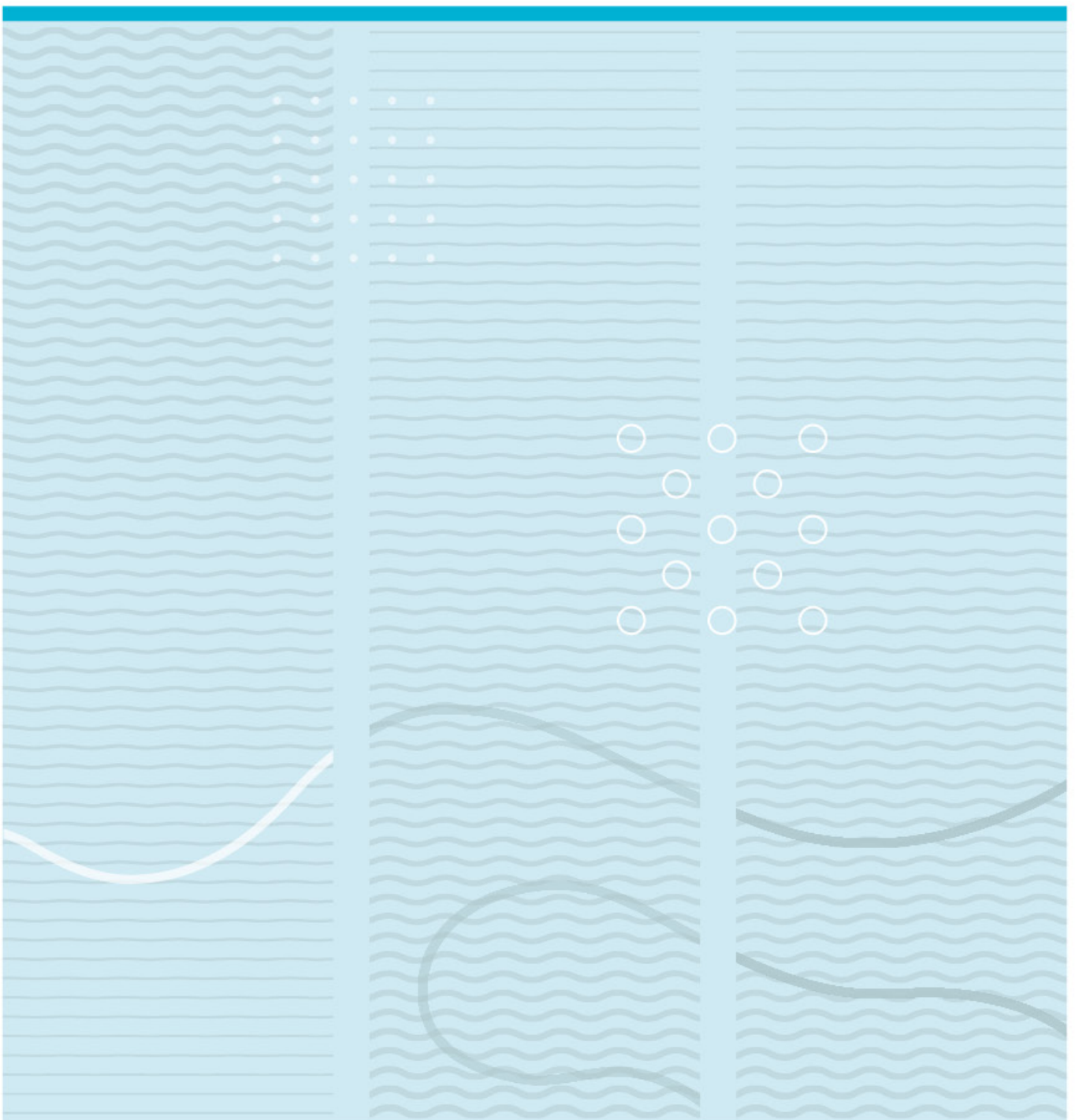


Mallika Aryal

## Talk to us, not for us

The perspective of Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background on inclusion and representation of their community in the Norwegian mainstream media



University of South-Eastern Norway  
Faculty of Law and Social Sciences  
PO Box 235  
NO-3603 Kongsberg, Norway

<http://www.usn.no>

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This thesis is worth 45 study points

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## Summary

In the last century the world has seen more movement of people than any other time in human history. This has brought about a wave where societies, especially in Western Europe are becoming more and more multicultural. Despite scepticism, multiculturalism has endured and become a requirement for well-functioning democracies that protect the rights of their citizens. Free and inclusive media are important tenets of a healthy multicultural society. In this thesis, I examine the role of the Norwegian mainstream media to explore whether it is sensitive to and is representative of a minority section of the Norwegian society—Norwegian Muslims with immigrant background. From the perspectives of the members of the community, I document the types of portrayals and stories that are present in the media today to answer whether or not they are representative of and sensitive to the Norwegian Muslim community. This paper describes the challenges, victories and weakness of the Norwegian mainstream media in their representation and in the inclusion of Muslim voices. I explore the reasons behind the types of representations that are present today, and discuss whether those portrayal of Norwegian Muslims with immigrant background rightly justifies the path Norway is taking towards multiculturalism.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, media, representation, inclusion, identity, stereotype, prejudice, racism, unequal power relations, hegemony, tolerance, dialogue

**For Buwaji:**

*I am trying to remember you  
and  
let you go at  
the same time.*

--the mourn  
by Nayyirah Waheed  
Nejma, 2014

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# Talk to us, not for us

The perspective of Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background on inclusion and representation of their community in the Norwegian mainstream media

# Table of Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.1. Thesis Statement</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1.2. Research Questions</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>1.3. Thesis Layout</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>2. Literature Review</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>2.1. Media the Powerful</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.2. Media and the Unequal Power Relations</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>2.3. Defining Multiculturalism</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>2.4. Multiculturalism's Backlash</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>2.5. Dialogue and Identity</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>2.6. Summary</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>3. Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>3.1. Stuart Hall</b>	<b>35</b>
3.1.1. Language and Meaning	35
3.1.2. Meaning, News and Audience	35
3.1.3. Culture and Power Relations	36
3.1.4. Representation and Othering	38
3.1.5. Othering and Racism	39
3.1.6. Resisting Stereotypes	40
<b>3.2. Tariq Modood</b>	<b>40</b>
3.2.1. Multiculturalism in Context	40
3.2.2. The Muslim Question	41
3.2.3. Islamophobia v. Racism	42
3.2.4. Narrow Racism and the Media	43
3.2.5. Multiculturalism and Dialogue	43
<b>4. Methodology</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>4.1. Positionality</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>4.2. Qualitative Method</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>4.3. Research Design</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4.4. Designing Case Studies</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>4.5. Research Sampling and Methods</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>4.6. Interviews</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>4.7. Interview Participants</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>4.8. Qualitative Data Analysis</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>4.9. Interview Data Analysis</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>4.10. Challenges in Realizing this Research</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>4.11. Ethical Considerations</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>5. Interviews and Findings</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>5.1. Norwegian Public Media</b>	<b>58</b>



<b>5.2. Stories that Connect</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>5.3. The Power of Stories</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>5.4. Fear of the Changing World</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>5.5. Telling Our Own Stories</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>5.6. Talk To Us, Not For Us</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>5.7. The (Un)apologetic Immigrant</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>5.8. Short Summary of the Findings</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>6. Analysis</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>7. Conclusion</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>81</b>
<b>Annexes</b>	<b>88</b>

## 1. Introduction

In the last few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many democratic states have moved away from the policies that attempted to marginalize and/or assimilate national minorities, the indigenous and those with immigrant backgrounds. In these countries multiculturalism policies are actively encouraged and this is reflected in school curriculums, the discourse around language and land rights, and policies for immigrant groups. These multicultural policies have gone “beyond the protection of the basic civil and political rights guaranteed to all individuals in a liberal-democratic state, to also extend some level of public recognition and support for ethnocultural minorities to maintain and express their distinct identities and practices” (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006, p.1). Multiculturalism can be understood as the political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration to the West (Modood, 2013). It is about seeking a society where people from different cultural, ethnic, racial and religious belonging can cohabit together and build a common life that recognizes rather than abolishes their differences (Hall, 2001, p.2).

Multiculturalism, as an idea has challenged global homogeneity and that, in turn, has also made it susceptible to criticisms. It has been criticized for being inconsistent with the idea of welfare state and for promoting ‘group rights’ over ‘individual rights’. Additionally, multiculturalism has been condemned for not being able to successfully incorporate the immigrant population socially and economically, which has led to the isolation of these groups. Since 9/11 critics of multiculturalism have asserted that multiculturalism policies have created space for radical religious and political movements to exist and thrive. World leaders, such as the likes of Angela Merkel in 2010 have openly declared that “multiculturalism has utterly failed” (Weaver, 2010). A year later, in the same vein, the former British Prime Minister David Cameron declared also that “multiculturalism is dead” (Cameron, 2011).

In response to those and other growing criticisms, two Canadian scholars, Keith Banting and Will Kymlicka at the Queen’s University, Canada developed a system of multiculturalism measurement. The multiculturalism policy index (MPI) tracks the evolution of multicultural policies across 21 western democracies. Banting, Kymlicka and other scholars have used this index to test the negative/positive effects of multiculturalism on welfare states, on social cohesion, civic participation etc.

This 2011 index evaluates multiculturalism policies related to immigrant minorities and it uses eight indicators. The indicators range from constitutional, legislative,

parliamentary affirmation of multicultural policies, to adoption of multiculturalism in school curriculum, inclusion of ethnic representation in media, exceptions to dress code, allowance of dual citizenship, funding for ethnic groups, funding for mother-tongue and bilingual education, and affirmative actions for disadvantaged immigrant groups (Tolley, 2011, p.4-6).

A closer look at the MPI shows that while the Netherlands, Denmark and Italy have seen weaker multiculturalism policies, the United Kingdom (U.K.), France and Switzerland have seen modest increase, while Sweden, Norway and Portugal have seen very strong multiculturalism policies. This change is significant in Norway as the country's score jumped from zero in 1980, zero in 2000, to 3.5 in 2010 (Tolley, 2011, p.3).

In Norway, the MPI's evidence is supported further by multiculturalism experts who have been studying the rise and backlash against multiculturalism. In their 2016 piece, Norwegian scholars Lena Lybæk and Christian Stokke take two empirical evidence—the Norwegian cartoon affair of 2006 and the *Innocence of Muslim* film affair of 2012—and argue that the Norwegian government has become more accommodating to multiculturalism (Lybæk & Stokke, 2016). Similarly, the report from the Norwegian Directorate for Integration and Diversity (IMDI, 2009) points to significant developments that indicate that Norway is becoming a more multicultural society. IMDI says that more people living in cities have contact with immigrants and are positive towards immigrants and towards multiculturalism (IMDI, 2009, p.11). It also argues that the immigrant population have a relatively high rate of participation in the labor market, especially for women and that Norwegian born children of immigrant parents have a high participation rate in higher education (IMDI, 2009, p.3). Then, in 2016, King Harald of Norway gave an impassioned speech stressing acceptance and tolerance which put multiculturalism at the center. “Norwegians come from the north of the country, from the middle, from the south and all the other regions. Norwegians are also immigrants from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Poland, Sweden, Somalia and Syria,” (Harald, 2016).

