CONFRONTING PRIVILEGE

A Feminist Research Project on Privilege and Inequality
in Volunteer Work with Marginalized Communities

A Master Thesis in the Field of Global Refugee Studies
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Katrine Isabella Gramstrup Nissen

Department of Culture and Global Studies

Student no. 20180696

AALBORG UNIVERSITY
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Abstract

This master thesis project investigates how privilege and inequality is experienced, reproduced and resisted by volunteers in the Danish NGO/community center for refugees and asylum seekers, Trampoline House. On the basis of an overall theoretical framework composed firstly of theories of critical race studies provided mainly by Ruth Frankenberg, Peggy McIntosh, Kimberlé Crenshaw and Audre Lorde and secondly by structuration theory as presented by Anthony Giddens, this thesis analyzes the social narratives of eight current or former volunteers from Trampoline House on the grounds of three online focus group discussions. Critical race theory has been pivotal in understanding and analyzing narratives of privilege and inequality, and structuration theory has provided the optimal framework for conducting this analysis. As I align myself with Giddens in the greater structure/agency debate, I understand structures as both limiting and enabling, meaning that the narratives of the volunteers can be both constrained reproductions of already existing structures of power, as well as modes of resistance to the structures. In fully comprehending the structurations of privilege as narrated by the volunteers, I have divided the analysis in two parts. The first part of the analysis focuses on the narratives of the volunteers, exploring how they understand privilege and experience inequality in the volunteer context. In the second part of the analysis, I elevate the analysis and unfold the structures surrounding and dictating the narratives of the volunteers, as the answer to how the volunteers resist and reproduce structures are to be found also in the structural contexts of Trampoline House and the wider society. In investigating structures of privilege and inequality, the analysis additionally engages in a larger analytical discussion on how it is possible to work responsibly with privilege in marginalized communities. In conclusion, it is demonstrated that the volunteers are unsuccessful in resisting the current structures as they experience them, despite an awareness on issues of privilege and inequality. Because the volunteers are shaped by the very privilege they speak of, they are taught not to recognize it in themselves, and as a result they push away the responsibility of creating change. It is additionally concluded that the pivotal first step towards resisting the current structures is to acknowledge how Trampoline House as an organization is complicit in the current structurations of privilege, which is informed and shaped by imperialism. On the grounds of this analysis, I argue for an examination of the construction of privilege in Trampoline House in order to work responsibly with structures of privilege and inequality in the meeting between volunteers and refugees.

"White people: I don't want you to understand me better; I want you to understand yourselves. Your survival has never depended on your knowledge of white culture. In fact, it's required your ignorance."

- Ijeoma Oluo (2017)

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1 Introduction

This introductory chapter clarifies the scope of the following research project on volunteer privilege. The chapter contains an identification of the problem area, the research question as well as a section unfolding the research settings, seeking to set the scene for this thesis in Development Studies and International Relations/Global Refugee Studies.

1.1 Identification of Problem Area

I started volunteering in Trampoline House, a community center for asylum seekers and refugees in Copenhagen, in February 2018. I still remember the feeling of chaos the first many times I spent in the house. Besides volunteering in the Gardening Team (prepping the backyard for spring), I spent many afternoons in the house simply wanting to get to know the place. During this time, it always felt clear to me that the house was not intended for me. It was - with good cause, I thought - intended as a safe space for rejected asylum seekers, asylum seekers, and refugees. The feeling of chaos that I experienced came from a feeling of being out of place. The two times a week I attended the Gardening Team, I had purpose and cause as I contributed and had a place in the community center. When I came to simply 'hang out' as is encouraged, I felt that I was expected to be a fluid part of the relations of the house, though I knew very few people. People were open and friendly, but I found it hard to naturally feel like part of the community center, which seemed like a closely tied group of people. When people asked me for help, I seldom knew the answer, and when they did not ask, I felt like I had no role in the house.

Three or four weeks after I started volunteering, I attended an introduction meeting for new volunteers, interns, and researchers, where I was told of the democratic practice of the house. I was told that we are all equal users of the house, that everyone has to contribute, both asylum seekers and Danish citizens alike, and that the motto of the house is "My House, Your House." (Trampoline House). This provided me with a new outlook on Trampoline House. I had considered myself to be there of service, to assist in any way I could to make life a little easier for the asylum seekers of the house. I knew that the asylum seekers and refugees also assisted in various activities in the house, but I had not been aware that this was a requirement. The purpose of this democratic practice was said to promote equality and sustainable integration (Trampoline House/About). I remember feeling uplifted when I walked out the door after the

introduction meeting. I felt that this was an amazing project to be a part of - I still do. I slowly found my place in Trampoline House, mostly with the other volunteers and the interns at the time, and I came to feel like part of the house.

Having now volunteered in Trampoline House for more than two years, it has become clear to me that the ideals of Trampoline House - as well as my own initial amazement for the house - is simplistic and, to some extent, naïve. There can be no doubt as to the fact that Danish citizens and rejected asylum seekers are not equal. Not in Danish society and not in Trampoline House. Some are paid, some are volunteering, building resumés as well as life skills, and some come in search of a refuge from the exit camps in which they live. It has become apparent that seeking equality between volunteers and asylum seekers in the house at best ignores issues of power and at worst contributes to an already uneven power relation in the meeting between volunteers and asylum seekers. Having pondered over this issue continuously both alone and with fellow-volunteers, I have developed an itch to better understand how this notion of equality is understood and performed by the volunteers in Trampoline House, as well as how these understandings affect their daily interactions with the other users of the house. It is on the basis of this itch that I emerge myself in an investigation on volunteer privilege and (in)equality in Trampoline House.

Going forward and in designing this research project, I align myself with sociologist and feminist Ruth Frankenberg's (1993) take on examining whiteness. As she articulates it: "(...) whiteness and Westerners have not, for the most part, been conceived as "the problem" in the eyes of white/Western people, whether in research or elsewhere." (Frankenberg 1993, 18). In a direct response, Frankenberg's study seeks to subvert this "representational matrix," as she terms it, by inquiring into the social construction of the white gaze through examining the formation of white women's race consciousness (Frankenberg 1993). Similarly, I have in Trampoline House experienced how it is continuously the refugees and asylum seekers being 'investigated' in research projects conducted in the house (my own previous research projects included) and would like to turn that table around and instead focus on the many volunteers, interns and researchers involved in the house. As Frankenberg's study, this project too will be "(...) an investigation of self rather than of other(s)," (Frankenberg 1993, 18) since it is a study of whiteness, privilege and inequality in voluntary work with marginalized communities by a woman who is white and volunteering in the organization under scrutiny.

1.2 Research Questions

In order to investigate understandings of privilege and inequality among volunteers in Trampoline House and to also engage in a larger analytical discussion on the topic, I pose the following questions: **a)** How do the volunteers in Trampoline House experience, reproduce and resist structures of privilege and inequality, and **b)** how is it possible to work responsibly with privilege in marginalized communities?

1.3 Research Settings: Trampoline House

Trampoline House is a non-governmental organization (NGO) functioning as a community center for "refugees, asylum seekers and other Danish residents" in the Nordvest neighbourhood of Copenhagen (Trampoline House/About). The community center was founded in 2011 in order to "show asylum seekers, Danes and politicians that there is an alternative to the existing asylum system." (Trampoline House/Press). The house is founded on democratic participation, "(...) because active citizenship entails understanding the social contract and the Danish democratic tradition." (Trampoline House/Press). This democratic practice is, according to the community center, established at house meetings, where the participants practice democratic dialogue, as well as in Democracy Class, where people with an interest in politics and communication can attend "in-depth talks about the nature and principles of democracy and political communication." (Trampoline House/Activities). The democratic practice can also be found in other principles of the house, for instance it is said that everyone in the house has to contribute; asylum seekers, refugees and Danish citizens alike (Trampoline House/About). In order to conduct research in the house, researchers must volunteer for a minimum of three months, one to two days per week in order to "give something back to the house." (Trampoline House/Research).

Trampoline House offers "tailor-made job training for refugees, matching each individual's needs, resources and motivation. That makes it easier for each individual to get a foothold on the job market as well as in society in general." (Trampoline House/About). In order to ensure this, the community center claims to work holistically through job training and education, democratic practice, counseling and system awareness, social network ("because integration is

something we learn from each other") and strategic partnership with companies, unions, NGOs, foundations, municipalities and the state (Trampoline House/About).

