1995) should be placed (Skey & Antonsich, 2017). With the book *Banal Nationalism* (1995), Billig made an influential contribution to the literature concerning nationalism. He argued that, contrary to common belief, nationalism does not occur on the periphery of society and is not limited to extremists or those who are trying to build a nation but permeates the nation. He focused on the reproduction of nationalism rather than the conditions that made it possible for

the nation to emerge in the first place. Nationalism in established nations that have long, shared histories is both explicit nationalism, which Billig (1995) refers to as *flagged nationalism* that flares up in times of war or crises, but it also, and perhaps especially, refers to the conditions that make it possible to create an immediate understanding of the necessity of war and protection of the nation, the *unflagged nationalism*. This may be found both in the unquestioned subscription to the idea of the nation itself and also in the existing ideological foundation and the unflagged, subconscious actions that are taken to protect the nation. This results in the well-being of the nation being valued higher than the well-being of the individual. Exactly because this ideology is unflagged or implicit, it is defused as common sense and is forgotten and difficult to detect when one is unaware of this structure, but omnipresent when one is looking for it (Billig, 1995).

Furthermore, Billig (1995) argues that nationalism should not be considered in isolation and through investigation of one specific nation, but within the context of *the whole world* as made up of many different nations. All nations are reproduced, not through language, culture, and other objective differences, as argued by for instance Marxist theorists such as Bauer, Gellner and to some extent also Smith, but through the collection of ideological habits that are deeply embedded in contemporary ways of thinking. These ideological habits are unnamed and, therefore, largely unnoticed and forgotten. According to Billig, it is therefore especially the gaps in political discourse that need to be analyzed to determine this banal nationalism. Lastly, Billig argues that even though this nationalism is called “banal” it should not be mistaken for being benign.

In the case of Western nation-states, banal nationalism can hardly be innocent: it is reproducing institutions which possess vast armaments (...) forces can be mobilized without lengthy campaigns of political preparation. The armaments are primed, ready for use in battle. And the national populations appear also to be primed, ready to support the use of those armaments (Billig, 1995, pp. 5-6)

Following the appearance of Billig’s highly influential book *Banal Nationalism*, many scholars continued the research of banal nationalism. Billig was criticized for leaving out the focus on imagined communities and the active imagination of the nation as introduced by Anderson (Calhoun, 2017). Billig was mostly focused on state institutions, and many scholars have since then researched the everyday talk of ‘ordinary people (Calhoun, 2017). John Hutchinson (2000) argued

that cultural nationalism is bottom-up nationalism that is produced within the population and seeks to build a moral community and strengthen identities, rather than being state-driven and political. Nationalism thus replaces or complements religious community and identity. Skey & Antonisch (2017) define banal nationalism as coming from the state institutions, and everyday nationalism as being expressed by the general population in their everyday conversations and reproduced in this way.

Hutchinson (2000) added that forgotten nationalism is part of a process or *social achievement*, which can be reversed by means of awareness and education. Because nationalism is forgotten, nationalist discourse is embedded in the hegemony and reproduced as common sense. Billig agreed with this and specified in the foreword of the Serbian translation of Banal Nationalism (Skey & Antonsich, 2017) that banal nationalism should always be considered as on a continuum between banal and hot nationalism, and that one can thus not exist without the other.

Moreover, Billig was criticized for defining banal nationalism as operating with a “notion of a uniform, homogenous national audience—something which is particularly untenable in a context of increasing international mobility of people” (Skey & Antonsich, 2017, p. 3). Although we agree with this, we do not consider it a weakness of the book, but rather as capturing one of the pitfalls of nationalism. As Smith (1991) argued, the national identity of a nation can be the cause of the bitterest conflicts. These conflicts do not need to be with parties outside the borders of the nation, but can very well take place internally. The increase in mobility merely increases the discussion about this national identity. While these discussions are often endless, the premise of the nation, and thus the source of the national identity, is rarely discussed or questioned.

To sum up, for this thesis we consider nationalism a social construct that has been embedded in the hegemony. The fact that the world is viewed as consisting of many separate nation-states that make up the international world is thus regarded as ‘common sense’ and is rarely questioned. Moreover, this ‘common sense’ is used to explain exclusionary rhetoric and politics.

Nationalist ideology

This section elaborates on two different, yet interrelated, nationalist ideologies that each has the goal of pushing nationalist agendas through logic arguments with the use of both color racism and

anti-Muslim racism. These ideologies manifest themselves as narratives that are repeated both in politics and the public debate. Firstly, we discuss the use of fractal logic to push the narrative of the nation in danger (Hervik, 2019). Secondly, we elaborate on the use of feminism through femonationalism (Farris, 2017).

Neo-nationalism and the nation in danger

For this thesis we use Peter Hervik's (2006) definition of neo-nationalism, This is a nationalist ideology that emerged in the 1990s and brought with it the idea that the Danish people must defend themselves against people from non-Western countries, but especially against Muslims. This is justified with the argument that these people pose a threat to 'Danish values' solely through their religion, as it is deemed incompatible with Denmark. Neo-nationalism, provoked by the changed structure of the world order in 1989, gradually grew in popularity. It started as being used only by the outspoken nationalist party The Danish People's Party but spread to overshadow the entire political debate. In essence, neo-nationalism incites a narrative of an external threat that requires action and protection, while working on the basis of the idea of the homogenous nation as the ideal. Rhetoric connected to neo-nationalism thus paints a picture of immediate crisis as the nation is in danger. This rhetoric can also be extended to include criminals, the unemployed and welfare benefit recipients (Hervik, 2019). As argued above, because banal nationalism is part of the hegemony and the nation is a social construct, this resonates with people. The zero-tolerance rhetoric is reproduced and becomes more and more naturalized.

Peter Hervik (2017) argues that both color racism and anti-Muslim racism are included in the awareness and overvaluation of national values and the belief that they are in jeopardy in contemporary Denmark. He thus suggests that in order to analyze how neo-nationalism is used in Denmark, the narrative of the nation in danger provides a more accurate picture. He argues that the narrative of the nation in danger is strengthened by the use of fractal logic. Fractal logic, as inspired by the natural sciences, refers to the misjudgment of a certain issue as being representative of larger issues and thus putting the nation in danger. Fractal logic operates on different levels of society and consequently contributes to the naturalization of white nationalism in all aspects of Danish society and individual human reasoning. The nation in danger is a specific fractal logic that uses specific events as "a basis for aggressive exclusionary reasoning and practices" (Hervik, 2019, p. 1). Hervik uses the case of gender segregation in swimming classes in Denmark as an example of this. This

segregation was introduced in order to encourage women and girls with a minority background to swim, as many of them would otherwise not do so due to religious beliefs. This caused outrage in the Danish media, and headlines included phrases such as “New-Danish girls are taking over the swimming pools”, which appeals to the narrative of the nation being in danger of being taken over by Muslims. However, as this was only one case, there was a use of fractal logic, as gender-segregated swimming pools were extended to foreshadow the overtaking of Denmark by Muslims. The nation in danger notion is a fractal logic, because “the fractal conceptualizes the way actors’ (racialized) interpretation of specific events or stories follows the same structure/logic as a socially shared key narrative” (2019, p. 9). The naturalization lies in the taken-for-granted unawareness of language, thought and action in human reasoning and logic, which explains why people are rarely conscious of such logic and are unable to articulate it (2019, p. 13). For this thesis, we use fractal logics as an analytical tool to examine the use of the nation in danger narrative.

Femonationalism

The term femonationalism was introduced by Sara Farris (2017) and refers to the utilizing of feminism and the fight for women’s rights to strengthen nationalist, exclusionary agendas in politics. Like Hervik, Farris describes how anti-Muslim rhetoric is used to induce fear in the population and make way for the exclusion of minorities from society. She argues that in recent years, specifically after the 2014 EU election, a fear of returning to fascism increased the support of far-right parties. One narrative that is being used to increase this fear is the construction of fear of Muslim men and Islam. The narrative of Muslim men as oppressors and abusers is pushed and used to create a narrative of the dichotomy between Islam and Western egalitarian societies. Therefore, many right-wing parties have created vague and often contradictory gender policy agendas with the goal of ‘saving’ Muslim women from Muslim men “in the name of women’s rights” (Farris, 2017) containing xenophobic rhetoric disguised as feminism. This works in two ways simultaneously. Besides creating narratives of Muslim men as dangerous, it also constructs a narrative of Western countries as being egalitarian, and the far right parties as feminist as “this heterogeneous anti-Islam feminist front, thus, presented sexism and patriarchy as the almost exclusive domains of the Muslim Other” (Farris, 2017, p. 2). The supposed incompatibility between Western countries and Muslims is thus further emphasized.

Farris's analysis is limited to political actors, but for this thesis, we find femonationalism a useful analytical tool to describe the rhetoric used amongst the Danish population to strengthen the narrative of the nation in danger, as this rhetoric is reproduced amongst the majority population.

3.2 Racism, Islamophobia and racialization

In this section, different approaches to racism, racialization, and Islamophobia are explored. We elaborate on the development from the traditional Jim Crow racism, where racism was seen in relation to skin color, and further account for newer and more nuanced forms of racism.

Furthermore, we account for Islamophobia as a form of racism directed towards Islam and Muslims, and lastly, we elaborate on racialization as an alternative to 'race'. We have chosen the theoretical approaches in this section because together they contribute to an understanding of racism, Islamophobia, and racialization, which we will apply in the analysis and discussion chapter.

Racism in relation to nationalism

Miles (1987) argues that nationalism and racism are interlinked, as the two ideologies have common features, articulating them rather than opposing them. His argument is that racism "*can be used to define and sustain nationalism*" (Miles, 1987, p. 24). Miles comments on Anderson's observation of positive emotional responses in relation to nationalism, in contrast to negative emotional responses to racism. Although Miles does acknowledge what he refers to as a love/hate dichotomy between the two, he argues that this is overly simplified, and is thus not in accordance with the complexity embedded in each ideology. Instead, since both nationalism and racism can be seen as both inclusive and exclusive, each can be argued to be evaluated with positive and emotional responses respectively. Thus, "the ideologies of racism and nationalism have formal characteristics which simultaneously overlap and contrast" (Miles, 1987, p. 41). Moreover, Miles draws on Anderson's notion of *imagined communities* (see p. 24), arguing that they can be specified and legitimized by racism, as he argues that: "the ideologies of racism and nationalism can be interdependent and overlapping, the idea of 'race' serving simultaneously as a criterion of inclusion/exclusion so that the boundary of the claimed 'nation' is also equally a boundary of 'race'" (Miles, 1987, p. 41).

In this thesis, we agree with this understanding of nationalism and racism as being interrelated. However, the two concepts are divided when processed and accounted for. In the concluding chapter, we will go into depth with the relationship between the two in relation to the data.

Jim Crow racism

In order to understand and account for racism, it is relevant to initially touch upon traditional Jim Crow racism. Jim Crow racism originated in North America, and the notion was used to express racial segregation. Jim Crow is the collective term for a number of laws passed throughout the late 19th and early 20th century by white Americans. At that time, the law separated whites and African-Americans, creating a form of racism directly linked to skin color. However, many scholars argue that this type of racism existed long before the laws were passed, and thus Jim Crow racism is more fluid and complex than this (Lewis & Lewis, 2009). The end of the Jim Crow laws was a process that took place in the 1960s, and this paradigm shift was the result of various factors, such as political requirements for affirmative actions to employment, civil rights groups, and actions of personnel professionals and employers (Dobbin, 2009). Although the Jim Crow laws have long been dismantled, racism has not. However, racism has evolved as a phenomenon, concept, and theory, and is now acknowledged in various forms, some of which will be presented in the following segment.

Color-blind racism

Color-blind racism, also often referred to as new racism or cultural racism, emerged as a new racial ideology in the 60s, and the concept refers to the belief that inequality is rooted in cultural limitations. In color-blind racism, inequality is rationalized by the white majority population as being a naturally occurring phenomenon and is therefore separated from traditional racist views of minorities being placed at the bottom of the hierarchy by God or from the belief that there are biological differences (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2006, 2013) conceptualized and concerned himself with color-blind racism, which he argues has superseded Jim Crow racism. Bonilla-Silva (2013) accounts for the paradoxes embedded in contemporary racial structures. He argues that racism remains even though only very few see themselves as racists. He is concerned with this paradox of “*racism without “racists”*” (2006, p. 1), and his argument is that color-blind racism facilitates the duality. This type of racism exists in the indirect ‘othering’ of minorities, in opposition to explicit racism such as for example, name calling. Whites in North America perceive

culture, and not biology, as a determining explanatory factor for blacks' societal position, and he argues that "color-blind racism has rearticulated elements of traditional liberalism (work ethic, rewards by merit, equal opportunity, individualism, etc.) for racially illiberal goals" (2013, p. 7). One reason for the general hesitation towards identifying as racist is the different ways in which the concept is understood by minorities and majorities respectively.

One reason why, in general terms, whites and people of color cannot agree on racial matters is that they conceive terms such as "racism" very differently. Whereas for most whites racism is prejudice, for most people of color racism is systemic or institutionalized. (2013, p. 8)

He argues that from the very emergence of race in human history, race formed a racialized social system (see p. 37) in which Europeans held the privileges. Eventually, this system of white supremacy became global due to European extension of reach. Although traditional racial thinking is no longer dominant, the racial structures continue to be reproduced, despite minorities' struggle for change. Bonilla-Silva (2013) substantiates that the reason for this is simply whites' unwillingness to sacrifice their privileged and dominant position. Although he uses the color-blind racism concept in a North American context, we consider it useful in this thesis because the overall mechanisms are not limited to a North American context.

Post-racism

Post-racism is used by Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff (2001) to describe the predicament of the postcolonial nation-state. This understanding of racism is, similarly to that of Bonilla-Silva, linked to culture. They find that the idea of homogeneous national culture is under pressure because nation-states become increasingly diverse. "In short, homogeneity as a 'national fantasy' is giving way to a recognition of the irreducibility of difference; so much so that even countries long known for their lack of diversity (...) are now sites of identity struggles" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001, p. 634).

Although the nation states have never been homogeneous, this is perceived to be ideal, which they refer to as a *national fantasy*. In a globalized, and thus increasingly multicultural world, the perceived national identities are challenged. This results in a culture becoming a valuable

possession, to which some are entitled, while others are not. Whether someone can claim the state or not lies in an autochthony: “in elevating to a first-principle the ineffable interests and connections, at once material and moral, that flow from ‘native’ rootedness, and special rights, in a place of birth” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001, p. 635). This insecurity in terms of national identity resonates with populist fears, and the shared anxieties amongst the public are often directed towards “outsiders” (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001, p. 635) , leading to post-racism. Comaroff and Comaroff argue that the threat of a nation-state rupture increases concurrently with the rate at which this nation-state becomes more diverse and multicultural, for which reason counteractions are considered to be necessary in order to resist and beat whatever is perceived to jeopardize it. Their study is based on a South African context, but they draw lines of comparison to Europe, and we find the understanding of a national fantasy and post-racism useful in the analysis of the data.

