UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN
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Hypervisibility and Invisibility: The Affective Experience of a Racialised White Gaze

Conversations on racialisation with a racialised minority youth in Denmark

Master Thesis, Advanced Migration Studies
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Summary

This thesis builds on qualitative interviews with twelve young men and women, who within European research on migration and settlement are commonly referred to as *the second generation*, or within Danish political rhetorics and statistics as *descendants of non-Western origin* [*efterkommere med ikke-vestlig baggrund*] i. In this study, I have chosen to refer to these young men and women as a *racialised minority* in present day Denmark.

Through such a deliberate phrasing, this study aims at exploring the innately embodied and affective experience of racialisation from the perspective of this racialised minority youth, and thus to contribute to a better understanding of how racialisation is felt by a racialised minority in a country such as Denmark, where an ideology of colourblindness, along with a belief that racism is something only related to a colonial past, continue to overshadow a discussion of racism and the experience of the racialised to a point, where articulations of racialisation are either neglected or straight out tabooed. With a methodological starting point in affectivity studies as a lens to racial formations, and an analytical foundation in theories of racialisation, postcolonial studies, and the white gaze seen as both producing hypervisibility and invisibility of the racialised body and subject, this study inquires into how everyday racism and processes of racialisation are lived and experienced among a racialised minority youth in their encounters with a white majority society, along with how such experiences in turn shape these young people's feelings of belonging, their strategies of identification, and how they choose to articulate their experiences with racialising incidents in the society they consider their home.

This thesis is made up of five chapters. *Chapter 1* introduces the aim and context for the study, while *chapter 2* presents the theoretical perspectives that inform the analysis. *Chapter 3* is of a strictly methodological nature and includes reflections on the interplay of the methodologies inherent to qualitative methods and affectivity studies, along with my own critical remarks on the influence of my own positionality as a white majority member studying a racialised minority. *Chapter 4 & 5* provides the analysis, which in in turn focuses on the experience of racialisation in the white gaze as 1) a notion of hypervisibility, and 2) as a notion of invisibility. The analysis ends with my informants own reflections on the problematic articulations of racialisation in Denmark, and as a conclusion, I sum up some of the key findings and most crucial reflections of the study, along with some suggestions for further research.

Keywords:
Racialisation, white gaze, everyday racism, hypervisibility, invisibility, racial ascription, racial embodiment, identity, identification, racial discrimination, colourblindness, Denmark, Scandinavia

A reader's guide

" "	Quotes from literature are marked by double quotation marks.
"*i* "	Quotes from informants are marked by double quotation marks and are in italic.
' '	Analytical concepts from literature is marked in single quotation marks. Example 'race'.
i	Specific concepts or words that have a specific meaning in a certain context. Example: *Danish*, *immigrant*.

Anonymity	All informants have been given aliases.
Language	The thesis is written in US English.
Front page	The front page pictures belong to Mino Denmark, but have kindly been borrowed for this thesis. The young people who appear by picture have all given their consent to do so.

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Chapter 1
Studying racism in Denmark

Introduction

I am waiting in the office of Mino Denmark for my informant to arrive. The rest of the secretariat have left long ago, leaving me in an empty room with only the echo of their plans, ideas and schedules left on the many whiteboards, which takes up a large part of the office of the small, but growing organisation which continues to work towards creating new opportunities and options for ethnic minority Danes from within the minority itself.[1] And here I am: a white majority female undertaking a study of racialisation. It is in that moment, as the in some ways conundrum of it all flows over me, that 23-year-old Yusuf enters the room. His dark eyes never leave mine as he shakes my hands, while greeting me with a polite and confident smile. When we sit down, a silence lingers briefly. For a moment I feel nervous; that I am about to enter a terrain which I have no right to occupy. But as Yusuf begins to speak, the eloquence and air of self-assurance which emanates from his voice both reassures and awes me, and I give in for the interview to run its course.

However, when Yusuf at the end of the interview divulges that he has spent a large part of the day before trying to quiet the stress in his mind and remind himself that he would be safe speaking with me even though I was a white majority member, I feel immediately humbled. In that moment, I am no longer merely a researcher interviewing an informant. In that moment, I am once again a white majority member undertaking a study of experiences which I myself know nothing about. While Yusuf and I are alike in many ways, seeing we are both born and raised in the Danish society we call home, are of almost same age, and are both enrolled in higher education, one difference sets us apart: Whereas he has been been met with countless questions of where he is from, and thus have his belonging to the Danish society questioned, I have not. In other words, seeing as Yusuf is *brown*[2], he has experienced the consequences of racialisation on his own body, and I, being white, have not.

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[1] Translated from the webpage of Mino Denmark: "About Mino Denmark". Link: https://mino.dk/om-mino-danmark/

[2] I use the terms 'brown' and 'brownness' first and foremost as emic term, i.e. a term that the informants use to define themselves in terms of looking brown, or having other brown features such as dark hair and dark eyes, or as we shall see being identified as Muslim or having an middle-eastern sounding name. Secondly, I use 'brown' and 'brownness' in a more politically charged sense as a racialised status.

Some would perhaps question the connection I am making here between a question of where someone is from and racialising practice. Some might argue that the question in itself is innocent, seeing as it has no ill intention on behalf of the one asking. A few scholars have even gone as far as to argue that to even draw such a connection merely works to strengthen a misguided differentiation between "*racist* Danes" on one side, and the "oppressed, marginalised and stereotyped *immigrants* on the other side" (Beck & Necef 2015; Necef 2009, emphasis added). However, this thesis is not about deeming someone as *being racist* or not, nor is it about *immigrants:* Rather, it focuses on the patterns and structures of racism and the *processes* of racialisation as experienced by a racialised minority youth. This needs some elaboration.

Firstly, to only view racism as a state of *being,* of being *racist,* found only in the deviant behaviours of individuals, is a perspective which only works to render invisible a recognition of racism as patterns and structures that exist and is continuously enacted in everyday practices (Essed 2001:495). It is this kind of 'everyday racism', as Essed (1999) conceptualizes it, and its impact on everyday encounters that this study centers on — and such a study is one that is highly necessary in a Danish context: Several Danish scholars have argued that when it comes to the topic of refugees, immigrants and their descendants in Denmark, there is not only an individualization of racist practices, but a full-out denial of racism and its effects as a salient phenomenon in Denmark to begin with (Jensen et. al 2017; Hervik 2015; Andreassen & Vitus 2015; Jensen, Nielsen et. al 2010). The crucial point that I will seek to underscore throughout this study is that while an encounter, where i.e. the question of where one is from is put forth, might not seem or be intended as racialising by the one asking, it might still *feel* and be *experienced* as such by those on the receiving end. As Essed (1999) herself states to describe the experience of everyday racism in the Netherlands: "*If there is one experience any Black in the Netherlands can tell you about, it is probably described by this simple statement: The first question was always: 'Where do you come from?' The second question: 'When are you going back?*" (ibid.:189). Even though this quote is from a Dutch context, I find it very relatable to a Scandinavian context and to Denmark in particular, where debates on immigrants and refugees have spurred an increasing rhetoric of white ethnic belonging — a rhetoric where the category of the *immigrant* seems to cover all racialised others, regardless of whether they were born in Denmark or not (Gullestad 2006:50).

Secondly, even though this thesis has an explicit empirical focus on those named as the *second generation* or *descendants* [efterkommere], as this group more commonly referred to in Danish statistics and political rhetoric when speaking of descendants of mainly *non-Western*

immigrants [3]*,* I have deliberately chosen to refer to this group of people as *a racialised minority.* And such focus and reframing is needed: Several scholars have emphasized that there is prevalent neglect in European research on migration and settlement of studies which focus exclusively on the second generation and not just the first generation (Crul et al 2012; Tayeb 2011; Nibbs & Brettell 2016). At the same time, when such studies are made, it has been argued that they still tend to focus mainly on the after-effects of the process of migration, rather than on the emergence of European minorities, and thus only work to reinforce the belief that there are only migrants, no minorities in Europe (El-Tayeb 2011:21). And such a distinction between migrants and minorities is crucial: To only refer to this group as descendants, and thus as someone always tied to previous generations' migration and/or refugee processes, only strengthens the precarious position that especially descendants continue to hold in the countries in which they are born: As a recent Danish study (Simonsen 2018) has argued, while such a group may in some ways inhabit spaces "inside the nation", seeing as they are born and raised within the national frame, they concurrently possess certain "markers of difference" which renders them as different from the majority population: they do not have the same perceived national ancestry, they may be visibly different from majority members, and they may adhere to another religion than most (ibid.:121-122). It is the confluence of such markers of difference and its impact on a racialised minority youth, which this study seeks to uncover.

Building on insights gathered from qualitative interviews with twelve young men and women from racialised minorities in present day Denmark, I will unfold the material of the study by unraveling the following research questions:

1. In what ways are everyday racism and processes of racialisation lived and experienced among a racialised minority youth in their encounters with a white majority society?

2. How does such experiences shape feelings of belonging among the racialised minority youth, and what strategies of identification do they employ?

In order to explore the experience of such processes of everyday racialisation, this study takes a methodological starting point in affectivity studies as a lens to racial formations (Vitus & Andreassen 2015), combined with a theoretical perspective of what I call a *racialised white gaze,*

[3] See for example: Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet. 2016. Integration: Status og udvikling 2016

which builds on insights from theories of the gaze as a theory of objectification (Mead 1982) and postcolonial othering (Said 1978, Grosfoguel et. al 2014), along with insights from theories on racialisation and racial embodiment (Fassin 2011), and the experience of being a racialised body in a white gaze as both a notion of hypervisibility and invisibility (Yancy 2008). I argue that such a latter duality of the process of racialisation not only works to render visible the "marking of bodies" (Grosfoguel et. al 2014:3), but at the same time results in an experience of "racialised invisibility" (Yancy 2008) and "double consciousness" (Du Bois 2008 [1903]) for the racialised. My analysis, which consists of two chapters, will lead us into an excavation of 1) which markers of difference are prevalent in making my informants feel hypervisible in a racialising white gaze, and 2) how the duality of being concurrently invisible as anything but a racialised subject this gaze in turn affects my informants' own self-identifications, and how such an experience of racialisation has an impact on the ways in which they choose to articulate their experiences. By doing so, this thesis aims to explore the innately embodied and affective experience of racialisation, and thus contribute to a better understanding of how racialisation is felt and articulated by a racialised minority in a society, where an "egalitarian understanding of sameness" (Gullestad 2002) and an "ideology of colourblindness" (Gullestad 2004) continues to overshadow a discussion of racism and the experience of the racialised to a point, where articulations of racialisation are either neglected or straight out tabooed. But before we dive into such an excavation, I will first provide some background knowledge on the topic of immigration, integration, and the question of racism in the context of Denmark.

Equality as sameness and the denial of racism in Denmark

Ever since the invitation of "*guest-workers*" in the sixties and seventies, and the later arrival of refugees throughout the eighties, nineties and to present day, the Danish society has gone through a long period of politicisation of the question of immigration and integration, both in terms of labour market integration and cultural integration (Jensen, Mouritsen et. al 2010:6). But whereas the discussions have centered in depth on the integration of refugees, immigrants and their descendants into Danish society, the very structures, along with normative and cultural understandings of the society in which they should integrate has not received the same focus. An exception are the studies of Gullestad (2002, 2004, 2006), in which she has sought to explore and determine the understanding of equality in Scandinavian countries, which rests on strong welfare societies. She argues that the understanding of equality present in such societies is one that rests on a specific version of "egalitarian individualism", where equality is based on "sameness" (Gullestad 2002);

that people are considered equal when they are alike, rather than equal in terms of equal rights regardless of their differences — including racial differences (ibid.).