In praxis, Trampoline House offers a broad variety of workshops, classes and activities such as legal, medical and psychological counselling, language classes (Danish, Arabic, French, Italian and Swahili), hairdressing, gardening, cooking, cleaning, sewing, bible class in Farsi, Women's Club, Women's Class and Children's Club. Except for counselling, which is done by professionals and volunteers from the NGO Refugees Welcome, everyone can freely volunteer or participate in all of these activities. It is also a possibility to assist at the help desk with providing information and welcoming new users of the house. If you volunteer in one activity (or more), you are free to participate in all other activities; quid-pro-quo. The community center encourages people to not just consider Trampoline House as a place with classes, activities and counselling, but also as a place where you can feel at home and relax. "In the house, you can make new friends, play ping pong and get free tea and coffee. Several days a week, we all eat dinner together, and every first Friday of the month we have a big party and dance to our favourite music." (Trampoline House/Activities).

2 Methodology

The following chapter will provide an insight into the chosen methodology, empirical data collection, and my general reflections on the methodological process as well as an exploration of my position in the research project.

2.1 Feminist Research

The incentive for undertaking research about privilege and equality in volunteers stems from both a personal curiosity as well as inspiration from Ruth Frankenberg's study on whiteness in white women. Coming from a background of cultural studies, it is part of my academic DNA to seek to give voice to those who are othered, to bring the margin to the center and to encourage diversity in research. At first glance, this research project does neither. It is an investigation of white privileged women. Still, I argue for the feminist intersectional stance of the research methodology in seeking to better understand how privilege, (in)equality and whiteness is experienced, reproduced, and resisted by those at the top of the hierarchical power relations in a volunteer context. In reversing the gaze, I seek to explore the social construction of volunteer privilege through the examination of volunteers' consciousness towards privilege and equality in their relations in Trampoline House. As such, I investigate what I consider to be "the problem" instead of those being subjected to this problem, as inspired by Frankenberg.

Feminist methodologies can in general be considered as a perspective more so than an actual method. In this understanding, a feminist methodology is a "(...) perspective on an existing method in a given field of inquiry or a perspective that can be used to develop an innovative method." (Reinharz 1992, 241). There are multiple definitions of feminism and, as a result, multiple perspectives on feminist research methods. But what feminist methodologies - or perspectives - in general have in common is that they are guided by feminist theory, that they seek to overcome biases in research, bring about social change and acknowledge and include the position of the researcher (Reinharz 1992). As will be unfolded in the coming sections, this research project seeks to include all of these points of impact.

For clarifying purposes and in defining what I consider to be feminist research, I look to writer, feminist and activist Gloria Jean Watkins (better known by her pen name Bell Hooks). In her first book, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (1981) she stated:

> "It is obvious that many women have appropriated feminism to serve their own ends, especially those white women who have been at the forefront of the movement; but rather than resigning myself to this appropriation I choose to re-appropriate the term "feminism," to focus on the fact that to be "feminist" in any authentic sense of the term is to want for all people, female and male, liberation from sexist role patterns, domination, and oppression." (Hooks 1981, 29).

I term the methodology of this project to be not only feminist but intersectional as I, in line with Hooks definitions of the term, acknowledge the ontological complexity and coherence of analytical categories such as race, gender and class, which is highly relevant for the purpose of this research (Evans & Lépinard 2019). Recognizing that these categories are mutually constitutive is paramount in investigating how volunteers experience, resist and reproduce structures of privilege, a multi-faceted analytical category in itself. Rooted in activism as a project of social justice, intersectionality seeks to make visible multiply-marginalized groups (Evans & Lépinard 2019). This research project seeks to investigate and problematize issues of power and privilege in the meeting between volunteers and marginalized groups in Danish society and is thus a project of social justice seeking to contribute to the possibility of evening out distributions of power in a volunteer context.

When doing research in Trampoline House, it is encouraged to share results and other useful insights at a so-called big house meeting. It is my intention with this research to do exactly this; to share and hopefully open up for a discussion on privilege and inequality in the house, thus opening up for the possibility of social change for the people of Trampoline House - volunteers, interns, and asylum seekers included.

2.2 Empirical Data Collection

In order to investigate how volunteers experience, resist, and reproduce structures of equality and privilege, I have conducted three online focus groups with former and current volunteers

from Trampoline House. A total of eight volunteers participated in the empirical data collection. The participants are all women, mostly Danish, one American, one Icelandic and one German and they are all in the ages of 20-30. Two of the participants have interned in the house (and continued to volunteer afterward) and the remaining six have volunteered in periods between six months to two years. The participants have volunteered in an array of projects in the house: Child Care, Women's Club, Help desk, Sister's Cuisine, Sewing Club, the Gardening Team, the People's Movement for Asylum Seeking Children's Future (with the Women's Club), as well as assisting in the daily cooking and cleaning of the house and various social events such as the monthly 'First Friday of the Month Parties'. Out of the eight participants, four study or previously studied either Global Refugee Studies or Migration Studies - two areas of study highly represented in Trampoline House in general. The rest of the participants study or studied Anthropology, Communication, Gender and Literature, and Cultural Encounters.

I decided to carry out online focus groups (OFGs) as it was not possible, due to the national Covid-19 lockdown, to perform face-to-face interviews of any kind. When reading up on alternative qualitative methods, I found OFGs to be a suitable substitute, as it provides an alternate way of engaging with people unable to participate in face-to-face data collection (Fox 2017). Due to the national lockdown, I had been forced to change my research object, as it was not possible to continue with my previously chosen study. The option of doing OFGs made it possible to set up the interviews rather quickly, not having to take into consideration whether it was possible for people to meet at the same location. The participants could thus participate from various locations in Europe, which I found was something that the participants also appreciated and took into consideration when asked if they would be interested in participating in the research. When looking further into the possibility of doing OFGs, I found that the method, similar to face-to-face focus groups, offers qualitative researchers the opportunity to study collective meaning-making as well as allowing participants to challenge ideas and respond to each other's experiences (Fox 2017). In addition, the method has great flexibility for the participants and is resource-lite on my part. Studies have also shown that this method can give a sense of 'invisibility', which can make the participants feel less inhibited and thus more open in their responses than they would in a face-to-face focus group (Fox 2017). All in all, I found only advantages in doing online focus groups for this particular study and thus decided to proceed with this method. The three OFGs were conducted via Google Hangout in the period of the 8th

to 10th of April 2020 and they each lasted between 35-50 minutes. I chose to conduct the interviews via Google Hangout as this virtual space is accessible without having to install anything or create a user, making the focus group as easily accessible as possible for the participants. As one of the focus groups consisted entirely of native Danish speakers, this interview was conducted in Danish. When quoting the volunteers who participated in this focus group, I will however translate their quotes to English.

In keeping with traditional focus groups, the discussions in OFGs are focused on a collective activity for the purpose of data gathering. When considering the interview questions, I wanted to make sure that the questions were as open as possible while still managing to steer the direction of the conversation. I ended up having three set questions (in addition to an opening question regarding their relation to Trampoline House). The questions focused on understandings of and experiences with equality and privilege as a volunteer and can be seen in Appendix A. The full transcribed interviews can be seen in Appendix B, C, and D.

Prior to the online focus groups, I ensured that all participants gave their informed consent in participating in the research project. This was in order to ensure that the participants were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the possibility of opting out of the research at any time without explanation, as well as the fact that their anonymity would be ensured prior to the OFGs. Gaining informed consent is a key ethical issue in minimizing potential psychological and emotional harm to participants in social science research (Floyd & Arthur 2012). All participants signed the declarations of consent prior to the focus groups. One participant chose to withdraw from the research and did not participate in the focus group discussion. This participant's consent form and all other details have been excluded from the research project. The remaining eight consent forms can be seen in Appendix E.

2.2.1 Autoethnographic Practice

My own personal involvement in Trampoline House has been a point of entry into this research project. I have been engaged in Trampoline House for more than two years, and I chose the overall theme of the research on a desire to explore and better understand structures concerning equality and privilege in volunteer work in the community center. The women participating in the project I know through different activities in Trampoline House and my personal involvement in the organization. My methodological outset thus involves an autoethnographic

practice as I have actively engaged in the activities where the participants have been involved - such as Women's Class, the Gardening Team, cooking, cleaning, house parties, and community dinners. This autoethnographic practice implies that I include my own reflections and subjectivity in the research process (Brinkmann & Tanggaard 2015). I will, therefore, include my own experiences as empirical data when relevant as I have continuously reflected upon my experiences in the field (Brinkmann & Tanggaard 2015). I have thus used my own familiarity with the research field as a resource in the production of knowledge.