Media is one of the indicators used by the MPI. In Norway, this indicator shows that that there is no evidence of the inclusion of ethnic representation/sensitivity in media. Media's role in a multicultural society cannot be overstated. Media gives meaning to events and happenings, it helps its consumers shape the view of the world: what is good and bad. It gives us our conception of identity, race, ethnicity, and nationality. Most importantly, media demonstrates and establishes who is powerless and who is powerful. Media “...dramatize and legitimate the power of forces that be and show the powerless that they must stay in their

places or be oppressed” (Kellner, 2015, p.7). Therefore, if Norway is on its way to becoming a multicultural society, the role of an inclusive media that represents and is sensitive to the minorities is all the more important.

The minority population that I am interested in looking at in this debate over multiculturalism are the members of the Muslim community in Norway. I am narrowing it down further and studying the members of the Norwegian Muslim community who have immigrant backgrounds. Statistics Norway (SSN), the government’s statistics bureau, defines immigrants as “persons born abroad to two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents”. While majority of the respondents I interviewed are first generation Norwegians who were born abroad and moved to Norway as children or young adults; some of my respondents are second generation born in Norway to parents born abroad; while still others are third generation Norwegian whose parents were born in Norway but grandparents moved to the country. All the respondents have Norwegian citizenship and consider themselves Norwegians with immigrant background.

According to SSN that last updated its data on March 2018, there are over 900 thousand immigrants and Norwegians-born to immigrant parents (SSN, 2018a). A 2016 report from SSN estimates the number of Muslims in Norway to be close to 200 thousand which is four percent of the total population (SSN, 2017). I believe this makes the Norwegian Muslims a minority population in Norway. Additionally, according to the American Pew Research Center’s 2017 report, between 2010-2016, Norway received 40,000 immigrants, 73 percent of which were Muslim (Pew, 2017, p.20). The research also projects Muslim counts over time under different migration scenarios for the year 2050. Under zero migration scenario Pew projects there to be 390 thousand Muslims in Norway in 2050 and under high migration scenario, the study projects over 1.3 million Muslims in Norway in 2050 (Pew, 2017, p. 29). This goes to show that the Muslim population will continue to surge in the future and Pew Research Center’s argument is that this boom will take place even with no future migration.

Historically, Norway, with the present population of 5.2 million (SSN, 2018b) has been a homogenous country, and ethnic minorities have been few in number, with the exception of the indigenous people of northern Scandinavia, the Sami. The Sami speak a Finno-Ugric language and have been associated with reindeer herding. A 2011 figure from SSN shows that there are about 40,000 Sami in Norway (SSN, 2011). A 2015 report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of the Indigenous Peoples puts the total

population of the Sami to be between 70,00 and 100,000, with about 40,000 to 60,000 in Norway (Human Rights Council, 2016). The Sami maintain their linguistic and cultural rights and have had their own parliament since 1989. Norway's population also consists of national minorities such as Kvens/Norwegian Finns (people of Finnish descent in Northern Norway), Jews, Forest Finns, Roma and Romani people/Tater (Eriksen, 2013). Norwegian government defines national minorities as "groups with long-standing attachment to the country" (Ministry of Local Government and Modernization, 2018).

In Norway up until the 1960s the flow of people was only in the outward direction—from Norway to abroad and mostly to North America. In the 1960s new people started moving in to Norway. The first to enter in this wave were the people from countries such as Pakistan, Turkey and Morocco, for jobs in industries or service sector. Then, in 1975, with the exception of people from the Nordic countries, the Norwegian government imposed a general ban, called the 'immigration stop'. "This policy was intended to curtail unwanted, unskilled immigration from countries in the South (outside the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) while securing skilled workers" (Brochmann & Djuve, 2013, p.220). This meant that there were now two ways to enter Norway: through family reunification, or as refugees and asylum seekers—both justified through international conventions and the humanitarian platform on which Norway's social democracy was based. However, new changes were introduced again in 2004 with the European Union enlargement. While Norway is not a part of the EU, it is party to the Schengen free movement agreements and many of its policies are in line with the EU policies, especially on labor migration.

When I started this research, I had already lived in Norway for more than a year. I am not a Muslim myself but I have been interested in the issue of representation of minorities in the media, especially the Muslim minority. Therefore, when I started this research, I went in with the assumption that the Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background will not feel that they are accurately and sensitively portrayed/represented in the Norwegian mainstream media.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to illuminate the issue of representation of Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background in the mainstream Norwegian media. What interests me is how the community feels that they are being represented in Norway. I explore the reasons for the kinds of portrayal of this community that is in the Norwegian media today, ask how much of the stories that the Norwegian media tells of this community adequately represents them and what it means for a society when certain groups are not properly

represented. Ultimately, I try to argue why a representative and sensitive media is important for a multicultural society.

## **1.1. Thesis Statement**

The aim of this study is to understand how the members of the Norwegian Muslim community with immigrant background experience the Norwegian mainstream media. Here, I want to take the opportunity to explain what I mean by mainstream media. During the course of my field research I focused on private and public Norwegian media in the form of radio, television and print (both online and paper). At the start of the interviews, I also asked the respondents to clarify what they understood as mainstream media and to list their daily news sources (elaborated later in the thesis). This criteria does not include social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and so on. The respondents of this research believed that the information available on social media is generated by members of the public in the forms of blogs and vlogs (or video blogs). Unlike the news content produced by the mainstream media these blogs and vlogs are not legitimate because, as readers, they cannot hold the journalists accountable for their work, trace the sources used, or track the experts and the organizations quoted. That said, a lot of the news content on social media is generated by the mainstream media. Those news stories produced by the mainstream media, but shared through social media have been included in this research.

The MPI shows that Norway is moving towards multiculturalism. I argue that if Norway is truly becoming multicultural, it is important to have an inclusive media that represents the interests of all, especially the minorities. This thesis is an exploration of how the members of the Norwegian Muslim community with immigrant background want themselves represented in the media. My aim is to examine whether the community is being misrepresented, and theoretically, what that kind of misrepresentation means for the community and for the society. I believe that the issue of being able to tell their own stories is an important one when trying to explore stories that correctly represent. There are power relations at play—exclusion from telling their stories due to economic or social relations—including, not having enough storytellers and/or not being able to organize themselves to take control of the community's narrative. Finally, from the perspective of the members of the Norwegian Muslim community, I want to understand what could bring about a better representation of the community in the media and how the community thinks it should be done.

Keeping in mind the position of Norway in the MPI, the criteria of ethnic representation/sensitivity in the public media, and the points of view of members of the Norwegian Muslim community who have immigrant backgrounds, my research will explore the following.

## **1.2. Research Questions**

The aim of this research is to explore the following questions:

- 1) Do the members of the Norwegian Muslim community with immigrant background perceive that the Norwegian mainstream media is representative towards/sensitive to their stories?
- 2) If the members of the community consider that the mainstream media misrepresents them/or does not accurately and sensitively portray them, a) what, according to them, are the reasons. Additionally, b) what types of portrayals would be sensitive to/and representative of them that would also describe multiculturalism in Norway?

## **1.3. Thesis Layout**

I start my first chapter by introducing my thesis and the issue that I will research. In the next section of the first chapter, I continue with the thesis statement and the research. I lay out the content of my thesis in the next section of the first chapter. In the second chapter, I introduce the relevant literature that I read/researched for this thesis. This is where I also explain the gaps that I found in the literature while I was studying the subjects and areas where future research can focus on.

In the third chapter I introduce the theoretical framework for the thesis. Here, I present British media theorist Stuart Hall and his ideas relating to the importance of meaning and the crucial role that media plays in interrogating the meanings. Using Hall's ideas I introduce the issue of 'difference' and why it is important to study them when we are talking about representation and identity. I also discuss power and hegemony and how it is linked to media and bring in the Dutch theorist Teun van Dijk to explain the power-relations present in the media today, including the leverage news and newsmakers have when it comes to selecting sources and choosing angles in their stories. In this chapter I also explain multiculturalism from the point of view of British multiculturalist Tariq Modood. Here, I focus on the idea of multiculturalism that is the result of immigration. Modood's research playground is Europe, and his main focus is the U.K. I bring him in as a theorist also because

of his stance that multiculturalism in Europe is about Islam and the Muslim community. He argues that the backlash against multiculturalism, the misrepresentation of multiculturalism in the society, policy and media is because multiculturalism has to accommodate Muslims and that is not as accepted in Europe. I link this particular idea to the media in Norway to see how big a role topics relating to the Muslim community plays in the press and what it means for multiculturalism in Norway .

The fourth chapter is the methodology chapter, where I discuss my positionality, why I chose qualitative method, the reasons for choosing case study method and how grounded theory, and inductive methodology under the qualitative method helps me answer my research questions, justifies my sampling method and assists me to better analyze my method and data analysis. In this chapter, I also introduce the interview subjects that I studied during the course of this research.

In the fifth chapter, I present my findings from my interviews. This is where I give summary of the discussions and use direct quotations from the interviewees. Following that, in the sixth chapter, I analyze the findings from my interviews and link them to the theories and the literature on media, representation and multiculturalism. Finally, in the seventh chapter, I give my conclusions on the research questions and provide recommendations for future research.



## 2. Literature Review

We live in a media-heavy world and there is no denying the power that the media has in our everyday lives. Media serves as a watchdog, changes opinions, impacts human rights, creates understandings, protects democracy, influences policies and even effects our behavior. In this section, I present the literature around the topic that I am exploring in this thesis. While focusing on the influence of the media, I also looked at the ways in which various communities are portrayed in the media. In my readings I found that the portrayals of minorities, immigrants and refugees in the media are often not positive.

Authors that I studied argue that there is deep-rooted racism in the portrayal of immigrants in the news and one of the reason for that is because the newsrooms across Europe are not diverse. This lack of diversity is due to unequal power relations that still exists in European society where power elites continue to decide what is newsworthy, how immigrants and minorities are to be portrayed and where to include minority voices. This has a profound impact not only on the minorities and how they view themselves, but also in how the society treats them. A negative treatment goes against the basic human principle of treating each other with respect, and against the various international commitments countries have signed. Negative portrayals of minorities is especially problematic in countries that are on their way to becoming more multicultural.

I study the idea of multiculturalism from the point of view of three prominent multicultural theorists Will Kymlicka, Tariq Modood and Bhikhu Parekh to understand how the idea is defined and explained in the discourse. My understanding of the world and readings about multiculturalism leads me to conclude that the world has become a smaller place, and as the recent world events (refugee crisis, economic and labor migrations) shows Europe cannot avoid multiculturalism. Critics argue that multiculturalism is a narrow and stringent concept. They assert that certain communities, in particular, the Muslim community cannot fit in Europe because their beliefs are in conflict with the freedoms of Europe. Multiculturalism, to the critics, creates broken communities, alienates minorities and festers anger. The critics also note that the idea of multiculturalism is inadequate because it doesn't embrace the idea of dialogue and communication. Other scholars maintain that dialogue has always been an integral part of multiculturalism, and those who claim that the element of dialogue is missing from multiculturalism have grossly misunderstood the concept. Norwegian scholars that I study also argue that genuine dialogue is taking place in Norway where groups are listening to each other while also being open to changing themselves.