Neo-racism

Similarly to Bonilla-Silva (2006), Peter Hervik (2011) argues that racism is prevalent in society, although most people do not identify as racists. Hervik conceptualizes the new form of racism as *neo-racism*, which is related to neo-nationalism (see p. 27). Neo-racism encompasses the perception that, in principle, all people have equally high morals and intelligence. However, xenophobic reactions are natural if people are in the wrong place. Thus, everyone is perceived to belong to a certain nation-state, and if they live somewhere else, xenophobic reactions are to be expected as they are unavoidable. Thus, neo-racism is built on a (neo-)nationalist idea, that people have a natural attachment and thus entitlement to spaces, and if people move beyond ‘their spaces’, xenophobic reactions to them are not racist, but natural. However, Hervik argues, although all people are thought of as equally intelligent and morally conscious, people who are perceived to belong to other spaces are still categorized as being less civilized than people who are perceived to belong to ‘our spaces’ (Hervik, 2011).

Islamophobia

According to Meer (2012), Islamophobia should be considered in relation to racism. Islamophobia is defined as a “*xenophobic reaction to the Islamic faith and to Muslims*” (Hervik, 2015, p. 798), but whereas xenophobia implies both fear and hatred towards strangers, Islamophobia seems to hold more hatred than fear. Since 9/11, Muslims have been increasingly stigmatized as a financial burden, a challenge to Western neoliberal values, and associated with crime and fundamentalism.

There are a large number of cases in which state policies have acknowledged and even encouraged this stigmatizing perception by supporting intolerance of Muslim eating habits, clothing, and living arrangements. Thus, Hervik argues: “*Islamophobia does not necessarily indicate a secular form of discrimination but, rather, a social-political discourse of anti-Muslims sentiments and intolerance*” (Hervik, 2015, p. 799).

Grosfoguel and Martín-Muñoz (2010) rationalize Islamophobia as a post-Cold War phenomenon of *social fears*, and *Muslim fear* in particular, which has spread through Western democracies. Muslim presence has been challenged by the ideas of Muslims as being in opposition to ‘Western’ values, such as gender equality, freedom of speech and national identity, thus resulting in and formed by Islamophobia attitudes. Scholars do not agree upon a fixed definition of Islamophobia. However, most agree that the aftermath of 9/11 and the discourse of the War on Terror plays a role in the emergence or increase of Islamophobia. Furthermore, some ascribe current Islamophobic stereotypes to the negative media representation of Muslims (Grosfoguel and Martín-Muñoz, 2010, p. 2-3). However, as Evelyn Asultany (2012) argues, the increase in attention towards Muslims in countries with a non-Muslim majority has not only been in an Islamophobic manner but has also led to a more varied representation; whereas Muslims have traditionally been depicted as the villains in movies. They are now depicted both as villains and heroes.

Grosfoguel and Martín-Muñoz (2010) argue that *culturalism* is a common feature in Islamophobic discourses because glorification and superiority of the West over Islam are used strategically. Culturalism, they argue, “denies the political agency of the social actors belonging to a particular ethnic/religious/national community and turns any particular event into a universalist judgment of the whole community’s belief system (religious or otherwise)” (2010, p. 3). While *culturalizing* refers to problems of racial and ethnic discrimination, Islamophobia refers to a “mechanism to place the cause of social exclusion of Muslim communities inside the community itself” (2010, p. 3).

Adiaphorization

Zygmunt Bauman and Donskis (2013) use the concept adiaphorization to describe what happens when human behavior becomes morally neutral, and when certain categories of humans are perceived as being “outside the moral–immoral axis – that is, outside the ‘universe of moral

obligations” (2013, p. 40). He argues that adiaphorization can contribute to the understanding of the dehumanization and thus genocide of Jews under World War II. At that time, the dehumanization of Jews enabled the genocide, because the distance between the Jews and everyone else was perceived to be large, and thus the majority population did not identify with Jewish people. According to Bauman and Donskis, adiaphorization of behavior is “one of the most sensitive problems of our epoch” (2013, p. 38), because

the things that we do not connect with our lives become of no importance to us; their existence is dissociated from our being in the world, and they do not belong to the sphere of our identity and self-conception. Something happens to others, but not to us. (2013, p. 39)

Thus, when people are thought of as essentially different from oneself, Bauman argues that there is a tendency for people to be indifferent and amoral in relation to them. We find the adiaphorization concept useful to analyze how the immigration debate, refugees and immigrants are perceived by the respondents.

Everyday racism

Essed (2002) is concerned with the day-to-day realities of racism, conceptualized as *everyday racism*, which appears in the small injustices recurring so often that they often go unnoticed and are seemingly unremarkable. Everyday racism encompasses the type of racism existing in routine practices, such as micro-aggressions, nagging or annoying events and encounters between individuals, rather than extreme incidents. They are, therefore, difficult to identify and thus problematize. Nevertheless, the concept relates these seemingly small instances of day-to-day racism with “the macrostructural context of group inequalities represented within and between nations as racial and ethnic hierarchies of competence, culture, and human progress” (2002, p. 2). Thus, everyday racism is in accordance with Hervik’s (2019) use of fractal logic, since the micro-level racism reflects the macrostructural racism of society. Essed argues that day-to-day racism should not be taken less seriously than extreme incidents since data shows that it has a negative impact on mental and physical health. Thus, everyday racism and banal nationalism (see p. 24) can be considered as interrelated, since both phenomena occur in the day-to-day micro-aggressions. Generally, neither everyday racism nor banal nationalism is acknowledged and recognized as problematic, since they are often perceived as innocent and insignificant.

White fragility

The notion of white fragility is introduced by Robin DiAngelo (2018), who uses it to describe white people's reactions to being confronted for behaving in a racist manner. DiAngelo argues that the problem with white people is that they do not listen and refuse to see or know how their position in society influences other people. Hence, similarly to Bonilla-Silva (2013), she finds that white people are, intentionally or unintentionally, unwilling to sacrifice their privileged position in society. We argue that the white fragility concept in itself can be a hindrance to relevant discussions of other topics, such as the discussion of what defines whiteness. We find white fragility useful in order to understand and analyze the data, but at the same time it lacks nuances, and therefore we apply it carefully.

Racialization as a more accurate concept than 'race'

Even though racialization is not necessarily the 'othering' of people based on 'race', racialization can be considered racism. Thus, not all racialization becomes racism, but racialization is a requisite for racism. Cohen (1994) argues that anti-Muslim feelings can be categorized as racism, even though they are attached to religion and culture, rather than skin color and descent. This is the case, because 'race' is an artificial social construct, and people or groups can be treated like a different 'race' based on various characteristics, artifacts or beliefs (Cohen, 1994).

Despite the extensive application of racialization as a concept in literature, various scholars define and apply it differently, and there is disagreement as to what exactly it refers to and what it might help us understand (Murji & Solomos, 2004). Since the 1970s, racialization has been used for analysis of "[i]mmigration, the media, political discourses, crime and policing, housing and residential patterns, and poverty" (2004, p. 1), as well as "cultures, bodies, institutions, images, representations, technologies, landscape, the environment, and art history" (2004, p. 1), and "whole institutions such as the police, educational or legal systems, or entire religions, nations, and countries" (Murjo and Solomos, 2004, p. 1).

Murjo and Solomos (2004) argue that there are two reasons why racialization is a better way to understand identities than 'race'. Firstly, racialization contains the psychological and social processes that divide people into racial categories, and secondly, racialization does not acknowledge

that a race may have a natural and fixed nature, but rather it assumes the nature of a race to be the result of the contextual ways of classifying people. Thus, “the concept of racialization in this view does the same work as putting ‘race’ in quotation marks, in showing that race does not have a biological basis but that it becomes significant through social, economic, cultural, and psychological practices” (Murji & Solomos, 2004, p. 8).

Murjo and Solomos find racialization a useful concept for describing processes where racial connotations are attached to certain issues in which race appears to be an important factor in terms of how the issue is defined and comprehended. However, it is often unclear whether the race in racialization refers to biology, to culture, to the idea that the language of race does not manifest at all, or to an overlap hereof, often making studies of racialization ambiguous. Fulcher and Scott (2003) conceptualize racialization by stating that race relations only exist when an ethnic group is racialized. Thus when groups of people are perceived as distinct based on their race, here meaning biological differences and skin color. Fanon (1961) argues that the racialization of mindset originates from the colonial times, where internal differences between Africans and blacks were no longer recognized, and they were perceived as one homogenous racial category. This simplified understanding of Africans and blacks thus gained footing among the native intellectuals, and quasi-racial categories, e.g. ‘African culture’, have been adopted, rather than national culture. Fanon holds European colonialism accountable for this.

Miles (1993) emphasizes that racism exceeds black/white divides, and uses the systematic discrimination of Jews as an example. He argues for a deconstruction of ‘race’. Thus, racialization is more accurate, since it refers to ideological practices that give ‘race’ its importance, as well as political and cultural situations and processes in which ‘race’ is used as an explanation and understanding. He rejects the understanding that racialization can be reduced to being solely a result of colonialism, and argues that it should be acknowledged as an issue produced and reproduced within Europe as well (Miles, 1993).

Racialized social systems

Bonilla-Silva (1999) argues that theories about race and ethnic conflict are often insufficient and overly simplified and that there is a need for other approaches to studying structural racism. He

makes a case for an advanced structural theory of racism, which he bases on *racialized social systems*. This term refers to:

societies in which economic, political, social, and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races. Races typically are identified by their phenotype, but (...) the selection of certain human traits to designate a racial group is always socially rather than biologically based. (Bonilla-Silva, 1999, p. 469)

Thus, the term ‘racialized social systems’ refers to a hierarchy in a society, which is based on social characteristics. The entirety of the racialized social relations and practices forms a society’s racial structure. Bonilla-Silva argues that after society has become racialized, racialization becomes independent from class and gender structuration, and is thus an isolated principle of organization social relations. Hence, racialized social systems are an intrinsic part of society, and “[r]acially motivated behavior, whether or not the actors are conscious of it, is regarded as "rational" that is, as based on the races' different interests” (Bonilla-Silva, 1999, p. 475). As racialization is embedded in the societal structures, it is often unnoticed, and people tend to only recognize explicit racist behavior as racism. Therefore, we find the concept of racialized social systems useful for understanding the data of this research.

To analyze the data of this research, we examine different approaches to racism through racialization and the power dynamics related to racialization. We consider racism and racialization to be present in all aspects of society in racialized social systems, for which reason people are often not aware of it, because it is unnoticed by the majority population. We argue that the various forms of racism accounted for in this section are not mutually exclusive, but rather they can coexist in people’s behavior or arguments. We argue that ‘race’ is a social construct, and thus racism can be manifested in diverse ways, based on skin color, culture, perceived national belonging, and religious affiliation. However, saying that ‘race’ is socially constructed implies that it is not real, which we argue is to neglect the great diversity of real consequences that the construction of ‘race’ contains. As Torres and Colón (2015) argue “racial experience is emphasized as an embodied experience that is as real and as valid as biological variation” (2015, p. 0). For this thesis, however, we are concerned with the racializing actor. We thus use racial experiences in the sense that racialization results in racial experiences.

3.3 The spreading and processing of information in the age of the internet

As established in the previous segments, there has been a gradual change in how scholars consider nationalism and racism. Billig, Hutchinson, and Anderson argue that nationalism in established nations has become the basis for understanding the international world, yet not many people consciously consider themselves nationalists. Similarly, racism is often perceived as being explicit racism only, and as something of the past or limited to extremist members of society. Common to both of these concepts is the circumstance that the majority of the population is oblivious to its omnipresence in society. This segment aims at explaining why these and other scientifically established concepts are often unidentified and doubted by the majority population. We thus elaborate on the study of ignorance and agnotology, explore whether we live in a post-truth society and elaborate on what mechanisms take place when processing information in modern society.

Agnotology

As for any research project, we have elaborated on our epistemological stance. However, as we discuss both knowledge and ignorance, we find it relevant to examine the study of ignorance, and what ignorance means and how it is produced. Agnotology refers to the study of cultural production of ignorance and was first coined by Robert N. Proctor in 1995 (2008). According to agnotology, ignorance should not be considered a passive void where knowledge has not yet been spread, rather ignorance is a cultural construct that can be reproduced both actively and passively. It can be used to spread misinformation and ultimately to control groups of people and exert power. Hence, it is a relevant concept to include when examining the perception of the immigration debate and its consequences.

Agnotology includes three different forms of production of ignorance. First, there is the deliberate, active production of ignorance fueled by economic and political interests, by large industries or corporations such as the tobacco industry. It has been scientifically established that smoking has dire health risks. Yet, smoking is still the number one cause of preventable deaths (Proctor & Schiebinger, 2008). Agnotologists (Proctor, Schiebinger, Micheals) argue that this is the case because the tobacco industry has actively produced ignorance to protect profit and keep their business running. They have employed the principle of *fighting science with science*, meaning that research centers, scientists, journals and expert statements, all funded by the tobacco industry, have

spread information which, even though it has been debunked and proven wrong by the established scientific community, is presented as scientific fact. Simultaneously, anti-smoking scientists have been personally attacked, and information has been suppressed; all resulting in the overall impression that whether or not smoking is a health risk is a controversial issue, which cannot be answered with certainty.

The persistence of controversy is often not a natural consequence of imperfect knowledge but a political consequence of conflicting interests and structural apathies. Controversy can be engineered: ignorance and uncertainty can be manufactured, maintained, and disseminated. (Tuana, 2004, p. 195)

However, ignorance can also be reproduced passively in two different ways. The very nature of how research is structured, who has access to carrying out research, and what is considered *real* research, affect what knowledge is produced, heard and considered valid. To become a researcher, one needs to go through years of education, which can most often only happen if one comes from a privileged background. Thus, to this day most researchers are white men [NSB12], excluding both the knowledge and perspective of everyone else in the world. Furthermore, any knowledge gained in other ways than through traditional research is not regarded as scientific knowledge and is therefore excluded. Ignorance can, thus, be produced actively through manipulation motivated by self-interest, or passively through the exclusion of voices, experiences, and perspectives. For this thesis, all three types of ignorance will be discussed in terms of our data.

The post-truth era

As we have established above, ignorance is not just random lack of knowledge, but must be considered within the context of the power structures of society. With the rise of technology and the spread of the internet and social media platforms, many argue that the Western world has entered the post-truth era (Block, 2019). There is no consensus about the origin of the term post-truth. Some argue that it was first coined in 2004 by Keyes and some argue that there had already been talking about post-truth during the Watergate Scandal in 1972 and whether it is a new concept at all has also been questioned (Mair, 2017). In *Manufacturing Consent* (1994) Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky showed how the supposed free press was permeated with propaganda, and that propaganda was not limited to totalitarian regimes. They showed how the news was shaped through

the deliberate spread of misleading, inaccurate and false information. The concept of post-truth is related to both agnotology and propaganda; however, we find that using the concept of post-truth allows us to include both agnotology, propaganda and the internet.

Though there is disagreement on where the term post-truth originates, it regained popularity in 2016 and 2017 when multiple journalists (Ball, 2017; D'Ancona, 2017; Davis, 2017) wrote books about the topic in the wake of the election of Donald Trump and Brexit. They argue that social media and the ability to broadcast one's opinion without having to declare one's sources or affiliation has decreased the quality of the information available and make it difficult for the consumer of the information to navigate in it (Block, 2019).