To this day, such a reluctance to regard racial differences as something with real impact on people's lives has proved a deep-rooted challenge for a society such as the Danish, where the population of immigrants and their descendants and thus the population of racialized minorities, are increasing: As of last year, 8,3 % of the Danish population consisted of "*immigrants and descendants with a non-Western origin*", mostly from countries in the Middle-East and from African countries such as Somalia.[4] However, despite of such a development, issues of racial discrimination have only become more difficult to discuss: Some Danish scholars have argued that to this day, there is a pervasive "denial" of the occurrence of racial discrimination in the Danish society, seeing as the "equality culture" that the Danish society prescribes to, in itself rests upon the very nonexistence of racism and other discriminatory structures to begin with (Mouritsen et. al 2009:108). And such a denial is one that makes the articulation of discriminatory and racialisation all the more difficult for those who experience it: In societies with a strong sense of egalitarian individualism, "people of colour" tend to be either ignored when attempting to put their experiences with racism into words, or told by the white majority that they are "obsessed with colour", "aggressive" (Gullestad 2004:187) or "oversensitive" (Essed 2001:495). But despite such a repudiation of racism, racist structures and practices might still exist in forms that are unacknowledged, such as how it is reproduced within the constitutions of majority culture and identity, *and* in discursive borders of ethnicity and essentialized concepts of culture (Jensen et. al 2017:52).

And such discursive borders are indeed prevalent in Denmark: The very terms "race" and "racism" have in many ways vanished from the Danish language all together in favour of terms such as that of ethnicity and culture (Jensen, Schmidt et. al 2010:2). Such a tendency is not however unique to Denmark: On a European level, discussions of racism and racial differences tend to be deemed as "missing the point" (Balkenhol et al. 2016:97), seeing as opposition to immigration and denials of racism often include the argument that non-Western immigrants are not "biologically inferior" but rather "culturally inadequate" (Grosfoguel et. al 2014:2). But such an emphasis on ethnicity and culture does not mean that issues of racism does not exists: As argued by David Goldberg (2006), it is exactly such discourses of cultural superiority, which keep structures and patterns of racism deeply interwoven into the fabric of European civil societies (ibid.:354). And as

[4] [4] Udlændinge- og Integrationsministeriet. 2017. Integration: Status og Udvikling 2017. Fokus på ikke-vestlige lande.

argued furthermore by El-Tayeb (2011), such discourses are what continues to produce and frequently present racialised minorities in Europe as "incompatible with the very nature of Europeanness" (ibid.:xx).

It is this very interwovenness of such concepts as 'ethnicity', 'culture' and 'race', which I deem makes the study of everyday racism all the more relevant in a society such as the Danish where there, as Gilroy (2014) argues, is not only an active forgetting of the country's colonial past (ibid.:xi), but where the very term of 'race', understood primarily as a biological concept, is regarded as something that the Nordic countries have left behind (Vitus & Andreassen 2015; Gullestad 2006, Hervik 2015). But as we shall see in the following chapter, there are many ways in which to explore and discuss the concept of race without it having to refer to 'race' in such a biological sense. This recognition is one that I will now unfold through unpacking the theoretical notion of what I call a *racialised white gaze.*

Chapter 2
Unpacking a racialised white gaze

In order to unfold how racialising structures and practices of everyday racism influence the encounters between a white majority population and a racialised minority in Denmark, I have chosen to focus theoretically on the impacts of what I call a *racialised white gaze*. To unravel what such a gaze might entail, I will in this second chapter elaborate on what I understand by such a notion, and present the theoretical perspectives have inspired me to name it so. We start of with the notion of the *racialised,* and the potential of such a notion in relation to other concepts tied to the construction of race.

On race, racism, neo-racism & racialisation

The scientific idea of biological 'race', seen as the socially constructed belief that the human race can be divided into biologically discrete and exclusive groups based on physical traits (Golash-Boza 2016:130) first emerged as part of an ideology developed with Europe's colonization of the Global South and the enslavement and forced dispersal of Africans (Gullestad 2004:177). But whereas the scientific concept of biological 'race' has been widely rejected, both scientifically and discursively following the Second World War (ibid.:178), race as a *social construction* still remains intact as an implicit principle of social distinction that has real implications on people's lives as a social category with significant power (Meer 2014; Balkenhol et al 2016; Alcoff 2014). Such a power is one that through the dialectical interplay of both the structures and ideologies of racism (Golash-Boza 2016:131) works to retain a system of human differentiation and inferiorization (Grosfoguel et al 2014:3) that is historically tied up to the after-effects of European colonization, also in its Danish form (Petersen & Schramm 2016:194). In this way, race today is as Yancy (2008:48) remarks: "neither biologically real, nor nonexistent".

One kind of racism that has been referred to as more prevalent today is one described as "racism without races" (Balibar 1991:21). Such a framework is one that, as touched upon in chapter one, builds on the belief of an hierarchical "irreconcilability of cultures" (Hervik 2015:39), where ethnicity as a social category is tied to that of having a distinguishable culture (Wikan 1999; Gullestad 2004). Seen in this way, the confluence of culture and ethnicity is one which works much in the same way as race as a mean to social differentiation (Wikan 1999; Andreassen & Adresen 2014) through the ways in which hierarchical schemes of racial and cultural differentiation intersect (Ong 1996:737). Such a confluence has in research been referred to as both 'cultural

fundamentalism' (Stolcke 1995 in Ong 1996:738), 'neo-racism' (Balibar 1991), and 'new racism' (Hervik 2015). Not all, however, would agree to such an intersection of race and culture. On the contrary, some researchers have stated that the Danish research on immigration and settlement has a tendency to deliberately steer away from issues of cultural differences and thus reject culture as an explanation of behavior, and instead pursue misguided studies of racism that lead to an unnecessary demonization of the Danish people (Necef & Bech 2015). Seeing as this study could by some be regarded as part of such misguided studies, I wish to offer some comments on this critique.

First of all, I have no problem with seeing culture as an explanatory factor that influences how an individual thinks and acts in the word. What I *do* deem problematic is the tendency as explained above to see culture and ethnicity as *de facto* explanations, especially when such explanations are predominantly used to decipher the behavior and motivations only of people of a certain colour and/or ethnicity, and not in relation to a white majority society. As argued by Wendy Brown, the very idea of a dichotomy between a "Western culture" and a "non-Western culture" rests upon the creation of a sophisticated and diversified concept of culture for "us" (understood as the west), and a reduction of "the others" (understood as the non-west) to mere puppets of their innately different culture (Brown 2008 in Hervik 2015:27) — a different culture which is, as argued by Annick Prier (2002), is first and foremost defined by ethnicity and the colour of one's skin in opposition to a "white culture as the Danish" (ibid.:75).

Secondly, when looking at research, and here especially anthropological research, of which I myself draw much on in this thesis, the caution towards using ethnicity and culture as *de facto* explanations becomes even more vital: Lila Abu Lughod (1991) has argued that the very discipline of anthropology is built on the study of the non-Western 'Other' by the Western 'Self' through the concept of culture as "the essential tool for making other" through the concept's innate ability of "freezing difference" and giving it "the air of the self-evident" (ibid.:139, 143, 146). In this way, she argues, the concept of culture is one that works much like its predecessor, race (ibid.: 143). In sum, such arguments as those given above convince me that there is need for studies, which focus explicitly on the processes of racism inherent to such a use of the concept of culture and cultural differences, and in addition, that we as researchers must refrain from using cultural differences as *de facto* explanations: instead, in order to not reproduce racialised ways of thinking about the 'Other", we must describe the behaviours of all people, including those of a certain colour and/or ethnicity with just as much complexity as we do of white majorities such as the Danish.

In sum, to view studies of racism in a Danish context as misguided or as "missing the point" (Balkenhol et al 2016:97), not only strengthens a "self-congratulatory idea of post-racialism"

(ibid.) — an idea which I believe to be the truly misguided one. It also runs the risk of only acknowledging one "universal definition of *racism",* understood as one solely based on biology, and thus refuse to acknowledge the specific forms of "marking *racisms*" unique to other regions of the world (Grosfoguel et al 2014:2, emphasis added). Such a risk is also pointed out by Essed (2001), who reminds us of the importance to explore how "racisms have common and different expressions according to historical, political and economic conditions" (ibid.:494).

In this study, I view the confluence of ethnicity with cultural differences in regard to racialised minorities of colour in Denmark as just that; as a specific way of marking racism through a specific kind of 'everyday racism' (Essed 1991), understood as a concept where the notion of the "everyday" is employed to reveal how racism occurs in the "systematic, recurrent, familiar practices" that inform our social relations and encounters in our everyday lives (ibid.:3). In other words, such an 'everyday racism' is about the oftentimes subtle and covert ways in which stereotypical views of browns or blacks are uphold and reinforced through everyday encounters and practices (ibid.:189). In order to study the effects of such an everyday racism on the racialised, Essed herself suggests an approach that works to "make visible the lived experience of racism" (ibid.:2). In this study, I take up this suggestion by following in the footsteps of studies that acknowledge the lived and affective experience of race (Andreassen & Vitus 2015) by unraveling how ideas of "race are embodied and bodies are racialised" (Fassin 2011:421). I should note that this is done while in no way seeking to support race as a biological nor scientific truth. On the contrary, when I speak of race in this study, I focus on everyday 'racialisation', understood as "the processes enabling some people to be considered a part of a supposed homogenous group of 'others' with certain negatively charged attributes" (Petersen & Schramm 2016: 194, my translation). For as pointed out by Meer (2014), through such a focus on the *processes* of othering, racialisation as a concept can in many ways be said to occupy the space between race and racism, seeing as it explores the dynamics of race and racism and how these become embedded in systems of power (ibid.:125).

Theorizing the white gaze

The second dimension to my theoretical perspective is that of the *white gaze*. To understand what this might entail, one must first look to the origins of the concept of the 'gaze'. The 'gaze' is a theory of objectification — of a conscious look that is directed both outwards and inwards. The American philosopher, sociologist and psychologist, George Herbert Mead has referred to this double-sided gaze as resulting in a sense of the 'Self' that is concurrently an "*I*", understood as the human being as a subject, and a "me", understood as the human being as an object (Mead

1982:177). The possibility of regarding the 'Self' in the objectified form of the "me", is to Mead what provides the "*I*" a sense of self through the possibility of regarding oneself as an object through the gaze of an other (ibid.). In other words, his studies show how we as individuals are highly dependent on the gaze of an "externalized other" in order to "see ourselves" (ibid.).

Several different forms of such an externalized 'Other' as opposed to the 'Self' has appeared in different strands of academic theory: In her essay from 1975, Laura Mulvey introduced the second-wave feminist concept of 'male gaze' as a feature of gender power asymmetry in film: Here the idea of an objectifying male gaze was used to theorise and identify the ways in which men look at women as a product of patriarchal relations in society (Evans & Gamman 1995:16.). Another form of the gaze comes through the theories of Edward Said (1978), one of the founders of the field of postcolonial studies: The gaze he identifies is one that explicitly focuses on the relation between the 'the Orient' and 'the Occident' as an expression of how Europeans and Americans continues to see Eastern and Arab culture not as it is, but "through their own eyes" (ibid.:17) — a privileged point of view which has allowed the Occident, the west, to construct representations of the Orient, the rest, as a mysterious, occulted, fragile, and static place (ibid.). Said's conception of the gaze is thus one that speaks into the same kind of critique of epistemic racism as that of Abu-Lughod, and concurrently one that theorizes the gaze in terms of racialising processes not only in a particular society, but *between* societies.