## 2.1. Media the Powerful

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century world we live in today, we cannot shut out the influence of media in our everyday lives. As Maxwell McCombs, one of the founding fathers of empirical research on agenda-setting functions of the press suggests—the pictures of the world outside is formed in people's mind with the aid of the media. These pictures of reality that media creates sets agenda for countries, sways public opinions and even has an effect on personal behavior including which college we apply to, and how we vote (McCombs, 2003). In fact, it is argued that while the politicians may have the first word on ethnic issues, their discourse and opinions become influential only through media (van Dijk, 2012, p.17). To understand the weight of media in human behavior, in a longitudinal study done in the Netherlands it was found that readers exposed to only one newspaper, *Telegraaf*, had more negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities than those exposed to more than one (Vergeer, Lubbers & Scheepers, 2000).

Sociologist Anna Triandafyllidou asserts that the European societies are fast becoming ethnically diverse and multicultural due to immigration. She says studies have shown that a fair and balanced representation of migrants in the media can support integration, and thus help the state (Triandafyllidou, 2013). Media is intrinsically linked to democracy and this relationship is seen as a 'social contract' which provides citizens with information they need to be self-governing, the governments with information it needs to make decisions that are for the common good, and as a watchdog keeping an eye against excesses of power and politics (Trappel & Nieminen, 2018, p.188). The role of the press and media in the protection of human rights, as included in Article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human rights cannot be taken lightly (United Nations, 1948). Similarly, the responsibility of media in disseminating values of tolerance, being the vehicle for dialogue keeping watch against prejudice and hate speech, have also been stressed (UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1995).

McCombs emphasizes and is very honest about the fact that that news organizations have premeditated goals and newsrooms work towards achieving those goals through the news and opinions they publish or broadcast. McCombs focuses both on television as well as print and argues that the power of the media doesn't just come with the fact that it provides factual information, but also because it has the ability to make the public decide how much importance to attach to the topic on the basis of where the news is placed. While McCombs' research is based on media's role in elections and how it influences national, local and

legislative agenda-setting, his idea of ‘priming’ is noteworthy. McCombs defines ‘priming’ as selective attention of the public (as everyone cannot pay attention to everything in the news) and the tone of the media. In addition to the agenda-setting and priming, the issue of framing is also important while talking about the media. Framing is the characterization of a topic, event or actor by the media which influences the understanding of the audience. Simply put, the media tells the audience not only about *what* to think but also *how* to think (Maier & Rittberger, 2008).

The nature of the message communicated by the media has a long-term obvious effects on societal attitudes and can have a bearing on behavior. There’s a role of media in promoting fear, which scholars argue is more visible and routine in public discourse today than it was in the past. That message of fear is accompanied by who and what is to be feared (Altheide, 1997). Scholar suggest that the media focuses on fear, and then it obsesses about how there is no solution for this fear. Media experts call this a strategy, and an effective tool used to play on the human emotions of the viewers and readers to maintain or grow subscriptions (Conway, Grabe & Grievess, 2007). This kind of negative portrayal is especially done about minorities, migrants and immigration (Kosho, 2016, p.86). Kosho’s study reveals that mainstream media describes minorities in the same way over and over again and uses same frames. Migrants are defined in a negative way (as intruders, queue jumpers and frauds) or as victims terrible conditions such as wars and natural disasters (Figenschou, Beyer & Thorbjørnsrud, 2015, p.66).

In a 2014 research it was revealed that the language used while covering the migrants (in the European press) mirrored the narrative of the migrant as ‘the other’. Similarly, words such as ‘illegal’ was most commonly used to describe ‘migrants’ and when it came to security concerns the word ‘terrorist’ was also often used (Danilova, 2014). In the debate on immigration, immigrant minorities are portrayed as contributing to the overcrowding, and the eroding of the economy. They are most commonly held responsible for the lack of job opportunities, violence, cultural erosion and terrorism (Yakushko, 2009, p.37). Looking at the research done on the portrayal of minorities in the United States (U.S.) also gives a similar picture. An empirical study done in the year 2000 examining the prevalence of negative portrayal of minorities in television showed the use of excessive force by police officers on television when it came to minority perpetrators than their Caucasian counterparts. This normalizes the narrative in the media that excessive force was acceptable when used against a certain ‘type’ of perpetrator (Mastro & Robinson, 2000).

While I have hitherto focused on the power of media and what happens when media focuses on the negative portrayals of specific groups, it would have also been helpful to study about what happens when media highlights positive stories about immigrants, minorities and immigration—stories of hope, of victory in the face of extreme hardships, neighbors helping newcomers, stories of integration and success. I believe this is a gap in this particular field of study and more research should be done on this issue. To understand the impact of positive news, for example, I found and analyzed one research conducted in Switzerland by Christian Schemer. It is a country-specific and a very focused research that investigates media's effects on stereotypic attitudes towards immigrants in a political campaign that dealt with the naturalization of immigrants. This specificity can be considered the limitation of the study, but the results are illuminating. Schemer concludes that repeated exposure to negative news images of immigrants increased prejudice toward the social group, while heavy exposure to positive news portrayals of immigrants was assumed to decrease the stereotypic attitude and the result supported this assumption. Schemer notes, "The more positive news about immigrants people received, the more negative outgroup attitudes decreased" (Schemer, 2012, p.748).

Meanwhile, there are certain scholars who do not paint such a grim picture of the portrayal of minorities in the media. When it comes to multiculturalism in media, writer Sanjay Sharma argues the study of media has changed where today there are more 'non-white' literature from African American and South Asian writings. He introduces the concept of the politics of *alterity* as, "the possibility that the differences of those marked as *other* can be ethically countered, without other being dominated or reduced to stereotypical representations" (Sharma, 2010, p.114). The weakness of his arguments, however, lies in the fact that he doesn't quite explain this change, or how this idea of *alterity* is being used by journalists in their stories, in the decision-making process that goes on within the newsrooms or even in classrooms of journalism schools where a new generation of reporters, journalists and broadcasters are being groomed.

In the chapter about media in Norway, author Gunn Bjørnsen argues that there's a new kind of "Norwegianness" in the understanding of multiculturalism in Norway and asserts that having an ethnic minority/multiculturalism background is not in opposition to being a Norwegian (Bjørnsen, 2011, p.56). However, researcher Daniel Meier paints a very different picture of the media landscape when he says Muslims are demonized in European media's portrayal of them in the news and popular culture. He argues that Muslim men are either seen

as terrorists while Muslim women are seen as being submissive, oppressed victims. He asserts that news stories do not do justice to the nuances of Muslim culture and life and that news media is not investing on feature stories that portray stories of normal, everyday Muslims (Meier, 2013). Although a bit dated and in urgent need for an update, Meier's point of view is also supported by the 2009 report by the Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity that argues that discussions around immigration is often about Islam, the religion, and the focus is often negative (IMDI, 2009, p.9).

## **2.2. Media and the Unequal Power Relations**

The negative portrayals of minorities, refugees and immigrants in the media is not helpful because it undermines the various international conventions that promote tolerance and cohesion, which European countries are a part of (Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013). They also do not prevent social discord. Furthermore, the images of minority actors being subjected to more force and scrutiny can influence viewers' perception of the criminal justice system, race and power relations. In the example of minority actors being subjected to more physical violence in American television, Mastro and Robinson argue, "Given that police authority is often viewed as legitimate authority, this may translate into a belief that the behaviors of minority groups are highly problematic and must be controlled by whatever means necessary" (Mastro & Robinson, 2000, p.394).

Triandafyllidou reiterates strongly that it has also been consistently shown that the media fails to rightly represent the diversity of the migrants. She adds that there are generally negative representations of immigrants in the media, which are reflected not only by the many negative stories that occur, but also by the infrequency of the stories where the subject matter is immigrants' rights. Triandafyllidou stresses that even when there is a positive piece of news, that is seen as an 'exception to the rule'. She concludes that the unequal power relations and the already existing stereotypes have deep roots in the European society. She further adds, "...the features of newsworthiness and the technical characteristics of the news-making routine, on the one hand, intertwined with the unequal power positions of migrants and the native majority (and its elites in particular) and ethnic prejudice or stereotypes, on the other hand, create a self-fulfilling prophecy: migrants create problems and hit the news only by their negative impact or actions in the host society" (Triandafyllidou, 2013, p.243).

It is further argued that what is newsworthy is often understood to be clear. Therefore, news is never 'grey' meaning that the news is either good or bad, black or white and that it usually involves elites (political or otherwise) (Gemi, Ulasiuk & Triandafyllidou, 2013,

p.268). They also argue that what constitutes as migration news is often in news format (meaning they are not given much prominence in the overall space), while editorial articles and investigative reports about migrants are almost non-existent. This particular research is valuable because it focuses on the fact that migrants have less access to media either because there are limited number of journalists in the mainstream media, or due to internal problems in the migrant community itself. What would perhaps also enrich this research is the exploration of the system of selection of sources and source texts and how power relations influence such selection processes. As journalists cannot possibly use all the source texts available, they apply a system of selection but the source texts of those who are considered to be less important, less powerful, or less interesting tend to be ignored (van Dijk, 2012, p.20).

It is important to note here that the process of news gathering, selecting of sources, discarding, summarizing, can show how journalists use their power to choose their angles. This process can reveal their prejudices, the stereotype that is engrained in them and their bias towards a certain group or community. This idea is further supported by the media theorist van Dijk—in Europe most newsrooms have majority white journalists and minority journalists are discriminated against, which could explain why the sources that they select are less multicultural and more white. Van Dijk argues that media has the habit of giving preference to ‘pre-formulations’ of concepts and categories articulated by powerful social and political elites. “...white journalists primarily write as White ingroup members, and hence represent ethnic minority groups in terms of ‘them’ and not a part of ‘us’. Since ethnic minorities are also predominantly working class, are less organized in powerful institutions, and have little political influence, the two dimensions of race and class combined produce social cognitions and therefore social practices among journalists that tend to ignore these out groups or to represent them in a consistently negative framework” (van Dijk, 1989, p.204).

Here, I want to link the idea of unequal power relations to cultural theorist Stuart Hall’s idea of stereotyping. Hall argues that stereotyping, in a sense, is reducing, simplifying or exaggerating something by fixed, simple essentials or characteristics (Hall, 1997a, p.245). According to Hall, stereotyping creates imaginary boundaries so that it can close and exclude anything that doesn’t fit. “It sets up a symbolic frontier between the ‘normal’ and the ‘deviant’, the ‘normal’ and the ‘pathological’, the ‘acceptable’ and the ‘unacceptable’, what ‘belong’ and what does not or is ‘Other’, between ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. The argument, thus, becomes between Us and Them” (Hall, 1997a, p.258). Hall further adds that stereotyping occurs when inequalities exist in power. In Hall’s own work, he explains this in

the context of how black people are represented in the West. However, Hall also finds support in the Arab American post-colonial theorist Edward Said. Said argues that the idea of ‘Orientalism’ came from the power that colonialists had to represent the Near East as the ‘Orient’ and ‘Orientals’ as race that is to be ruled. “Orientals or Arabs are thereafter shown to be gullible, “devoid of energy and initiative”, much given to “fulsome flattery”, intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk either on road or a pavement (their disordered minds fail to understand what the clever European grasps immediately, that road pavements are made for walking); Orientals are inveterate liars, they are “lethargic and suspicious,” and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race” (Said, 1978, p.38-39).