Jonathan Mair (2017) argues that most literature revolving around post-truth can be categorized into the following three areas. Firstly, there has been a discussion of post-truth in politics where politicians have gone from covering up incidents and showing a certain angle of events to both arguing that facts cannot be trusted and producing *alternative facts*. Secondly, technological change and the emergence of the social media have resulted in super-abundant information that can lead to information overload that makes it difficult to sort through and critically evaluate the extreme amounts of information contesting for the attention of the consumer. Such information can be broadcast by anyone leading to "the distinction between authoritative and amateur news sources" becoming "blurred" (Mair, 2017, p. 4) The information overload has also resulted in lower quality information, as many publishers use 'clickbait' to grasp the attention of the reader. Furthermore, many more articles need to be produced, as income is generated through advertisements placed around the articles. Newspapers can no longer make a sufficient income through the sale of newspapers. These factors drive the quality of news down. This also leads to the publication of fake news and alternative facts. Consumers can no longer easily discern between trustworthy media sources and less trustworthy ones. The combination of the enormous masses of information and conflicting messages leave the consumer confused and desensitized. Thirdly, Mair (2017) argues that a great deal of the discussion of post-truth has revolved around the possibility of confirmation bias.

Confirmation bias leads to a more favorable assessment of information if this information is in line with pre-existing beliefs. Information that challenges pre-existing convictions is not granted the

same level of attention (Porta, 2014). Social media provide optimal conditions for confirmation bias because of the algorithmic design of the websites. In order to satisfy users of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, the platforms are designed to learn what content the individual user enjoys and agrees with and to show them only such content. This is often referred to as the 'Facebook bubble' because users will use the platform within a bubble where they do not necessarily realize that their content is highly personalized. They will be in a *social media echo chamber* that reflects and confirms their previously established opinions, and where one is rarely confronted with conflicting or uncomfortable news, views or stories. Because of this technology, confirmation bias is difficult to detect and escape, a fact that is only further complicated by human hesitation towards believing information that would be disadvantageous to oneself (Mair, 2017). A white person is thus inclined to disregard structural racism because it is a power structure that benefits them and would require insight into their own role in this power structure.

However, Mair (2017) questions the use of the concept and asks:

Does the ubiquity of the term indicate the emergence of a genuine, new phenomenon, or is the real change the growth of the critical discourse of post-truth itself? Is the category sufficiently well-defined to do service in ethnographic description, or is it simply a rallying point for the outraged intelligentsia, one that describes nothing more than their chagrin at the fact that the wrong kinds of people are suddenly claiming authority and having their say? (Mair, 2017, p. 3)

As argued above, other concepts, such as agnotology and propaganda, may be useful in explaining the deliberate spread of ignorance, for example through misleading information or suppression of perspectives. However, we find post-truth to be a useful concept, as it provides a more holistic approach to the processing of information in the age of the internet and social media. For this, thesis we use the concept of post-truth to describe the distrust of politicians, the media, science, and other citizens in Denmark. As it also accounts for the amount of information that users of social media are confronted with; we use it to discuss desensitization and indifference.

Overestimation of knowledge and understanding

We have discussed confirmation bias in relation to social media above, but there are also other relevant concepts to consider when elaborating on how misinformation and indifference to certain subjects can prevail in society. We furthermore find the following concepts relevant to include, because their effect is multiplied through social media and the internet.

The Dunning-Kruger effect

The Dunning-Kruger effect refers to the overestimation of one's abilities and knowledge. The weaker one's abilities or knowledge about a certain topic are, the less likely one is to realize one's intellectual limitations.

As regards the overestimation of one's abilities and knowledge, especially the unskilled and uneducated overestimate their abilities in social and intellectual domains. 1. These people reach conclusions that may be faulty, and thus make poor choices, and, 2. Their incompetence robs them of the metacognitive ability to realize this. Improving their skills increases their assessing ability and knowledge (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

Figurations of memory

The figuration of memory refers to the way in which citizens of a nation perceive its colonial history. Although the colonial past of a nation is not repressed or forgotten, it can still be perceived by the public and portrayed in public discussions as either romanticized or as something which was necessary at that time. Thus, a nation's colonial past can be marginalized by its citizens, because it is considered to belong to the past, and the past only. As the colonial past is perceived to be in contrast to the modern state, its negative consequences are neglected (Andersen, 2013).

The hegemony embedded in common sense

Common sense is a common argument used to rationalize opinions and to present an idea or understanding as something which is taken for granted. Gramsci defines common sense as the understandings and ideas which are collectively accepted to be truthful and is present and taken for granted at all levels of society (in Crehan, 2016). These ideas and understandings are deduced from the hegemonic discourse in society, which in turn is dependent on the power structures present in society. The hegemonic discourse is reproduced in society and becomes internalized as common sense and is regarded as a neutral and natural truth. The idea of common sense plays a large role in

terms of how common misunderstandings and indifference can exist in society, as it can contribute to one-sided and wrongful understandings of what is true and false information and knowledge (Crehan, 2016).

The straw man fallacy

The straw man fallacy refers to situations where a person's argument is misrepresented or intentionally misunderstood to be weaker than it is. When someone commits the straw man fallacy, they make a counterargument to a statement which was never argued, because it is easier to critique or defeat than the real statement. The straw man refers to a third imaginary person with an imaginary argument, which the person committing the straw man fallacy argues against. Thus, the counter argument is not a response to the original argument, but instead, it is a response to the imaginary argument, as the other person's position is misrepresented (Walton, 2013).

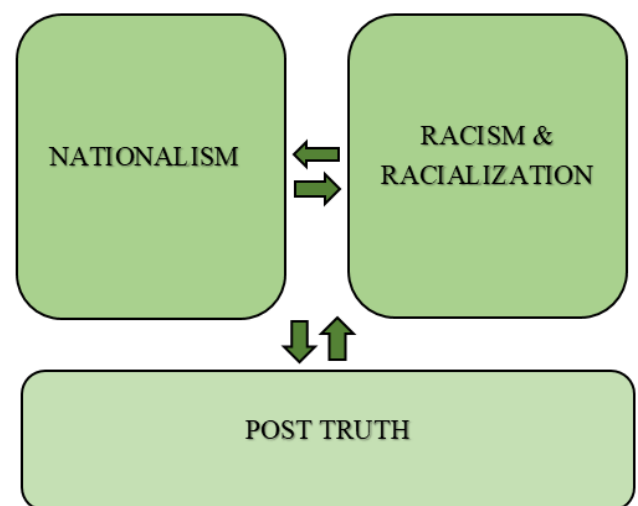
3.4 The theoretical framework

Throughout this chapter, we have accounted for a wide range of theoretical concepts relating to nationalism, racism, and post-truth. We consider these three complex concepts essential and useful for answering our research question. With them, we have created a theoretical framework to examine and understand how the immigration debate in Denmark is perceived, what worries and opinions are connected to the topic, as well as how these are rationalized.

We argue that nationalism as a concept can provide us with an understanding of how the immigration debate is perceived because the understanding of nations and one's entitlement to a nation-state is essential for understanding how people coming from outside of Denmark are perceived. Furthermore, we find that racism as a concept can provide us with an understanding of how people coming to Denmark from other countries are perceived, and how this influences the perception of the immigration debate. Racism furthermore reinforces the excluding mechanisms that are rooted in nationalism. Both nationalism and racism are useful concepts for examining the opinions and worries linked to the immigration debate, as they contain perceptions of who is a part of the nation, and who is not. Lastly, the concepts related to post-truth provide a useful framework through which we can examine how people make sense of the immigration debate, and how their opinions and worries are rationalized.

With the theoretical framework of this thesis, we argue that nationalism and racism are embedded in the hegemonic discourse, and thus people's outlook on life and perception of social structures. Therefore, the immigration debate can contain strong emotions and opinions. Whereas the nationalism concept provides an insight into how people make sense of who is included in society, racism, and racialization contributes to an understanding of who is excluded from the nation-state. We find these mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion relevant in relation to the examination of the immigration debate. The concepts related to post-truth can contribute to an understanding of how nationalist and racist understandings, ideas and behaviors are given meaning and rationalized.

Thus, as the concepts are interrelated, the totality of the concepts can contribute to a broad and complex understanding of the research question. Each of the concepts has the potential to contribute with certain approaches, which could make a theoretical framework of its own. However, we find that each of the concepts nationalism, racism and post-truth can bring meaning to the other, and thus contribute to multifaceted and comprehensive research.



Model: The interconnectedness between the master concepts

4 Analysis and discussion

This chapter contains the analysis of our data divided into four parts. The first part acts as an introductory analysis of the perception of the immigration debate in Denmark. The following three parts are structured according to our theoretical framework. The second part thus is an analysis of nationalism in the data. The third part is an analysis of racism in the data, and the fourth and final part is an analysis of the effects of the post-truth era on the data and in relation to the previous parts of this chapter.

4.1 The public debate and the political landscape in Denmark

This part of the analysis aims at analyzing how the respondents perceive the current political landscape surrounding refugees and immigration policies. We analyze how they define themselves within this context and how they define who the public debate is about. This segment is divided into four sections: The polarized public debate, Tokenism in Danish politics, and The extremes in Danish politics and The perception of self in relation to the immigration debate.

The polarized public debate

During our interviews, we used the Danish word *indvandrerdebatten*, which we translate to the immigration debate (see p. 15). All respondents seemed to know immediately what we meant by using this phrase and they all came with strikingly similar descriptions of this public debate.

The debate is very inflamed. Extremes are being created and the politicians fan the flames. The tone is very hard and the issues are being presented as being larger than they might actually be. (Jonas, Appendix G, ll. 288-289)

They all describe the public debate as being divided into two camps; the left wing and the right wing. They described the general rhetoric as being undifferentiated, polarized, rough, snarky and extreme. No matter what their political opinions were, they all agreed that the public debate is full of conflicts and sharp frontiers. As Camilla puts it:

If you look at it from a general perspective, there are two large conflicting poles - there is the extreme left wing, who become emotional quickly and easily, and one cannot utter a wrong word or start putting people into boxes without their feeling deeply violated. And then there is the extreme right-wing, who are working to preserve freedom of speech and who are stone set in their right to call people different

things in such boxes. I would say that in some places the debate has become too rough. Everything in moderation. (Camilla, Appendix F, ll. 13-18)

Furthermore, a pattern we observe is that the respondents seem to find that this public debate fails to discuss topics that are not, in their opinion, important in the bigger picture. Celina says:

it's overarching (...) somehow it's the debate. And it takes away focus from any other type of societal issues or challenges we have in a country like Denmark. (...) I think it's being taken into all discussions. So, when we lack money for nursing homes then it's the fault of the refugees, and when we need money for vulnerable [people] then it's somehow because of the immigrants. (Appendix I, ll. 17-22)

Tokenism in Danish politics

Moreover, besides labeling the public debate surrounding immigration policies as being polarized and extreme, many respondents also suspect that politicians have ulterior motives, and when asked to elaborate on their opinion on the covering ban almost all respondents describe it as being tokenism. Dalina says:

It is the most ridiculous law. It is strange that the liberal parties, who care about freedom in terms of what we eat, drink and smoke, want to control peoples' clothing. That is a double standard. (Appendix B, ll. 233-234)

However, while most of them agree that this law is unnecessary, they do not agree on what the root problem is. Peter says that the niqab and burqa should not be a part of Denmark, but finds that the covering ban is simply insufficient. He does not think that it targets the root problem, which he thinks is connected to Islam in general. In his eyes, the politicians know that many people do not agree with Islam and want it out of the country, and he, therefore, sees it as tokenism in that not enough is done to prevent Muslims from practicing Islam (Peter, Appendix H). Celina, on the other hand, says that the covering ban is an obvious statement by the government that Muslims are not welcome in Denmark, and she finds this wrong (Celina, Appendix I).

The extremes in Danish politics

As previously mentioned, many respondents described the public debate surrounding immigration as extreme. This is a word that they all use frequently and it is almost always used to describe someone other than themselves.

In terms of politics, most respondents describe the political landscape in Denmark as having become more extreme during the last couple of years. Even though the Danish People's Party has been considered a far-right party, none of the respondents describe it as being extreme. They mention the newer parties Hard Line and The New Right as belonging to the far right. On the left wing, Christian describes parties like The Red-Green Alliance, The Socialist People's Party and The Alternative as ones that: "can be quite extreme in their rhetoric" (Appendix E, ll. 20-21). As he is a member of The Danish People's Party he says:

One usually wants to place The Danish People's Party over on the extreme right wing, but I don't think, not in the debating culture there is in Denmark and the way it is right [now], that The Danish People's Party is particularly extreme. Perhaps it is just where I come from and because I agree with them [The Danish People's Party] but I think that we [The Danish People's Party] have a form of rational opinion on the situations (Appendix E, ll. 32-35)

While many scholars agree that the political agenda promoted by The Danish People's Party can be deemed both racist and nationalist (Hervik, 2006), we can see a change in perception of which parties qualify as extreme political parties in Denmark today compared to 15 years ago when DF was first established. Peter says: "You have The New Right, especially now, and Rasmus Paludan and Hard Line versus people from The Red-Green Alliance and The Socialist People's Party and The Alternative" (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 20-21). Multiple other respondents mention Hard Line and The New Right as being a new form of extreme. This has two consequences. As we can see in our data, The Danish People's Party and especially The Social Democrats, The Conservative People's Party, The Liberal Party of Denmark and The Liberal Alliance are not considered to be extreme. We argue that this is a problem because it enables these parties to enact racist and misogynistic laws such as the covering ban since extremism has become normalized (Bruhn & Christensen, 2019). In 2009 a similar ban was proposed, but then it was opposed by both The Liberal Party of Denmark and the Liberal Alliance (Bruhn & Christensen, 2019). Thus, the statements and policies that would previously have been considered extreme, are now considered normal and not noteworthy.

The perception of self in relation to the immigration debate

As established above, the respondents have a clear understanding of the public debate surrounding immigration policy, politicians and other debate participants as being extreme, polarized and

oftentimes uneducated. They, furthermore, go on to define themselves within this context and they do this both explicitly and implicitly.

None of the respondents include themselves in the extremist group. Henning, for example, anticipated that we might think that his statements were going to be radical or extreme. The following dialogue took place after he asked us what we wanted to hear from him:

Nina: We are not here because we want you to say something extreme.

Henning: No, because then I will probably disappoint you. I am actually not particularly extreme, but I do, of course, have some opinions, which I don't sugar coat. But perhaps I don't fulfill your expectations of me being a little more extreme in some ways. And maybe I am, but perhaps it's not as extreme as I may have led you to believe. And then the question is whether it is that side you want or what I actually believe. Because otherwise, I'll just say what I really believe (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 16-22)

This statement surprised us and following it, we expected Henning to change the nature of his statements compared to previous conversations. However, this was not the case. Christian, who is an active Danish People's Party member, also actively distances himself from extremism. He says:

I was in a debate with someone from The New Right, who said that we should throw out all immigrants and refugees within the next week. And, personally, I can't agree with that, because of course, I think that we should send people home, so they can get the chance to help to rebuild their home countries [...]. But within a week, I think that is unreasonable and very extreme. Then we do not have the time to help them in the way we should (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 37-42)

This quote shows how Christian both distances himself from what he perceives as being too extreme, and at the same time, says that he thinks refugees should be sent to the country he refers to as their home, which could be considered quite extreme or radical in itself.

Summary of findings

To sum up, the respondents have a clear impression of the immigration debate and the political landscape. According to them, the rhetoric in the immigration debate is extreme and the respondents actively distance themselves from that. The data indicates that what is perceived to be extreme in

the immigration debate has changed over time. Thus, extremism has become normalized and the limits of what is considered extreme have evolved over the past decades.