In this study, I explicitly look upon the gaze as a 'white gaze', or as Yancy (2008) defines it, of how "the Black body is looked at", while "whites inherited the privileged status of being the lookers and gazers, with all the power that this entailed" (ibid.: 14-15, 87). Although he writes within an America context, I still regard such a structure of a white gaze as one that is just as relevant in a Danish context: Several scholars have argued how whiteness in the Nordic region has been constituted as the "normal", the "invisible", and the "unmarked" (Vitus & Andreassen 2015:16), or the "neutral ethnic norm" (Petersen & Schramm 2016:194), where the majority *we* is constructed as the unmarked normative center in relation to various people who are marked out as different (Gullestad 2004:193). In a society where whiteness holds such a position, it is thus especially salient and important to critically regard the effects of what Yancy himself deems as "the discursive and epistemic structuring of the white gaze" in producing the image of Black bodies as 'Other' (ibid.:15).

Even more specific to a Danish context, a recent study by the Danish social scientist Kristina Bakkær Simonsen (2018) is one that focuses in some regard on the direct effects of such a white gaze on the racialised minority youth, or descendants as referred to in her study: Among her informants, the experience of a certain gaze from the "Danish majority population" is directly tied to the "sense of not being seen as a Dane", along with a "feeling of being 'othered'" and "being

revealed by one's appearance'" (Simonsen 2018:135). While Simonsen does not, however, go into detail about what such a feeling of "being revealed by one's appearance" entails, this will be an explicit aim for my analysis. But before we dive into such an analysis, I will first present the methods and methodologies underlying this study, and how these interplay to place explicit focus on the lived reality of race and the embodied, and as we shall see, affective experience of racialisation.

Chapter 3

Approaching the affective and embodied experience of racialisation

As touched upon in the introduction, to study the experience of racialisation as a white woman in the societal structures I call home, for me entailed a certain recognition that I in fact knew nothing at all, seeing as I myself have never experienced racialisation on my own body. As a researcher, such an awareness is one that from the outset steered me towards pursuing a highly qualitatively attuned methodology, seeing as this would help me get closer to the perspectives of the racialized and thus get a better sense of how everyday racism be is lived and experienced in everyday situations and relations.

As a methodological starting point, I have found much inspiration in the book *"Race and Affectivity"* (2015) by the Danish scholars Katrine Vitus and Rikke Andreassen, and their approach to use affectivity as a lens to the experience of racial formations in Western countries (ibid.:11). They argue that in order to gauge closer at how racialisation is felt, we as reachers must go beyond merely adopting a discursive approach, which focuses solely on the representational, textual, institutional, and historical forms of racial formations, and instead move towards, as they themselves phrase it, an approach that "embrace the inherently embodied nature of race" (ibid.:13). In this study, I have adopted much of this approach. However, I also owe much to the perspectives of Abu-Lughod (1991) and her work at unravelling how an qualitatively attuned methodology can work not only to bring closer the affective experience of racialisation, but also, as she puts it, to "subvert the very process of 'othering'"(ibid.:149) that I have previously argued is inherent to the epistemology of anthropology as a discipline. In order to combat this, I follow Abu-Lughod's suggested strategy of aiming to write what she calls "ethnographies of the particular" as a way to turn the focus to how societal structures are reproduced on an individual level, through their inscription in actions, bodies and words (ibid.:158). In other words, to use qualitatively attuned methods in this way, we are as researcher given the opportunity of observing social structures through its effect on human actors (Davies 2008 [1998]:20).

It should be noted that I have adopted such a methodology without in no way seeking to devaluate the potential and power inherent in a study of the more structural forms of racial formations: Such an approach is central towards uncovering the structural biases that underlie a society such as the Danish, where the workings of racism is denied. However, it is also my view that such a structural unravelling can never fully be done without first seeking to understand the

affective experiences of those racialised minorities who themselves have faced such structures. As Vitus (2015) remarks in her individual contribution to the book, it is essential for studies of racism and racialisation to go beyond merely looking at how racism is discursively and structurally reproduced: Studies need to also focus on how race is affectively enacted and experienced as "a holistic experiential reality of embodiment" (ibid.:3). It is this holistic experience of race, which I sought to uncover through my qualitative interviews.

In what follows, I will present the informants, data and design of this study, along with my own reflections on the process of recruitment and the influence of the organization Mino Denmark on this study. This will later lead to a more direct discussion of my own positionality as a white majority member interviewing a racialised minority, and how this position offered both possibilities and limitations to the scope of my analysis.

Interviews & interviewees

This study rests upon twelve qualitative interviews, which I carried out in Copenhagen in the spring of 2018. Most of these were individual interviews, but two were double-interviews: one with a pair of sisters and one with two close friends, seeing as they themselves preferred it that way. My informants were all young people in the ages from 16-24, and all have parents who have either migrated or fled from Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Turkey, Morocco, Somalia and from the Kurdish minority. The informants appear through aliases in this thesis. The interviews lasted between one to two hours and were guided by a quite structured interview-guide (see Appendix II), although the actual format of the interviews were more semi-structured in their nature with many jumps and shifts based on what the informants chose to focus more deeply on. The main themes were the informants' own experiences with discrimination and with being a racialised minority in Denmark, along with their perspectives on the vocabulary used in the public media debate on immigrants and integration. The interview-guide also included a section which inquired directly into their experience of the interview, *and* into their experience with being interviewed by me, a white majority member. The recordings from the interviews were transcribed and afterwards coded into different themes and topics.

My choice to focus on this age-group rests upon two reasons: Firstly, and quite simply, because the statistical group *descendants* in Denmark predominantly consists of young people below the age of 25[5], and secondly because I wished to explore when an awareness of racialisation begins to form amongst young people, and how such an awareness in turn affects them.

[5] According to Denmarks' Statistics, 82 % of the group referred to as descendants are below the age of 25 (Udlændinge-, Integrations- og Boligministeriet. 2016. Integration: Status og udvikling 2016)

I thus chose to reach out both to young people in their late teens (16-17) and to those in the early years of adulthood (21-24) in order to explore whether articulations of racialisation differed between the two age-groups and to what effect. In terms of the scope and applicability of the experiences voiced in this study, I do find it necessary to point out some limitations.

First, in terms of gender, most of my informants were female (8 out 12), and this was despite the fact that I made explicit effort to equalize this shrewdness. In general it was quite the challenge for me to get in touch with male informants. At first, I thought it was merely an effect of the networks I was engaging, but along the process of conducting the interviews, I slowly came to believe that it might have had something to do with my own position as a white majority member. This is a point that I will dwell on more fully later on in this chapter.

Another limitation to the scope of this study has to do with class and locality. To approach the latter first, it is necessary to note that almost all of my informants lived in Copenhagen or in areas relatively close by, and that this has shaped their experiences. Some of the informants explicitly stated that the "*multiculturality*" of Copenhagen was something which had given them an advantage: Many stated that they felt like they belonged more to their local communities than those of their friends who lived in smaller cities with more "*ethnic sameness*". Furthermore, in terms of class, most of my informants characterised themselves as coming from homes in the middle to upper middle class, although a few came from homes with fewer resources. In addition, all informants were enrolled in some kind of education, the youngest in gymnasium, and the rest in some kind of higher education, mostly university. The group in which my informants represent is thus predominantly female, and one that mostly represent young people from homes that are generally better well off financially compared to the group of *descendants* as a whole in Denmark: According to a report from 2017, about a fifth of the group *descendants* came from homes with an income below the poverty line used by OECD (SFI 2017:11). While such limitations must of course be held in mind, I however still believe that many of the experiences voiced by the informants show a level of transcendence, seeing as the *feelings* expressed by my informants seemed to cut across their differences, although expressed in different ways.

The process of recruitment & the role of Mino Denmark

Seeing as this thesis is in part a collaboration with Mino Denmark, a few notes on my own involvement and the context of the organisation is needed. Mino Denmark[6] is a fairly new organisation. It was first established in the fall of 2016, where, following another rather intense political debate on the issue of "Danishness", MD published their first campaign with the explicit

[6] From now on referred to as MD

message that "*being Danish is a feeling independent from one's roots and ethnic background*" (Sameksistens 2016). Since then, MD has sought to solidify its position through several projects such as talks, workshops, developing an educational material, and promoting groups among racialised minority students, all with the goal of "*working for a society of engaged and equal minority citizens*".[7]

My own involvement with MD began in the fall of 2017, where I initiated my academic internship as a part of my master programme. Thus my involvement began several months before the initiation of the research for this thesis. In some ways, one could argue that my involvement with the organization through my position as a part of the secretariat in Copenhagen has in itself been a long-term ethnographic fieldwork, where I as part of the team have picked up on the issues that they deemed most important to their work. And this was crucial for me: As a white majority female writing about experiences of racialisation, I needed the input of an organisation who not only works with these issues, but whose key actors are all from a racialised minority and thus have direct experience with racialisation themselves. Their inputs and comments to the foundation of this study, i.e. to the interview-guide, not only proved crucial to the interview situation, but also forced me to confront my own biases and reflect more explicitly on my own role as a white majority female interviewing a racialised minority youth.

In terms of recruitment, MD and their networks also played a crucial role. I reached out to people mainly through the personal ad professional networks of the MD secretariat, although a few informants were also recruited through snowballing. Possible informants were contacted on Facebook or through email, and were told that I was conducting a study for my thesis in collaboration with MD and was seeking people willing to participate in an interview about their experiences with being a young person with an ethnic minority background in Denmark, along with their experiences of discrimination (see Appendix I for the initial contact). The level of involvement from MD in the recruitment process was intentional on my part: Seeing as the interviews that I wished to conduct were of a rather sensitive nature — that I wished for young people to share their experiences with racialisation — I was highly dependent on going through an organisation that the informants trusted and perhaps even valued. In other words, MD was an invaluable '*gatekeeper'* (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995) and thus a "trust-building intermediary" (Romme Larsen 2013:19*)* between me, possible informants, and the intention of my research. Reflecting back, I believe that this strategy was part of the reason why I received much immediate positive interest, but I do believe that my own position within Mino Denmark also played an essential role:

[7] Mino Denmark's Facebook page 2016: From description box in "about", my translation: https://www.facebook.com/events/1607085259592457/. Last visited 04-01-2018.

When asked directly about how my informants felt about being interviewed by me, one of my informants explicitly stated that she felt more safe because she knew that I was a part of the daily team in Mino Denmark, and that she thus had a better idea of my personal and political values. This latter point is one that not only made me think of my own positionality, a point which we will come back to shortly, but also of the impact of my own presence as a white majority member on the production of knowledge in the very interview-situation in itself.

The interviewer-interviewee relation and the power to define

The knowledge produced through interviews are always based upon an interplay between the interviewer and the interviewee. As remarked by Kvale & Brinkmann (2009): "an interview is in its most literal sense an 'inter view', an exchange of points of views between two individuals (…) a mutual dependence between human interaction and the production of knowledge" (ibid.:18). But as we have seen through the perspectives of both Edward Said and Abu-Lughod, the production of knowledge is "not just a partial truth, it is a positioned one" (Abu-Lughod 1991:142). In other words, the human interaction and production of knowledge inherent to the interview is not an interaction devoid of the question of power, or to put it a little differently: of who has the power to define. While Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) themselves point out that the interview-situation always contains an asymmetrical power relation, seeing as the interview is both structured and controlled by the interviewer (ibid.:51), I would argue that such a power asymmetry becomes even more prevalent when the role of the interviewer is concurrently occupied by a white majority member interviewing a member of a racialised minority. As Kragh (2007) has emphasized, one of the characteristics of the majority in a society is that they are "the group that can define what is normal and what is abnormal" (Kragh 2007 in Johansen 2010:173). In other words, the majority population is the one with the power to define, and such a power relation can have direct effects on the interview situation.