In addition, I have chosen to take fieldnotes before, during and after the online focus groups as a tool to engage critical thinking and reflexivity. I wrote down my thoughts before and after each interview, documenting feelings, surprises as well as considerations for the following interviews or points of analysis. In doing so, I sought to bring self-reflection and transparency into my research, which are key feminist principles (O'Keeffe 2017). I took the fieldnotes by hand, as to be able to take notes during interviews, and I will therefore not enclose these as an appendix, but rather include them when relevant in line with my other reflections within the field.

2.3 Narrative Research

Seeking to investigate how volunteers in Trampoline House experience, resist and reproduce structures of privilege and equality through online focus group discussions, I will be analyzing narratives of inequality and privilege as expressed by the participants in the OFGs.

Similar to feminist methodologies, there is no set guideline on how to do narrative research, no overall rules about modes of investigation, nor any automatic starting or finishing points (Squire et.al. 2017). However, having set my overall methodology within a feminist perspective, some direction to the narrative investigation is set. Working from a poststructuralist stance to narrative research, I am interested in the power relations within which narratives become possible - meaning that narratives are produced and understood by multiple subjectivities. Narratives are multiple, socially constructed, reinterpreted, and reinterpretable: "(...) the storyteller does not tell the story, so much as she/he is told by it." (Squire et.al. 2017, 4).

I also acknowledge narratives' social positioning as discourses and the problematics of subjectivity, representations and power (Squire et.al. 2017, 10). In this understanding, narratives can be viewed as "modes of resistance to existing structures of power" (Squire et.al. 2017, 5), but

also as succumbing to the structures and hereby reproducing them. This is what I will be exploring in the coming analysis.

I frame my research in terms of the participants' social narratives because I believe that by doing so, I can investigate different layers of meaning and understand more about individual and social change:

> "By focusing on narrative, we are able to investigate not just how stories are structured and the ways in which they work, but also who produces them and by what means; the mechanisms by which they are consumed; how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted and what, if any, effects they have." (Squire et.al. 2017, 2).

As such, narratives can help describe, understand, and explain important aspects of the world. They carry traces of human lives that we want to understand (Squire et.al. 2017).

Writing from a feminist methodological perspective means acknowledging my own part in the research process. It is therefore important for me to underline that I understand narratives as co-constructed, as dialogically constructed forms of social code that are shaped by listeners. In this research project, it is to be understood that the narratives from the volunteers have been affected not only by my presence in the interview but also by the presence of other participants as well as wider, societal contexts such as the narratives they are presented with in Trampoline House - officially and from other volunteers (Squire et.al. 2017).

In line with this and in going forward in the analysis, I will be focusing especially on the concept of social narratives, defined as follows: "(...) narratives that are embraced by a group and also tell, in one way or another, something about that group." (Shenhav 2014, 17). Working with this approach to narratives it is understood that narratives are the product of the *multiplicity dynamic*, "the process of repetition and variation through which narratives are being reproduced at the societal sphere." (Shenhav 2014, 17). Social narratives are formed through the mechanism of multiplicity, which is the act of retelling stories or variations of these stories. When a narrative is adopted by a group and the individuals, it can be considered a social narrative (Shenhav 2014, 18). In focusing on the social narratives of the volunteers, I acknowledge and take into consideration both the collective as well as the individuals narrating. In exploring the social narrative of the volunteers from Trampoline House, I have the opportunity to investigate how the volunteers, as

a shared group, understand and act upon their own privileges. Interpreting these narratives open up for the possibility of exploring the ways in which the volunteers construct and shape their perceptions of inequality (Shenhav 2014, 17).

2.4 Positionality

Before proceeding to the theoretical chapter, I find it necessary to pursue an overall reflection upon my own positioning as a researcher in the field of global refugee studies. I do this in order to outline the framework in which I place myself and, as such, constitute the foundation on which I have carried out the analysis.

As unfolded, I use my own familiarity within the research field as a resource when drawing upon my own experiences and thus acknowledge my own part in and effect on the research process and the results. Accordingly, I align myself with Donna Haraway (1991) and her notion of 'situated knowledge', stating that knowledge does not exist without context and that I, as a researcher, cannot detach myself from my own biases in the research process (Haraway 1991). Recognizing this implies a need for awareness of my position as a researcher engaging in Trampoline House and socializing with the other volunteers and participants. I believe this position to have been beneficial for my access to investigating the topic, but I also recognize that the position has influenced my findings as well as the entire research process. My position in doing 'insider research' means that I have had access to the participants - it is only allowed to do research in Trampoline House if you are yourself a volunteer. It also meant that I had the option of reaching out to many of the volunteers personally, which was clearly the way in which I got the best response (as opposed to writing in the various Trampoline House Facebook groups and chats in which only two participants offered to participate). In addition, being an insider researcher means that I know the environment well - I am familiar with the organizational culture as well as the routines and different activities of the community center (Hannabus 2000). Other benefits in insider research can be found in terms of credibility and 'peer respect':

> "In effect, because the wider social structure classifies the researcher and informants in a similar or identical fashion, this creates greater confidence between the parties (...) One of the results of this trust and exposure to the most intimate of details is that the insider researcher is able to appreciate the

> full complexity of the social world at hand. The result is a potentially accurate portrayal, rather than a simplistic caricature." (Hockey 1993, 204).

During the OFGs, I found the conversations to, at times, resemble conversations that I have previously had with some of the participants - conversations that led me to this investigation. I, therefore, do believe that being a peer to the volunteers meant that they possibly opened up more than they would have to an "outsider researcher", trusting that I would handle their statements with confidentiality.

However, I find it necessary to nuance this debate on insider/outsider research from a feminist approach to ethnography, which offers a lens in which to view this debate on whether it is most beneficial to conduct fieldwork as an insider or an outsider of the "community" of study:

> "In this feminist revisiting of the insider/outsider debate, I argue that the insider/outsider distinction masks power differentials and experiential differences between the researcher and the researched. The bipolar construction on insider/outsider also sets up a false separation that neglects the interactive processes through which "insiderness" and "outsiderness" are constructed." (Naples 1996, 49).

As such, it is to be understood that outsiderness and insiderness are not fixed or static positions and it becomes necessary to recognize the fluidity of outsiderness/insiderness and recognize that I, as an ethnographer, am never fully inside. My relationship to the community is constantly negotiated and "[t]hese negotiations are manifest in local processes that reposition gender, class and racial-ethnic relations among other socially constructed distinctions." (Naples 1996, 49).

On the grounds of this input in the insider/outsider debate, I find it necessary to clarify that by calling myself an "insider researcher", I mean that I, as a volunteer of Trampoline House, know the organization well, that I had access to the possible participants of this study, and that I have the possibility of using my own familiarity with the research field in the production of knowledge - resources that would not have been accessible for researchers with no affiliation to Trampoline House. In this, I recognize the interaction between shifting power relations in a community context and acknowledge that I am neither fully inside nor outside of the research field.

Additionally, I find it important to highlight and recognize that my privileged membership in the categories of white, middle-class university student with a Danish national background and a feminist agenda influence the relations I engage in as well as the results of the study. The question of privilege and power relations is one of the main reasons that I have chosen to conduct this study and why I have chosen to focus on the experiences of the volunteers in Trampoline House. Bringing my own reflections into the analysis stresses that this study, as previously stated, becomes an investigation of self rather than of others (Frankenberg 1993).

3 Theoretical Framework

In this theoretical chapter, I will introduce and unfold the main theorists of this research project, namely Ruth Frankenberg, Peggy McIntosh and Anthony Giddens. Frankenberg and McIntosh are both researchers within the field of anti-racism and whiteness studies and have valuable insights on working with privilege methodologically as well as theoretically. I employ their theories in answering both research questions; in investigating how the volunteers experience, resist and reproduce structures of privilege as well as to discuss how it is possible to work responsibly with privilege in marginalized communities. For analytical purposes and as a point of departure for investigating structures, I position myself with Giddens in the greater structure-agency debate. This chapter will therefore contain an elaboration of his *structuration theory* which will be of main relevance for the coming analysis in understanding how the volunteers of Trampoline House resist and reproduce structures of privilege. I find that these theories in combination provide the optimal base for analyzing the narratives of volunteers in Trampoline House. These three main theorists will be supported by insights from critical race theorist Audre Lorde as well as other research that present relevant and useful insights. Additionally, I will in this chapter shortly unfold the theory of intersectionality as presented by Kimberlé Crenshaw, as this theory provides a framework for my understanding of privilege.