4.2 Inclusion and exclusion of people in Denmark

In this part of the analysis chapter, we analyze and discuss how the respondents describe and perceive Denmark as a country, how they perceive Danish culture, what Danes are like and who can call themselves Danish. We furthermore analyze who the respondents think has the right to live in Denmark. The goal of this part of the analysis is to show, how nationalism is embedded in the respondents' way of thinking about Denmark, the world, refugees and immigrants. This part of the analysis chapter is divided into three segments: Denmark and the Danes, Inclusion and exclusions and exclusion of refugees and immigrants, and National identity myths and banal nationalism.

Denmark and the Danes

This segment is divided into four sections: Characterizations of Denmark, The unawareness and neglect of Denmark's past, The inherently good and homogenous Danish culture, and Characterizations of the Danes.

Characterizations of Denmark

First and foremost, the respondents describe Denmark as a free country characterized by trust, inclusivity, and equality. They describe Denmark as a wealthy country, that has worked hard for its glory and deserves it. Jonas says:

People can live side by side no matter what background or religion you come from. Whether your father is the director of a bank or a blacksmith, well, it does not matter. To me, Denmark is actually more like the American dream than the USA is. Because you have free education and a safety net. No matter what your background is, you have the possibility to build the life you want. (Appendix G, ll. 97-101)

Magnus furthermore describes Denmark as “wealthy, lovely, small, cozy, very productive, very organized, decent, well-functioning welfare state, equal, navel-gazing, arrogant, pretentious” (Appendix D, ll.78-79). Henning used the Danish word *lalle glad* which means being happy, carefree, naive and a little silly. It is noteworthy that the respondents have a wide array of positive adjectives that they find appropriate to use to describe Denmark as a nation. The respondents overall associate Denmark with being a noble country, which they explain through vague, emotional descriptions.

There is a constant either explicit or implicit comparison to other countries, as Denmark is continuously mentioned or described in the context of the international world. Celina, for example,

says: “We have done well as a country, and in many ways, we have had a country, where I think many could learn something, you know, on the bottom line” (Appendix I, ll. 156-157). Even though Henning says: “We have to remember that there are more people in Hamburg than in Denmark.” (Appendix C, ll. 238-239), it is clear that he, and the other respondents, find Denmark to be a superior country compared to other countries.

Some of the respondents point to flaws, but when they do, it is done in a way that still contributes to frame the narrative of Denmark as an overall *good* country, such as when Denmark is described as being “too kind and credulous” (Jonas, Appendix G, l. 269) and “navel-gazing, arrogant, pretentious” (Magnus, Appendix D, l. 79). There is a recurring narrative of Denmark as the underdog country, that has earned a spot in the world and in turn gained too much confidence. The respondents describe a level of megalomania, but they find it charming. All respondents think highly of Denmark, and we argue that they all consider this confidence as ultimately justified.

The respondents speak of Denmark as if it were a human being and an active agent with a moral conscience. They do this by attributing human characteristics such as being “too kind and credulous” (Jonas, Appendix G, l. 269) and “navel-gazing, arrogant, pretentious” (Magnus, Appendix D, l. 79). They talk kindly and lovingly about Denmark as if it were a family member. When discussing what Denmark is like, the respondents often use the word *we* and thus actively place themselves as being a part of Denmark itself. We argue that the human attributes they refer to thus refer to the people that make up the population of Denmark and ultimately refer to themselves.

The unawareness and neglect of Denmark’s past

Connected to the discussion of Danish culture and Denmark as a country, many of the respondents brought up that Denmark is connected through a shared past. They found that there is a connection to be found in historic events that transcend through time and thus ties the Danish population together. Margrethe spoke with pride of Denmark’s past:

Relative to Denmark’s small size, we have really made our mark on many places in the world, which I think is impressive. Norway was once Danish and some towns there have Danish names, and Greenland has been Danish. (Appendix B, ll. 225-227)

Celina also has positive connotations with Denmark’s past and what it says about the nature of the country. She says:

We are a country that, during World War II was united and dared to be saboteurs and dared to smuggle Jews to Sweden no matter if we agreed with Judaism or not. But that was basically the fundamental, human condition and human rights that was the foundation for us and we said; it's up to the individual to choose who you believe in and who you love. (Appendix I, ll. 161-164)

When Margrethe and Celina speak of Denmark during both World War II and the Viking Age, they have romanticized almost mythical understandings of purer times filled with heroic deeds and hard work that resulted in glory. Henning does not think that Islam is suitable with his ideas of what Denmark is, as he perceives Islam as being violence promoting. About Denmark's own violent past he says that Denmark has a:

shady past with our Vikings, where we traveled around and killed people (...), so of course we have had beliefs and sacrifices, but I mean, that was, of course, some hundred years ago. Let's move on. So, therefore, it does not fit well together. I don't think so. No. (Appendix C, ll. 462-465)

Unlike Margrethe and Celina, Henning does not solely think of Denmark's past as glorious and positive as he describes the Viking Age as shady. However, he acknowledges this with an attitude of it being necessary and to be expected from that time period. The sheer time that has passed since these events took place to excuse them. This also implies that Henning thinks of the international world in terms of development and that development goes in one linear direction. He implies that Muslims should have been, what he considers to be, further developed by now, and that the presumed violence is thus inexcusable. Furthermore, Henning thinks of Islam as violent and seeks to beat us to it by mentioning Denmark's violent history before we can bring it up and counter his argument. However, none of the respondents think of or mention Denmark's colonial history as violent or wrong. We argue that this is what Astrid Andersen (2013) refers to as *figuration of memory*. Many historians have accounted for the violent, oppressing and less flattering parts of Danish colonialism and history in general, yet the population remains unaware. Even though Celina's example of the saboteurs during World War II is not part of colonial history, like Margrethe, she is convinced of a fantasy-like, positive narrative of Denmark's past.

The respondents also brought up the past in less specific ways, where they referred to "the good old values" (Celina, Appendix B, l. 195; Camilla, Appendix F, l. 544) or refer to a time where things were better. Camilla says:

We need to get back to the thing about being good citizens, and when there are elderly who can't work out the bus lines, then we must help them. And when the neighbor needs sugar and stuff like that, then we need to put that out. If we can see that the neighbor is traveling, then we keep an eye on their house, and if the garden is completely overgrown, you can maybe go over there and mow the lawn. (Appendix F, 552-556)

Celina says: "Those good old values about us helping each other and that we have faith and trust in each other. (...) Community spirit and that one helps broadly speaking and takes care of one's weakest" (Appendix I, ll. 195-198). As with the national history, there is a figuration of memory or a continuous narrative of the olden days as being better and also as being *more Danish* and more in line with the imagined shared values.

The inherently good and homogenous Danish culture

During our interviews, the term *Danish culture* came up multiple times. None of the respondents had specific answers to what that is, yet they all think it exists. This is what we argue to be a subscription to the fantasy of national culture (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001). Magnus says that Danish culture is to:

share fundamental outlooks on life, a democratic foundation, the wish to get to know one another across groups, that we have a shared cultural frame of reference, because we have gone to the same schools, we have read the same books and know the same poets, know the shared history (Appendix D, ll. 218-221)

Christian says: "We have, as you know, some core values, which we all advocate for, and we have some rights, that are embedded within us" (Appendix E, ll. 154-156). He refers to that, as we are also Danes, naturally, we must be aware what the core values that make up the Danish culture are. Furthermore, he says: "Well, of course, people must have the right to say what they want, but they should also be able to receive criticism afterward (...)" (Appendix E, ll. 156-157). Like many of the other respondents, Christian points to freedom of speech as being a core, Danish value, simultaneously implying that perfect freedom of speech exists in Denmark, but that it is threatened from the outside, and that freedom of speech is something rare, only really present in Denmark. However, besides freedom of speech and supporting Danish football, Christian has a hard time defining Danish culture and instead, slightly agitated, implies that we already know what it is:

Christian: It's like I said, that you advocate for these basic rights and shared values that we have. And what is meant by those values is, of course, a long tradition of values, so that is not something I can recap in three to four minutes, it's, of course, a lot of things, that result in us being together about some things. That we agree about some things.

Mette: Do you think that these completely different and nuanced things (...) are something that we all have in common?

Christian: We can, of course, have different opinions of them [the shared values], but you don't find a lot of people in Denmark, who say, that of course, we should not have equality between men and women. You don't find that in Denmark because one just has an approach where one thinks that we should have equality and that it does not matter whether you are a man or a woman on the labor market. Everyone must have the right to equal opportunity (equal opportunity said in English). (Appendix E, ll. 224-234)

Christian mentions gender equality as if perfect gender equality exists in Denmark as if all Danish citizens agree that it is important and as if it stands in contrast to other cultures or countries. Both freedom of speech and gender equality are commonly mentioned by all respondents at multiple times during the interviews. It is often mentioned, that Islam does not fit with Danish culture precisely because, according to the respondents, Islam does not advocate for these two rights. They also agree that Danish culture is inherently good and is something that must be preserved and lastly that there is a risk that other cultures replace or change Danish culture. Magnus says: "multiple cultures suddenly have to live together (...), so national identities, as one as has previously perceived them, become more washed out and challenged." (Appendix D, ll. 14-16) and "how do we secure that Denmark stays a more or less equal society. How do we reallocate in a just way, so that the cohesion remains?" (Appendix D, ll. 69-70).

Characterizations of the Danes

During our interviews, many of the respondents mentioned what they think Danes are like and who *is* a Dane. Henning has a set impression of who the Danes are. He uses 'we' and defines Danes in comparison to for instance Norwegians and Germans. He says:

We are not as obsessed with our nation as the Norwegians are, they get way too excited when they score a goal in a football match. And that's too much. But we are really patriotic and happy to be Danes (Appendix C, ll. 244-247)

Like many other respondents, Camilla describes Danes as having a strong sense of community. She says: "We like to be a part of a community, and we like to come together around stuff" (Appendix F, ll. 194-195). However, when describing who the Danes are and what they are like, the respondents used many negative descriptions. Anne says: "People can always find something to complain about. People complain too much." (Appendix B, ll. 217-218). Many of the respondents mention, that in their opinions, Danes tend to complain a lot. Celina says:

And now the entire middle class acts like they are born with a fucking gold spoon up their ass. Pardon my French, right, but one runs around and thinks that because you are a pedagogue and a carpenter, then you are part of the more affluent part of society and are entitled to judge anyone who has a yearly earning of less than 500.000 [DKK] on average. I think... damnit... have you forgotten where you come from? Have you forgotten what is supposed to make this society stick together? (Appendix I, ll. 171-176)

Many of the respondents name genuinely wanting to be a part of *the* community as being both central to being Danish and also to becoming Danish. All of the respondents, in one way or another, say that it is a vital part of being Danish that one contributes to society and participates. According to Peter and Jonas, this is done by working and paying taxes and by participating in association activities. Camilla says: "There are some people in Denmark, who do not associate themselves with the values and rights we do. And it is not to create a 'we' and 'them', but it [the values] is embedded within us." (Appendix F, ll. 190-191) and "People who run a parallel society, I would not call Danes. I mean, you can have Danish citizenship without being a Dane." (Appendix F, ll. 204-206). Surrounding this question there seem to be many expectations of active participation in the Danish society. Even if an individual had already obtained the Danish citizenship many of the respondents were reluctant to automatically call them a Dane. For many of the respondents, this was only a requirement for people who were not born in Denmark. Both Peter and Jonas would like similar requirements, especially for active participation in the labor market, to be applicable to People who were born Danish citizens.

To sum up, the respondents think of Denmark as a superior country characterized by trust and equality. Margrethe is proud of Denmark's colonial history. Henning argues that Denmark has a history of violence, but that it is irrelevant now because it happened a long time ago and, according to him, was acceptable at the time and Celina has a romanticized impression of the resistance movement during World War II. Moreover, they perceive Danish culture as something homogenous, inherently good and as something all Danes agree upon. In contrast, the respondents characterize Danes as more nuanced compared to how they describe Denmark as a country.

Inclusion and exclusion of refugees and immigrants

This segment is divided into two sections: The limit to the number of refugees and immigrants Denmark can handle and Determining factors for inclusion and exclusion.

The limit to the number of refugees and immigrants Denmark can handle

The respondents have difficulties naming exactly who, in their opinion, has the right to live in Denmark, be a part of the Danish society and be able to receive social benefits. Most of them speak about who, outside of Denmark, has the right to come and become a part of Danish society. Magnus puts into words that: "There is some sort of genealogy, that gives sort of a legitimate claim to a home and therefore everyone who comes from their home to ours must somehow subordinate themselves. Or perhaps not subordinate, but adapt themselves somehow." (Appendix D, ll. 168-170). To the respondents, it is a given that people born in Denmark are automatically a part of Danish society and have the right to live there.

The respondents have clear distinctions between granting asylum to refugees and to give residency permissions to immigrants. There is a pattern among the respondents of prioritizing both who should be helped, as many of them spoke about limited resources needed to be distributed in fairly. All of the respondents think that there is a limit where no more refugees or immigrants can be accepted in Denmark. Some of them think that Denmark has passed this limit a long time ago. They argue that there are too many issues with the refugees and immigrants that are already here and that Denmark cannot afford the financial burden. Jonas says:

There has to be a limit (...), so one knows who is coming into the country (...). If you look at Denmark as your house, then you like to know what kind of guests you are bringing inside. You like to know if they want something good for me and my house

or will they try to steal and tear it down? It has to make sense financially. I am not saying that we should close the borders, but one should not let the whole world in. It has to make sense. (Appendix G, ll. 115-119)

There is a general agreement both on Denmark's duty to give asylum to refugees but also to remain in control of who enters the country. Magnus says:

So on the one hand, I think, that everyone who falls under the Refugee Convention, has a right to come to Denmark, and on the other hand, I think, that we as a society and community, must be able to define, who can come to Denmark. (Appendix D, ll. 193-195)

Determining factors for inclusion and exclusion

In regards to who can live in Denmark and enjoy the benefits that come with the citizenship and residency permission, we see three, not mutually exclusive, patterns.

First, all of the respondents agree, that Danes (see page 49 for accounts of who is a Dane) should always be prioritized first. Christian says:

We always have the responsibility to help Danes, because they are the ones, who live in Denmark and that is why they should be the first priority in terms of receiving help. Homeless people should be the first priority, the elderly should be the first priority, children should be the first priority. It is the Danish population that must be first. When the Danish population has been taken care of properly, then we must focus on everyone else. (Appendix E, 403-407)

He thus argues that simply *because* Danes are Danish, they should be prioritized first. This line of argumentation is rooted in banal nationalism because it seems clear and logical to most of the respondents that being born within Denmark or having a Danish passport gives one rights to be prioritized.

Second, they all mention that it is Denmark's duty to help refugees and grant asylum to those in need. Magnus says:

"I think, fundamentally, we have a duty to protect everyone who needs protection, so everyone who can be granted asylum according to the Refugee Convention, fundamentally I think, has a right to come to Denmark." (Appendix D, ll. 185-187)

As accounted for in the first part of the analysis, there is a tendency of perceiving refugees as people who are vulnerable and desperate, and whose sole goal is to receive shelter from war and persecution. They do not think that refugees have the right to decide for themselves, whether they want to stay in Denmark. The respondents perceive seeking refuge as something temporary and because of their nationalist perception of the world, they find it to be a logical consequence, that these refugees should go 'home' again once whatever initiated the flight in the first place, has ended. This simultaneously shows how the respondents perceive themselves, and through themselves also Denmark, as kind, merciful saviors, who do what they are morally obliged to do. Furthermore, many of the respondents repeatedly emphasize that asylum is temporary. They think that Denmark should help those in need.