A recent Dutch study (Van Bochove et. al 2015) has sought to unravel such an impact of what they have called "ethnicity-of-interviewer-effects on ethnic identification" (ibid.: 652). They focus on three interview situations, where ethnic minority respondents are either interviewed by (a) a majority member, (b) by a co-ethnic, or (c) by a non-co-ethnic minority member (ibid.). Seeing as relation (a) was directly reproduced in my own interviews, I will mainly focus on the effects of this interview situation. And in terms of this specific interviewer-interviewee relation, the study found that when placed in a face-to-face interview situation with a majority interviewer, ethnic minority respondents tended to say that they feel more Dutch (27.3 %) than when placed in an interview situation with a co-ethnic interviewer (5.4 %) (ibid.:661). Such

findings not only underscore the effect of the physical presence of the interviewer, but also how the physical *appearance* of the interviewer influences on how the interviewer and the interviewee perceive of one another. As seen in the Dutch case, one effect speaks to a feeling amongst racialised minorities that they have to speak differently to a majority member than to other racialised minorities: that they needed to say that they felt Dutch. A somewhat related effect was also prevalent among my own informants, seeing as some stated that they had felt like they needed to explain themselves more when talking to me because I was white, and even that this made them hesitant to talk of racialising events in the first place. As expressed by Yusuf:

> "I'm just so used to the fact that there's some things that I can't say to you because you're white. I just think that you'll never truly understand, that you won't care, or that it's simply none of your business."

While such an effect is highly interesting in itself, to me there is something more than interviewer-effects at large here when looking back at the Dutch study. Bochove et. al explicitly state that they measured the ethnic identification of their respondents by asking them how they would describe themselves based on already fixed categories.[8] Such a tendency to ask for ethnic identification based on already fixed categories might to some extent be necessary to quantitatively attuned research such as the Dutch study. However, it is one that I have also found present in qualitative studies, at least in a Danish context: While a study on the identity-formation among descendants (Larsen 2012) explicitly asks in what situations the informants feel more "Danish", and whether they see it as possible to "be both an *immigrant* and a *Dane*" (ibid.:39, emphasis added), another study directly asks informants to identify what makes them feel Danish, and what does not(Simonsen 2017). While I do not at all believe that the intention behind such questions is to fix informants in categories that they perhaps do not ascribe to, we as researchers must never deny our power to define such presupposed categorization, overemphasizing *Danishness* in perceived contrast to *immigrantness* being one. This is especially crucial when the interview-interviewee-relation is also that of a majority-minority-relation.

One way that I sought to engage with this issue in my own interviews was fairly simple: Instead of asking my informants whether they identified as Danish or as another category, I simply asked them to openly define themselves by using whatever phrasing that came to mind. The

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[8] Categories were as follows: (1) Dutch, (2) resident of Rotterdam (in Dutch: "Rotterdammer "), (3) Surinamese/ Turkish/Moroccan (the answer option varied according to the respondents' own ethnic background), (4) Surinamese-Dutch/Turkish-Dutch/Moroccan-Dutch, (5) Dutch-Surinamese/Dutch-Turkish/Dutch-Moroccan, (6) non-native (in Dutch: "Allochtoon "), (7) Christian, (8) Muslim, (9) Hindu, (10) European, (11) World citizen, (12) Other, namely, (respondent's own answer)" (ibid.:658)

results I got from posing this question was thus not merely a measurement of whether they felt Danish or not, but something which I would argue, came closer towards shedding light on their own notions of identification on their own terms — identifications which showed much more diversity and individuality than merely asking them whether or not they felt Danish could ever encompass. This shows in other words, how we as researchers must never cease to reflect critically on our own epistemologies and categorizations, including the power and privileges that a positionality of being a white majority member can entail. This is a task that I will now fully take upon myself: In the last part of this chapter, I will explore fully the influence, possibilities, and limitation to my own positionality as a white female majority member engaging in a study of the experiences of a racialised minority youth.

Being both an insider and an outsider: Reflections on positionality

Even though I made deliberate effort in my interviews to ensure that I asked questions with the direct aim of letting my informants take the role of the definer upon themselves, a power relation still remained: my white majority positionality. No matter how I phrased my questions, the fact that I was white and they were brown could not be overlooked; after all, as the Dutch study showed, the interview is as all meetings not just an encounter between people, but also an encounter between bodies *and* the meanings ascribed to those different bodies. As Fassin (2011) reminds us, as qualitative researchers we can never fully escape our own bodily presence when it comes to racial unveiling; we must accept that we are an inherent part of it (ibid.:420). However, this does not mean that we as researcher, if of the white majority, can consider ourselves insiders to the experience of racialisation: Rather, our very positionality as white is one that I have argued works to make us outsiders at least to some degree. Such a dual position of the qualitative researcher is one that within anthropology has been discussed as the 'insider-outsider position' (Dwyer & Buckle 2009; Hastrup 2005 [1992]; Okely 2005[1992]), understood as the anthropological researcher being either an "insider, sharing the characteristic, role, or experience under study with the participants, or an outsider to the commonality shared by participants"(Dwyer & Buckle 2009:55). However, in my case, such a clear distinction between the two positions was not always as clear.

Even though there could be no question that I was not an insider to the social reality and experiences of a racialised minority, several of my informants still expressed general agreement that a conversation with a white majority member was necessary and even welcoming to them — especially seeing as I worked for an organisation like MD. As one informant said: "*Well seeing as you sit here every day, I know that you are not, you know, in support of Danish People Party*".[9]

[9] A Danish right-wing political party which takes a clear anti-immigrant stand in public debates

Thus to them, I was not *only* an outsider. Several things are at play here: First of all, in terms of age, I was an insider to many of my informants' social realities, seeing as I myself is about the same age as them. Secondly, in terms of gender, I could connect especially to my female informants. But I was perhaps most explicitly considered as a potential insider due to my political standpoint. In the interviews, I was very open in my advocacy for the political cause that MD pursues, seeing as I deemed this necessary in order to build the kind of trust that the sensitivity of the topic I wished to explore required: For my informants to speak of such vulnerable things in a society where an articulation of racialisation is mostly tabooed, I saw it as my duty to give some of myself to them, and by doing so assure them that I did not intend to diminish their experiences of racialisation. Although this by some could be seen as a loss of objectivity, I would argue as Okely (2005), that "a reflexivity which excludes the political is itself unreflective" (ibid.:3). As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) also remind us: To be truly authentic in our interactions with our informants, we cannot hide behind the the wall of professional distancing but must act with genuineness (ibid.:60). And such a decision had palpable effects on the relation to my informants. As Dana reflected:

> "That you're posing these kind of questions, and that you, as you say, yourself have had these moments of "can I even say this?", means that we're heading in the right direction. It shows me that it's not just our battle, it's yours as well. By wanting to listen and understand, you fight with us."

It is clear from this quote that my openness towards discussing my own positionality was appreciated among my informants, and that the very fact that I as a white majority member had reflected upon my own position in some ways produced a feeling among my informants that we shared a commonality as young people wishing to tackle the challenges of our time. In this way, it is seen how qualitative interviews can have the potential of being more than structured conversations but "dialogical narratives" (Werbner 2002 i Schmidt 2007:14-15), where the very meeting between the researcher, the informants, and the society around them is what creates the narrative — or as remarked by Hastrup (2005), that the reality of research becomes truly more than an "unmediated world of the 'others'", but also a world between ourselves as researchers and those we study (ibid.: 116).

However, despite such a benefit of my openness to discuss my own my positionality, a certain challenge also arose: To obtain arrange interviews with racialised minority males. As previously mentioned, only four of my informants were male. Only two responded to my initial contact although I contacted several more, and the last two were only recruited because it happened through those two male informants who had already responded. When I explicitly mentioned this

struggle to one of my male informants, and asked whether he knew anyone in his network, Ali replied the following:

> "Well yes, I do, but you would not succeed in getting into contact with them. No offense, but they would never want to participate in any kind of interview. They are too distrustful of Danes, that their statements might be used against them. They don't know that you're open-minded and stuff".

In other words, the fact that I was a white majority member, and one they did not know, would actively hold some racialised minority males back from wanting to participate in an interview. That they furthermore would perceive of me as a "*Dane*", with the indication that they did not think the same of themselves, only reinforces the rather discontenting recognition that there *is* general mistrust between the racialised minority youth and white majority population in Denmark, especially among racialised minority males. My own positionality as a white majority member was thus a direct limitation towards establishing contact with possible male informants. This indicates that in order to reach some racialised minority males, future studies could perhaps benefit from being performed by researchers who are racialised minority members themselves.

Regardless, what the reflections of this chapter proves to show is that as researchers, we must never forget to acknowledge the impact of our own presence in the research, both as a body and a subject. It is my belief that such a reflexivity should be inherent to any research that seeks to understand processes of racialisation from a point of view where the researcher has no embodied nor affective experience of such processes themselves. For such reflexivity not only provide great methodological insight, but also takes us, as white researchers, beyond our own biases and into the lived reality of race and the embodied experience of racialisation— and in we must now go.

Chapter 4

The white gaze as a notion of hypervisibility

So far, this study has shown that while the concept of race holds no scientific value today, a study of the affective experience of racialisation might still reveal how practices of everyday racism can hide within the familiar structures that inform everyday meetings between a racialised minority and a white majority — even, and perhaps even more so, in a society such as the Danish, where discourses of equality as sameness continues to strengthen the belief that racism is an issue of the past. I have argued that such awareness of the lived reality of race is one that forces us as researches not only to confront our own gaze upon those deemed both epistemologically and politically as 'Other', but at the same time acknowledge that a study of racialisation conducted by white researchers means handing over the power to define to those racialised minorities who themselves actually face such experiences on a daily basis.

In this first part of the analysis, we dive deeper into the concept of racialisation and its consequences by seeking to unravel how ideas of 'race' are embodied and how bodies are racialised (Fassin 2011:421). To do so, I explore what markers of difference the racialised minority youth of this study themselves feel render them *hypervisible* in the white gaze of the majority — a hypervisibility which, as we shall see, is first and foremost felt as an inability to "*pass*" (Ahmed 1999), but also one that makes the racialised minority youth feel like "*bodies of out place*" in a society where the somatic norm is inherently white (Puwar 2004:2). In other words, the experience of racialisation becomes that of "*racial embodiment*" (Fassin 2012:420); of being looked upon as a racialised body and subject in a white society. As Yancy remarks of the white gaze:

> "The Black body is *looked at*. The Black body does not return the gaze. The white body *looks at* (…) The white gaze is capable of seeping into my consciousness, skewing the way I see myself. But the gaze does not 'see' me, it 'sees' itself" (Yancy 2008: 87, 90, original emphasis).

The experience of a racialised white gaze in in this sense thus an innately embodied experience: It is the "*marking of bodies*" (Grosfoguel et. al 2014:3), and the processes in which such markings are given meaning through certain somatic characteristics (Miles 1989:75). But how are such meaning

imposed upon the racialised body? To understand this, we must once again return to the notion of the white gaze and its power as a theory of objectification. For as portrayed in the above quote, there is much difference to the experience of being seen and '*looked at*' compared to that of being the active seer of the '*I look at*': It is the difference between being the active subject and the passive object, where the active subject has the power to decide what and whom is looked upon, and who is not. In this way, the experience of a white gaze is one that not only makes the black body an object, but something that in itself makes black people *become* black (Yancy 2008.:xvi). In what follows, I aim to show how this process is at the heart of the racialisation experienced by the racialised minority youth of this study.

To feel "looked at" and "singled out"

The feeling of constantly being '*looked at*' in a certain way by the ethnic white majority was one that many of my informants gave voice to: While some, especially the youngest, found it difficult to put such a feeling into words, all spoke of a certain "*look [blik]"* that they felt associated them to negative stereotypes of racialised minorities in Denmark. Jamila, one of my youngest informants, describes the feeling as follows:

> "I often have the feeling that people look at me with a certain kind of look; that if I'm riding the bicycle poorly, then people will think it's because I'm brown, that I'm not properly raised or something. This look has great power over me. I feel like it's a war I have to win against an enemy who wants to hurt me."