Developing further on what have been stated in my introduction, I have for this research project been inspired by sociologist and feminist Ruth Frankenberg who in the book *The Social Construction of Whiteness: White Women, Race Matters* (1993) focuses on the advantages that whiteness has for women rather than on the disadvantages suffered by non-white women. In doing so, Frankenberg outlines ways in which racial inequalities endure even when white people regard themselves as anti-racist. I find her insights to be highly valuable when conducting the following analysis, as I will be working with the narratives of volunteers who considers themselves part of the anti-racism movement in Denmark. Drawing inspiration from Frankenberg, I will in my analysis focus on whiteness as a form of privilege. As she put it: "(...) in a social context where white people have too often viewed themselves as nonracial or racially neutral, it is crucial to look at the "racialness" of white experience." (Frankenberg 1993, 1).

Analyzing narratives of inequality and privilege from the point of view of the volunteers means looking at the white experience in understanding how the volunteers deal with (or do not deal

with) their own privilege in working with marginalized people, since "(...) any system of differentiation shapes those on whom it bestows privilege as well as those it oppresses." (Frankenberg 1993, 1).

In working with whiteness and white privilege (among other forms of privilege), I have found it relevant to also include the works of feminist and anti-racism activist Peggy McIntosh, author of "White Privilege and Male Privilege: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences through Work in Women's Studies" (1988). Having worked in the field of Women's Studies, McIntosh outlines different ways in which white privilege and male privilege shares similarities:

> "I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. (...) I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious." (McIntosh 1988, 291).

In the research paper, McIntosh documents 46 privileges which she, as a white person, experiences. She distinguishes between "earned strength" and "unearned power conferred systematically" (McIntosh 1988, 296), and explains how privilege seems to be a desirable state, but that many of the attributes ascribed to privilege are distinctly negative and will always - unless they are rejected - reinforce present hierarchies. This is for instance the privilege of not listening to less powerful people, which "distort the humanity of the holders as well as the ignored groups." (McIntosh 1988, 296). She therefore calls for a distinction between positive advantages (which we should work to spread) and these negative advantages. Positive advantages of being privileged is for instance the expectation that neighbours will act decently towards you, or that your race will not work against you in a court of law. These privileges should be the entitlement of everyone and the norm in a just society (McIntosh 1988, 296).

As a white woman researching to better understand her own privilege, McIntosh raises a highly relevant question - "What will we do with such knowledge?" She calls it an open question whether we "choose to use unearned advantage to weaken hidden systems of advantage, and whether we will use any of our arbitrarily-awarded power to try to reconstruct power systems on a broader base." (McIntosh 1988, 298). This exactly is what I will seek to investigate in the coming analysis. Being a volunteer in Trampoline House means - to a varying extent - to be

aware of one's own privilege. This leads to the question of what the volunteers do to weaken the systems of inequality in the house, as well as how they articulate this awareness. As for my own part in weakening the systems, McIntosh writes:

> "As we in Women's Studies work reveal male privilege and ask men to give up some of their power, so one who writes about having white privilege must ask, "Having described it, what will I do to lessen or end it?"" (McIntosh 1988, 292).

As this is a study also of 'self', as Frankenberg coined it, this entire research process is for me a lesson in better understanding my own privilege and how I can use this privilege to reconstruct unequal power systems. I consider this research project, including the discussions to follow in Trampoline House, to be my small contribution in lessening inequality and privilege in this particular organization, hopefully setting an example for other organizations working with marginalized people.

Though focusing in her research paper on white (and male) privilege, McIntosh highlights that there is a need for a similar examination of the daily experience of having advantages related to age, ethnic background, physical appearance, nationality, religion and sexual orientation and that "all of the oppressions are interlocking." (McIntosh 1988, 298). This leads me to the next feminist scholar that I will highlight in this theoretical framework; Kimberlé Crenshaw, who in 1989 coined the term *intersectionality* in the research article, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989). In the article, Crenshaw argues that because black women are dually oppressed in the categories of women and black, they are sometimes excluded from feminist and anti-racist policy discourse "because both are predicated on a discrete set of experiences that often does not accurately reflect the interaction of race and gender." (Crenshaw 1989, 140). Theory on social privilege argues that each individual is embedded in a matrix of categories and contexts and that each individual as a consequence will be privileged in some ways and disadvantaged in others:

> "The complex and intricate relationship between privilege and oppression has led us to a definition of privilege that is more inclusive and intricate. We define social privilege as any entitlement, sanction, power, immunity, and

> advantage or right granted or conferred by the dominant group to a person or group solely by birthright membership in prescribed identities." (Black & Stone 2005).

This is further supported by the concept of intersectionality. When applying this concept to that of social privilege, it is to be understood that different forms of privilege and oppression are interlocked, that one can be privileged or oppressed in the different social categories that you belong to; categories and contexts intersect. Crenshaw argues that problems of exclusion are not to be solved simply by including black women (or other marginalized people) in an already established analytical structure, and that any analysis that does not take this issue of intersectionality into consideration cannot account for the ways in which marginalized people are subordinated (Crenshaw 1989). Privilege is multifaceted and nuanced, and looking at privilege from an intersectional understanding helps bridge the gaps between these many factors. I thus implement the concept of intersectionality to ensure that when talking about privilege in volunteer work, the many different nuances and levels of the concept are appreciated and taken into account. Though the following analysis, with inspiration from Frankenberg and McIntosh, focuses mainly on white privilege, I wish to clarify that when referring to white privilege, I do not believe this privilege to be a singular, isolated type of privilege constructed on the basis of skin color alone. The privilege which I refer to in looking at volunteers and refugees/asylum seekers in Trampoline House respectively is especially affected by citizenship and nationality, and not skin color. Many users of Trampoline House are rejected asylum seekers, some are currently seeking asylum and some have been granted asylum, but are still far from having the same rights as Danish or European citizens (which the majority of volunteers are). But, as pointed out by Crenshaw, privilege is multifaceted, and the distribution of power in Trampoline House is not unequal simply due to questions of citizenship and nationality. Also skin color, religion and different cultural attributes makes this relation unequal. In the analysis I will, through the narratives of the volunteers, explore how they handle this inequality and, ultimately, engage in a discussion on how volunteers and organizations can work responsibly with issues related to privilege and inequality.

Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration has informed this analysis and will operate as an analytical framework in exploring narratives on privilege and inequality. I thus align myself with Giddens in the greater structure-agency debate, where he argues for the duality of structure;

according to him, "the constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena (...) but represent a duality." (Giddens 1984, 25). He does not equal structures with constraint but considers them to be always both constraining and enabling. Furthermore, Giddens argues that all human agents have the power to make change through their capability of making decisions and taking action. He considers people to be 'knowledgeable' and therefore, able to reflect on their position and thus able to resist the constraining structures by taking action - and enabling them (Giddens 1984). In analyzing narratives, these insights are highly valuable, as it provides a framework for working with the insights from Frankenberg and McIntosh. In combination it becomes apparent that privileged people (being in terms of whiteness or citizenship) have been taught not to see their own privilege, to consider themselves racially neutral - but that going along with this implies complicity in reproducing a structure that is benefiting themselves, and that it is possible to resist these structures.

Particularly two concepts from Giddens' structuration theory will be unfolded in this thesis: *Reflexive monitoring of actions* and *rationalization*. Reflexive monitoring describes the ability to reflect upon and monitor one's actions, and rationalization refers to the act of rationalizing these actions (Loyal 2003). These two abilities are informed by *practical consciousness* and *discursive consciousness*, which represents respectively the tacit knowledge employed in everyday routines and the "agent's ability to articulate his knowledge or 'to be able to put things into words'." (Loyal 2003, 52). The practical consciousness is associated with the rationalization of actions, it enables agents to navigate everyday routines, but also makes them able to "judge one another as 'competent' and 'accountable' in terms of the rationalizations they provide for their actions." (Loyal 2003, 53). Giddens clarifies that "the rationalisation of action is causally implicated, in a chronic manner, in the continuation of day-to-day actions." (Giddens 1984, 345). It is in this process that the agent can reflect, monitor and modify their actions, thus changing the rationalization behind their actions. The discursive consciousness is, in contrast to the practical consciousness, accessible to the conscious awareness of the agent (Loyal 2003).