We need to stand our ground and say, that if you are an asylum seeker then you must go home. There has to be someone to rebuild those countries again and make sure that the values are being maintained. So they must go home. (Camilla, Appendix F, 441-443)

Camilla uses a straw man fallacy to explain why refugees cannot stay in Denmark. She argues that they have to go back to rebuild the country they came from. This way she turns attention away from her own discontent with having to accept new citizens in Denmark. She does not want refugees to call Denmark home, but she finds herself suitable to judge that their country of origin is still their home and that they have a duty to rebuild it.

Third, when immigrants have been granted either a residence permit or citizenship, the respondents find that these immigrants must behave in a certain way and actively pursue integration into Danish society. The respondents thus use the notion of integration to include and exclude based on their own understandings of what appropriate behavior for refugees and immigrants is. They find it likely that immigrants come to Denmark motivated by monetary gains and not to contribute to the Danish society, which the respondents find to be morally wrong. According to the respondents, they must genuinely want to become a part of Denmark. This should be done through employment and tax payment and through active participation in social life and *Danish culture*. The respondents feel entitled to the presence, interest, and engagement of immigrants and they expect gratitude. This entitlement is rooted in a belief that Denmark has been generous and given something to the immigrants for which they are now in debt and need to repay. Jonas says: "Denmark is like a home. When I have invited you two [us as interviewers] into my home, I want to know a little about who

you are and what you want.” (Appendix G, ll. 263-264). There is an expectation of the behavior of immigrants that exceeds the expectations of those who are born in Denmark.

Common to all three arguments presented above is a degree of selfishness. The respondents are of the opinion that there are only limited resources available in Danish society, which means that priorities have to be made. The respondents feel much more compassionate towards ethnic Danes because they subscribe to the fantasy of national culture and believe that they are connected to events that happened in that country in the past which gives them a shared history. Thus, according to the respondents, Danes are more closely connected with each other than they are with refugees and immigrants. Refugees and immigrants are often perceived as a homogenous agentless group, and it is easier to argue that fellow Danes should receive support rather than refugees or immigrants because it feels more like helping oneself than giving money to someone else.

They also all agree that Denmark has a duty to help refugees. This argument feeds into the narrative of Denmark as a noble, compassionate country. As the respondents identify with Denmark, ultimately they view themselves as compassionate and noble and want to strengthen that narrative. Simultaneously, this is an easy statement to make, as many of the respondents also argue that most of the refugees who come to Denmark are not real refugees. Peter, Henning, Jonas, Camilla, and Magnus all mention doubts about the refugees being *real* refugees and elaborate on, why they should not be allowed to come to Denmark. As they find immigrants less deserving of social benefits because they are not *real* Danes, they are worried that they will exhaust the resources they themselves might need one day. Therefore, Denmark does ultimately not have the responsibility for a large number of refugees.

As the respondents are worried that there are limited resources in the Danish welfare system, they argue that there has to be a prioritization of whom they are allocated to. Because they view the world from a banal nationalist perspective, they find it obvious that Danes should be prioritized over anyone who does not have Danish citizenship. Furthermore, according to them, Denmark has a duty to help refugees, however, many of the respondents think that a great number of the refugees are not real refugees, but are immigrants who have come to exploit Denmark's welfare system. In general, the respondents find it likely that immigrants will come to Denmark motivated by monetary gains and therefore they argue that immigrants need to prove that their interest in Denmark is genuine and that they want to become integrated into the Danish society.

Summary of findings

This chapter analyzes how people are included and excluded from the Danish society. Our data shows that the respondents characterize Denmark as a good country that has earned its' place in the international world throughout history. The respondents thus find it natural that the resources available in Denmark should be preserved for Danes. This is justified by reference to the national identity that is rooted in a shared history. We see in our data that the respondents have a clear impression of what the Danish national identity is. Smith (1991) argued that national identity is a myth that results in territory or ancestry as being used as an argument for the political community. They associate human characteristics such as trust and kindness with Denmark as a nation. Our data shows that the respondents are all affected by this national identity myth as they with ease describe what Denmark is like and use this national identity to explain why Danes should be prioritized above refugees and immigrants (Smith, 1991). They are thus part of an imagined community (Anderson, 1983). They furthermore argue that refugees and immigrants need to become integrated in the Danish society, which has the function of ensuring cultural homogeneity, which as Anderson (1983) argued, is vital for the survival of the nation.

The survival of the nation is important to the respondents because they are affected by banal nationalism as they perceive the entire world as made up of different nations. This is the way they make sense of the world and the basis for understanding themselves. The respondents never question the existence of the nation itself but argue for its' protection as common sense. Therefore, banal and forgotten nationalism is omnipresent in their line of argumentation and how they include and exclude who can benefit from the nation. Billig (1995) argues that banal and hot nationalism is on a spectrum and that one cannot exist without the other, as banal nationalism is simply hot nationalism that has been forgotten. Hot nationalism is defined as explicit nationalism that can make people want to die to protect their nation. However, as we have shown that extremism has become mainstream and thus banal or forgotten, even explicit nationalist statements are not seen as particularly nationalist or out of the ordinary. Banal nationalism is dangerous because it legitimizes actions based on social constructs that are imagined and diffused and seen as common sense. It is thus difficult to argue against and hard to make people see. If hot nationalism is becoming increasingly normalized and forgotten, it becomes more and more legitimate to exclude human beings from receiving help.

4.3 The racialization of the ‘others’

In this chapter, we account for, analyze and discuss how the respondents talk about and think of people who are different from the illusion of ‘us’, which was accounted for in part 4.2 of the analysis. The inclusive perception of ‘us’ is linked with exclusion and racialization of the ‘others’, who are perceived to be Muslims, refugees, immigrants and people from the Global South. Henceforth, we use the notion *the ‘others’* when we refer to people who the respondents perceive to be different from Danes and incompatible with Denmark and it is not specified whether the statements refer to immigrants, refugees, people from the Global South or Muslims. We do this as these diverse characteristics are often confused to be the same in the data, as the ‘others’ are considered with indifference and unawareness. Thus, the differences between and internally within the groups of people are often neglected in the data.

The chapter is divided into three sections: Racialization of refugees and immigrants, The ‘others’ are incompatible with Denmark and thus should not be here, and There is no racism here and I’m no racist.

Racialization of refugees and immigrants

Our data shows that conversations on the subject of refugees and immigrants almost always lead to a discussion of Islam and Muslims. Therefore, this chapter analyzes and discusses the racialization of Muslims and analyzes how Islam is perceived.

Islam is too extreme

The racialization of Muslims is, to some extent, prevalent in all interviews. Among other examples, Magnus racializes Muslims, because he assumes that, most likely, there is social control within Muslim communities. He expresses his concerns about Islam in Denmark through a fractal logic (Hervik, 2019) by extending the ideology of Hizb ut-Tahrir to apply to all Muslims. He says that they live their lives differently from ‘us’ and create parallel societies in which Danish values, norms, and legislation do not apply. We argue that this is a fractal logic, because he uses an extreme example of a fundamentalist Muslim group, which represents a very small number of all Danish Muslims, to argue why there are challenges in terms of the presence of Islam in Denmark.

Christian racializes Muslims when complaining about an, according to him, a too small number of liberal Muslims in Denmark. Like Magnus, Christian uses fractal logics (Hervik, 2019) to prove this point by including Hizb ut-Tahrir as an example of anti-social members of parallel societies, who

“support such things as Sharia zones, where you disregard Danish rules in order to follow the rules of the Qur’an instead” (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 202-203). According to Christian, most Muslims in Denmark are extremists, and when asked about it, he said that he thinks most Muslims subscribe to the ideas of Hizb ut-Tahrir, because “they come from countries, where that line of thought is being followed” (Appendix E, ll. 302-302). This statement includes several forms of racialization. Firstly, it is a racialization of Muslims in Denmark, because he classifies them as one homogenous group, unable to break free from their, according to Christian, traditional belief system, which is not compatible with the ‘Danish’ belief system. Secondly, he racializes when assuming that all Muslims living in Denmark are either refugees or immigrants, and thirdly, when assuming that the countries they supposedly come from are all governed on the basis of extreme and conservative Islamic values and beliefs.

Islam is backward and underdeveloped

Another theme of racialization is the understanding of Islam as underdeveloped compared to the Global North, and which ideally should become more ‘European’ to be successful. For instance, Jonas says:

I think that maybe - and this might come off as a bit harsh - that Islam is to a large extent, in the Middle East, in particular, characterized by this medieval view, and is not very developed in its evolutionary way of thinking about religion. (Jonas, Appendix G, ll. 214-216)

Similarly, Henning and Camilla compare Islam and the Middle East with European countries hundreds of years ago. Thus, Islam as an ideology is perceived as underdeveloped and backward, which we argue is a negative stereotype. The data shows a general unawareness of diversity within Islam. This suggests that Islam as a religion and ideology, as well as Muslims in general, are stigmatized and racialized as a homogenous group in contrast to ‘Western values’. None of the respondents have any notable knowledge about the Qur’an or Islam in general, but still, they have strong opinions about Islam. Generally, the respondents speak openly about their lack of knowledge in relation to other conversation topics, such as specific legislation and political events, and are hesitant to comment on these things. However, in relation to Islam, they have a tendency to make statements without being aware that they are not well informed, or without caring about the fact that they are not. We argue that this can be problematized because it produces and reproduces false and oversimplified ideas of what Islam is.

Muslim full-face veils are contrary to Danish values

In the data, the niqab and burqa are perceived to be tokens of something distant from what the respondents perceive as Danish, and the Muslim full-face veils evoke many emotions in them. The opinions concerning this are diverse. Peter says that he does not actually have anything against women wearing it, but nevertheless, he thinks it signals something that “is not very Danish” (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 200-201). He associates it with the oppression of women, which he finds is in contrast to equality and rights in Denmark. He does not consider the possibility that women may choose to wear niqab or burqa of their own free will. The respondents use rhetoric that we argue represents femonationalist argumentation. The respondents argue that the niqab and burka are oppressive and that they do not align with Denmark’s gender equality. By using this argument they simultaneously reproduce a narrative of Denmark as having perfect gender equality and nationalism.

The respondents’ skepticism of Muslim veils seems to be based on the visibility of religious affiliation. This, for instance, is Henning’s explanation of why he perceives Muslim clothing as inappropriate. He says that he is not against women wearing a scarf, as long as it is not a *Muslim* scarf. Thus, we argue that the respondents find that freedom of religion only applies when it is practiced according to a more European understanding of religion, namely practiced privately and invisibly. His explanation of why he thinks this, is that he does not accept religious clothing if people wear it with the intention to harm or provoke. He refrained from elaborating on this logic, and he did not seem to understand why this needed further explanation. This is a racialization of Muslim women who wear the veil because he uncritically assumes that they wear it to provoke people around them.

Muslim women are oppressed and Muslim men are oppressors

In contrast to the perception of Muslim women wearing full-face veils to provoke the people around them, they are also racialized as being oppressed by Muslim men. Christian says that women who wear Muslim full-face veils will most likely say that they choose to do so themselves, although this is most likely not the truth. However, even if a woman might have chosen to wear it herself, he does not think that it should be allowed, which he explains by extending a fractal logic:

I think that one should consider what burqa and niqab symbolize in the countries, where people are forced to wear them. This is, for instance, Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern

countries. Those places, women actually take them off to show that they want constitutional rights. (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 275-278)

Thus, he rationalizes indignation against Muslim full-face veils in Denmark by explaining the situation in the Middle East. In terms of the Danish context, he associates the niqab and burqa with women in women's shelters, which feeds into his idea of these women as helpless individuals without agency. He explains this assumption by stating that it is because of the “patriarchal parallel society that they used to live in” (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 263-264). This statement entails racialization because he believes that the women used to live in a ‘parallel society’, which is used to describe areas of Denmark with a high density of immigrants and crime (Regeringen, 2018). We argue that he assumes that this is negative because people living in ‘parallel societies’ are commonly associated with people who are not integrated into Danish society, and who do not want to become so. Furthermore, his statement shows the racialization of the women who wear full-face veils, because he assumes that they are oppressed by patriarchal forces. Moreover, he blames women who wear the niqab for:

legitimizing Islamist patriarchs in saying that it is okay to oppress women because they are not allowed to show their beauty, for they [men] are wild animals that cannot control themselves if they get as much as a glimpse of a heel. (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 256-258)

Thus, besides victimizing Muslim women who cover their faces, he racializes Muslim men when considering them oppressors who cannot control their sexual drive.

Moreover, Camilla talks about how Muslim women are forced to wear the niqab or the burqa and sets them in stark contrast to Danish women who, in her opinion, are free. She also says that many Muslim women would not describe themselves as oppressed because they do not know any better. She says: “they have never tried really being free from those cultural things, so they don’t know what the alternative is (...). Maybe they are afraid of the unknown” (Appendix F, ll. 241-243). Camilla herself is not a Muslim woman and has never worn any type of headscarf. Still, she sees herself as being in a position where she can judge whether wearing the niqab is something oppressing or not. She says that the Muslim women who wear the niqab might be afraid of the unknown, but does not reflect that this could also be the case for herself.

The ‘others’ do not have control over their own lives

The racialization of the perceived lack of control is not limited to Muslim women who wear veils. Rather, there is a general perception that the ‘others’ often do not have the power and desire to change their own lives. Henning considers vulnerable people in Africa less deserving of support than vulnerable ‘Danes’, which becomes explicit in his comment on people supporting charity for countries in the Global South. He says that: “Then there might be some people who think that it is more fun trying to save a child down in Africa, and it does look very nice in pictures, and there are child brides, and that sort of thing” (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 264-266). Thus, his general perception of people living in Africa is that they are poor creatures in need of help. This limited understanding of an entire continent is racialization since he is classifying an enormous number of people based on geography. Furthermore, his antipathy against “saving a child down in Africa” is racialization, because he considers these children less worthy because of their origin. All in all, Henning’s idea of the ‘others’ is either Africans or Muslims, as these are the two examples he keeps returning to when referring to other people than ‘Danes’.

We argue that Henning’s perception of the ‘others’ as someone who needs help, indicates that he thinks of ‘them’ - whether ‘they’ are African children or Muslims - as people without any agency or power to affect their own situation. This racialization is represented in various forms in the data. For instance, Christian expects refugees in Denmark to be grateful for being allowed to stay in Denmark. He does not think that refugees should get attached to Denmark or go to the same schools as ‘Danes’, and he does not “consider someone, who comes to Denmark and has children with a Danish woman or man, to be a refugee”. Instead, he “consider[s] a refugee to be someone who stays here until they have to go home again” (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 390-392). This is indicative of racialization, which is expressed in his degrading perception of people coming to Denmark as refugees as solely poor creatures, whom we - the ‘Danes’ - should take care of until they can go back to their country of origin. Thus, their individual agency, such as with whom they fall in love and their basic social wants and needs, are completely neglected.

Furthermore, it is mentioned multiple times that Denmark has a responsibility into teaching these refugees how to rebuild their country of origin. Camilla says that refugees should receive “funds and resources that are needed to return and rebuild their country” (Appendix F, l. 329) and “we need to help them handle these traumas and then afterward send them home, when they have become good citizens, who can help rebuild their country” (Appendix F, ll. 46-48). This statement

is remarkable because it shows how she has multiple assumptions about refugees. Firstly, it shows her assumption of Denmark as a superior country, that has the skills needed to help refugees rebuild their country of origin. Secondly, she assumes that refugees are responsible for rebuilding their country of origin, and thirdly, she assumes they need to learn to be good citizens.