Teun van Dijk who argues that while access to media by the minorities is one of the most critical conditions in the public participation, their obvious absence is one of the indications of the symbolic domination by the white elites (van Dijk, 1996). Written in 1996, some of his arguments such as, “In Europe there are virtually no minority journalists, least of all controlling editorial positions” (van Dijk, 1996, p.92), may not be wholly true in 2018, but the thesis of his argument resonates with Said and Hall. Van Dijk delves into the problems news faces when it doesn’t have minority in the newsroom. He notes that homogenous newsrooms mean that there are serious consequences to the content—in style, source and the general discourse. He also argues that due to the limited economic and social power, the minorities lack access to various forms of organized media such as press conferences, news releases etc. Van Dijk concludes that in a world where white journalists will often quote dominant institutions in their stories, the voices of the minorities and the underdogs often gets ignored.

Additionally, stories about immigration are seen in negative light and defined as invasion and not as contributing to the economy or the society as a whole. Similarly, stories about crime and violence is typecast as ‘ethnic’ news. Lack of access by minorities also means that the stories that are most important to them are not covered. Van Dijk says that minorities are rarely quoted, and if they are, they are mostly when they share the majority perspective in that particular story or on ‘soft’ issues such as culture and art.

During the course of my research I often asked myself—what are the consequences of not being able to tell your own stories in your own words? The unequal power relations prominent in the news creates a divide of ‘us’ v. ‘them’ where the ‘they’ are the minority whose motivation is to disrupt the ‘peace’ that ‘we’ (the majority) desire. This is often the

dominant discourse in the media. This type of thinking and discourse sounds rigid and challenging. Van Dijk explains it well, “Because of a lack of alternative information sources about ethnic relations, the effects of such daily reporting of the models and attitudes of many white readers are predictable: widespread prejudice and xenophobia” (van Dijk, 1996, p. 94).

### **2.3. Defining Multiculturalism**

A diverse media is an important tenant of a multicultural society. Here, I explain the definition of multiculturalism from the perspective of three different and prominent multiculturalism scholars. First, Canadian multiculturalist Will Kymlicka argues that modern society is being confronted with minorities demanding their rights, and the acceptance from the wider society of cultural differences. He focuses on two patterns of cultural diversity to address this demand—multinational states and polyethnic states.

According to Kymlicka the kind of cultural diversity that arises from incorporating national minorities is called a multinational state. Kymlicka adds that the members of the multinational states with national minorities, such as the Native Hawaiians in the U.S., the Quebecois and the aboriginal communities in Canada, have distinct national group, language, culture, territory etc. and wish to maintain themselves as societies alongside the majority culture and demand various forms of autonomy or self-government (Kymlicka, 1995, p.10). In a polyethnic state members experience immigration and they are considered ethnic groups, not national groups because they have culture and language, but no defined territory or claim of ownership. He argues, “while they often seek greater recognition of their ethnic identity, their aim is not to become a separate and self-governing nation alongside the larger society...” (Kymlicka, 1995, p.11). Kymlicka makes a strong case for national minorities, and gives the lowest moral weight to the members of polyethnic states.

I believe Kymlicka’s classification of cultural diversity and multiculturalism is narrow and rigid. Kymlicka argues that the members of polyethnic states left their own countries and cultures voluntarily. In his theories, he is clear in explaining that those who left had a choice. However, in making this kind of claim, he is ignoring a critical issue of how many of the members of the polyethnic groups have had no choice other than to move because they are fleeing wars, terrorism, dictatorship, torture and natural disasters. While national minorities are supposed to push for self-governance, the members of polyethnic groups are supposed to integrate. As Iris Marion Young argues in her critique of him, Kymlicka’s classification doesn’t fit the subjects who were transported during colonialism, or slaves who were removed from their country, language, family, culture and made forceful



subjects of hard labor. Neither do refugees and guests workers fit into this category. In this shrinking world where wars and disasters are creating more refugees and economic migrants, Kymlicka has no place for them in his idea of a nation. Young rightly adds, “I think these questions and anomalies show that Kymlicka’s desire to develop two mutually exclusive categories of cultural minorities is misguided, and that it is far better to think of cultural minorities in a continuum, or perhaps in a set of continua” (Young, 1997, p.50-51).

Meanwhile, British thinker Bhikhu Parekh explains multiculturalism as a way of viewing human life. Parekh says that there are three insights to multiculturalism. He argues that human beings are culturally imbedded and grow up in a world that is culturally structured (Parekh, 2006, p.143). Secondly, he asserts that different cultures have different ways of viewing what good life actually means. He argues, culturally self-contained life is not possible—cultures grow out of conscious and unconscious interactions (Parekh, 1999). Communities should be able to seek the wider society and not feel alienated. Therefore, he puts a very big importance on intercultural dialogue (Parekh, 2006, p.351), and argues that intercultural dialogue must be the founding principle of multicultural societies.

Parekh’s support for intercultural dialogue is similar to the one expressed by the Canadian multiculturalist Charles Taylor who argues that people form their identity via dialogue with others. Taylor asserts, “the making and sustaining of our identity, in the absence of a heroic effort to break out of ordinary existence, remains dialogical throughout our lives” (Taylor, 1994, p.34). As early multiculturalists, Parekh and Taylor are important voices in the multiculturalism debate, especially in the backlash against multiculturalism, where critics have argued that the reason multiculturalism has failed is because the element of intercultural dialogue has been missing.

British theorist Tariq Modood differentiates the birth of multiculturalism in the U.S. and Europe. He argues that Europe, and especially the U.K., became a multicultural society not by the virtue of social movements, but by immigration. Modood notes that one of the biggest differences between the U.S. and Western Europe is that the majority of these non-whites in Europe are Muslims, and they have become central in the discourse on multiculturalism. Therefore, in Europe multiculturalism is “the political accommodation by the state and/or a dominant group of all minority cultures defined first and foremost by reference to race, ethnicity or religion, and, additionally but more controversially, by reference to other group-defining characteristics such as nationality and aboriginality” (Meer & Modood, 2012, p.181). To Modood multiculturalism is about demography, economy,

migration, social and racial equality, it is the “...the political accommodation of minorities formed by immigration to western countries from outside the prosperous West” (Modood, 2013, p.5).

As a multicultural theorist, Modood injects religion into the debate by putting Islam in the center of multiculturalism. The centrality of Muslim communities in western Europe has also been supported by other scholars such as Jose Casanova, who asserts that in continental Europe, Islam and immigration has become almost synonymous. In most European countries, majority of the immigrants have been Muslims (barring the U.K., where there is more diversity of immigrants from the former colonies of the British Empire). Like Modood, Casanova also notes that as societies become more multicultural, there is also a wave of anti-Islam ideas spreading in Europe. One of the reason for the anti-Islam sentiments increasing across the continent is because of the role of Islam in public life. In Western Europe religion has been taken out of the public sphere and has gone into the private sphere. “Across Europe, since the 1960s, an increasing majority of the population has ceased participating in traditional religious practices, at least on a regular basis, while still maintaining relatively high levels of private individual religious belief” (Casanova, 2009, p.143). He argues that European societies today are torn between this dilemma of protecting religious freedoms and the right to practice one’s religion safely and the idea that Islam is un-European.

Casanova argues that there are number of reasons that Islam is considered un-European with reasons ranging from anti-immigration, xenophobia perpetuated by the nationalist right in certain countries, to the discourse surrounding Islam being ‘foreign’, unwelcome and unassimilable (Casanova, 2009, p.145). Casanova makes a very important connection when he says that the singling-out and restricting of Islam as conservative and undemocratic is similar to the discussions surrounding Catholicism in the past. He notes, “Today’s totalizing of discourse on Islam as an essentially anti-modern, fundamentalist, illiberal and undemocratic religion and culture echoes the ninetieth century discourse on Catholicism” (Casanova, 2001, p.1054).

The reason that I am using Modood’s brand of multiculturalism should be obvious by now. While he introduces the importance of Muslim communities in the multiculturalism debate, he is also a big proponent of bringing the society (in this instance, the British) together so there is one national identity that everyone is proud of. However, reading Modood, I couldn’t help thinking if he is unjustly putting the idea of multiculturalism further into a narrower and a tighter spot—while multiculturalism was defined by ethnicity earlier, is

he now advocating that it be defined by religion? In this 21<sup>st</sup> century world we live in, shouldn't our understanding of multiculturalism be more varied, more diverse more vibrant? I believe, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen would be a critic of Modood's idea of multiculturalism as he warns against linking and defining it just within culture, ethnicity, or religion. Multiculturalism, Sen argues, does not mean collection of communities, or federated religions. He asks if a person has to be defined by the culture or religion she was born into, or if she can be defined by her political convictions, or even her literary pursuits. Thus, this line from Sen's work rings true, "There would be serious problems with the moral and social claims of multiculturalism if it were taken to insist that a person's identity must be defined by his or her community or religion, overlooking all the other affiliations a person has (varying from language, class and social relations to political views and civil roles), and through giving automatic priority to inherited religion or tradition over reflection and choice" (Sen, 2006, p. 274-275).

A thorough reading of Modood left me conflicted. While I understand as well as sympathize with why he wants the discussion to include the Muslim communities—for more empathy towards the community and wants to correct the misunderstandings and re-write the stereotypes, I also believe Modood emphasizes too much on why Islam is demonized. What I miss the most in my readings of Modood is a more critical look at some of the dangers of including religion in a debate about multiculturalism. Whilst I understand that Modood is not a religious scholar, but his life's work does revolve around this issue. I believe, his arguments would've benefitted greatly, if he had also touched on the challenges within Islam and the metamorphosis Islam would have to go through in a truly multicultural world.

#### **2.4. Multiculturalism's Backlash**

Needless to say, the idea of multiculturalism has not been without its fair share of criticisms. American journalist turned author Christopher Caldwell's 2009 work is about what he calls 'Muslim immigration'. He thinks non-Europeans wanting to settle in the European countries for good creates the problem of multicultural and multiethnic societies (Caldwell, 2009, p.23). He argues that a culture that is profoundly different will find it harder to assimilate in Europe. He claims that, in practice, Islam is creating acute problems for European societies. "Islam in Europe is different. Since its arrival half a century ago, Islam has broken—or required adjustments to a rearguard defenses of—a good many of the European customs, received ideas, and state structures with which it has come in contact" (Caldwell, 2009, p.26). Caldwell argues that immigration, and by association, multiculturalism, extracts steep costs

for Europeans when it comes to liberties and freedoms that Europeans have held closely as rights. He argues that Muslims are different by citing clichéd examples of Muslim women and work, women and their dress codes, the practice of female circumcision and falls into the obvious trap as those who think they are criticizing but are actually stereotyping the entire community. It is an unbalanced and unequal study of multiculturalism that comes out as his own diatribe against the Muslim community.

Similar feelings against multiculturalism are also expressed in 2008 by Prins and Salisbury when they use the U.K. as the background for their argument that Britain, as a post-Christian country, is fragmenting because the people cannot agree on the history, national aims, values and identity. They argue that the fragmentation is being made worse by the ‘misplaced deference’ towards multiculturalism, inadequate leadership to lay down the line to the immigrant community, which is undermining those who are trying to fight extremism. They say, “The country’s lack of self-confidence is stark contrast to the implacability of its Islamist terrorist energy, within and without” (Prins & Salisbury, 2008, p. 23).