Implementing the concept of agency means acknowledging that the agents have power to "act otherwise" (Giddens 1984, 14), meaning in this regard that the volunteers are capable of making a difference through their actions as volunteers, by intervening or not in current state of affairs or course of events. Through action, agents produce structures; through reflexive monitoring and

rationalization, they can transform them. To act, agents must be motivated, knowledgeable and able to rationalize and reflexively monitor their actions.

In summary, the theory of structuration and the understanding of the duality of structure and agency are important concepts to the following analysis, as it is important to highlight that I do not view the volunteers as passive or submissive to structures of privilege and inequality. They are capable of resisting these structures and thus have an impact on the relations they engage in when working with marginalized people. As Giddens points out "(...) routine is integral both to the continuity of the personality of the agent (...) and to the institutions of society, which are such only through their continued reproduction." (Giddens 1984, 60).

I will thus in the following analysis delve into these concepts of the duality of structure when employing theories of critical race studies in analyzing the narratives from the volunteers, and demonstrate to the reader how the structures that the volunteers engage in affect their narratives, but in turn also how they reproduce or resist these structures actively through reflexive monitoring and discursive practices, consequently supporting or changing the current structures of privilege and inequality through their narratives.

4 Analysis

Drawing on theories of critical race studies and structuration theory, I venture on this analysis of inequality and privilege in the narratives of the volunteers in Trampoline House.

On the basis of my theoretical framework, I recognize that looking at the white experience is crucial in investigating understandings of privilege, that in order to see and act upon white privilege as a white person, it is necessary to address and confront the structures surrounding us (Frankenberg 1993). I recognize that these structures can be limiting as well as enabling and that the agent cannot be separated from the structure as they are both a part of and reproduced by social practice (Giddens 1984). I also recognize that when talking about privilege, one cannot simply talk about white privilege, but that one can be privileged or oppressed in different social categories, that the different nuances and layers of privilege intersect (Crenshaw 1989). In the following analysis, it will especially be the categories of race and nationality that will prove themselves relevant. It is important to keep in mind that also categories of gender, language, age, sexual orientation, religion and ability could (and most likely do in some ways) also have an implicit impact on the social narrative of the volunteers and affect the ways in which the individual refugees and asylum seekers of Trampoline House are oppressed in Danish society in other contexts than in their relation to the volunteers.

Taking point of departure in the duality of structure/agency, and the understanding that narratives can be both reproductions of already existing structures of power as well as modes of resistance to the structures, the following chapter will firstly investigate the ways in which the volunteers reproduce and resist structures on privilege and inequality in their shared narratives.

In Giddens understanding, it is not possible to fully comprehend the structurations of privilege through either a micro- or macro-focused analysis (Giddens 1984), and I will thus, in the second part of the analysis, elevate the analysis and unfold the structures surrounding and dictating the narratives of the volunteers, as the answer to how the volunteers resist and reproduce structures are to be found also in the context in which they engage.

4.1 Exploring Social Narratives

In the first part of the analysis, I will seek to unfold how the social narratives of the volunteers are constrained by the existing structures on privilege and inequality, but also how the narratives they produce are powerful and constitute realities. In narrative research it is understood that the narratives of the volunteers are shaped by the social more so than they are determined by it and, consequently, their narratives should be understood and analyzed as constituting the realities that they engage in as volunteers (Tamboukou 2017, 15). Understanding the duality of structure as expressed by Giddens, the agent - the volunteer - are able to engage in a dialectic of control and to "intervene in the world or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs." (Giddens 1984, 32). In choosing to act through their narratives or in refraining from doing so, the volunteers have the ability to change the structures they engage in and, as implied in narrative research, to constitute realities. It is however important to call attention to the duality of structure in this constitution, as their actions are constrained by their understandings of available actions and external limitations (Giddens 1984). It is on the basis of this understanding that I proceed to this first part of the analysis.

At the beginning of each interview, I would ask the volunteers to explain their relation to Trampoline House; how long they have volunteered, in which projects and why they chose to join this particular community center. An ongoing theme in their answers pertained to the notion of doing something meaningful, of 'giving back'. One participant stated:

> "I knew that I wanted to do some sort of volunteer work that was meaningful, that could both make a difference but also where I could learn something and broaden my horizon." (Appendix C, 1).

Another volunteer said: "I felt like I wanted to do my part here at least." (Appendix B, 2). It becomes clear that the social narrative of the group is sought to be that of 'doing something meaningful', but when asked further, most of the volunteers have other, more personal reasons for volunteering: "to make more friends" (Appendix B, 1), "to meet a lot of new people" (Appendix B, 2), "to learn something" (Appendix C, 2) or to be able to do research with refugees (Appendix C, 1). One volunteer said the following:

> "I think it is really exciting to get to know people and hear about their background and their stories. But it's not like I'm coming out of here with a lot of new skills or learning anything in that manner." (Appendix C, 2).

Very early on in the interviews, a power hierarchy opposing the claim to equality in Trampoline House is established. As I experienced when first starting volunteering in the community center, the relation between volunteers and refugees in the community center is not equal. On the surface, their reasons might not seem to be problematic; what is wrong with volunteering to make more friends, or to be able to do research within refugee studies? Previously, I myself would have said nothing at all. But taking points from critical race studies, it is necessary to look at what these reasons mean for the distribution of privilege in the volunteer context. One could also question the very notion of doing 'meaningful' work - what defines meaningful work?

To volunteer in Trampoline House one has already established privilege, as volunteering in itself is a privilege: Not everyone can afford to spend their time working without financial compensation. Choosing to volunteer in order to collect empirical data further builds on this privilege; volunteering on the basis of being a university student, seeking to gain something for yourself. And thus, "[t]he place of the minority - being the marginalized woman, man or the young person - becomes subject to a Eurocentric projection of needs (Bhabha 1998, 3).

Most of the volunteers, it seems, are aware of this and do consider it an issue. This is seen in the interviews, where especially one volunteer points out in relation to a research project, that "we really wanted this to be a mutual project, but it was really just for us" (Appendix C, 5), recognizing that the research projects conducted in Trampoline House are rarely for the benefit of the refugees, but rather for the benefit of the volunteers themselves.

The second question of the focus group discussions pertained to the relations between volunteers/interns and refugees/asylum seekers, and whether the interviewees thought this relation to be equal. The volunteers were quick to dismiss the idea of an equal relation:

> "It's not equal in the sense that obviously we as volunteers or interns, we have, like we can freely walk around the house, we can always leave, go home to our apartments and get in and out versus like they might, if they are asylum seekers or have been rejected, they live in deportations camps." (Appendix D, 2).

But when talking about this inequality, the volunteers tend to distance themselves and instead talk about how "the house" or "they" fail to equalize the relation between volunteers and refugees:

> "I don't think it's possible to ever equalize those power dynamics, not in Trampoline House either and I do think in some contexts, in some situations the house is good at acknowledging this. But I also do think that sometimes they tend to neglect it, it sort of depends on the situation." (Appendix B, 3).

In doing so, the volunteers push the responsibility of creating an equal relation to this vague notion of "the house". The volunteers in general establish that achieving equality is impossible, and in doing so they push away the responsibility of weakening the system of inequality. While it might be impossible to achieve equality, it is not impossible to fight inequality and address their own privilege. This goes to show how racial inequalities endure in Trampoline House, even though the volunteers clearly regard themselves as anti-racist (Frankenberg 1993).

The volunteers go to great lengths in the interviews to underline how the relation between volunteers and interns are not equal, that they (the volunteers) are in a position of power: "Some people come in, in a more position of power, we have more privileges, where people are coming in with no power, living in camps." (Appendix B, 4). They hereby recognize that they have the power in this relation and still they accept that 'the house has these structures', pushing away the responsibility and the power to create change. They again seemingly are critical of their privilege, but diving into their shared narrative, they actually distance themselves from the very power they speak of. Another volunteer states:

> "You could feel that there was a power imbalance and sometimes, as they said, my impression was that the house was trying to acknowledge it and do something about it, I don't know if they were doing… They kept on saying that we were all equal, but…" (Appendix B, 5).

Clearly separating herself from the issue, the volunteer actively distances herself and the other volunteers from the responsibility of acknowledging the power imbalance and 'doing something', again making this the responsibility of 'the house', without explaining who or what 'the house' is.