To sum up, the data shows that refugees and immigrants are most often thought of as being Muslims, which in itself is a racialization of refugees and immigrants. Furthermore, Islam and Muslims are racialized in various ways: Islam is considered too extreme and underdeveloped compared to Denmark, the Muslim full-face veils are perceived to be in opposition with Danish values, Muslim women who wear the veil are racialized as victims of Muslim men, and in general the ‘others’ are not perceived to have any control over their own lives.

The ‘others’ are incompatible with Denmark and thus should not be here

This segment analyzes how the respondents rationalize why ‘the others’ are excluded.

People outside Denmark are less deserving of help

“At all times, I’d rather help [veterans in Denmark] than Achmad, or whatever such people are called, who live outside the Danish borders. Or little Louise, if that’s something people in Africa are called” (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 293-295). Besides the nationalist perception and idea of people inside the Danish borders as being more deserving, this statement also includes racialization of the ‘others’. This is because Henning’s immediate example of someone undeserving is a common Arab name. Thus, not only is the ‘others’ anyone outside Denmark but an Arab in specific. When adding an example of an African child, we see this as a sign of him wanting to move beyond the negative Muslim narrative, because he is aware that otherwise, we will most likely disapprove of his statement. He knows that there is a potential risk of being called a racist if he names a stereotype name or something he thinks sounds like an African name. Thus, he attempts to move beyond stereotypes by calling the imaginary African child Louise. Although he says that he would rather help Danish veterans returning from war than people who live outside Denmark, he himself does not do anything to help veterans. Therefore, we argue that the need for support for veterans is not particularly important to him, but rather he feels strongly that people outside Denmark are not entitled to any support from Denmark or Danish people. Thus, his statement is not about Danish

veterans, but about his dissociation from Africans and Muslims, whom he considers less deserving of help and support.

Refugees should stay in the ‘neighboring regions’ where their culture is

In our data, there are many examples of racist narratives and statements that may seem insignificant to anyone belonging to the white majority population, and which were delivered by the respondents without the intention of saying anything racist or in other respects provoking. An example of this is Christian saying that refugees should stay in the neighboring regions to their country of origin, because *“they should stay in areas where their culture is and where they agree with each other”* (Christian, Appendix E, l. 421).

The ‘neighboring regions’ have been used as a buzzword in the Danish political debate since 2015 (Dansk Folkeparti, 2019; Venstre, 2019; Socialdemokratiet, 2019) and Christian’s assumption about the shared culture and agreement in the ‘neighboring regions’ (*nærområder* in Danish) is commonly accepted in politics and the media. The reference to the ‘neighboring regions’ shows an idea of endless resources and space available in a geographic location which is rarely specified beyond ‘the neighboring countries’. The notion ‘neighboring regions’ neglects differences in culture, language, and history between Middle Eastern and African countries. Christian’s classification of people in the ‘neighboring regions’ as someone who shares culture and opinions, is a degradation and racialization of huge population groups. We argue that when the ‘neighboring regions’ is included as an argument about refugees and immigration in Denmark, it is often used as a means to avoid taking a stance in terms of how to react to the situation and take responsibility. Thus, as long as refugees and immigrants do not come to Denmark, this is a sign of success. We argue that when it is stated that it is better for people to “stay where their culture is”, it is most likely not because the person saying it cares about the wellbeing of the refugees or immigrants. Instead, it is used as an argument against immigration, and thus against the ‘others’ coming to Denmark.

Islam is incompatible with Denmark

Although Islam was a rather small theme in the interview guide, it ended up being a large part of most of the interviews. Overall, Islam manifests something distant from the perceived ‘us’, and the topic of Islam and Muslims evoked many-faceted emotions and beliefs. A common perception held by all respondents is that Islam and Muslims are different from themselves. Peter explicitly describes the differences between what is ‘Danish’ and what is Islam: “I’m just thinking, when you

say Islam, then it is something with veils and so on, and it is damn hard to say that that's Danish" (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 265-267). He does not consider Islam a religion the same way as he does with Judaism and Catholicism and says about Islam that "what I'm thinking is that [Islam] is something extreme, where you really go full monty on living like that. That's how I think about it" (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 276-277). Hence, he is certain that Islam will never be compatible with Danish culture and values, because, as he puts it:

There is such a large divergence between what are considered Danish values compared to [values of] Islam. Well, I haven't read the Qur'an or anything, but it sure isn't designed to adapt. (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 234-236).

Thus, Peter not only sees Islam as something different from his idea of what is Danish, but he describes Islam as something extreme, and considers it a threat to 'Danish values'. We argue that this is racialization, because he considers all Muslims a category of their own, and does not acknowledge or even consider any differences among Muslims. His understanding of Islam is not based on knowledge about what Islam contains, or any interest herein in general. However, he thinks of Islam as extreme and unable to be adapted into Danish culture, and Muslims as a group of people who all live the same way and are too different from 'Danes' to be a part of the Danish society.

Muslims are difficult to integrate into Danish society

Besides the respondents' various opinions about Islam, they all find that Islam and Muslims are something different from what they consider to be typically Danish, and each argues that these differences result in challenges and problems in relation to integration. It is a common perception in the data that Muslims, in general, are particularly difficult to integrate into Danish society. Anne explains that Muslims are more difficult to integrate than for instance Catholics, and Christian describes his worry about Muslim bus drivers working during Ramadan because they might not be physically and psychologically fit to do their job properly when they do not eat. Moreover, Christian thinks that no European country has succeeded in successfully integrating Muslim groups. Peter shares this opinion, stating that:

We have not been capable of integrating the refugees that we currently have particularly well, and what with Islam and Muslims and all sorts of non-Western cultures coming to Denmark, I think that it is going to eventually explode. (Peter, Appendix H, 421-423)

Hence, Islam is considered a threat and incompatible with what is perceived as ‘Danish’. Generally, the respondents describe clear distinctions of what is ‘us’, the Danes, and what is ‘them’, the Muslims.

The fear of Islam taking over

The data indicates that the respondents would like the distinction between the perceived ‘us’ and ‘them’ to be maintained, but worry that it will eventually become erased. Generally, the respondents state that they are not concerned about other people’s religious affiliations, and the value of freedom of religion was mentioned in many of the interviews. However, some respondents explicitly express concerns about Muslim people trying to force them to convert to Islam, or trying to change the respondents’ way of living. Camilla says that even though she thinks it is okay for people to embrace themselves as individuals, she does not want to be required to follow other people’s preferences, such as when Muslims want halal meat. Likewise, Jonas says that he does not care what religious affiliation other people have, as long as they do not impose it on others. Lastly, Henning says that he does not like religion, and: “especially not when they try to recruit me into that thinking - why can’t I just have my own beliefs?” (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 443-444). However, Henning has never experienced anyone trying to make him change his own beliefs. Still, he is certain that Muslims often try to convince people to change their own beliefs and become Muslims. He says: “they try to recruit Muslims all the time (...) In streets and alleys. Radicalization is a problem, you see” (Henning, Appendix C, l. 448). Overall, none of the respondents have ever experienced a Muslim trying to change their beliefs, but they express worries that it will happen and consider it to be something that happens in society. Thus, we argue that this fear is irrational. Furthermore, we argue that it is paradoxical that on the one hand, the covering ban law, and thus forcing women to take off their veils, is generally perceived as reasonable, and on the other hand, the thought of a Muslim trying to convince one to eat halal meat is frightening and unacceptable.

To sum up, the data shows that the ‘others’ are considered too different from Danes and thus incompatible with Danish values, and the respondents generally do not think that they should be in Denmark. The data shows that the ‘others’ are perceived to be less deserving of help, and refugees as people who should preferably stay in the ‘neighboring regions’, as their culture is considered to be placed there. Islam is considered incompatible with Denmark and Muslims are considered especially difficult to integrate. Lastly, the data elucidate the fear that Islam will take over.

There is no racism and I'm no racist

This segment analyzes how racism is denied and how the respondents distance themselves from being racist. The segment is divided into three sections: The Denial of racism, It is worse to be called a racist than to have a racist behavior and Racism is extreme and violent.

The denial of racism

It is clear that the respondents understand racism as a bad thing, and that none of them wishes to be called a racist. None of the respondents identify as racists, and racism, in general, does not seem to be something that any of the respondents believe to exist in a Danish context. Sometimes, when a respondent made a racist statement, the statement was followed by explicitly denying the racist nature of their words. For instance, when Henning says that he would get greater satisfaction from "saving" an unemployed young person from his hometown than from "saving a little girl down in Africa", he immediately follows up by saying that: "And then I'm racist (laughs). But really, I don't think that I am" (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 275-278). Thus, Henning is aware that his comment might be perceived as racist, and he feels the need to distance himself from that label. We argue that the fact that he laughs about it shows his insecurity about mentioning being a racist, which is an emotion that occurs often in relation to the topic of racism in general in the data.

The data shows ambiguity about the meaning of the word racism among the respondents. They have various opinions about what racism entails. Some think it is limited to discrimination based on skin color, whereas others include ethnicity and some also religion. These diverse understandings of what racism is, show uncertainty and unawareness of what the term covers. We found that there is a tendency to argue that racism does not have a set definition, but is something which it is up to the individual to define:

The limit [of what is racism and what is not] is difficult to pinpoint - it is individual. For instance, I can think something is racist, which Margrethe does not consider the same way. I'm probably more critical [of refugees and immigrants] than Margrethe is, but does that make me a racist? There is a difference between being critical and racist. (Anne, Appendix B, ll. 354-357)

This understanding of racism as something which can be individually defined is a way of disclaiming one's own responsibility and avoiding being held accountable for racism. By not

dealing with racism, the respondents do not have to hold themselves accountable for any discriminating behavior.

It is worse to be called a racist than to have a racist behavior

In most of the interviews, we showed the picture of the Red-Green Alliance politician Pelle Dragsted and the chairman of the Danish parliament, Pia Kjaersgaard. The picture is of a specific event, where another politician, Kenneth Berth, states that there are no instances of European countries where Muslims have been successfully integrated. Pelle Dragsted's response to this is to call the statement racist. We showed this picture to initiate a conversation about whether the respondents thought that the statement was racist or not, and we found that most respondents did not consider it to be so. For instance, both Peter and Christian argue that it was not racist, because the statement was truthful. This, we argue, does not influence whether the statement is racist or not. Christian adds to this that the statement cannot be classified as racist, because Kenneth Berth does not express any hatred towards Muslims. We argue that statements can be racist, although hatred towards a population is not explicitly expressed. Berth might not express hatred, but his statement is a racialization that reduces Muslims all over Europe to be the cause of problems, hence it can be argued to be racist.

Even though, on the basis of the theoretical framework of this thesis, Kenneth Berth's statement is racist, the conversation the picture initiated in the interviews was not about whether it was racist or not, but whether Pelle Dragsted had the right to call it racist. This might be a reflection of the public debate surrounding the episode, which largely had the same focus (see for example S  , 2019), or it can be seen as a way to avoid taking a stance in terms of what is racism and what is not. The recurring tendency in the data is that the respondents consider the word 'racist' an invective. Thus, instead of focusing on the meaning of the statement, most respondents focus on the decency of the word. Some were critical of the use of 'racist' in the Danish Parliament because they think that the politicians have to maintain a "civil tone" (Henning, Appendix C, l. 134; Christian, Appendix E, l. 490). Overall, the respondents are very aware that being racist is a bad thing, and the general perception is that being categorized as a 'racist' is worse than saying something racist.

We argue that this general hesitation to talk about what is and where it is to be found is linked to the fear of being seen as or called a racist. In the data, variations of "this is not supposed to sound wrong, but" (Trine, Appendix B, l. 460) were used as a disclaimer prior to statements of which the respondents were afraid might be misunderstood. We found that it was necessary to touch upon

racism in a careful manner because the respondents generally seemed to become hyper-aware of their words. Peter says:

And you asked me if I have to hold myself back [in conversations] sometimes, and yes, I do have to, because if I'm in company where I don't know people that well, then it is easy for one of them to pull that card and say "hey, you're a racist!". And that obviously isn't a nice thing to be told, because, you see, I haven't... I've nothing against those people. (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 515-517)

Peter feels strongly about this, and he feels attacked when people call him out for being a racist. About the 'racist card,' he says: "(...) It's so easy to pull that, and then one has to be ashamed" (Appendix H, ll. 512-513). We argue that this defensive, emotional reaction to being confronted with one's racist behavior is a sign of *white fragility*. Arguing that someone else is 'pulling the racist card' can be seen a way to defend oneself by directing attention to the wrongfulness and unfairness of the use of the word 'racist', which the respondents generally perceive as an invective. Hence, the reaction with emotions of hurt or injustice when confronted with one's racist behavior is potentially a hindrance to the conversation concerning *whether* the behavior was racist or not. Instead, the focus will be directed towards the feelings of the person who was called out, and thus white fragility can be a hindrance to a discussion about race and racism. We observed signs of white fragility in many of the respondents, as they feel strongly about not wanting to be labeled as a racist, and generally, react with discomfort or feelings of injustice when the topic comes up.

Racism is extreme and violent

Overall, we argue that the data reflects the racialized social systems which are intrinsic in society. The respondents are part of a hegemonic discourse and established structures of power upon which society is based. Thus, although we analyze the interviews as individual narratives, the respondents are naturally affected by the society in which they live, just like everyone is. However, the respondents generally speak from the understanding that they are not influenced by mainstream discourses, and they seem to think that everyone, regardless of skin color, cultural background, and ethnic origin, lives under the same conditions in Denmark. Camilla says:

Yes, I think so [that being called a n**** is the same as being called a 'pale face' and 'red shrimp']. As long as there is no intention to be mean. Because you see, it comes from the Latin notions, referring to the color black (...) I don't think it matters, as long as it is

innocent and stems from goodwill. It is only a problem when we turn it into a superior, evolutionary struggle about who is better. That, I think, is bullshit. (Appendix F, ll. 168-175)

Camilla has a color-blind perception of races and does not consider any connection between calling someone a n*****³ and the structural power relations in society. To her, as too many of the respondents, the intentions are crucial, and people should not get offended by the word if it is intended in a good, playful or innocent manner. However, it should be taken seriously, if the word is used with the intention to dehumanize and exclude others. She says:

But that's because when it [the word n*****] is used to degrade and put people into some boxes, which can create genuine hate or prejudiced relations - for example as was the case with the Jews under World War II, when it is used to shame a whole population and exclude them from others' constitutional rights, then I definitely think that we should intervene. (Camilla, Appendix F, ll. 141-144)

Moreover, she thinks that people should be careful about calling people n***** if it is someone unfamiliar to themselves. She argues that "one has to check out where the boundary is, because if they have been exposed to a smear campaign (...) if they have been called 'black bastard' or some 'n*****animal', then I don't want to remind them of that episode" (Camilla, Appendix F, ll. 157-160)

These statements indicate that Camilla's understanding of racism is that it is something extreme and violent, as she associates it with the persecution of Jews during World War II or with a personal smear campaign with individual targets. Thus, it is believed that thoughts and beliefs are only racist if they are acted upon. Henning says: "Some people might get upset with my opinion about Muslims. And yes, I do have that opinion, but I do not practice it. And that's where morals come in" (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 548-550). We argue that this indicates unawareness and neglect of the racialized social systems embedded in the structures and all mechanisms of society.