German political sociologist Christian Joppke in 2004 argues that multiculturalism hasn’t come out as a winner and, in fact, multiculturalism is retreating in many European societies. Joppke says there are various reasons for that and puts the lack of public support for multicultural policies, weaknesses and failures, especially of the socio-economic multiculturalism policies, and most importantly, the way in which liberal states are imposing liberal principles (Joppke, 2004) as some of the prime reasons.

Similarly, the British author Kenan Malik who writes on pluralism and multiculturalism says that diversity and the issue of multiculturalism is complex. In Europe—the U.K. has given ethnic communities equal stake in the political system, Germany has granted immigrants citizenship and has let the immigrant communities lead their own separate lives, whereas France has tried to assimilate them. He argues that, in not one of the cases has the policy worked. He notes, “..in the United Kingdom, there has been communal violence; in Germany, Turkish communities have drifted further from mainstream society; and in France, the relationship between the authorities and North African communities has become highly charged. But everywhere, the overarching consequences have been the same: fragmented societies, alienated minorities, and resentful citizenries” (Malik, 2015).

Multiculturalism has also been criticized because it tends to preserve cultural heritage. Critics have introduced the idea of interculturalism, which enables cultures to evolve (Powell & Sze, 2004). Other critics have argued that multiculturalism has “failed to join the dots—it

failed to see how prejudices could be altered in one sphere and that this could equally apply to another sphere” (Antonsich, 2016, p.474). In the early 2000s the concept, “parallel lives”—communities whose lives do not intersect at all, was introduced (Cantle, 2001, p.13). The critics argued that multiculturalism doesn’t support community cohesion, citizenship, civic identity, civic pride and shared values to unite people (Cantle, 2001, p.19-20).

However, in 2011, in response to these criticisms Canadian thinkers Will Kymlicka and Keith Banting released the multiculturalism policy index (MPI), which evaluates multiculturalism policies related to immigrant minorities. While the rest of the world was debating whether multiculturalism was retreating, Banting and Kymlicka argued that those states that adopted multicultural policies have kept them. Meanwhile, new countries have also incorporated multicultural policies. MPI asserts that multiculturalism policies works well with civic integration (Banting & Kymlicka, 2013).

## **2.5. Dialogue and Identity**

Meanwhile, criticizing that the idea of multiculturalism as inadequate, the 2008 Council of Europe white paper argues that multiculturalism creates ‘majority’ and ‘minority’ which leads to further segregation (Council of Europe, 2008, p.19). They propose the idea of intercultural dialogue as it “contributes to preserve and promote human rights, rule of law and democracy” (Council of Europe, 2008, p.8). It links intercultural dialogue to political, social and cultural cohesion and says it contributes to human dignity and fosters equality.

Elaborating on the idea of intercultural dialogue Norwegian scholars Lybæk and Stokke in their 2016 piece warn that while talking about dialogue, we must distinguish it from negotiation. This is because citizens are not all “free and equal” and negotiations often take place when there are unequal power relations. Lybæk and Stokke call for “genuine dialogue” where the aim is to “...reach a provisional consensus after all parties have been listened to and understood, and where participants are open to transformation of their own views” (Lybæk & Stokke, 2016, p.6). They say that genuine dialogue is about people’s emotions, it is about cooperation and meeting others as human beings (and not just as citizens). Lybæk and Stokke take two empirical evidence—incidents that took place between six years in the global media, which was perceived hurtful to the Norwegian Muslim community, and how the Norwegian government and the communities dealt with it. They argue that due to the Muslim voices gaining access to public sphere and influential sections of the Norwegian society learning something about the Muslim community had helped Norway respond to the incident six years later with empathy and sensitivity. While this

particular piece provides evidence of the evolving nature of the perception of multiculturalism in Norway, it is challenging to find other empirical examples within Norway, to support this evolution. I believe future research, that provides more empirical evidence on dialogue contributing to the growing sense of multiculturalism in Norway would benefit many researchers who are trying to understand multiculturalism and its link to dialogue and media.

It was the Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire's work on dialogue that helped me understand why dialogue is important in breaking down barriers created by prejudice, bias and stereotypes. In Freire's work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* he argues that the acknowledgement and recognition of humanity of other individuals should be the central focus of human existence. In any time in the human existence both humanization and dehumanization of humanity is a possibility. Interestingly, he argues that the attempt to dehumanize the other reinforces our humanity. Freire talks about the oppressor and the oppressed and says that the oppressor groups saves humanity to themselves and dehumanizes the oppressed group as a way to maintain power. He adds, "For the oppressors, 'human beings' refers only to themselves; other people are 'things'" (Freire, 1970, p. 58). Affirmation of individual, yearning for freedom, emancipation from labor can be some of the characteristics of humanization while oppression, violence, injustice are some of the characteristics of dehumanization. Struggle, here, is to overcome oppression and regain humanity and the job of the oppressed is to liberate themselves as well as the oppressors.

Freire adds that human beings do not exist apart from each other and are in constant interaction. Therefore, for Freire, critical thinking and dialogue is not only a human phenomenon, but an important aspect of the struggle. I believe Freire's answer to addressing the unequal power relations, that leads to the imbalance in representation, is through dialogue. He says that dialogue presupposes action and argues that the attempt to liberate the oppressed without their active participation is not possible. "...to substitute monologue, slogans and communiques for dialogue is to attempt to liberate the oppressed with the instruments of domestication" (Freire, 1970, p.65). Additionally, he argues that those who have been denied the right to speak must reclaim their right so as to prevent further dehumanization. He adds, "Dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied" (Freire, 1970, p.67).

Additionally, human beings are communicative creatures and to prevent them from communicating is to reduce them to 'things'.

Dialogue leads to authentic revolution and avoids military coup. Freire says that dialogue is not a concession, or a gift and cannot be a tactic used for domination. For him, cooperation in dialogue is a continuing aspect of a continued struggle. Dialogue, he asserts, "...does not impose, does not manipulate, does not domesticate, does not 'sloganize'" (Freire, 1970, p. 166). As an educator himself, Freire's call for dialogue has been used in human rights education and by education scholars all over the world. In analyzing his work, I have come to understand that his views on dialogue has not been used in analyzing the media. I believe that it is one area that would benefit from Freire's analysis and hope that this gap in connecting human struggle, dialogue and media is filled by future research.

Canadian political philosopher Charles Taylor, in his ground-breaking 1994 work argues that human beings become full humans through our interaction with others. Taylor argues that human minds need others to grow and is dialogical not monological. According to him relationships play a very big role in defining ourselves and that is an important aspect of human beings' identity. "Discovering my own identity doesn't mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal with others" (Taylor, 1994, p.34). There are two type of identity, according to Taylor—intimate (personal) and social (political and cultural), and according to him identity requires authentication and affirmations at both the levels. Taylor argues intimate level identity is vulnerable and needs recognition given or not given by others and in social level identities are formed by dialogue, which is not predefined by an already-existing script. He notes, "Equal recognition is not just the appropriate mode for healthy democratic society, its refusal can inflict damage to those who are denied it" (Taylor, 1994, p.36). For Taylor the demand for recognition comes in a number of ways and multiculturalism is one of those ways. Thus, our identity is shaped either by recognition or the absence of recognition ...misrecognition. He equates misrecognition to a form of oppression, imprisoning someone. He adds, misrecognition leads to a person, or a group of people suffering "...real damage, real distortion if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves" (Taylor, 1994, p.25).

## **2.6. Summary**

As the influence of media grows, the power it exerts in our everyday life is becoming more obvious. News tells us what to fear, how to dress, what to eat, how to live, how to vote, who

to vote for etc. When it comes to the subject of immigration and minorities, media and migration scholars have argued that a balanced report about their situation helps not just the newcomers but also the society as a whole in terms of integration. However, negative portrayals of immigrants—holding them responsible for lack of opportunities, crime and violence, dominates the media. While there are certain media and multiculturalism scholars who believe that newsrooms, news content, journalism schools are becoming more diverse and more empathetic to the issues of minorities, representation and identity, most who study identity, representation and media believe that the immigrants, and especially the Muslim immigrants are still viewed in a stereotypical way.

The reason for this unfair portrayal of minority groups can be attributed to the lack of diversity in the news rooms, the ingrained biases and prejudices of the journalists and newsmakers and the minorities' lack of access. This is what happens when communities are not allowed to tell their own stories. This type of skewed image of minority communities in the media doesn't just happen in Europe. Black communities in the popular media are portrayed in a negative light. Edward Said's work 'Orientalism' is a documentation of historically stereotypical way in which the 'Orient' or the East has been portrayed by the West. The roots of this could be traced to the unequal relationship of power that is dominant in our society.

But if we are working towards making multiculturalism as the winner, the idea has to be defined and certain questions have to be asked. Should multiculturalism give priority to the national minorities—those who were pushed out of their lands? What about those who left their countries and entered a new one? Should they not be given the same level of moral weight as the national minorities? Can we assume that the newcomers had a choice and give them only certain kind of rights? Has multiculturalism evolved from being about ethnicity to being about religion? Multiculturalist Modood puts Muslims in the center of the debate when it comes to multiculturalism in Europe. But what if one shuns their ethnicity and religion? Nobel laureate Amartya Sen asks a very important question: shouldn't multiculturalism be about reflection, and more importantly, shouldn't it be about choice?

Parekh reminds us that cultures grow out of conscious and unconscious interactions and that we need other cultures to expand our mind and limit fundamentalism. Pushing the issue of dialogue, Parekh supports the kind of multiculturalism that believes in crossing that aisle and communicating with others. Critics of multiculturalism have also argued that in



order for the idea to truly work, dialogue has to be one of the most important aspects of multiculturalism.

Yet, the MPI published every decade shows that multiculturalism is not on retreat in Europe and that a country like Norway is embracing multiculturalism policies. Two empirical evidence focusing on the Norwegian media also shows that the country has been able to incorporate minority voices, which has led to gaining of empathy and sensitivity towards Muslim and minority issues in the society. They attribute this to genuine dialogue that is taking place in Norway today. Dialogue is important also for the media—for journalists, newsmakers to empathize with the issues that concern the minority communities. As Brazilian philosopher Paulo Freire argues that if genuine dialogue is to take place it has to be between equal subjects where both are allowed to argue, agree, disagree, discuss, speak and contribute. Philosopher Charles Taylor links the issue of dialogue to identity. He argues that it is not possible to affirm and discover our personal or intimate identity in isolation. Recognition has to come from the interaction with others and equal recognition is important in a well-functioning, healthy society. This is why multiculturalism is important because it is one of the ways to demand this equal recognition of all in the society.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

In a study that examines whether members of the Muslim community feel that the media is representative and inclusive in covering the stories and issues that concern their community, it is important not only to look at the issue of multiculturalism but also the issue of representation. I am doing that through the writings of Stuart Hall, the Jamaican-born British sociologist whose work focuses on cultural and media theories. Also known as the “godfather of multiculturalism” (Martin, 2014) his work on identity, race, gender and sexuality is considered ground-breaking, as is his contribution to cultural and media studies. In reading this paper certain questions may arise—what is the importance of media in our culture? Where does media get its power? What is the connection between meaning and media? And, how are news consumers (readers, viewers, listeners) important? In this section I link language, media, public opinion and power with the attempt to understand how power influences news sources, news production, and in the generation of stereotypes. I answer why stereotypes in the media are harmful for the society and for the representation of the community. In this exploration, I end up on Hall’s prescription on resisting stereotypes, which I include as a silver-lining.