While this experience of being looked at, or "*singled out"* as Adila also expressed it, was articulated in some way by all my informants, there was much doubt and some discord when asked what specifically made them feel exposed to such a gaze. While some used phrasings such as "*my ethnic background*", a majority, including Jamila above, explicitly fixed it to the colour of their skin ("*because I am brown*"). Adila was perhaps the one who most explicitly connected the fact that she is "*dark* [mørk]" to her feeling of being "*spotted* [udpeget]" in a crowd: "*When you look at me,"* she said*, "you get all the clues: I wear the hijab, I'm dark, and that just makes people very skeptical of me*." Two essential '*clues*' are at play for Adila's experience of the gaze: her skin-tone and her hijab. We will return to the hijab later in this chapter, but for now let us turn our gazes towards the first marker: being a person of colour.

The feeling of being looked upon with the skepticism that Adila speaks of, is one that my informants all felt: either in relation to their teachers, fellow students, or just from the white majority in general. However, one specific source of skepticism cut across their differences: They all felt targeted by a certain gaze in the media, one filled with negative stereotypes of Muslims and people of middle-eastern descent. Steer explicitly states that the stereotypes in the media have "*left its mark*" on her:

> "I know this feeling of being looked at differently is just in my head, but it's just a product of what I meet in the media, you know; that I'm not good enough. When I was younger, I never saw this difference between ethnic Danes and me, but as I got older and I started to read the papers and such, that's when you really notice like; good grief, I really *am* different from them. I can feel that it has left its mark on me."

To Steer, the media gaze is thus one that has both affected the way she sees herself, *and* affected her encounter with the white majority: She began to feel different from them. This effect of the media is recurrent for all my informants: They all spoke of how prevailing stereotypes in the media had affected their encounters with white majority peers, teachers, and with the public in general. Nadia recalls once being met with the comment: "*Wow, you're doing really great. I had not expected that when I first saw you"* from a white majority classmate. When she asked him why, he said that it was because of "*all the things you hear in the media about people with a different ethnic background*". Nadia felt like she had to be the one to "*prove him wrong*", and explain to him that, as she phrases it: "*most brown Danes do not live up to the negative stereotypes in the media*". Tate (2014) has explained this role for people of colour as becoming either "the exception" or the "representative of the race" (ibid.:2476) — or as expressed by Puwar (2004) in case of the latter: "to carry the burden of representation" (ibid.:145). And to my informants such a role was indeed a heavy burden: Yusuf says that it puts him in a constant state of mind "*where you constantly have to be ready to defend yourself*" — a state that to him results in what he calls "*minority-stress",* which he describes as constantly having to think of "*how to act, how to appear, and how to best represent those who are brown*".

As a racialised minority male, Yusuf has also experienced being looked upon with suspicious white eyes in a very direct way: To be criminalized in the eyes of the police. He recalls an incident in Copenhagen, where he attended a demonstration with his fellow students who, as he

himself said, "*were all white"*. When someone in the crowd far from him at one point made trouble, Yusuf was the only one in his group who was instantly targeted by a police officer:

> "He just walked up to me, like 30 meters through the crowd, and asked to see my residence permit. Just me, not my friends. When I told him that I was a Danish citizen, he just asked for my medical insurance card[10]. But it was just weird, you know; that just because I'm brown, then all of a sudden I can't be a Danish citizen?"

In many ways, Yusuf's account speaks to the kind of experience that Yancy (2008) has described as inherent to the experience of the black body in public spaces of being "condemned before it even acts" (ibid.:16). It also speaks to the ways in which everyday racism works through the structures that inform everyday encounters (Essed 2001:495); here between a figure of authority and a racialised citizen. The experience of Yusuf of being automatically placed him in an incriminating gaze from the police because he was brown, was one echoed by all of my male informants, albeit in different situations. Amal was once thrown out of a club when there was a fight, even though he had done nothing. As he himself states: "*As soon as the bouncer spotted me, he just pointed right at me and said "out!*""

Even though my female informants expressed that they had never experienced such an incriminating gaze from the police, several of them spoke to the same awareness that the accounts of Yusuf and Amal attest to: the connection between being singled out in a crowd and the colour of one's skin. As seen in the next two quotes, two of my female informants both directly expressed such an awareness:

> Dana: "Well, I'm very pale, very white. But some of my friends who are darker than me experience much more and generally have it much worse. Especially those who also wear the hijab."
> Aya: "I've been lucky, because I am so light-skinned. Sometimes people assume that I must be half-Danish because of how light-skinned I am. For me, my name is what

[10] Only people with a Danish citizenship can obtain this

> makes me the *perker*[11]. When I speak my name, people are just like; what did you say? They expect Katrine [12] or something similar."

Whereas Dana and Aya feel like they have not experienced as much discrimination because they are "*pale"*, "*white"* and/or "*light-skinned"*, Yusuf, Adila, and Amal all felt that the white majority looked upon them with skepticism because of the colour of their skin. And for the two males, such skepticism resulted in them feeling directly targeted by the police. Such experiences speak to the hypervisibility of colour: that regardless of your background, of whether or not you are born in Denmark, the visibility of your somatic difference will make you unable not to be "spotted" and regarded with skepticism by the white majority. In other words, seeing as their bodies are not considered white, they cannot move comfortably through spaces (Ahmed 2007:158).

Sara Ahmed has described this type of comfortable movement as the ability to 'pass' (Ahmed 1999:88) — an ability which she states is reserved for the "unnoticeable" white bodies in societies orientated around and towards whiteness (ibid.). But to be a black subject in a white society is more than just being noticeable: To Ahmed, it is concurrently an act of transgression, where "looking black" becomes a deviation from the normalized state of "being white" (ibid.:92). This is also emphasised by Puwar (2004), who argues that while white bodies have the undisputed right to pass in white societies, bodies that does not adhere to the historical somatic norm of whiteness are considered as both "space invaders" and "bodies out of place" (ibid.: 10). This latter phrasing is one that refers to Mary Douglas' (1991[1966]) concept of "matter out of place", seen as those bodies which do not adhere to the normative categories of the symbolic social structure of society (ibid.: 36, 41). In such a way, the experience of being a body out of place and thus not being able to pass comfortably in the white gaze, is one that makes race "real" to those who experience it (Ahmed 2007:158). Yet, there is more at play here than racialisation on cause of skin-tone: As some of the quotes show, there are other markers of difference that makes my informants feel hypervisible in the white gaze of the majority. These include wearing a religious marker such as the hijab, and to have a middle-eastern-sounding name.

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[11] The word "perker" is a Danish derogatory slang for a person of middle-eastern descent

[12] Katrine is a typical Danish name.

The intersection of whiteness, non-whiteness, and Islam

Incorporating religion into a study of racialisation is crucial because of what some have called the current "muslimification of racism" (Essed and Trienekens 2008:62), understood as the tendency for religion as a marker of difference to surpass that of race and ethnicity in the dominant public discourses of especially European countries. Goldberg (2006) has even deemed such a tendency as inherent to what he calls the "Europeanization of race and racism" (ibid.:333), wherein experiences of race has become subsumed and repressed under the coverage of cultural and religious references (ibid.:335). In such a way, religion, and here with specific attention to Islam, can come to act like a racial category in the lived experiences of a youth where religion for some can be a signifiant in defining their sense of self (Moosa-Mitha 2009:128, 132).

For my informants, this was first and foremost felt in relation to the muslim headscarf, the hijab. Aya and Nadia both recall similar experiences in public spaces — one in a square in Copenhagen, the other in a train — where they and their mothers, both of whom wore the hijab, were verbally assaulted and asked to "*fuck off to where you came from* [skride hjem]" by white majority males. Such an incident was one that for Aya made her even more conscious of the white gaze. As she herself states: "*To this day, I still feel like I have a trauma from that incident. I still feel uneasy when riding a train, like overly conscious of how people look at me*." Incidents like these clearly show the hypervisibility of the hijab, and how it becomes a direct cause for derogatory remarks. But there is more to it, as seen through the comment to go back "*where you came from*": I am referring here to the immediate link made between wearing a hijab and not belonging in Denmark. In other words, such a comment is one that speaks to the intersection of whiteness, non-whiteness, and religion (Vassenden and Andersson 2011).

In their study of religion among young people in Norway, Vassenden and Andersson found that while whiteness allowed some of the young people of their study to hide their Christian religiosity, the non-whiteness of others instantly identified them as Muslim (ibid.:574-575). In order to explain this tendency, Vassenden and Andersson have put forward the notion of "faith information controls", understood as, with inspiration from Goffman's theory on stigma, the "signs given" and "signs given off" as to whether or not a person wishes to be seen as religious (ibid.:577). They argue that whereas the hijab has the character of being a sign given, by the wearer actively choosing to wear it, ethnicity and race are signs given off, seeing as these are signs one cannot control (ibid.). As Vassenden and Andersson remarks of a young female informant: "in virtue of her non-whiteness and her hijab, she becomes a visible point of faith in the white secular mass" (ibid.: 582). In other words, both her hijab and her non-whiteness makes the young female informant in their study unable "to pass unmarked and unremarked" (Ahmed 2004:122). In this sense, it is thus

not only the hijab and the connotation to Islam inherent to it that makes young women such as the girl above and Adila in my own study visible in the white gaze: It is the *interplay* of non-whiteness and Islam as concurrent processes of racialisation.

But what if you do not possess the immediate hypervisibility that such markers of non-whiteness and faith signifiers entail, and that, as Aya stated previously, only your name gives you away? To explore this and the act of passing as not only a "transgression" but also an act of "identification"(Ahmed 1999:96), we turn to story of Ali.

To "become visible" and marked

Admitted, when I first met Ali, I experienced a moment of bewilderment. The same kind of disarray that Puwar expresses as the "*disorientation*" that occurs to the white gaze when a black body does not conform to the categorizations in which it has been fixed (Puwar 2004:42) — in this case my own disorientation was all the more present seeing as Ali is in fact neither brown nor black in terms of skin-tone. He is white. In having inherited his Danish mother's appearance rather than his Palestinian father's, Ali notes that he "*looks fairly Danish*" — a comment, I should note, which speaks clearly to the confluence of Danishness and whiteness. To Ali, this character of his appearance is what makes him able to pass as a white body in a white society. As he states:

> "I can walk in hiding while on the street, because when people see me, they think I'm a Søren. But as soon as people speak to me and hear that my name is Ali and see that I don't drink, then I become visible. The they're all like: How? Why? What happened?"

As can be seen from the quote, Ali can walk in "*hiding* [skjul]", but "*becomes visible* [synlig]*"* as soon as he speaks his name out loud, or when his actions of not drinking was a sign given of his Muslim religiosity. And to Ali, these signs given have not been without consequence. Later in the interview, he tells the story of a "*Danish girl"*, who had developed a crush on him without him being aware of it. Her white father would always act nicely towards Ali and be interested in hearing about Islam and Palestine, but when the girl told her father that she had feelings for Ali, everything changed. As recounted by Ali, the father "*exploded in rage"*, threatened to get a restraining order, and said that he did not want his daughter to be with such a "*perkerunge"* — a derogatory slang made up from the word "*perker*" and the word "*unge*" which is the Danish word for child. To Ali, the experience was the first time he realised that even though he looked Danish, i.e. that he was white, he would never be regarded as such because of his name. As he states:

> "I simply couldn't comprehend that he had just called me a 'perkerunge'. I could not bear it. Since that day, I just knew I would always be seen as different; that I would always be an Ali. That struck me the hardest; that my entire life could be judged only by my background, and not by who I am."