When asked about their experiences related to privilege in Trampoline House, very few personal examples are given. This shows how, even though the volunteers are capable of articulating clearly issues of privilege and inequality, they are still shaped by this privilege, taught not to

recognize it (McIntosh 1988), and as such they demonstrate incapability of reflexively monitoring and rationalizing their actions. They fail to "link the agent and the agent's knowledgeability," (Giddens 1984, 29), meaning that the volunteers fail to incorporate the knowledge we see through their narratives in their actions.

In her research, McIntosh describes how men, in relation to male privilege, seldom are genuinely upset by systemic, unearned male advantages. More importantly, she articulates how those men who do recognize that male privilege systems have over-empowered them "usually end up doubting that we could dismantle these privilege systems." (McIntosh 1988, 292). It seems that the volunteers in their narratives take this one step further and actually acknowledge that they have the power to change structures. But they do not. They resort to waiting for 'the house', which could be understood as a greater symbol of society in general, to change. One volunteer even recognized how "we create this structure and then we put people into it, we are still sort of in the position to create these structures." (Appendix B, 3-4), opening up for the question: If they create these structures, why do they not change them? An answer to this question is that the volunteers draw upon their knowledge of structural contexts when they act; their actions are constrained by their understanding of available actions and external limitations. The factors that can enable or constrain the volunteers are termed by Giddens as *capability constraints* (Giddens 1984). In the specific context, I believe that they are constrained by a lack of 'co-presence', meaning whether other actors take part in their actions. It is clear that the volunteers consider 'the house' as the determining factor in creating structures and as this issue is not something that is openly verbalized, they are constrained (or constrain themselves) from taking action.

In order to grasp the incentive behind these narratives, we need to understand that even though the volunteers of Trampoline House have good intentions, they do not have anything at stake nor any benefits to draw from a change in these structures. Growing up white in a European society, with all the privileges that come with this, is damaging. We get no training in seeing ourselves as unfairly advantaged people, as participants in a damaged culture (McIntosh 1988, 292), and even when we have the schooling (such as Migration Studies or Global Refugee Studies) to know about these issues, we cannot automatically separate ourselves from this "skewed white psyche" (McIntosh 1988, 297), that has become part of our core. This too has to be challenged. While the volunteers in their narratives recognize issues of privilege and inequality, they continuously push away the responsibility for creating change on these issues. An explanation is

that they have the schooling, they read the books, but that they have not been forced, or put in the needed effort, to understand exactly how they themselves are damaged (McIntosh 1988, 297). They therefore, seemingly, do not have the incentive to "act otherwise" in spite of a lack of co-presence.

In the interviews, the issue of the democratic practice of the community center often came up. As examples of this democratic practice, the volunteers highlight in particular democracy class and the weekly house meetings. Speaking of democracy class, one volunteer says:

> "I think that was really a room where we sort of took these power dynamics and looked at them and discussed them, and sort of really acknowledged that they were there and tried to get everyone's perspective on them." (Appendix B, 4).

While there seems to be a general recognition of the positives of the democratic practice of the house and initiatives such as democracy class, several of the volunteers mention issues of Westernization. One volunteer points out how "our view on democracy is a Western view as well. It doesn't mean in the right way, but it's the way we are putting out to everyone in democracy class as well." (Appendix B, 4). The objective of democracy class has for several years been to train people in building arguments as well as learning democratic practice. The refugees of the class then attend the People's Meeting (Folkemødet) in Bornholm in June, where they debate politicians and organizations on issues of asylum and human rights issues in refugee politics. Related to this, one volunteer points out:

> "And even in like democracy class for example, it was always the same people that would go to Folkemøde in Bornholm, because they were good speakers, and of course it is super important and we need that because we want the politicians to listen. (...) democracy class definitely helps some people but I also think that it was a very Western way of doing, to get the politicians to listen, where it is, I don't think it helped others." (Appendix B, 10).

In this quote the volunteer in question demonstrates the issue of how only certain people of color or other cultures can fit into European/White societies. What (and who) defines a 'good speaker'? The quote draws parallels dangerously close to discourses on who the 'good refugee' or the 'good Muslim' is, narratives dividing refugees and Muslims into those who can be accepted in

European societies, and those considered a threat to the Western democracy (Wilson & Mavelli 2016). Understanding discourses through a post-structuralist lens, I draw on Stuart Hall's "The Rest and the West" in explaining the power of discourses such as these.

> "Not only is discourse always implicated in *power;* discourse is one of the "systems" through which power circulates. The knowledge which a discourse produces constitutes a kind of power, exercised over those who are "known." When that knowledge is exercised in practice, those who are "known" in a particular way will be subject (i.e. subjected) to it. This is always a power-relation. [...] Those who produce the discourse also have the power to *make it* true - i.e. to enforce its validity, its scientific status." (Hall 1992, 204).

When discussing issues of Westernization, we see hints of how the narratives of the volunteers could potentially resist the structures and use their knowledge on privilege to create change discursively. The volunteers clearly point out that Trampoline House is doing work which "will allow "them" to be more like "us."" (McIntosh 1988, 293), for instance in the following quotes, where volunteers (in relation to the democratic practice) reflects:

> "I don't think that the house meetings are inherently a bad thing, but I just, I think that it's like setting, it is setting up a structure and trying to fit people into it. Into this ideal of who should contribute with what, and who should sort of take the lead, and it always ends up being the same people anyways. So I do think it's sort of a structure, a procedure that is set in place to do the opposite thing, but it just, it's not going to work I think. At least not in that way. And maybe it is better to just acknowledge that this is what we have, and we can't force this structure and this way of talking about things on to other people, in a sense." (Appendix B, 9-10).

> "I think in terms of power, everyone who is coming from a non-Western country for example have to learn that, the way that we already know. So, they are already one step behind in that situation because it doesn't have to be learned by us in the same way." (Appendix B, 5).

White people are taught that their lives are neutral, average and ideal. Therefore, when working to benefit others, we "help" them become more like us (McIntosh 1988). This seems to be the

mantra that Trampoline House as an institution works from. A mantra that the volunteers of Trampoline House are, to some extent, aware of. And still, there is no indignation to be found in the narratives of the volunteers. I was told no stories of volunteers engaging with the management or board of directors and no stories of raising the subject in, for instance, house meetings or democracy class. Neither have I ever experienced it myself in the two years I have been to Trampoline House. (Nor, let's be frank, have I done it myself). The issues remain a whisper, something to be discussed over a beer after community dinner, and never something to be subject of confrontation. McIntosh points out how she, through her work with Women's Studies, have met very few men who are truly distressed about systemic, unearned male advantage;

> "And so one question for me and others like me is whether we will be like them, or whether we will get truly distressed, even outraged, about unearned race advantage and conferred dominance and if so, what we will do to lessen them." (McIntosh 1988, 297)

While it is praiseworthy that the volunteers are able to see and agree on the issue of Westernization taking place in Trampoline House, particularly in Democracy Class, they still accept issues of race advantage and conferred dominance in their silent awareness. Their social narrative is clearly shaped by being critical towards existing structures, they see issues relating to privilege and inequality and actively address how it is problematic that an NGO working for 'refugee justice' makes the volunteers and interns of the house 'the knowers' of the community center - and not the refugees themselves. Still, I see no narratives of outrage, of criticizing their own positions within this democratic practice, in questioning the structures surrounding themselves and their role in them.

4.1.1 Subsidiary Conclusion

In this first part of the analysis, I have established that there is a social narrative among the volunteers where they problematize and question the daily practices of Trampoline House, but, seemingly, have given up on trying to improve or resist these structures as they are glazed with good intentions. In their narratives, the volunteers thus reproduce notions of especially white

privilege in both pushing away responsibility of creating change as well as actively choosing not to speak out, despite having the knowledge to "act otherwise", as termed by Giddens.

The analysis demonstrates how the narratives of the volunteers are shaped by their privileges, that even when faced with issues of Westernization and inequality, they distance themselves from the power to change structures, proving how racial inequalities endure in the community center despite knowledge and seemingly good intentions among its volunteers.

Having established these issues concerning privilege and inequality in the narratives of the volunteers, the next part of the analysis will investigate where these narratives come from, why we cannot create change with good intentions alone, and how Trampoline House as a Danish NGO is hindered by its key practices, as unfolded in the narratives.