I believe a discussion around representation and identity is important because this study is also about multiculturalism in Norway. I explore multiculturalism from British multiculturalist Tariq Modood’s point of view as he provides the context for multiculturalism in Europe. He argues why multiculturalism in Western Europe is about immigration, most importantly, Muslim immigration. While other multiculturalists have been linking multiculturalism with ethnicity, he brings in religion to explore the reasons why Europe is reluctant to accommodate the needs of the Muslim communities. Modood asserts that Islamophobia and anti-Muslim sentiments are a form of racism and argues that Muslims have not been given the same protection as other minorities as there is an assumption that the Muslim community is not subjected to racism because they chose to be Muslims (because religion is a choice). He calls this a ‘narrow’ view and argues that this type of thinking is so entrenched in the society that even media cannot avoid it. According to him, the negative portrayals of Muslim in the mainstream-media is due to the fact that these stereotypes are so imbedded in us that it influences the newsroom discussions, choice of sources, employment of journalists and the quality and slant of the stories. Finally, Modood, who is a big defender of dialogue in multiculturalism reiterates the need for intercultural dialogue in multicultural

societies to nurture representative newsrooms that produce stories that are sensitive towards the minorities, contain prejudice, and limit stereotypes.

### **3.1. Stuart Hall**

#### **3.1.1. Language and Meaning**

In his seminal 1997 work *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices*, Hall delves deep into what representation means, the importance of language, meaning, discourse, power, knowledge and what 'subject' means. While focusing on media representations, I concentrate on Hall's attention on Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's use of language as a model of how culture works and the reason why meanings are important. Hall argues that to think that representation represent something, a meaning that is already there, is an old way of thinking. According to him meaning is never fixed and depends on what people, cultures, communities make of it. Hall's encoding/decoding theory states that the producer (in this case encoder), frames meaning in a certain way, while the consumer (in this case decoder) processes it differently according to his/her personal background, social situations and so on. This is derived from Saussure who argues that meanings are closely linked to interpretation and that the meaning (for the consumers in the media as well as the writers) we take are never exactly the meaning given to us. He says, "It is full of all sorts of older meanings, and can never be fully cleansed for screening out all other, hidden meanings which might modify or distort what we want to say" (Hall, 1997a, p.32). Meanings will change from culture to culture because the way in which cultures give meaning are different. Language is a part of the social phenomenon and the source lies in the society, in the culture, and in the cultural codes.

#### **3.1.2. Meaning, News and Audience**

For Hall meaning and language are important aspects of news production. For the media, meaning is crucial as it represents people, events, situations and explains them. Media is a medium that circulates meanings. He calls the production of news a 'complex' process as it entails bureaucratic sorting and selecting of news where journalists *play up* dramatic and tragic elements and the events with the highest rank has a greater value or 'newsworthiness' (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 1978, p.53-54). However, there is another less-obvious but more important aspect of news production—the presentation of that news in a way that is understandable to the audience. "This bringing in of events, within the realm of meanings means, in essence, referring unusual and unexpected events to the 'maps of

meaning' which already form the basis of our cultural knowledge, into which the social world is *already* mapped" (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 1978, p.54). In other words, what the scholars are arguing is that news sources its meanings from social and political institutions such as the police, courts etc.

Hall also argues that media communication is not linear. Here, he breaks with the presumption that the masses are dumb. Using the example of television, Hall notes that it is wrong to assume that the audience sits hours upon hours in front of the television set passively consuming what is given to them. Consumption means creating meaning and the meaning cannot be created passively (Davis, 2004, p.62). Some audiences may align themselves with the dominant meanings embedded in the media, others may negotiate, while still others may reject. For the media, giving meanings to events is important because it helps society construct consensus which, the authors argue, brings us together, as a society and culture. "What unites us, as a society and culture- is the consensual side and it far outweighs what divides and distinguishes us as groups or classes from other groups" (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 1978, p.55).

### **3.1.3. Culture and Power Relations**

Hall explains culture by describing the study of 'difference'. According to Saussure difference matters because, again, it gives meaning. Meaning, in turn, depends on the difference between binary oppositions such as day/night, black/white. "We need 'difference' because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the 'Other'" (Hall, 1997a, p.234). Hall agrees with Derrida when he says that there are very few neutral binaries, because "...one pole of the binary is always the dominant one" (Hall, 1997a, p.235). While difference is critical to giving meaning to culture, it can also be a source of negative feelings. This is an important point, where Hall brings in the work of social anthropologist Mary Douglas, who argues—what disturbs the social order is when things turn up in a wrong category, or when something can belong/fit in more than one category. She argues that there are unwritten rules in the society, and what unsettles it is when things are out of place and not according to these unwritten rules. "Marking 'difference' leads us, symbolically, to close ranks, shore up culture and to stigmatize and expel anything which is defined as impure, abnormal" (Hall, 1997a, p.237).

Therefore, while Saussure's contribution on representation in practice, and explanation of how language works and the role it plays in creating meaning, are important, Hall argues that Saussure didn't touch on the broader issues of power and knowledge. Hall

explains that power consistently strives to fix meanings to support its arguments. “Even if language in some sense, ‘spoke us’ (as Saussure tended to argue) it was also important that in certain historical moments, some people had more power to speak about some subject than others (male doctors about mad female patients in the late nineteenth century...)” (Hall, 1997a, p.42). When it comes to media, Hall explains this power relation in terms of ‘hierarchy of credibility’ —the possibility that those in high-status positions in society make commentary about controversial topics, which is accepted as definition because these people in power are assumed to have accurate information than by those in the majority population. Thus, this relationship that media has to power gives them the role of reproducing definitions of those privileged sources. These definitions, in turn, helps describe and build a particular image of a society. It helps represent the interest of certain classes as the interest of all members of the society. They argue that this process of taking the raw materials, transforming and reproducing these dominant ideologies into ‘public idioms’ is a product of structural imperatives present in the society, and it gives validity to the images that are already present amongst us.

Iris Marion Young, the American political theorist, would call this ‘cultural imperialism’, which means the standardization of a dominant groups’ experience and culture as the established one (Young, 1990, p.58). This dominant idea can be so strong and get distributed so widely that they are understood as the norm. This is an important point to remember, especially with regards to media’s role in forming public opinion as media acts as the bridge through which those who are assumed to have the information communicate with the rest. “The media do not only possess a near monopoly over ‘social knowledge’ as the primary source of information about what is happening; they also command the passage between those who are ‘in the know’ and the structured ignorance of general public” (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke & Roberts, 1978, p.64).

Hall elaborates the idea of Foucault’s position on discourse, knowledge and power and argues that for Foucault knowledge doesn’t operate in a void, “what we ‘know’ in a particular period about, say, crime, has a bearing on how we regulate, control and punish criminals. For Foucault power circulates, between systems of power which produces and sustains it and the effects of power which reduces and extends it. Hall further explains with an example, “It may or may not be true that single parenting inevitably leads to delinquency and crime. But if everyone believes it to be so, and punishes single parents accordingly, this will have real consequences for both parents and children and will become ‘true’ in terms of

its real effects, even if in some absolute sense it has never been conclusively proven” (Hall, 1997a, p.49). Thus, in a 1997 lecture Hall asks very pertinent questions with regards to media and power. I have also kept those question in mind and asked myself, “*Who* has the power, in *what* channels, to circulate *which* meanings, to *whom*?” (Hall, 1997b, p.14).

### 3.1.4. Representation and Othering

While thinking about representation, the issue of subject is also important to talk about. Hall argues that Foucault was also concerned with the idea of subject, and maintained that ‘subject’ is produced through discourse, *within* discourse. This is an important point in the theory of representation because this idea shows that the subjects themselves define positions from which they become important and have influence. As Hall says, “Individuals may differ as to their social class, gendered, ‘racial’ and ethnic characteristics (among other factors), but they will not be able to take meaning until they have identified with those positions which the discourse constructs, *subjected* themselves to its rules, and hence become the *subjects of its power/knowledge*” (Hall, 1997a, p.56).

One of the results of unequal power relations is the construction of ‘otherness’. Hall also introduces the idea of stereotypes and argues that stereotyping occurs when there are “*gross inequalities of power*” and is directed against an excluded group. Hall explains that stereotypes use ““simple, vivid memorable, easily grasped and widely recognized’ characteristics about a person, reduce everything about the person to those traits, *exaggerate and simplify them*, and *fix* them without change or development to eternity” (Hall, 1997a, p.258). He further argues that stereotypes creates boundaries that excludes anything and everything that doesn’t fit. Hall links this idea of stereotyping to what Foucault called power and argues that Gramsci would have called this the struggle for hegemony. Therefore, for Hall, power is more than just economical (economic exclusion or exploitation) or physical, it is about the power to represent someone in a certain way. Hall’s description of ‘otherness’ also finds support in scholar Edward Said’s idea of Orientalism. Said has argued that European scholars created this stereotypical image of the East and called it ‘the Orient’. Within the framework of western hegemony the Europeans created a discourse by which they were able to study the Orient during the post-Enlightenment period (Said, 1978, p.78). To this Hall adds, “A *discourse* produces, through different practices of *representation* (scholarship, exhibition, literature, painting, etc.), a form of *racialized knowledge of the Other* (Orientalism) deeply implicated in the operations of *power* (imperialism)” (Hall, 1997a, p.260).

### 3.1.5. Othering and Racism

Hall has argued that the discourses in the mainstream media when it comes to representing race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion are not innocent because what is hidden in mass media is ideology. This becomes dangerous as media can become active agents in the racialization of crime, the patriarchal narratives on gender, and the ‘othering’ of immigrants, Muslims, poor and minorities. This idea is also supported by the discourse analyst van Dijk, when he talks about the reasons that public discourses (and not private conversations between family and friends) are more influential in the making of the society. According to him, journalists, teachers, scholars, writers, politicians are the *symbolic elites* as they play an important role in the prevalence of dominant knowledge. Van Dijk calls this system of domination within the media racism and argues that there is racism when it comes to the topics chosen by newsrooms while covering minorities. Van Dijk gives concrete examples—according to him, when non-European groups immigrate, such movement is seen as a major problem. When this group has settled in a country the next topic that the media focuses on are the problems—related to housing, reception, employment and integration. Additionally, one of the most frequent topics associated with minorities and immigrants in the media has to do with crime and violence. The general message being conveyed is that newcomers and minorities are at least a problem if not a threat to us. The same message doesn’t focus on the problem *they* may have with the natives (van Dijk, 2012, p.23).