What Ali experiences here is what Sara Ahmed has expressed (1999) as being "*detected as black underneath the assumed white mask*" (ibid::91) — or perhaps more directly connected to this incident; to be detected as subject who does not conform to the image that is assumed from the objectivity of his body. This speaks to Ahmed's description of the second aspect of passing as "identification", understood as "the act of assuming an image that constitutes the subject" (ibid.:92). Due to his appearance, Ali was as a body able to pass successfully in the "*invisible and privileged community of whiteness*" (ibid.:93), but due to his name, he was as a subject unable to pass seeing as his name revealed him to be a "*subject 'not being' the identity assumed*" (ibid.:92). Due to the intersection of Islam, the Middle-East and non-whiteness in the process of racialisation, Ali thus became visible and marked, even though he was in fact white. One might even say that in that moment he became brown, not as a skin-tone but as a racialised status, seeing as his name and religiosity made him unable to be seen as white in a racialised white gaze. In other words, he became ascribed to a race in which he does not appear to belong by being identified as 'Other' (Fassin 2011:422). In this way, the case of Ali gives voice to what Fanon (1967) has described of the experience of being seen though white eyes: "*Dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes, I am fixed*" (Fanon 1967:116).

Becoming brown

Even though, as we have seen, this fixation as a brown object and subject and the stereotypes such a fixation entails all had different expressions among my informants, one thing cut across their differences: The feelings of unease and anxiety that came from being hypervisible in a racialising white gaze. Even though many of my informants were acutely aware that their brownness, religious markers, and/or names mark them as someone who don't belong in the Danish white somatic norm, and that they thus have to work a lot harder in order to be accepted, they still expressed an awareness that such a acceptance might never come at all. As told by Yusuf:

> "To feel brown is to wake up every day and know that you're brown; to have people look upon you with all these stereotypes in their heads. I think about how I appear all

> the time. I try not to play music too loud, or take my hoodie off if I think it makes people feel threatened. But even then, I will only be accepted for a moment. The next day, I am still the brown kid and always will be."

To feel brown in Denmark is in other words to feel hypervisible through white eyes, and in turn to gaze upon oneself through those eyes. In a society such as the Danish, where whiteness is the norm, the unmarked, and the invisible, to be hypervisible is thus to live with marked bodies and fixed identities. And such a scrutiny of the white gaze is one that can, as we saw in the very beginning of this chapter with the quote by Yancy (2008), become internalized as a way of seeing oneself, not as one are, but as the white gaze wants one to be seen. As portrayed by Yusuf, such an internalization of the gaze might even end up with one acting upon it by adjusting oneself to its image. In such a way, the gaze that Yusuf describes becomes disturbingly close to that of the "*inspecting gaze*" as expressed by Foucault in his reflections of the panopticon. He writes: "*each individual under its weight will end by interposing to the point that he is his own overseer; each individual thus exercising the surveillance over, and against himself*" (Foucault 1977 in Evans & Gamman 1995:19).

And the white gaze do play a crucial role in defining people of colour as 'Other'. During the interview, Yusuf described how it was only when he came "*back home to Denmark"* from a study exchange in Turkey, that he truly understood how the looks he had received in Denmark had formed him as a person. In Turkey, he never once thought of how he appeared to others, nor felt the need to adjust, and even found to is own surprise that discussions of racism, racialisation and minorities no longer interested him as they had done in Denmark. But that all changed when he got out of the plane in Copenhagen:

> "Already at the gate, there was just these looks again: These looks from white Danes that I had grown up with all my life and tried to navigate. To not have experienced them for several months was really all it took for me to be like; wow, what's going on? It was just like: shit, now we're back. I am brown again."

To Yusuf it was thus only through the inspecting looks of the white eyes he had grown up with, that he once more felt like he was "*brown again".* In other words, to be brown is not something you are, it is something you become through a racialising white gaze. Such an awareness is one that attests to the well-argued fact that there can be no brownness or blackness as racial markers without

whiteness as its constructed counterpoint; that one can only really become black once in the West, in the confrontation with the white world (Fassin 2011:423). In other words, as seen in the quote from Yancy in the beginning of this chapter, the white gaze does not see the people it gazes upon, it only sees itself.

But ascribing someone racially is not only to impose an identity upon them: Fassin reminds us that racial ascription is concurrently a process that deprives people of colour of alternative identifications other than brown or black, including the mere possibility of having multiple belongings (ibid.). This deprivation and its consequences is something that we will explore in the next chapter, which will provide the second part of the analysis. Here I will look upon the white gaze as concurrently a notion of invisibility, as the inability to be seen as both an individual and a person of colour in white spaces, and in turn explore how this other dimension of the reach of the white gaze affects my informants' sense of self and identification, and what strategies they in turn adopt to work against the stereotypical ascriptions imposed on them.

Chapter 5

The white gaze as a notion of invisibility

In the last chapter we established how the notion of hypervisibility is crucial in order to understand the lived experience of race. We found that different markers such as skin-tone, faith signifiers, and the association to the Middle East and other non-Western countries coexist and reinforce each other in the racialising white gaze's construction of black and brown bodies. But we also found that the affective experience of racialisation is more than being seen as a racialised body; it is concurrently a process of racial embodiment, of how the image of a certain subject is tied to its bodily expression — both by the white gaze *and* by racialised subjects themselves. In this way, racial embodiment is not just about racial ascription but also about the individual interpretations of and reactions to racialisation (Alcoff 2014:186). Yet how does one begin to interpret oneself as racialised body and subject in a society such as the Danish, where an egalitarian understanding of sameness, together with an ideology of colourblindness and discourses of immigrants, integration and ethnicity continue to overshadow an acknowledgement of racism and the innately embodied and affective experience of racialisation in itself? This question is what this second chapter of the analysis chapter seeks to explore. But in order to do so, we must first dive into the experience of racialised invisibility as a consequence of a racialised white gaze, and its impact on my informants' own self-perceptions and identifications.

Understanding racialised invisibility

Yancy (2008) has sought to shed light on how black bodies are rendered both hypervisible *and* invisible in dominantly white spaces (ibid.:86): To be hypervisible as a racialised body and subject is in other words *also* an experience of not being seen at all; to experience what Yancy calls "racialised invisibility" (ibid:87). But how, one may ask, can one possibly be both invisible yet hypervisible at the same time? In order to understand this complex duality, we must once again look back on the gaze as a theory of objectification: In the last chapter, we saw how having the power of being the active seer, of being the one who *'looks at*', entails having the power to decide who and what is looked upon, and how this made racialised bodies hypervisible in the white gaze. However, in order to understand racialised invisibility, such a power of the white gaze does not merely lie in deciding who is looked upon, but also *how* objects are looked upon and thus *recognised*. But what does such a recognition in the white gaze entail?

Giordano (2014) is one who has conceptualized recognition as a process where "each actor engage in practices of translation to produce an intelligible account of the other" (ibid.:15), and how this process for the clinical psychiatrists of her study entails a translation of the "indigestibility of the foreign other", in this case migrants, into categories that are "recognizable, includable, and thus digestible" (ibid.:22). And such a translation is not only crucial for the intelligibility of the psychiatrists, but also for the self-perception of the migrants constructed as such "foreign others" (ibid.). As the theories of Mead (1982) reminded us previously, we are as individuals highly dependent on the gaze of an externalized other in order to "see ourselves" (ibid.:177). And in the case of being a racialised 'Other' in the white gaze of a white majority, this sort of intelligibility inherent to the kind of recognition as explained above, is something that fixes racialised minorities to the only digestible category in which the white majority can perceive of them: to be recognised as *brown*, as an '*Other*', and perhaps most perceivable in the Danish case; as an *immigrant.* In this way to experience racialised invisibility is to be looked upon as a black body by white eyes which only "see themselves, or fragments of their imagination — indeed, everything and anything but me" (Yancy 2008:87). And among my informants, especially the recognizability of them as *immigrants* in the white gaze of the majority, is one that they feel does not at all resonate with how they perceive of themselves. As expressed by Adila and Jamila:

> Adila: "I hate it when people dump words like 'immigrant' on me and my generation, even though we are born in Denmark. You can perhaps say that I have roots from somewhere else, but do not call me an immigrant. That is not me."
> Jamila: "I get really pissed when people use the term 'immigrant' about people like me, because it's just a lie. I am not an immigrant. I am born and raised in Denmark."

Thus in sum, to be a brown or black body in a white society such as the Danish means to be both hypervisible as a racialised body, and invisible as anything but the subject befitting this image — in this case the image of the *immigrant*. And it is this kind of duality of being both hypervisible and invisible, which Yancy sees as what truly strips the black body of its integrity (ibid.:86). In order to unfold how such a duality is played out and experienced by the racialised subject, we must now turn to Du Bois (2008 [1903]) and his conceptualization of the "double consciousness" of the lived reality of racialisation.

To become Danish or disappear

> "It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder" (Du Bois 2008 [1903]:45).

To this day, the quote from Du Bois' more than hundred year old *Soul of Black Folks* speaks much to the lived reality of feeling both hypervisible and invisible as a racialised body in the white gaze — and it also echoes much of the same kind of struggle that Yusuf spoke of in the last chapter; of the tendency to constantly adjust oneself, or to "measure one's soul" as written by Du Bois, under a perceived scrutiny of white eyes. But as indicated above, the quote also resonates with a different kind of struggle: an inner battle of "two souls, two thoughts", of "two warring ideals" that remain unreconciled. While these two ideals to Du Bois are seen as the "American" as opposed to the "Negro", to my informants this double consciousness appears, as indicated above, through being concurrently a *Dane* and an *immigrant.* In other words, it speaks to the enigma of being both a subject innately tied to the country and culture in which you are born and raised, *and* at the same time feeling like a racialised subject and body.

The struggle of this enigma was a recurring issue to my informants, and something which we talked about at length during all the interviews: Many referred to this as a struggle between feeling *Danish*, while at the same time be allowed to also feel *brown* without having to adhere to the prevalent stereotypes that they consider prevalent of racialised minorities in Denmark. Jamila was one of those who most explicitly expressed this struggle and its consequences for her. To her, the struggle to escape the stereotypes tied to her "*background*" is one that for many years made her feel like she had to hide the part of herself that she felt was connected to Palestine:

> "When I was younger, I did everything to make sure there was no doubt that I was *not* in any way different from my Danish friends: I kept trying to prove that my family and I did not live up to the negative stereotypes. But now, I'm just seen as a Dane, which I don't feel that I only am. My background is also Palestinian. I feel like

> I've let go of too much of that part of myself; you know, the things that are not just the Danish stuff."

In attempting not to be tied to racialising stereotypes because of the hypervisibility of her body, Jamila feels that the part of her that is "*not just the Danish stuff*", a part that she today takes great pride in, has become invisible. This process is one which in many ways relate to what Gullestad (2004) has referred to as the "price for acceptance": She explains this process as one where the hypervisibility of being a racialised body makes one want to disappear, to become invisible by "reject[ing] all evidence of difference" (ibid.:193). Puwar (2004) has also described this process: She argues that in order to conform to the white majority norm, bodies who are not the somatic norm must "undergo self-erasure" (ibid.:151— or as also phrased by Fanon: "to become white or disappear" (Fanon 1967 in Puwar 2004:152). In the case of Jamila, this process of her becoming just like her "*Danish friends*", of rejecting all evidence that she it "*not different*", is one that has been successful in some ways: As she herself states, she is now *"just seen as a Dane*" by her friends, and thus in their eyes she has become invisible as a racialised subject. But the price for such an acceptance, one that Jamila laments in the quote, is that she has had to "*let go*" and make invisible something that is just as much a part of her as being Danish: her positive connection to Palestine.

This feeling of having to reject a part of oneself, is one which is felt by all my informants in one way or the other. For Yusuf and Adila, the feeling came across not as a struggle to be seen as Danish, but as a fight to escape the "*recipe*" of how to behave as a black or brown body and subject:

> Yusuf: "As brown you are not allowed to find yourself. Instead you're given this recipe of how to be brown; of how to act and speak right down to minor details. I hate it, but I also know that I have to live through this codex for otherwise I'll never be accepted and survive as brown in this society. I'm not seen as a human being, only a part of the brown mass."
>
> Adila: "We have produced these ideas of how a white person and a black person should be. If I don't live up to the stereotypes, then I'm just white all of a sudden. But I'm not going to let you define me according to your definition of what it means to be black or to be white. I'm just me."