This perception of racism as something that belongs to the past and to places outside Denmark is prevalent throughout the data. Thus, the respondents do not only refrain from taking a stance to racism, but they also think of it as something distant from themselves. This understanding, which is accounted for throughout the chapter, is prevalent in all the respondents' narratives. Thus, they do

³ Camilla used the Danish version of the n*word. While it is considered offensive it does not have the same historical significance as the n*word does in an American context

not consider the fact that persons of color or persons with other ethnic or cultural origins than Danish have other experiences of living in this society than they do.

To sum up, the data shows awareness and acceptance of racism as something bad and undesirable. The respondents consider it worse to be called a racist than to actually be a racist. Overall, they perceive racism as limited to color-racism, and as something distant from themselves.

Summary of findings

In this part of the analysis chapter, we have analyzed how the 'others' are racialized in various ways. As argued in the previous part of the analysis, 4.2, the social construct of nationalism has become embedded in the hegemony. Banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) influences the opinions of the respondents in the way that they subscribe to neo-nationalist and femonationalist ideologies (Farris, 2017). This way of thinking leads to an exclusionary division between Danes and the others. This chapter analyzes how this exclusion is fuelled by the racialization of the 'others'.

In general, refugees, immigrants, Muslims and people from non-Western countries are racialized as someone different or other than Danes, and as people with no control of their own lives and less deserving of help than the Danes. In particular, Islam as an ideology and Muslims as a category of people are perceived to be radically different and thus incompatible with Denmark, which is defined by Hervik (2015) and Grosfoguel and Martín-Muñoz (2010) as Islamophobia. The respondents think of Islam as underdeveloped and backward, which shows neo-racism (Hervik, 2011), because the respondents consider this difference in perceived cultures as a natural reason for incompatibility. Besides considering Islam incompatible with Denmark, the data indicates a fear of Islam overtaking Denmark. Thus, as Comaroff and Comaroff (2001) argue, the national fantasy of a homogeneous nation-state is perceived to be under pressure, as the state becomes increasingly diverse.

The data shows that there is a tendency to perceive the 'others' as people without the power and desire to control their own lives, and the people perceived as the 'others' are generally talked about as someone distant from the respondents. They are furthermore perceived as being part of a large, indistinguishable mass. Thus, there are examples of the dehumanization of Muslims in the data, which we argue can be explained as an adiaphorization of behavior (Bauman and Donskis, 2013).

We consider this indifference and neglect of individual agency problematic as it further develops the narrative of Danes having the natural right to Denmark.

Overall, the data shows that racism is not considered to be an issue in Denmark, and it is perceived to only exist in extreme incidents, such as when a minority group is explicitly undermined and attacked, such as the Jews were during World War II. Hence, the racialized social systems (Bonilla-Silva, 1999) and everyday racism (Essed, 2002) is denied in the data, as racism is considered to exist only when it is explicit, rather than systemic. The respondents generally perceive racism as essentially different than being reluctant to immigration to Denmark, as they argue that immigration skepticism and racism are two separate attitudes. However, we argue that this is a neglect of the racialized social systems, because any antipathy against the 'others' is a sign of neo-racism (Hervik, 2011) and neo-nationalism (Hervik, 2006), since it indicates that the respondents consider themselves entitled to Denmark, whereas people born elsewhere are less deserving of staying here.

4.4 The judgment of truth in the immigration debate

In this part of the analysis, we account for, analyze and discuss how the respondents make sense of and judge information and news stories about refugees and immigrants, as well as how they relate to 'the truth'. The chapter is divided into two sections: The assessment of trustworthiness and The understanding and rationalization of the immigration debate.

The assessment of trustworthiness

This segment is divided into four sections: The mistrust of news sources and politicians, The trustworthiness of news sources has declined over time, The truth can be found within oneself, and The majority population trusts untrustworthy news.

The distrust of news sources and politicians

All respondents consistently state that they do not trust the media or politicians in general. They all state this confidently and without hesitation. Although most of them get daily news from traditional, established news sources, none of them can pinpoint any specific news source or politician that they fully trust. The main argument for the distrust is that no media sources or politicians tell the truth, but always construct an angle on a story that benefits themselves. Trine says that she does not like to read articles anymore because she no longer trusts big corporations that profit from people reading the articles. Likewise, the mistrust to politicians is highly prevalent in the data, for instance in the case of Peter, who is in his 40's:

I don't think that I have ever thought of the politicians as untrustworthy as I currently do. At all. I think that they are deeply untrustworthy, all of them. No shit. Klaus Riskjær runs for parliament now, and they all blame him for being untrustworthy because he used to be in jail. Well, but the only difference between him and those already in the parliament is that he has been in jail, and they damn well should be (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 112-116).

Overall, the respondents find that politicians and the media often communicate information which is either false or framed in ways that profit the sender, or that the debate consists of conflicting, alleged assertions.

The trustworthiness of news sources has declined over time

The data indicates a perception that the media has not always been as untrustworthy as it is today. Particularly Celina and Henning, whom it should be noted, are among the oldest of the respondents,

explain that the news media used to be more transparent and truthful than it is nowadays. They imply that the truth used to be more accessible and that the large number of television channels and the diverse possibilities in relation to gaining information have brought negative consequences with it.

I think that there has been a general increasing scepticism compared to when I think about my own childhood back in the '80s, where the absolute and complete time of silence in any ordinary home was when the news on DR was on (...) that I think have changed from being omnipresent, that the news there were available were truthful and unedited, and the press was there to inform the public about the real and actual conditions (Celina, Appendix I, ll. 122-128).

Thus, she finds that the truth used to be presented in the daily news coverage and that this is no longer the case, as the people have access to different news from different sources at all times. The quality of information and knowledge on diverse media platforms are considered less trustworthy, due to the spread of social media and thus the potential for anyone to become an opinion former. One cause for the mistrust to the media is that everyone can publicly express their opinion about everything through social media: "You see, everything is escalated. Now Fie Laursen⁴ blogs about something and has an opinion about refugees. And with all respect of who she is, I don't think that's her area of expertise" (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 74-76).

The respondents generally think that a definitive truth exists, but that this truth is not presented in the media or by the politicians. If it is, the truth is to be found among many falsities, and therefore it is difficult to pinpoint. Celina compares news coverage today to news coverage in her childhood. Today there are both more news sources and anyone, with access to the internet, has the possibility to broadcast their opinions and do not have to meet any standards of research and fact-checking. However, even though there were fewer news sources in her childhood, these news sources were also affected by the hegemony and thus also presented biased news. When only one perspective of reality was presented, the information was more likely to be uncritically received, in contrast to now, when information flows from different news sources, bringing diverse and contradictory perspectives of the same case.

⁴ Fie Laursen is a Danish blogger who has been the center of many controversies (<http://fielaursen.dk/>)

The truth can be found within oneself

Since the respondents do not find the news media nor the politicians trustworthy, they express that they do not trust anyone but themselves: “You cannot trust any media, only yourself. You have to stick to what you yourself consider right or wrong” (Jonas, Appendix G, ll. 282-283). While none of the respondents are able to specifically pinpoint how they decide what is true and what is false, they describe it as something that comes from within themselves, a gut feeling. The respondents describe the information flow in the media as an intangible jungle, and the ‘facts’ presented from the political level or the media as contradictory. Thus, they generally perceive all ‘facts’ as untruthful by default. We argue that the respondents’ overconfidence in their own ability to tell right from wrong, along with their general mistrust to the politicians and the media is problematic because it gives them perceived capacity to produce their own personal truths as they wish, regardless of scientific knowledge and other people’s experiences.

The respondents think of themselves as someone who detects the truth without being affected by the mainstream news media flows or the general societal discourse. Accordingly, they navigate within contradictory information based on their inner, personal feelings and beliefs. We argue that seeing oneself in isolation from the context is neglect of hegemonic discourse. For instance, Peter is explicit about his lack of knowledge about where the tax money goes and how they are distributed. He describes both the handshake law and the covering ban as tokenism, and he is highly critical of current immigration policies and the media coverage in general, as he finds that no one can be trusted and that none of the, according to him, ‘real problems’ in society are being solved. However, he is sure that refugees and immigrants are to blame for bad conditions in hospitals and schools in Denmark:

Who the fuck is, in fact, spending that money? Nothing is getting any better for us. Where does that money go? Then it is natural to say that now 600.000 refugees and descendant just arrived, which was the number we were supposed to have in 2050, so I don’t like it (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 28-32)

Thus, he both says that he does not have any knowledge about the economy, and at the same time he is certain that the refugees and descendants spend the money that in his opinion should have been spent elsewhere. Although all respondents distance themselves from the politicians and the media, they all, in varying degrees, share the general skepticism or even hostile discourse about immigration to Denmark (see chapter 1). Hence, they argue that they are not controlled or

influenced by the dominant discourse, and find that they have figured it out. However, we argue that this is most likely not the case since they are all to some degree influenced by the hegemonic discourse, which is the perception of immigration as containing threats and issues.

The majority population trusts untrustworthy news

While the respondents think that people in general trust untrustworthy news and they think that the information and news published by media and politicians are difficult to make sense of, they do not see themselves as a part of this system. They all seem to believe that they are the only ones, who can tell right from wrong. They describe the wrongful perceptions mistaken for truths as something that happens to other people and do not include themselves when talking about being influenced by the media. They generally distance themselves from the people who fall for clickbait and fake news. For instance, Margrethe says: “Therefore I think that if the media makes clickbait, then people will read the articles, and that [clickbait articles] is something people comment on” (Appendix B, ll. 91-92). Thus, through this statement, she distances herself from being an easy target of clickbait but explains that this is something people usually fall for. Peter says: “Yes, one just has to find someone to be mad at. Now the media writes about these scroungers and uh, [Muslim] veils and all that. Fine, then we have someone to scold and be mad at there” (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 458-459). He says this in a sarcastic tone, implying that people who trust the media and are critical of Muslim veils are victims of an agenda formed by the media. However, it is worth noticing that Peter speaks critically of Muslim veils, and thus can be argued to be affected by the media himself.

In the data, two interrelated perspectives can be perceived: On the one hand, the respondents think that they have figured out the pitfalls of mainstream media, and on the other hand, they consider the general public unaware or too unintelligent to realize that they are being fooled. Celina expresses that she does not rely on the mainstream flow of news, clearly indicating denunciation of the information presented through those kinds of channels. She is critical of the negative discourse about immigration and the way it is communicated through the mainstream news sources. About the people who trust the general media discourse, she says:

I hope that deep down in those people, who think that immigration is to blame [for everything bad in the society], there is a person that wants to help, but just cannot cope with the consequences and feels pressured. I think that it is fundamentally fear (Celina, Appendix I, ll. 341-343)

She feels bad for the people who do not share her opinions and beliefs, and figures that there is a chance that they do not know the truth because of fear and incapability to see the bigger picture. This perception is consistent throughout the data, and generally, the respondents feel absolutely certain that their own beliefs and understandings are truthful. Thus, there is a tendency to think that other people are influenced by the politicians and the media, which spread false information, but that they themselves are capable of judging the truth from lies in the diffuse, contradictory news stream navigated by their gut feeling.

To sum up, the data shows skepticism of the trustworthiness of all news sources and the perception that the media has become less trustworthy over time. Thus, the mechanisms of hegemonic discourse, which have been present even when there were fewer news sources, are disregarded. The respondents think that no one can be trusted, but that they themselves know what is true and what is false. Simultaneously, they think that the majority population is unable to make this distinction.

The understanding and rationalization of the immigration debate

This segment is divided into three sections: The confirmation of one's understanding of the truth, The overestimation of knowledge, and Arguments used as a diversion.

The confirmation of one's understanding of the truth

As established, the respondents do not trust the media or the politicians and find that they can only trust themselves and certain people they have decided to be trustworthy. Nevertheless, all respondents support their own arguments with statistics or news stories that they believe to be truthful. To support his opinion, Peter makes use of an example from the mainstream media:

There was this case - You've probably heard about it - about that woman from Somalia, who lives in Århus and has been in Denmark for 16 years and has children, and then she has not learned Danish yet, dammit. She has not produced as much as one honest hour of work for Denmark (Peter, Appendix H, ll. 399-401)

His argument is that the integration of refugees and immigrants has failed and that it might be a good idea to make cuts in the financial support for those groups. To support this, he includes the example of a Somali woman, which was highly debated in the national news media in 2018 (for example see TV2, 2018). He uses the example of this woman, who as it turned out did, in fact, speak Danish, and thus was faultily exposed in the mainstream media coverage (DR, 2018), to

support his narrative of successful integration. We argue that this is *confirmation bias* because he uses one headline story to prove a point, which he already believes. He is thus influenced by the media but confuses this with trusting himself or his gut feeling. The information he selects to support his argument verifies his belief that there are people in Denmark who do not make an effort to become members of society.

Confirmation bias is prevalent throughout the data, and is present in arguments in the cases of all respondents. There are confirmation biases that draw on media coverage, which conveniently support the opinions and beliefs of the respondents, such as in Peter's case. Furthermore, the selective inclusion of political debates, events, and personal experiences constitute confirmation biases, because they use them to account for and justify their opinions. Camilla uses her personal experiences to explain why she is against the Muslim veil in Denmark:

Because you see, I've had friends who wore the [hijab], and they did not understand why they did so - they wore it solely because it was a habit and tradition (...) But then the rest of us began 10th grade, and made a big deal out of our hair and actually found that it was cool and cozy, they started to question this thing about wearing scarfs and being covered as a woman. Very often I brought rollerblades and a bike, and those are liberties that were not the norm, that was not something one did. So that way they became aware that it [hijab and being prevented from rollerblading] might not be something one necessarily feels for, but it's a choice that one [Muslim girls] doesn't get (Camilla, Appendix F, ll. 231-238)

Thus, she uses this example of some of her former Muslim classmates to account for why the Muslim veil is constraining and bad. She has probably met or heard about other women who wear the veil, but she includes this specific example because it strengthens her point of Muslim veils as oppressive. In the data, there are several examples of particular people, who become symptoms of a larger issue in the respondents' rationalizations of 'the truth'. Furthermore, we argue that there is another side to confirmation bias, being that people deselect and miscredit information if it does not match their beliefs, which is also prevalent in the data.

The overestimation of knowledge

Overall, the respondents argue in a way that implies that they believe that a definitive truth exists and that they themselves in most cases know this truth. However, many of the respondents do not possess the level of expertise about certain topics as they presume. This becomes clear especially when discussing their supposed knowledge of Islam. Henning says that Islam is not compatible with Denmark, because there is a lack of respect for Danish values from Muslims in Denmark. The reason for this, he argues, is:

Well, among other things it has something to do with the things written in the Qur'an. That other religions have to be eliminated. The Bible prescribes that you are not allowed to have other Gods than [the Christian God], but it does not prescribe that you have to combat others or kill Jews (Henning, Appendix C, ll. 436-438)

Although Henning has not read the Qur'an himself or has any basis for understanding the ideology and religion of Islam, he speaks about the content of the Qur'an with certainty and presents his understanding hereof as objective, truthful information. Likewise, Christian confidently describes the incompatibility of Islam and Denmark by the differences in how Islam is practiced and how religion is traditionally practiced in Denmark:

(...) [Muslims] care a lot about religion. You know, people talk about that we are very cultural Christian (*kulturkristne* in Danish), instead of caring insanely much about some rules we have to follow, such as what to eat or how to prepare our food. For instance, the Jews are not allowed to eat meat and milk together, because it's impure - for some reason. [For 'Danes'] There are no rules about halal, or that we have to wear some kind of clothing: burqa or niqab or something (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 181-185)

Thus, his perception of Muslims is that they are subject to strict rules about what to eat or wear, and their ways of living in general. Simultaneously he is of the opinion that because the majority of Danes do not follow any religion strictly, they are freer than those who do. Like Henning, he draws this conclusion without having studied Islam and without being familiar with any Muslims in his day-to-day life.