He adds that prejudices are not inherent but acquired, legitimized and encouraged by the elite discourse and racism (van Dijk, 2012, p.17). Prejudice and racism is dehumanizing and leads to negative emotions towards the group, isolation of the said group, and overall negative attitudes towards minorities. Here, Hall breaks with van Dijk’s idea of power coming from the top. He takes support from Foucault and argues that power is everywhere, it doesn’t always have to come from the top and doesn’t always have to be exercised by the dominant. Meanwhile, in a very revolutionary way Hall also argues that power and dominance is always accompanied by resistance. In countries like Russia these pockets of resistance can be in the form of Pussy Riots (Rourke & Wiget, 2016), it can be in the form of the book club for women set up by a university professor in autocratic Iran (Nafisi, 2003), it may be the American Black Lives Matter movement (Lebron, 2018), and can also be in the form of the global #MeToo movement (Ward, 2018). In Norway, they can be in the form of Norwegian music, poetry, stories or graphic novels produced by immigrants (Opsahl & Røynealand, 2016) that talk honestly and critically about growing up as immigrants in a

majority white country. Hall encourages us to think differently—he explains that if we flip the argument on resistance, those who do hold the dominant discourse may also think of their views as ‘resistance’ against the ‘different’ discourses that minorities may be trying to inject.

### **3.1.6. Resisting Stereotypes**

In his 1997 lecture Hall talks in detail about “contesting stereotypes”, which means increasing diversity of images in the media, which opens new possibilities of identity. Hall gives an example of black men in the media, but it can be used for any community that has been stereotyped. Hall argues that limited images of a community effects the way society perceives them in the real world. This is why it is important to contest stereotypes. He states that you can’t fix bad representation, but what one *can* do is to go inside the image itself and turn the stereotype against itself. In order to open the process of representation, one has to go into the power of stereotypes itself and ask questions about who produces the image, what is the source of the image, who was silent during the process of production, who and how is the image being distributed. Therefore, interrogating stereotypes opens them up in such a way that they can be made uninhabitable. But Hall doesn’t stop there, he goes a step further—he says that if we want to understand society, we can’t just look for that understanding in mainstream news as they may be full of official discourse. If we truly want to seek different stories, different perspectives, different realities, and understand nuances we have to also look at popular culture—in music videos, in soap operas, in reality television and gossip magazines.

The importance of discussing media, public opinion, power relations and stereotypes arose from the fact that this paper is an exploration of representations of minority Muslim community in the media in Norway, a country that is fast moving towards becoming a multicultural society. In the section below, I attempt to answer what multiculturalism means for Europe.

## **3.2. Tariq Modood**

### **3.2.1. Multiculturalism in Context**

Tariq Modood, the British multiculturalist makes a clear distinction between the American multiculturalism and British/European multiculturalism. Modood argues that while social movements brought about multiculturalism in the U.S., multiculturalism in Europe is about immigration.



Early 20<sup>th</sup> century was a divisive time, where Nazism had singled out differences between humans in terms of race, gender, sexuality, and color, which was defeated in the wave of anti-racism march. The Civil Rights Movement in the U.S. asserted the sameness in human beings. “The imperial idea of ‘the White Man’s burden’ of ruling ‘the lesser breeds without the Law’ was regarded as an embarrassing anachronism if not a matter of shame amongst white youth” (Modood, 2013, p.1). However, this was also the time when many communities were proclaiming their differences—African Americans started asserting their black pride, women asserted their distinctions from men and gay men and women asserted their differences and explored homosexuality in a way where they could carve out their own identity and space without fear or shame. These ideas came under what was understood as ‘progressive policies’, or politics of identity: “being true to one’s nature or heritage and seeking with others the same kind of public recognition for one’s collectivity” (Modood, 2013, p.2). According to Modood, one of the terms that came to describe these progressive policies was multiculturalism.

Meanwhile, in Europe multiculturalism has a different meaning. While communities in the U.S. became more multicultural by the virtue of social movements, in Britain and parts of Europe, the wave towards multiculturalism was driven more by immigration and the changing of the societies due to this wave of immigration especially from outside Western Europe. There are different ways of defining multiculturalism, but what Modood is most concerned about is the issue of ‘difference’ that is brought about by the large-scale migration. He argues that the communities formed in the West after immigration are defined by two differences—first that of negative difference “...with alienness, interiorization, stigmatization, stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, racism and so on” (Modood, 2011, p.5). And secondly by the identity that they use to define themselves. For Modood, this is an important aspect of multiculturalism—that it must recognize the individual reality of groups, not just of individuals and organizations.

### **3.2.2. The Muslim Question**

As I look at the perception of a multicultural Norway from the point of view of Norwegian Muslims with immigrant background, Modood’s emphasis on the Muslim community becomes important because he puts them at the center when he argues about multiculturalism in Europe. Modood believes that there’s a wave of anti-Muslim sentiments blowing across Europe at the moment. In a 2009 piece by Modood and Nasar Meer, the authors talk about interdependence between Muslims and multiculturalism in Britain and argue that Muslims’

claim has been characterized as being unreasonable, and that is because Muslims have been perceived to be in opposition to the liberal ideas of individual rights and secularism (Meer, Modood, 2009b, p.481). Modood stresses, “One factor is a perception that Muslims are making politically exceptional, culturally unreasonable or theologically alien demands upon European states” (Modood, 2009, p.164). In countries such as France, the idea that religion should stay out of politics and policy (away from the public sphere) and should remain in the private sphere has made issues related to Islam, which “claims to regulate public as well as private life, is therefore seen as ideological foe and Muslim presence as alien...” (Modood, 2009, p.165). Modood, Meer et al. also say that the global events, with regards to terrorism, have similarly contributed to Islam being viewed in opposition to multiculturalism. “Indeed, in a post-9/11 and 7/7 climate, the explanatory purchase of Muslim cultural dysfunctionality has generated a profitable discursive economy in accounting for what has been described as ‘Islamic terrorism’” (Meer, Modood & Dwyer, 2010, p.221).

Modood argues that this backlash against Islam and multiculturalism comes from the rise of radical secularism. He says there are groups today creating “secularism as an ideology to oppose Islam and its public recognition in a challenge both to pluralism and equality, and thus to some of the bases of contemporary democracy” (Modood, 2009, p.185). His main argument is that there is a need, across Europe, to include Islam as an organized religion and Muslim identity as public identity. This, he argues, will integrate Muslims and help them pursue religious equality because it is not inconsistent with what secularism means in practice in Europe. He adds, “We should let this evolving, moderate secularism and the spirit of compromise it represents be our guide” (Modood, 2009, p.185).

### **3.2.3. Islamophobia v. Racism**

In another 2009 piece multiculturalism scholars Meer and Modood argue why the Muslim minorities in Europe can be subject to racism but are met with less sympathy than other religious minorities, for example, the Jewish groups. Meer and Modood say that the reason for this is because being a Muslim is a religious identity that is voluntarily chosen. According to them, while ethnic minorities are still welcomed in public space, it is different and more difficult for religious minorities. They argue that many view the Muslim community as a threat and not as a disadvantaged group because they perceive Muslims to be disloyal or to be associated to terrorism (Meer & Modood, 2009a). This means that anti-Muslim sentiment and Islamophobia is not considered as problematic as other forms of racism.

### **3.2.4. Narrow Racism and the Media**

This is a narrow view of racism, they argue, and assert that this type of ambivalence towards anti-Muslim sentiments are often expressed by news stories and in the media. The scholars interviewed a British senior home affairs broadcast journalist, two broadsheets and one tabloid newspaper commissioning editors in their 2009 piece where the subjects delink anti-Muslim sentiments with racism to argue that discrimination directed towards racial minorities is not the same as those directed towards Muslims because religious identities are chosen and shouldn't have the same legal protection as racial minorities.

Modood and Meer argue that the result of framing anti-Muslim sentiments with less seriousness can lead to bias in the framing of news items. The result is that stories about Muslims are framed in a negative way or in a superficial way, where the story does not go beyond just reporting and is missing deeper analysis. One of the ways to fix this attitude in the press is by increasing the presence of Muslims in the newsrooms. What Stuart Hall calls 'resisting stereotypes', Modood and Meer call "...nurturing of 'Muslim voices' within newspapers in a way that can draw attention to how issues of importance to some Muslims, such as wearing the veil, may be reported in an educative manner" (Meer & Modood, 2009a, p.348).

Equality, for Modood, means difference-affirming equality, which relates to the notions of respect, recognition and identity. This to him is political multiculturalism. One of the ways in which religious equality can be affirmed is by positive inclusion of religious groups. Modood talks about media in Britain and specifically about the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) where it is trying to review and improve its newsrooms, and on screen representation and personnel "by making provisions for and winning the confidence of women, ethnic groups and young people" (Modood, 2009, p.172). He questions why the media cannot do the same for religious groups. "In short, Muslims should be treated as a legitimate group in their own right (not because they are, say, Asians), whose presence in British society has to be explicitly reflected in all walks of life in all institutions; and whether theory are so included should become one of the criteria for judging Britain as an egalitarian, inclusive, multicultural society" (Modood, 2009, p.172-173).

### **3.2.5. Multiculturalism and Dialogue**

Tariq Modood argues that dialogue is one of the foundational elements of multiculturalism. For Modood, dialogue in multiculturalism is important in a philosophical level and like multiculturalist Charles Taylor, Modood believes that recognition of the 'other' without

conversation and dialogue with that ‘other’ is not possible. Dialogue can either be with, or in against, what the others see in us. He argues that we cannot create our identities alone, we have to be in dialogue in order to create our identity. Deriving inspiration from philosopher Bhikhu Parekh, Modood argues that even cultures need to be constantly in dialogue with each other—to learn from each other, to challenge each other and to limit radicalism. For Modood, multiculturalism is also about negotiation and dialogue between majority state policies and minority mobilization. Dialogue is about communication, about critical thinking and it is about cooperation. Modood asserts that arriving to any kind of solution to a problem requires cross-cultural understanding that can be reached at together between groups. Additionally, and most importantly, when we are talking about media, dialogue is crucial to build relationships of trust, co-operation and a sense of belonging together (Modood, 2017, p.5).

Moving beyond the philosophical context of dialogue, Modood argues that even political multiculturalists such as Will Kymlicka have advocated to include the ‘voice’ of the marginalized; Iris Marion Young who helped gay, black communities to understand themselves as oppressed, to form an identity that is focused on liberation to engage with other groups and to institute a new form of democratic politics (Young, 1990); and philosopher James Tully (as cited by Modood), who stressed for a need to question dominant ideologies in the society to identify other ways of thinking (Modood, 2017, p.6). “Specifically, these authors also argue that dialogue is the way to handle difficult cases of cultural practices such as clitoridectomy, hate speech, religious dress, gender relations and so on” (Meer & Modood, 2013, p.113).

## 4. Methodology

The main research purpose of this thesis is to examine the issue of representation in the Norwegian public media from the point of view of Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background. I used the qualitative method to conduct this research. I analyzed relevant literature, books, chapters, government documents, white papers, peer-reviewed research papers etc. to explore whether Norwegian public media (television, radio, online as well as print newspapers) are becoming more representative and multicultural in their content. The interviews of the representatives of the Norwegian Muslim community are at the heart of this research as I view their perspectives with utmost importance.