As can be seen from the quotes, the struggle of not acting along to the "*recipe* [opskrift]" of being a person of colour is one that makes both Adila and Yusuf feel like they do not have the space to find themselves on the same terms as their white majority peers: They are either seen as "part of the brown mass", as expressed by Yusuf, that their colour is always hypervisible, *or* they are seen as "white" as stated by Adila — or in extension, as *Danish* — where her blackness is rendered invisible in white eyes. In such a way, the price for acceptance becomes their sense of individuality; of not being allowed to be seen as anything but the two warring ideas, and thus never as *all* that they are. In other words, in a society such as the Danish where whiteness is seen as the norm and to be a brown body is to be a body out of place, an 'Other', there is no in-between, no possibility of having multiple belongings, multiple identifications, or even multiple identities: You are either seen as Danish, as white, or you are an immigrant, a brown/black body, an 'Other'.

However, and now we are approaching the truly crucial part, such an constellation of binary identities are only that: formations, a "production" (Hall 1990:222): As Stuart Hall reminds us, identity is never as accomplished or as unproblematic as we think: It is "never complete, always in progress, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (ibid.). And in the case of my informants and the context of Denmark, such a kind of binary representation of identity is one that I will dare to argue is a narrative of the past: one where there were only *Danes* and the *immigrants*, the "hosts and the guests" (Hervik 2004; Rytter 2018). For as Hall states, identities are but the "names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves in terms of the narratives of the past" (Hall 1990:225). In this sense, identity was never a matter of being but "a matter of becoming" (ibid.); of becoming something else, *someone* else. And in terms of such positions of the "neither/nor" (Baumann 1991:56), as the one of the *Dane* as opposed to the *immigrant*, the host to the guest, there is need to, as Bauman himself expresses it, "expose the artifice, the fragility, the sham" (ibid.) of such a separation to begin with — both in research and in society. For in the case of my informants, alternative identities and identifications are indeed emerging.

To my informants, the idea that they should only strive to identify only to a single sense of belonging and being in the world — to be either *Danish* and white, or to be an *immigrant* and to be brown, an 'Other'— is, as Amal so explicitly put it, a "*fallacy*". To them, the society they live in is not one of single belongings but of several. As expressed by Aya and Dana:

> Aya: "It's almost considered an insult to say that we are a multicultural society. Everything else than 100 % Danish just has to be a bad thing."

> Dana: "We have fucked it up completely; that you can have a different culture and not make it a negative thing. In Denmark it's just like; 'oh, you have an arabic background…I'm sorry".

Despite the endless times they have felt and directly been told by the white majority that their "*background*" is a burden, all of my informants insist on articulating their backgrounds and the cultural diversity they bring not as a burden, but as a privilege. Nadia states that she "*feel[s] acknowledged as an individual*" when her teachers recognises her background as something that can be an advantage for her as a student, and Amal says that he makes a "*deliberate effort*" to show his teachers that his background is something that makes him "*a better student*". However, this kind of "*double-culturality* [dobbeltkulturelhed]" as Fadi expressed it, can also be a difficult place to be: For Adila, this state of being has made her feel like she in many ways needed to live a "*double-life*" — one far too demanding for her:

> "I cannot cope with having to live every day and never be myself. People told me that I was just confused, that I could just live a double-life without problems, but I just felt worthless, like I belonged nowhere. I was not a human being, I was just nothing.. It was just too much."

Through such a statement, we see how Adila's own sense of self, of her own individuality, has been rendered so invisible by the duality of feeling racialised in her own double-consciousness, her own "*double-life*", that she feels like "n*othing*", "*belong[ing] nowhere*". In other words, she is experiencing the feeling that Du Bois described as "being torn asunder" by the two "warring ideals" innate to the "dark body". Later in the interview, Adila expressed that the only way out of this nothingness was to find her "*own way* [egen retning]", one where she did not have to live a double-life, but one where she could begin to "*discover herself neither as only Somali nor only Danish, but just as Adila*". This exact wording is one that was also echoed by Steer, when asked how she would define herself: *"I'm just Steer. I don't bother labeling myself anymore. I am Danish, I am Kurdish, and I'm so much more than that. I'm me.*"

Now that we understand more fully the experience of racialisation as being both the hypervisibility of being a racialised body, and the invisibility of one's individuality as a racialised subject, we turn now to the direct strategies of identification that the young people of my study turn to as a racialised minority in a society, where there is little room for the acknowledgement of racism

and the innately embodied and affective experience of racialisation. With inspiration from Stuart Hall (1997), we shall look at how my informants' sense of identity rest on the "point of suture" in which they as subjects *"*choose to identify or not identify*"* with the subject positions to which they are summoned, and the ways in which they choose to perform such positions (ibid.:14). In doing so, we shall explore how their refusal to be either *Danish* or an *immigrant* makes them adopts strategies of identification in which they in different ways embrace the murky identifications that being in the "grey area" (Baumann 1991:56) between such binary identifications entail. In other words, we shall explore how they take the role of being the "undecidable, the stranger" upon them; of not only being the "unclassified" but the "unclassifiable" (ibid.:57-58).

Two strategies of identification

I perceive of two different strategies of identification in which my informants have chosen to perform such a position: One of these, the marginal dominant one (7 out of 12), is a deliberate choice to refuse to speak of oneself in terms of discursive and/or racial binaries, and thus a choice *not to identify*. Here phrasings such as "*I am me*", "*I am human*", or "*I am a young person*" or "*I am just a woman*" echoed the loudest. Although some of these informants on some occasions used phrasings such as "*having a different background*" or referred to themselves as "*brown*", their refusal to themselves identify with the subject positions of being either Danish or brown/black and an immigrant was insistent. As expressed by Fadi and and Aya:

> Fadi: "I refuse to see myself as an Iraqi from Denmark, or a Dane from Iraq. I'm just a human being on planet earth. That's it."
>
> Aya: "When you asked me, I just immediately thought that I was a woman. Then a scientist. I actually didn't even consider something about a different background or something like that."

As scholars studying racialisation, such statements remind us that even though you may experience racialisation on your own body and even articulate awareness of such processes, this does not mean that you always want to identify with your own brownness or blackness: Sometimes people, and perhaps especially young people, just want to go about with their lives without having to constantly think about racialisation and its consequences — perhaps most especially in societies such as the Danish, where their experiences are not acknowledged as such. One might even argue that this first strategy of identification is one that directly adapts to the very colourblindness inherent to the

Danish society in which they live. However, to merely see such a strategy as adaptation, and thus to strip it of its agency is, I believe, misguided: To my informants such a strategy of identification is one essential to their identity work, *and* one which entails the freedom to see the world from the perspective that they wish; one where the consequences of being a person of colour do not exist, or at least where they refuse to acknowledge them as such.

The other strategy that emerged was in some ways a direct opposite approach. A number of my informants, although small (3 out of 12), deliberately chose to refer to themselves by the very racialised and marginalizing ascriptions and categorizations into which they felt hailed: This strategy was expressed through the use of hyphen-identities, and of "*brown*" and even the derogatory slang "*perker*" as positive identity markers. As expressed by Dana, Aya, and Yusuf:

> Dana: "I am Danish-Iraqi or Iraqi-Danish. I cannot be the one without the other."
> Aya: "Sometimes it's just necessary to take the power from the words. If someone came up to me and said; you f**cking *perker*, then I would just be like: Yes, I am."
> Yusuf: "I am queer, brown, and Muslim. Those three things intersect to make up who I am, and I'm proud of that."

What the observant reader might notice is that Aya is interestingly also one of those, who previously did not see herself as anything but a woman and a scientist when asked to define herself. In her case, what such a statement proves to show is how identification is never a completed process, but one always in progress (Hall 1997:2). As Hall himself states, it is a "constant agonistic process of struggling with, resisting, negotiating and accommodating the normative or regulative rules with which they confront and regulate themselves" (ibid.:14). Understood in this way, identity is a "positioning" (ibid.) — one that may change and fluctuate over time and be used differently in different situations. Regardless, such a kind of strategy to adopt racialising ascriptions as positive identity markers is one in which my informants chose to *identify with* the subject positions in which they are hailed, but in a manner that they felt was their own. This strategy is one that attests to how racial categories and racialised subject positions can become the foundation for what Golash-Boza (2016:137) had called "positive group-based identities", where the power is not only taken from the words but the very power of the categorizations in themselves.

With these two strategies of identification in mind; as choosing 1) *not to identity* or 2) *to identity with* racialised subject positions, how then do we perceive of such strategies in relation to the current discourses of ethnicity, immigration and integration that continues to overshadow the

experience of racialisation not just in the Danish society, but throughout Europe as argued previously by Goldberg (2006) and El-Tayeb (2011)? El-Tayeb herself suggests to see such strategies and thus "performativity" of young racialised minorities as "queering ethnicity", where to *do* queer practices means to actively work against homonormative discourses of whiteness in European societies by, as she phrases it: "queering and destabilizing the exclusionary fictive European ethnicity" (ibid.:35-36). In other words, for racialised minority subjects to use "queer performance strategies" is to shatter the logic of normative racial binaries of black and white by adopting and "rearranging the components of the supposedly stable but incompatible identities assigned to them by exploring their impure, inauthentic, non-reproductive potential" (ibid.:35). Or as expressed previously, by not only embracing the murky identifications of being an undecidable and a body out a place, but to shatter the very binaries which produce racialised bodies and subjects as such to begin with. The strategies of my informants could be seen as ways of doing just that.

A silent racism

We are reaching the end of this excavation into the affective experience of racialisation. However, one inherent issue and challenge for my informants still remain: Whether or not they can actually begin to actively vocalize their experiences as racialisation in a society which does not recognise them as such.

When I asked my informants if they would use the term racism to describe their experiences, most did indeed need a long silence to consider their answers. When they eventually replied, one particular reflection echoed amongst them: All of them were very aware of the "*sensitivity*" of the term racism in a Danish context, and as such many considered "*discrimination*" as a better term if they wanted to express their experiences without causing people to, as expressed by Amal, "*choke on their coffee* [få kaffen galt i halsen]". To many of them, what was most important for them was that the white majority understood their experiences, and not to "*create further distance"* by using the term of racism. These kind of reflections are clear in the short excerpt below from my interview with the two sisters, Layla and Nour, who were also some of my youngest informants. When asked whether they would use the term racism, both of them hesitated.

> Nour: "Well yes…. I think so… But I don't really use it, because then some people would just think; now you are drawing the racist-card."
> Layla [nodding]: "The victim-card."
> Nour: "Exactly."

> Layla [hesitant]: "But I do use it sometimes. You know, if I think it has reached the point, where I have to call it racism."
> *Interviewer: And when does it reach that point?*
> Layla: "You know the story about Ali having to send in way more job applications in order to get a job? *That* is racist."

Layla is referring here to a story that gained quite a lot of attention in the Danish media — a story based on a recent master thesis made by two Danish social scientists (Dahl & Krog 2017). Using sampling data made from 800 fictive job applications[13], the study found that minority applicants with a Middle-eastern sounding name needed to send out 52 % more applications in order to receive the same number of invitations to job interviews as applicants from the majority with traditional Danish names (ibid.:22), and that minority males received fewer call backs than both majority males, majority females and minority females (ibid.:26). As can be seen from Layla's quote above, this kind of *structural racism* was something she *had to* refer to as racism. Furthermore, when asked about what they considered as racism, several other informants also mentioned racial profiling by the police as something which once again is especially hard on male racialised minority members: According to a recent Danish documentary produced for the Danish Radio (DR) "immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries" have a 86-88 pct higher risk of being arrested without it leading to charges (DR 2018). And such a tendency is indeed seen as racialising among my informants, both among those who have had encounters with the police, and by those who have not. As expressed by Yusuf, who as we saw previously himself had an encounter with a police officer, such an experience was one that for him "*definitely crossed the line*".