4.2 Structurations of Privilege

In the first part of the analysis, I have critically investigated the narratives of the volunteers and established that the volunteers, despite good intentions and knowledge on their own privilege, are unsuccessful in resisting the current structures and creating new structures through their narratives. The reason for this is to be found partly in the first part of the analysis, in understanding how the volunteers are shaped by whiteness and other privileges. But I believe the answer to be more complex and have found it necessary to elevate the analysis and explore the very structures limiting them in this second part of the analysis. Recognizing "the importance of the local and wider social contexts means that it is possible to see the preoccupations of the narrator and the identity claims they make on the basis of their autobiographical histories and the experiences they claim." (Phoenix 2013, 12). I thus proceed to an analysis of the structural framework and prerequisites for Trampoline House's existence and the volunteers' part in it.

In writing the first part of the analysis, I have found that the narratives of the volunteers, explicit and implicit, are tied to the structures of Trampoline House. As volunteers, we enter Trampoline House on the premises of the house and find ourselves limited in seeking to change the structures that are clearly hindering equality in the house. Trampoline House is run by fiercely motivated people, people who want the best for asylum seekers and refugees in Denmark. I have no doubt about this matter. So how is it that people with the best of intentions fail to establish a community center where privilege and inequality are addressed and prioritized? I

have partly answered this question in the previous analysis, but I believe that the answer is also to be found in the wider societal contexts, and cannot be found in looking only to the personal narratives of the volunteers, as "(...) white complicity with racism should be understood—and challenged—in the complex, multifaceted terms in which it operates." (Frankenberg 1993, 242).

When speaking of issues related to privilege and racism in an organization such as Trampoline House, it is necessary to separate racism *by intent* and racism *by consequence* (Guess 2006). While racism by intent operates at the level of the individual and is manifested as racial discrimination and prejudice, racism by consequence operates at the macro-level of society and represents a historical evolution. For the purpose of this project, it is relevant mainly to look at racism by consequence, but it is pivotal to understand that racism by consequence is a repercussion of racism by intent:

> "It constitutes a gradual shift away from a conscious, almost personalized conviction of the inferiority of an "othered" "race." Such conviction expresses itself in attitudes of prejudice and is acted out in discriminatory behavior. In its place follows social practices that are essentially depersonalized through institutionalization." (Guess 2006, 652).

Speaking of racism by consequence is particularly relevant in the context of the Nordic region where the idea of Nordic exceptionalism oftentimes fails to acknowledge how the countries have been informed and shaped by imperialism (Loftsdóttir & Jensen 2012). While I believe these structures of ignorance to be exactly what the founders of Trampoline House intended to fight when organizing the community center, it is necessary to understand that they are there in order to understand why Trampoline House is, in some aspects, failing in this fight. Frankenberg speaks for the more complex contributions to the discussion of racism by consequence in writing that "[t]he story of race is not a simple story of black and white, but rather one of more complex, intermeshing dyads crafted through nationally structured processes of history." (Frankenberg 1997, 23). This corresponds with Giddens understanding of actors as having reflexive, contextual knowledge, and that it is this habitual, widespread use of knowledgeability that makes structure become institutionalized as these structured processes of history (Giddens 1984).

Seeking to understand Trampoline House's complicity in racism by consequence, I turn to feminist and self-described black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet; Audre Lorde:

> "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable." (Lorde 1984, 113).

In this quote from the famous essay "The Master's Tool Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1984), Lorde speaks into the issue represented at Trampoline House. Using the 'tools of a racist patriarchy', the center is built on a democratic practice, one that is widely criticized by the volunteers engaged in it, and offers 'job training and education', 'counseling and system awareness' and 'strategic partnerships' in order to push for an understanding of the Danish job market, the social contract and the Danish democratic tradition (Trampoline House/About). It can be understood that Trampoline House is training the refugees of the house to better fit into Danish society. The Westernization that persists in the narratives of the volunteers thus operates within a very real framework. One that does not create positive change for the refugees in Denmark.

This issue of structural racism hidden within a framework of activism and equality is discussed in the anthology *Actualise Utopia* by the Norwegian institution Kulturrådet:

> "Unity is what keeps the Nordic cultural sector to flourish, but in truth, the cultural sector is just as, if not more, segregated as the Nordic society at large, where whiteness stands as gatekeeper and refuses to open its doors. If the doors are opened, the brown and black body cannot enter unconditionally, but only through narratives, tokenism and other colonial structures linked to race, exotification and stereotypes." (Josef 2019, 2).

This quote on segregation in the Nordic cultural center hits home when speaking of the job training/system awareness and integration project as a whole at Trampoline House. As volunteers, we enter Trampoline House on the premises of preparing refugees for Danish society, helping them to get a job and to better understand 'the Danish way'. A premise that, at first glance, seems noble. But looking closer and through the lens of critical race studies, it becomes clear that Trampoline House is not doing the refugees a favor, but rather discrediting them, trying to shape them to fit into Danish society - instead of working to change that society to be able to embrace diversity, appreciate different cultures and to help the job market see the worth they already possess:

> "For difference must be not merely tolerated, but seen as a fund of necessary polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic. [...] Difference is that raw and powerful connection from which our personal power is forged." (Lorde 1984, 114).

As an NGO fighting for refugee justice, Trampoline House should be front runners in advocating diversity, starting with their own practices. Relevant to this discussion, Ninos Josef asks in *Actualise Utopia*:

> "Who do you fear the most, the one who openly despises your existence, or the one who silently excludes your existence while pretending to care for it?" (Josef 2019, 2).

While I do believe it to be a stretch to claim that Trampoline House, both the management and the volunteers, only 'pretend to care' for the existence of refugees, there is definitely a ringing of truth to the notion of silent exclusion. But again, I believe the situation to be more complex and that this disfavor is hidden well beneath not only good intentions, but also many good and helpful initiatives. Trampoline House is much more than a job training and integration center, it is also a community center that gives asylum-seeking women their own space, that provides child care and activities for refugee children as well as community dining, gardening, chess, Arabic/Farsi/French lessons for children and adults so they do not forget (or never learn) their own language, to name a few. Again, I have no doubt about the intention nor the rewards of many of these activities. But for Trampoline House to truly shed its imperialistic continuation, the community center needs to get serious about cleaning up its 'toolbox'.

Volunteers in Trampoline House are actively participating in this continuation of imperialistic structures, but on a level where, it seems, they are unaware of it. While it comes clearly across that the volunteers are aware of their privileges and the negative consequences of discourses, it seems that the volunteers cannot see what they need to detach themselves from in the case of Trampoline House. When asked about experiences related to privilege, the volunteers, as explored in the first part of the analysis, tend to distance themselves and answer in more general terms about how 'the house' has issues with privilege - not themselves. But when addressing these issues, they seldom succeed in giving concrete examples of exactly how or where 'the house' fails in creating an equal space. One volunteer problematizes the center as follows:

> "Trampoline House does seem a little happy slappy every now and then, just like a little, uhm, like very idealistic, and very like, ahh everything is cool here, cause we read a few books about it or like, uhm, yeah. I don't know." (Appendix D, 8).

Their narratives on the subject often, much like in the quote above, become vague or abstract. The vagueness of their narrative demonstrates how they are aware that there are issues related to, for instance, idealism and privilege, but that they are unaware of the concrete practices of concern. Except for recognizing the issues of Westernization related to the democratic practice (which is echoed throughout the interviews), no other examples are given of the 'happy slappy' idealism of Trampoline House. According to Frankenberg, examining the construction of whiteness (and other privileges) may lead activists away from the incorporation of "old" discursive elements into "new" strategies. She argues "that we need to displace the colonial construction of whiteness as an "empty" cultural space, in part by refiguring it as constructed and dominant rather than as norm." (Frankenberg 1993, 243). Such an examination of privilege could in the case of Trampoline House be the answer, or at least a step on the way, to better understanding the problems of inequality in the house related to racism by consequence - both the issues that the volunteers are aware of and the ones they attempt at speculating. Again, I will reference Frankenberg, in this quote drawing on the thoughts of Antonio Gramsci:

> "One is reminded of Antonio Gramsci's often-quoted comment on human subjectivity in general: "the consciousness of what one really is [entails] 'knowing thyself as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory."" (Frankenberg 1993, 240).