All respondents present their interpretations of Islam as objective. They all, except for Celina, talk about Islam as problematic, and some even describe it as dangerous and a threat (see 4.3). However,

none of them have any thorough knowledge about Islam, besides what has been presented to them in the media, in political debates, or what they have heard from other people. Only Camilla says that she has read about the Qur'an online. According to her, it is not mentioned in the Qur'an that women should cover themselves. Thus, she argues, women who wear the niqab or burqa have a "distorted view of what their religion really covers" (Appendix F, ll. 261-262). We argue that their supposed objective interpretation of Islam and the way they think that all Muslims live their lives is an oversimplification of reality since Islam is largely complex and difficult to define, even for people professing to Islam. They generally overestimate their knowledge of Islam, while presenting their opinions as facts, and thus the Dunning-Kruger effect (1999) is prevalent in the data in relation to Islam.

Besides being prevalent in relation to the topic of Islam, the Dunning-Kruger effect is present in the causal explanations of why refugees and immigrants come to Denmark, and how this affects the national economy and the welfare system.

We [the Danish People's Party] have supported the stop of quota refugees, because the municipalities have become too restrained because the amount of refugees coming has been too high, and the focus has been to help them first, instead of the citizens who already live in the municipality. And that is why the conditions in nursing homes, for instance, have been intolerable, and there are elders who only get a shower once a week or every second week (Christian, Appendix E, ll. 207-211)

Christian equates the bad conditions at nursing homes with the number of refugees, arguing that the refugees get social benefits which belong to the elderly in Denmark, and uses a false dichotomy to argue that we have to choose whether the elderly or the refugees should receive the help they need. Besides these examples, the Dunning-Kruger effect is prevalent in relation to Muslim full-face veils, the causes for refugees or immigrants to come to Denmark, the problems of 'ghettos', and the national economy.

Arguments used as a diversion

In their attempt to avoid answering questions to which they do not want to take a stand, many of the respondents skew the interview questions and thus answer to something different. That way they can turn the subject of conversation in a direction that might be easier for them to answer and does

not put them in a situation where they will have to say something that they know might be controversial. Camilla, for example, turns a conversation about the increasing number of refugees in 2015 into a narrative about her compassion for those left behind:

And we can see that the people coming to Denmark and the rest of Europe is primarily men. And that, of course, worries me, because this means that we have lots of women and children left behind for the military groups that are taking over and committing war down there. And I'm not a fan of that. I think it's crazy to think about what they are just left to that horrifying destiny that awaits them. And that is why I'm worried because it is the strong ones who have fled far away, instead of staying there to fight (Camilla, Appendix F, ll. 318-323)

We argue that this is a straw man fallacy (Walton, 2013) because she makes a counterargument to an argument that was never initiated, namely that the men should not flee or emigrate from the war zones, because they leave poor women and children behind. Just prior to this, she argued that the people coming to Denmark at that time were not refugees but immigrants, because they have come too far, and she says that they should all be sent 'home', as they do not have the right to be here. However, instead of elaborating on why she considers this a serious problem for Denmark, she turns the conversation to be about women and children who she says are being left behind. This, we argue, is not her main concern, as the entirety of her interview indicates strong national feelings. Furthermore, she expresses concerns about the existence of other ethnicities and cultures in Denmark, as she thinks that this is a threat to Danish values. Therefore, we argue that this change in the topic of conversation is a way for her to avoid having to argue why she is against immigration to Denmark. Instead, she puts herself in the role of a compassionate and considerate person and argues against statements that were never made. Her argument is difficult to argue with because it is unlikely that people will disagree with the unfairness of women and children being left behind in a war zone.

We observe the straw man fallacy in many of the interviews, when the respondents seem to lack arguments for what they believe in, or when they get insecure about what they think about particular subjects. Another example hereof is when Anne talks about the repatriation law in the national budget, commenting on the fact that refugees will most likely be sent back to their country of origin, regardless of whether they wish to or not:

It is difficult. If someone is well integrated, it obviously sucks to be sent back home again. However, many people probably want to go back home again to their own country and their own culture, so that way I can see the good in it (Anne, Appendix B, ll. 370-372).

Thus, she avoids taking a stance in terms of what she thinks about the new legislation and makes an assumption that refugees might be pleased about it instead.

To sum up, the data shows that the respondents are influenced by confirmation bias, as they are more likely to trust information that supports what they already believe in. Furthermore, the data shows various examples of the Dunning-Kruger effect, where the respondents overestimate their own knowledge and present their opinions as if they were objective and truthful. A common diversion from questions the respondents either could not or did not want to answer was the use of the straw man fallacy.

Summary of findings

Our data shows that how the respondents' judge trustworthiness has a great impact on their perceptions of the immigration debate. They say that they distrust almost all news sources and that no one can ever say with certainty that a particular politician or news source is trustworthy. They worry that all statements made, are made based on ulterior motives. The respondents do not know how to tell right from wrong and are confused and desensitized by the sheer masses of information presented to them on a daily basis (Mair, 2017). As Henning says: "I receive so many newsletters, and I can't manage to read them all. I'll read the headlines and then what? It's of course not the real opinion that's in the headlines." (Appendix C, ll. 228-230). The respondents deal with this in two, not mutually exclusive, ways. First, some of them do not read or watch any or only limited amounts of news. While this can have multiple reasons, Dalina says that she does not like to read articles anymore, because she does not trust them. Other respondents also show that they are desensitized to the news and do not know how to navigate among the information overload, so they do not engage in it at all. Second, all respondents argue that when they do not know what to believe they trust themselves and use 'common sense' to determine the truthfulness of statements. This, we argue, is detrimental because 'common sense' is determined by hegemony (Crehan, 2016). As we have argued in part 1, 2 and 3 of the analysis banal nationalism and structural racism define large parts of the statements made by the respondents. These are concepts that are part of the hegemony and of

which the respondents are largely unaware. Their arguments are presented as ‘common sense’. Therefore, by believing that one can find the truth within oneself, one is reproducing nationalism and racism without being aware of it. This tendency is further strengthened by confirmation bias, which means that if one is presented with information challenging whatever belief one sees as ‘common sense’, one is likely to dismiss this information as untrue, but judge information in line with one’s beliefs favorably. When engaging in arguments some of the respondents use both the straw man fallacy and a false dichotomy to deflect attention or win an argument. This suggests that they are exposed to political debates where these kinds of arguments are being used. These arguments are manipulative and can be used to spread misinformation and doubt. The straw man fallacy and false dichotomies were used only by the respondents who were most outspoken about being anti-immigration. Perhaps, they are not aware of these false arguments but are simply repeating what they have heard politicians say. Lastly, these mechanisms result in the Dunning-Kruger effect where the respondents perceive themselves to be knowledgeable about certain topics, without being in a position to believe so. Because of their lack of knowledge, they are not capable of recognizing this and will thus confidently make claims that could be argued to be incorrect (Dunning-Kruger, 1999). Because of the internet and social media, anyone can post about their opinions and thus increase the availability of confusing and contrasting information, affecting other people. Misinformation and desensitization are thus thriving and difficult to combat.

5 Conclusion

This thesis took a starting point in the polarized immigration debate in Denmark. Neo-nationalism and neo-racism have evolved and grown in Denmark, and media discourse has become increasingly Islamophobic (Hervik, 2006). Several nationalist and anti-Muslim laws have been approved and enacted such as border control and the covering ban. Far-right nationalist parties have been formed and the political landscape in general tilts more and more towards nationalist discourse.

While scholars (Hervik, 2006; Jensen, Wiebel, & Vitus, 2017) agree that nationalism and racism exist and thrive on multiple levels of Danish society, racialized social systems and racism are not often discussed. It is, however, considered an insult to be called a racist. When the chairman of the parliament, Pia Kjaersgaard, told member of parliament Pelle Dragsted off, for calling another member of parliament's statement racist, a media storm arose and the appropriateness of the term was discussed widely. This shows color-blind racism as exclusion is explained as based on insurmountable cultural differences (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Occasionally, a media storm related to racism arises, and as shown by Hervik (2018), racial experiences are dismissed and neglected. It is simply rarely acknowledged when racism happens.

Thus, scholars have shown that racism and nationalism is present in Danish society, but that it is rarely acknowledged. With this thesis, we wanted to examine the thought processes and rationalizations of people of the majority population who live their daily lives in the midst of this continuous debate. We therefore asked:

How is the immigration debate perceived in Denmark? What worries and opinions are connected to this topic and how are they rationalized?

We sought to answer our research question by conducting semi-structured interviews. We conducted eight interviews of which one was a focus group interview with four people and the rest were individual interviews. As our goal was to understand the respondents' experiences of the immigration debate, we took a hermeneutic stance to the analysis of our data. This allowed us to analyze the meaning behind the statements made by the respondents. The data gathered consisted of the words uttered throughout the interviews but also included the shared social experiences (Hervik,

2003) we had with the respondents both previous to the interviews and during them, providing us with rich data and deeper insight.

We divided the analysis into four parts based on our theoretical framework. In the first part, we analyzed how the immigration debate in its' entirety is perceived and how the respondents rationalized themselves within this context. In the second part we analyzed the data in terms of nationalism, in the third part we analyzed how racism and racialization affected the data and lastly, in the fourth part, we analyzed how the post-truth era affected the data.

We found that the respondents had a clear impression of what was implied by the umbrella term 'immigration debate' (*indvandrerdebatten*). They all found the debate to be polarized, containing harsh and extreme discourse, which worried them. Furthermore, we found that the respondents were affected by nationalism in two ways. First, banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) was omnipresent throughout the data, as, to the respondents, it was an unquestioned premise, that the world is divided into nations and that this provides the inhabitants of each nation with special rights to the nation they are born in. This foundational understanding of the world was used as an argument for inclusion and exclusion, as it was seen as natural and logical that shared history and a shared culture gives access to the benefits and resources available in a nation. Some explicitly mentioned a prioritized list of who should receive help if resources were scarce. This imagined community (Anderson, 1983) is rationalized through reference to a national fantasy (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001) about a shared history and shared national culture. However, as it is forgotten or simply never known that this sentiment is based on nationalism (Hutchinson & Smith, 2000), it becomes internalized as natural and logical (Billig, 1995).

Moreover, the respondents were also affected by neo-nationalist political ideologies and felt a strong sense of national pride (Hervik, 2006). This became evident in the way they described Denmark in a loving, favorable way and used human characteristics such as *trusting*, *open-minded* and *kind*. They furthermore used neo-nationalist rhetoric and spoke about *Danish values*. While they did not agree on what these values entailed, they all agreed that values were unique to Denmark. According to most of the respondents, agreement or disagreement with these values could and should be used to determine whether one should be included or excluded from Denmark.

This nationalist idea of what Denmark is like and how Danes should behave led to the racialization of anyone who did not fit into this perceived category. Due to banal nationalism and neo-nationalism, the respondents saw themselves as being entitled to have a say in who should be included and excluded from the Danish society. This excluded ‘other’ were primarily Muslim immigrants and Muslim refugees. Many of the respondents had clear, racialized impressions of these groups of people and saw them as a homogenous mass that stood in stark contrast to everything they perceived as being Danish. Thus, it was repeated multiple times by most of the respondents that immigrants were welcome in Denmark *if* they behaved in a certain way that the respondents deemed appropriate. However, the respondents found this unlikely as they perceived *their* culture to be too different and incompatible with ‘Danish culture’. This shows color-blind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2013), as the respondents distance themselves from having anything against the immigrants, and blame the incompatibility on cultural differences. Furthermore, it shows neo-racism because this understanding of cultural incompatibility is perceived as being natural. Most of the respondents expressed a level of awareness of diversity among Muslims, yet they thought that the majority matched their negative conceptions.

All respondents eagerly claimed that Denmark has a moral obligation to help refugees. While their perception of Islam and Muslims still remained when discussing refugees, the tone was a completely different one as the consensus was that refugees should only be granted temporary asylum. The respondents saw themselves as merciful, good samaritans, while they perceived the refugees as a homogenous mass of apolitical, desperate and vulnerable human beings, indicating a clear unequal power dynamic.

Lastly, we found that the respondents thought of the media, politicians and the public debate as being untrustworthy. Paradoxically, they thought of the majority population as being at risk for being influenced by fake news and misrepresentation of facts but considered themselves to be critical and well-informed. When determining the truthfulness of something they all argued that they knew within themselves what was right and what was wrong. They thus determined truth by the use of their own gut feeling or by applying *common sense*. The respondents viewed their gut feelings and common sense as neutral or untainted by the media. Common sense is highly influenced by the surrounding environment and the hegemony. The respondents, however, felt reassured and as if they know the ‘truth’ without awareness of their own bias. There are thus three

factors that influence how the immigration debate is rationalized. First, social media and the internet provide a superabundance of information, which is difficult to navigate within. Second, the algorithmic design of social media result in the social media echo chamber, and third, the way the human brain processes information is influenced by confirmation bias.

Based on the abovementioned findings we conclude that the respondents view the immigration debate as intense and extreme. They distance themselves from the extreme but do not realize that their own discourse reflects the extreme speech of the political debate. The respondents are worried about this polarized atmosphere and confrontational discourse because they desire a form of order within the nation. As nationalism determines their view of the world, they think that there should be a regulation of who lives in Denmark and who cannot. The respondents have two key worries. First, they are ultimately worried that letting the ‘others’ into the country, will limit the benefits they themselves can receive. Second, they are worried that their own identity is at risk. Because of neo-nationalism and neo-racism, the respondents view all the ‘others’ as fundamentally different from themselves and as incompatible with their own fantasy of Danish culture and ‘Danish values’. As they equate Denmark as a nation with themselves, their response to this perceived threat is emotional and they find this danger important to fight.

Furthermore, we found, that when confronted with the accusation of being a racist, the respondents actively distanced themselves from that term. Their confirmation bias prevented them from realizing the racist nature of some of their statements. They were oblivious to racialized social systems and viewed racism as being limited to color racism which they thought was only present among extremists.

The respondents’ emotional connection to and identification with Denmark leads to a strong sense of need for protection (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2001). Nationalism leads to the naturalization of exclusion and inclusion, and to uphold this structure racialization takes place. These belief systems are internalized and further strengthened and reproduced through themselves and through the immigration debate. As confirmation bias, the social media echo chamber, the Dunning Kruger effect, indifference and super-abundance of information prevent them from escaping these belief systems and thus are part of vicious cycles (Blazevic, 2013) that normalize, reproduce and increase all forms of nationalism, racism, and adiaphorization.

Further research should consider the possible relation of our findings to white supremacy in an international context. Moreover, as social media becomes an integrated part of people's lives, the effects of the post-truth and how hegemony is reproduced must be researched to examine possible ways to break the vicious cycles of nationalism and racism in Denmark.

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