However, while my informants were inclined to regard some structural practices as more racist than other forms, all at the same time seemed to agree that political discourses, such as that of the right wing *Danish People Party*, were indeed racist as well: They referred often and with palpable indignation to incidents such as a member of the party asking a woman in a live TV-debate to take off her hijab in order to become truly assimilated[14], and to a well-known campaign that elicited much criticism seeing as a portrait of a fictive Danish family did not include a single person

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[13] It should be noted that the applications were designed to meet essential criteria for the validity if the results: This included making sure that the applications were constructed in a way that ensured they were perceived as real applications, that the applicants should be equally qualified, and that as many occupations were covered and equally divided, so that the only difference between the applications was the name of the applicant and their gender (ibid.:16).

[14] From the programme "Debatten (The debate), where the incident occurred: https://www.facebook.com/Debatten/videos/-du-skal-lige-tage/1880713635302919/

of colour.[15] While such types of in some ways more covert racialisation is different from the direct and personal experience of being profiled by the police, many of my informants still felt that their experiences with such a kind of racialisation, especially when experienced through everyday encounters, needed to be given attention and validity as well. As expressed by Nadia:

> "I think of racism as a spectrum: In the one end there is my friend getting asked to go sit at the back of the bus because she is black, and then there is your teacher doubting your academic skills because of your ethnic background. The first one is racism in a sense where everyone could say it and everyone would be appalled. But it's just as racialising to constantly be met with negative stereotypes. It's just more *wrapped up in silk paper*[16]*,* you know? It's just as much about how you feel and react upon something as a receiver, but it's a lot harder to confront someone about something so indirect. People will just react like: Come one, Nadia, haven't you just had a lousy morning? The direct form is almost easier to handle because it's just much more tangible, you know?"

Nadia's reflections echo among many of my other informants, i.e through Adila expressing her frustration upon always being met with prejudices and yet being told that she should "*not take it personally*", and Dana stating that to her, the feeling of being racialised is even more *"present and hurtful*" when it is done to her indirectly. Fadi and Jamila give voice to this kind of racialising experiences as a "*silent racism*" — one that is both much more difficult to navigate and much more difficult to spot, because it has become such an ingrained part of everyday life and encounters. As they state:

> Ali: "There is a kind of silent racism in Denmark, where you're afraid to say it out loud. It's s better than the explicit form, but it's definitely more difficult to navigate."
> Jamila: "I think that in some absurd way, racism is just such a natural part of your everyday life as a brown person, that sometimes it even gets difficult for you to spot."

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[15] The poster for the campaign can be found at the official homepage of the DPP through this link: https://danskfolkeparti.dk/kampagner/vores-danmark-saa-meget-vi-skal-passe-paa-2016/

[16] Translated directly from the Danish idiom: "pakket ind i silkepapir" (more commonly: "pakket ind i vat [cotton tissue]". An English equivalent could be "to sugar-coat".

What such reflections from my informants show is first and foremost how racialisation, even in its "*silent*" or "*silk-wrapped*" version, is something that is strongly *felt* and affectively experienced, even though such experiences cannot easily be placed into theoretical nor political boxes. Secondly, the tendency amongst my informants to speak of discrimination rather than racism is one that attests to how conversations about racism and the lived reality of race in Denmark are not only "*sensitive*", but that there is a lack of a general language and acceptance of such in which the racialised can begin to express themselves and their experiences. As Adresen (Andreassen & Andresen 2014) states when reflecting on her own experiences: "I do not have a language to address this different treatment, as I cannot speak about race and racial visibility in Danish. I can only talk about 'ethnicity'" (ibid.:27). In this way, it is seen how in Danish society, the tendency to use ethnicity as a substitute for race, makes it more difficult to even begin to talk about racism, and how a lack of a language in which to speak of race prevents us from addressing existing patterns of racial inclusion and exclusion (ibid.:28). And this is indeed a struggle, and one that continues to influence the everyday life of racialised minorities in Denmark. As this thesis is being written, a young man, Jens-Phillip Yazdani, is undergoing what is more commonly referred to as a *shit-storm* on social media platforms after posting an update[17], where he in many ways explains the exact same feeling as that voiced by my informants. In what follows, he writes of his own experiences with wanting to cheer for the Danish national soccer team, but not feeling like he truly could:

> "I wanted to side with Denmark with every nerve of my body. Allow myself to be carried away along with the 50.000 of my fellow countrymen (…) But I couldn't. I just couldn't. Something within me resisted. Did not allow me. And that was when I felt sick — in the internal rupture (…) that was about to tear me apart. Why should I side with a team, which represents a country that does not want me?" (Jyllandsposten 2018, my translation)

And the response to such a statement? The young man in question was told in the comments to the referred article to stop pulling the "victim-card" (ibid., my translation), and was told off by a fairly well-known social commentator on Facebook for "smearing the Danes and Denmark" and was told

[17] The update was originally posted on Facebook, but was taken down by the site due to it being reported and flagged as inappropriate. Thus I refer to an article in the Danish newspaper *Jyllandsposten*, which chose to publish his update.

"to be very ashamed".[18] Thus in attempting to address the impact of the kind of silent, everyday racism that racialised minorities experience on a daily basis, this young man's experience is not merely put into question, but harshly silenced and even socially sanctioned, seeing as he is told to be ashamed. This consequence is one that my informant Yusuf also reflects on:

> "If you speak of racism, then some people will just automatically snap and turn it all on you… you can just feel its more sensitive, because if you're speaking of racism, then it's something that can affect us as a society too."

In other words, to speak of racism and perhaps especially the kind of everyday racism that inform everyday practices makes the conversation dangerous, seeing as it becomes about the very patterns of society, and not just about individual acts: It becomes about us all. And in there, perhaps resides the conversation that is the true stranger, the real undecidable, to Danish society: To speak of our colonial past and the structures of structural racism and processes of everyday racialisation that to this day not only influence the encounters between a racialised minority and a white majority, but that have real impacts and consequences for those who experience it. As expressed by Amal:

> "Experiences like that change you. It can make you feel like it's not even worth to be a part of a community, which constantly tells you that you are unwanted. Either you choose to take up the fight, knowing that it will be hard, or you choose not to do. For fighting against these kind of thing is truly hard: it eats away at all that you are, if you allow it. I don't. I fight on. We cannot go without talking about racism any longer. To me, this is on the same level as all the other fights for equality that Denmark as a society has gone through, and that is what I fight for every single day."

[18] Facebook 2018, post by social commentator, Karen West. Link: https://www.facebook.com/karen.west.140/posts/10214668086388435. Last visited 27-07-2018.

Concluding remarks

This thesis has not been about deeming someone as being racist or not, nor has it been about immigrants and their to some failed integration in Danish society: Rather, this study has focused on how patterns and structures of racism and processes of racialisation are experienced by a racialized minority youth in the society they consider their home, but where the confluence of markers of difference inherent to them such as skin-tone, faith signifiers, and the association to the Middle East and other non-Western countries concurrently interplay to construct them as racialised bodies and subjects in the racialised white gaze of the white majority.

I have argued that such processes of racialisation are innate to the experience of a racialised white gaze, and that such processes can be viewed as an form of 'everyday racism'. One that when acted out in everyday encounters between a white majority and a racialised minority, appears in covert or as stated by my informants *silent* ways, which makes the articulation of it and the navigation in it all the more difficult for the racialised. As such, the study of such a silent racism is one which I have stressed is highly necessary in a Danish context, where racism and the very concept of race are considered as issues of the colonial past and thus not regarded as something with an influence on structures and everyday practices in Denmark today. I have done so while in no way seeking to support race as a biological nor scientific truth, yet I have simultaneously embraced the recognition, as pointed out by Meer (2014), that in order to explore the continuous pull of race not only in a biological sense but also as a social construction, we must first recognise it as a category that has real impact on everyday lives (ibid.:117). This study has been a direct attempt at acknowledging such a "paradox of race" (ibid.) and thus give value to the experience of and the impact of the processes of racialisation on the racialised.

One key finding of this study has been that the experience of racialisation through a racialised white gaze, is one that not only makes the black body an object, but something that in itself makes brown and/or black people *become* brown and/or black — both in the intelligibility of such racialised minorities to the white majority, and in the self-perceptions and gaze of the racialised minorities themselves. To feel brown in Denmark is thus both to feel visible to white eyes, and in turn to gaze upon oneself through those eyes. This impact is particularly salient in a society such as the Danish, where whiteness is regarded the norm, the unmarked, and the invisible, and where to be brown is thus to be a marked body with the inability to pass. In case of my informants, we saw how this was felt as kind of *minority-stress,* described as constantly having to think of how to act, how to appear, and thus to constantly having to oversee oneself through white

eyes. In such a way, the experience of being a body out of place and thus not being able to pass comfortably in the white gaze, is one that makes race feel very "real" to those who experience it.

Another key finding has to do not with the white gaze as a notion of hypervisibility, as seen above, but with the white gaze as a notion of invisibility. Here we saw that the price of such an invisibility of either being seen as part of the brown mass, to be an *immigrant,* or to be seen only as *Danish*, as white, was that many of my informants felt like they had to reject a part of oneself and thus their sense of individuality — a price that for some was too high: To be rendered so invisible by the duality of feeling racialised in ones's own double-consciousness, in a double-life, might lead to a feeling of being made into nothing. Or in other words, that the struggle of having to conform to only one of the two warring ideals, of being either *Danish* or an *immigrant*, is a internal fight of the soul that might threaten to tear it asunder. But such a binary representation of identity, I argued, is one that should exist only as a narrative of the past. For as we saw in the case of my informants, such a binary identification of being either Danish, the host, or an immigrant, the guest, does not exist: they are a positioning, and where there is agency, actors, even racialised ones, can always choose to position themselves differently, and thus to be more than "docile bodies that step into discourse" (Hall 1997:12).

In order to combat the tendency that visible racialised minorities such as the one my informants belong to will continue to remain, as phrased by El-Tayeb (2011): "invisible in the unambiguous discursive divide of Europeans and migrants" (ibid.:32), we must as researchers thus refrain from only seeing these young people as nothing but, as phrased by Goldberg (2006), "a DuBoisian problem" (ibid.:347). As researchers we must find ways where a study of racism in a society such as the Danish is not made into a discussion of whether someone is racist or not, but instead look more closely at how processes and patterns of racialisation and different kind of *racisms* reside in structures which are experienced and played out through everyday encounters between a racialised minority youth and a white majority. And, as we have seen, this also means that we must turn the gaze towards ourselves as researchers, our own epistemologies and categorizations, and no less importantly the influence and positionality of our own bodies and roles in such encounters.

In sum, it becomes the undertaking for future research in migration and settlement in at least a Scandinavian context to find ways in which we as researchers can begin to truly question the belief that patterns and narratives of racism are only inherent to colonial pasts and thus something we have left behind, by making the conversation about us all. In other words, we need studies that

seek to challenge the prevalent norms of the majority, including images of the past constructed by colonial ties and the position of whiteness as the ethnic neutral norm (Petersen & Schramm 2016:193). Rather than to insist on and perpetuate discourses of ethnicity, culture and immigration as separate from the influence of racism as a social construction, it is time for us, both as researchers and as members of our respective societies, to develop a language, epistemology and concrete practices to recognize structures of racism, and perhaps more importantly to first and foremost acknowledge the innately embodied experienced of feeling both hypervisible and invisible as a racialised body and subject in a racialised white gaze.

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