Knowing themselves and their complicity in racism by consequence as products of a historical evolution is the first step in working truly anti-racist. Trampoline House and its volunteers are subject to a fierce structural framework, a framework with a tendency of predispositioning certain groups, which is clearly shown in the internal structure of the house as well as in the narratives of the volunteers:

> "Yeah, cause even like they did put a user board in place, to show that there is a different organ deciding like what should we take to the big board and,

> but it is still a structure, you still get the feeling that it's still the directors, it's still the staff trying to put a structure in place so that we sort of try to shift the power, but it's just still trying to fit people into... it's not coming from the bottom up, if you understand... like it's, yeah." (Appendix B, 10).

The volunteer in question demonstrates how the management of Trampoline House does attempt to fight the uneven distributions of power but fails in doing so, as the initiatives are not coming from a place of open communication and actual equality. As is the case for whiteness, privilege is a "complexly constructed product of local, regional, national and global relations, past and present." (Frankenberg 1993, 237). It is thus a relational category, one that changes spatially and temporally and is co-constructed from a range of racial and cultural categories of, for instance, race, nationality, class and gender. An open awareness and mutual articulation on this topic could go a long way in opening up for a discussion that, it seems, the volunteers of Trampoline House are craving for. Opening up for this discussion would also eliminate the issue of a lacking co-presence, removing one of the constraints possibly holding back the volunteers in using their reflexive monitoring to change the structures they know are problematic.

While Trampoline House claims to work for refugee justice democratically and from a place of 'sustainable inclusion', I argue that they do so partly by means of the tools of a racist patriarchy, that, as many of the volunteers point out, is grounded in a Western knowledge apparatus. Whether it is a lost fight trying to dismantle the issues of privilege and inequality in Trampoline House is left to the directors' and volunteers' will to change. But the answer to how it is possible to work responsibly with privilege in marginalized communities, should, on the grounds of this analysis be clear: The process of altering present and future structures of privilege is inextricably linked to altering understandings and practices linked to working anti-racist from a place of privilege. This work should start from within, from acknowledging the current distributions of power. But, as Frankenberg points out in regard to whiteness, "that project is not individual but collective". (Frankenberg 1993, 243). Altering structures of privilege is as much a project of collective action as it is an individual responsibility. In order to truly change distributions of power, it will take collective actions by people from a range of locations of privilege. An obvious project for a community center such as Trampoline House to take on:

> "Without community, there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her oppression. But

> community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist." (Lorde 1984, 111).

In order for Trampoline House to address inequality and privilege in their practices, it is necessary to openly acknowledge that the volunteers and users of Trampoline House are not equal. And that it is not something that Trampoline House can change. What they can change, is how equality is discussed in the house, and how we as volunteers and refugees deal with this inequality. Together.

As agents experience inherent and contrasting amounts of autonomy and dependency, they can always choose to act or not. So far, as from my personal experiences and from analyzing the narratives of the volunteers, they are currently refraining from intervening despite having knowledge on the issue at hand. An open discussion on privilege could persuade the volunteers as to the level of autonomy they have on this matter, clearing the way for the volunteers to act and intervene in the structurations of privilege.

In executing this analysis, I have found that when investigating privilege and inequality in volunteer work with marginalized communities, one cannot look only to the narratives of the volunteers to understand how they experience and affect the structures. At least in the case of Trampoline House, the volunteers are tied to the very structures of the house, while the community center is tied to structures on a larger societal scale. But this does not mean that the volunteers nor Trampoline House cannot resist structures and shed their imperialistic continuation. It does, however, mean that one has to be painfully aware of one's own complicity in the preservation of structures of racism and inequality in order to create change. As pointed out by Ijeoma Oluo: "When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, we'll find our opportunities to make real change." (Oluo 2019, 64).

4.2.1 Subsidiary Conclusion

In this second part of the analysis, I have, on the basis of the narratives of the volunteers, analyzed the structural framework and prerequisites for Trampoline House's existence and the volunteers' part in it. I have engaged in a larger analytical discussion on how it is possible for an organization such as Trampoline House to work responsibly with privilege and concluded that the pivotal first step towards resisting the current structures is to acknowledge how we, as

volunteers, interns, managers, staff, asylum seekers, refugees and other users of Trampoline House are complicit in the current structurations of privilege. This second part of the analysis has made it possible for me to answer several questions asked throughout the first part of the analysis, questions that could be summed up as follows: If we (the volunteers as well as other privileged groups in Trampoline House) create these structures of inequality, why do we not change them? It has been established through the narratives of the volunteers that they have both knowledge and good intentions, and still they fail to 'act otherwise' and create new structures. In this second part of the analysis, it has been demonstrated that creating new structures is a matter of collective action, one that cannot be left to the individual volunteer. Trampoline House is currently failing in creating new structures on privilege in the community center because they are not actively fighting to do so. If the community center wishes to work truly responsible with the structures of privilege represented in the refugee context, it is necessary to actively and openly scrutinize every project and every initiative in Trampoline House, starting with the integration and job training praxis. While the volunteer's awareness proves that they are already reflecting, an important first step, their narratives demonstrate that they are not using this awareness as a means of reflexive monitoring and rationalization, mainly on account of a lack of motivation, of pushing away the responsibility of intervening. It for now remains an open question whether this awareness and their good intentions manifests itself as will and effort to truly create change once this dialogue is opened.

5 Conclusion

I have in this thesis investigated understandings and structurations of privilege and inequality through analyzing the narratives of volunteers in the community center, Trampoline House. The first part of the analysis I dedicated to exploring the narratives of the volunteers as exemplified in three online focus group discussions. On the basis of this part-analysis, I was able to demonstrate that the volunteers despite an awareness on issues of privilege and inequality are unsuccessful in resisting the current structures as they experience them. The volunteers see clearly that the relation between volunteers and users of the house is not equal in spite of attempts from the management of Trampoline House to set out this narrative. They however fail in taking this responsibility upon themselves, and instead blame Trampoline House, releasing themselves from the community center as well as the responsibility. Several times throughout the interviews, there can be detected irreconcilable statements in the narratives of the volunteers; they for instance maintain that they are in power in their relation with the refugees in Trampoline House, even that they have the power to create and change structures. Still they push away the responsibility of creating this change on to the abstract notion of 'the house', referring to the community center. While being capable of articulating issues of privilege and inequality in terms of Westernization and democracy, they fail in incorporating this knowledge in their actions. In the first part of the analysis, I mainly utilized insights from McIntosh, as her work on white privilege has proved to be both enlightening and a useful tool for understanding the social narratives of the volunteers. Her insights have particularly informed a main conclusion from this part of the analysis: That the volunteers, despite being knowledgeable on the subject, have yet to shed the damage of having grown up privileged. As they are shaped by the very privilege they speak of, they are taught not to recognize it in themselves, even when openly discussing issues connected to the very matter at hand. Simultaneously, it can be derived from this analysis that the volunteers are constrained by an imagined lack of co-presence, of support in changing the structures of the house. On top of this, a lack of motivation to 'act differently' can be derived, as actions are constrained by a lack of motivation, and years of being shaped to ignore the privilege bestowed on you would also make you less motivated than those less privileged to actually create change.

In the first part of the analysis, I zoomed in on the narratives of the volunteers in order to understand how they experience and reproduce structures of privilege. I use this understanding as a point of departure to elevate the analysis to more of a macro-level and focus in the second part of the analysis on the structures of Trampoline House as it became clear that the volunteers' narratives are tied closely to the structures of the community center. Understanding the unequal distribution of power in Trampoline House through racism by consequence makes it clear that even though the volunteers (as well as the managers of the community center) have good intentions as well as knowledge on the problem of inequality, they are combatting deeply institutionalized social practices cemented through a history of intentional racism and privilege. These institutionalized practices become apparent when digging a little deeper into the practices of Trampoline House, where it becomes visible that the community center is hindered by some of its key practices, job training and integration processes, which has clear connotations to what Lorde terms 'the tools of a racist patriarchy', allowing only for the most narrow perimeters of change. I thus conclude that in order to open up for the possibility of creating change, the community center needs to get serious about cleaning up its 'toolbox'. On the grounds of this analysis, I argue for an examination of the construction of privilege in Trampoline House. Seeking to answer the second research question on how it is possible to work responsibly with privilege in marginalized communities, I have turned especially to the research of Frankenberg, and concluded that knowing oneself as a product of a historical evolution is the first step in dealing with issues of privilege. While it might be impossible to change these structures as a single person, it is not impossible to resist them as a project of collective action. Going forward and with the contribution of this thesis, I hope to assist Trampoline House in identifying where privilege intersects with oppression in the community center, paving the way for finding opportunities to resist the current structures and create change as a community.

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