### 4.1. Positionality

My personal interest in this topic stems from my background of working as a journalist in Nepal, South Asia and the U.S. During my time as a journalist, I concentrated on issues of inclusion and representation in the stories I have covered. In Nepal, a country that is ethnically diverse where caste and class system plays a big role, and as a woman reporter working in predominantly male workplaces, my work focused on issues of representation of gender, ethnic and sexual minorities in businesses, bureaucracy, newsrooms, and most importantly, in positions and processes of decision-making.

My interest in multiculturalism in Norway started with the controversy surrounding the decision by the national television, *NRK*, to tap a hijab-wearing television host Faten Mahdi Al-Hussaini for a television series during the run up to the 2017 elections. According to the paper, *Norway Today*, the television channel received more than 3,600 complaints, several of which were reported to be hateful and prejudiced, weeks before the program had even aired (Taylor, 2017). Keeping in mind the influence media has on our everyday lives, I wanted to understand, from the point of view of the members of Muslim community (of which Faten is also a part of) whether they view the Norwegian public media to be representative of their community and sensitive to their stories.

I want to take this opportunity to clarify that this research is not a religious exploration. My identity as a Nepali, another “brown person”, made it easy for me to understand the issues surrounding how the society views non-white men and women as “the other” or “the outsider”. However, as a non-Muslim, non-religiously aligned woman researcher writing about representation so closely attached to religion, it was also challenging to analyze the disenchantment, disappointments and (sometimes) anger of my interview

subjects. Nonetheless, acknowledging that social science research is messy, and being aware of my sex, race, identity, privilege, and background I have tried to be as objective as possible while investigating and presenting the results of my research.

## **4.2. Qualitative Method**

The topic of my research demands that I give emphasis to relevant literature, documents, research pieces and reports. My research, including my fieldwork (interviews) was concerned more with words as I was not trying to quantify my results. Therefore, a qualitative approach to this research was most relevant. As Bruce Berg argues qualitative strategies, "...are intricately intertwined with both the substance of the issues they explore and theories grounded in these substantive issues" (Berg, 2001, p.287).

Epistemologically the research is influenced by interpretivism, as I was seeking to understand, and not explain. According to Alan Bryman, interpretivism "...is predicated upon the view that a strategy is required that respects the differences between people and the objects of the natural sciences and therefore requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman, 2012, p.30).

Additionally, the relationship between theory and research is that theory either drives the research process (deductive approach) or that theory is a result of the research process (inductive approach). While the research I conducted is influenced by the theories of media, multiculturalism, representation and dialogue, to use the deductive approach, I would have had to have a number of hypothesis that I would put through rigorous empirical testing. Instead, my study started with a set of research questions, which guided me as I collected samples, formed tentative hypothesis, which then formed the basis of a set of ideas to explain my topic (or theory). Therefore, I used inductive approach in my research. Since theory is arrived at after the research, one of the advantages of an inductive approach is that it is more open-ended and flexible because the research is not being determined by a particular set of theoretical ideas. However, I am also aware of the shortcomings of this kind of approach. As Bryman warns, inductive studies provide illuminating findings, whose theoretical importance is not really clear (Bryman, 2012, p.27). One of the other disadvantages of the inductive method is that it relies a lot on observation and doesn't guarantee conclusions. It can also be subjective and difficult to replicate.

In short, keeping the epistemological background in mind, my research was influenced by interpretivism as I was seeking to understand social realities of Norwegian

Muslims of immigrant background. Additionally, I have employed an inductive approach starting with my questions to seek responses that will help answer theoretical questions.

### **4.3. Research Design**

For the purpose of this research, I believe the case-study approach was the most appropriate method. “Case study methods involve systematically gathering enough information about a particular person, social setting, event or group to permit the researcher to effectively understand how it operates or functions” (Berg, 2001, p.225). One of the biggest advantages of the case study approach is that it allows researchers to study an individual, a group or a community where they will have the liberty to provide heavy descriptions of the experiences and context. According to Berg, “case study approach can be either pointed in focus or have a broad view of life and society” (Berg, 2001, p.225). I believe that the case study method has kept me focused and curious, helped me keep an open mind and has reminded me to remain flexible.

Additionally, I applied the instrumental case study approach to this research because my intention was not to test the theories or to develop new ones but to understand the theoretical questions better. Berg argues, “instrumental case studies often are investigated in depth, and all aspects and activities are detailed, but not simply to elaborate the case per se. Instead, the intention is to assist the researcher to better understand some external theoretical question or problem” (Berg, 2001, p.229).

While conducting qualitative social science research there are some criteria to keep in mind: trustworthiness—how good is the research, credibility—how believable are the results, dependability—will it apply to other contexts, and transferability—whether the results will apply at other times (Bryman, 2012, p.49). One of the potential limitations of the case study design is that there are no assurances of external validity—of how the case study can be representative so that the findings can be applied more generally to other cases. Bryman says that it is not reasonable to guarantee external validity when it comes to the case study method. Bryman adds it is impossible to “...identify typical cases that can be used to represent a certain class of objects whether it is factories, mass-media reporting, police services, or communities” (Bryman, 2012, p.70). In other words, as a researcher I was aware that a case study is not a sample of one.

### **4.4. Designing Case Studies**

There are various ways of designing case studies. Robert Yin argues that case studies can be

used when examining contemporary events but when behaviors cannot be controlled. Yin says that case studies use the same techniques as history to explain events but it adds to important sources that historians don't use, namely, direct observation of the events one is studying and interviews with the people involved. Yin emphasizes, "...although case studies and histories can overlap, the case study's unique strength is the ability to deal with a full variety of evidence—documents, artifacts, interviews and observations—beyond what might be available in a conventional historical study" (Yin, 2003, p.7-8). This type of design made perfect sense as my research was about media, diversity and multiculturalism in Norway through interviews, literature and observation of the events that are unfolding.

Here, I also want to clarify that I am studying multiculturalism as a phenomenon, through the perspective of the members of the Muslim community in Norway. Yin calls this kind of design embedded case study (Yin, 2003, p.42) as within a single case I am giving attention to a subunit or subunits (here, subunits being the members of the Norwegian Muslim community who have immigrant backgrounds).

#### **4.5. Research Sampling and Methods**

There are many ways in which social science researchers can decide and choose samples to answer their research questions. As a researcher, I was not randomly selecting my research subjects, neither was I depending on samples to come to me by chance. I chose my sample because of their importance and relevance to my research questions. I was clear in my mind on what samples to include and therefore, the type of approach that I have applied is the purposive approach. Under purposive sampling, I used the snowball sampling method. Snowball sampling is when the researcher initially selects a small group of people relevant to the research questions and meets certain criteria. These participants, in turn, suggest others to contact for interview and so on. If the focus of the research is on a network of individuals, this type of sampling is advantageous (Bryman, 2012, p.418-427). I believe, for the kind of research that I undertook, a deliberate/purposive sampling combined with a snowball sampling was best suited.

While the number of respondents for the research was open, the criteria for interview was quite specific. The criteria for their relevance in the study was that the research subjects had to be Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background (first, second, third generation Norwegians) who followed Norwegian news (through newspapers, television or radio), were willing to meet and share their thoughts for the research and were of diverse age-groups. I was keen on interviewing people of both genders and various ages because I was interested in



understanding the responses from various points-of-view and age groups. Similarly, although the respondents are all Muslim and of immigrant background, I wanted ensure their immigrant backgrounds were also diverse. Therefore, some respondents' background from is from South Asia, while others are from the Middle East. Unfortunately, I was not able to include respondents with African background. In terms of sampling strategy, I applied the elements of a snowball sampling—I asked for recommendations from the individuals/groups I talked to about more members of their community who would be willing to talk. I also focused on the patterns of consumption of media amongst the respondents—did they read news on paper? Did they read news digitally—on smartphones, computers or tables? And did they get their news from television, radio. Most importantly, as researcher employing purposive sampling, I kept in mind the limitation of this type of sampling—that it will not allow me to generalize to a population (Bryman, 2012, p.418).

#### **4.6. Interviews**

In-depth, semi structured qualitative interviews were adopted for the purpose of this research. Before the interview, I prepared a list of pre-formulated questions related to specific themes. Many of the responses are personal and specific, therefore, a focus-group/group interview would not have worked. Similarly, since I was not asking my respondents to recall a particular event, or be descriptive and biographical in their response an oral history interview method or a life history interview method would not have been fruitful. In fact, my in-depth semi-structured interview questions were asked in a consistent order, with ample independence to the interviewee as semi-structured interviews allow the interviewee the freedom to take their time, pause and even digress (Berg, 2001, p.70).

This type of interview was especially crucial in my research as issues of representation and identity requires that the interviewer give importance to the point-of-view of the interviewee. As an interviewer, my aim was to get rich and detailed answers. For that to happen, I gave the power to the interviewee to lead the course of the interview. For example, on questions of representation of their community in the public media, if the respondents needed to talk about their identity as a student or member of a trade union other than just as a Muslim Norwegian, as a researcher, I adjusted my course of questioning according to the response. This is very important according to Bryman, “qualitative interviewing tends to be flexible, responding to the direction in which interviewees take the interview and perhaps adjusting the emphasis in the research as a result of significant issues that emerge in the course of interviews” (Bryman, 2012, p.470). Additionally, the role of the

interviewer is to probe beyond the prepared questions, and if that requires a second or third interview, the semi-structured qualitative research allows the researcher to do just that. Fortunately, I did not have to interview my subjects more than once, but having the freedom and clarity that semi-structured interviews allows for more than one opportunity made the relationship between me and my interviewee lighter.

Before the interviews I prepared an interview guide (attached as an appendix here) with questions on themes such as multiculturalism, representation, immigration, Muslim culture, diversity, religion, voice and public media. This guide was approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) (approval attached in the appendix) and it helped ensure that the interviews maintained the important criteria of having an organized layout but remaining flexible (Bryman, 2012, p.473). While remaining open to the messiness of social science research, and respecting the right of the respondents, I kept Bryman's suggestion in mind—I started by recording a 'fact sheet' of basic information of the respondents, created an order in the questions that addressed the themes, used coherent language, and avoided leading questions (Bryman, 2012, p.473).

The interviews took place in quiet public spaces such as libraries and cafes in Oslo and the suburbs. Interviewees received an information letter (also approved by the NSD) with ample time to read about how their interviews would be used. After they had read and signed the information letter, I asked them again (it was also mentioned in my information letter) if they gave me permission to record their responses in my digital audio recorder. It was only when my subjects were ready to proceed that I began the interviews. During the course of the interview I made sure to leave plenty of time for the interviewees to ask me questions, clarify confusions etc. At the end of each interview, I asked the respondents if they had anything more to add, and if they wanted to elaborate on questions that I hadn't touched upon.

After each interview I made notes in my thesis diary about the important points, observations, environments and other details that were significant (Bryman, 2012, p.476). I also recorded the respondents' pauses, sighs, body language etc. These interviews were transcribed, within a week so the nuances were not missed and the issues talked about in the interviews remained fresh. Transcribing shortly after the interviews also helped me assess whether I needed a second interview with the subjects.

#### **4.7. Interview Participants**

Respecting the wish of some of the participants to remain anonymous, I have used codified names as well as descriptions for the participants. There are instances in qualitative

interviews when anonymizing is simply not enough (King & Harrocks, 2010, p.120). It has been my attempt to be transparent with my subjects about how the interview will be used. The interview quotes have not been changed, and I have also attempted to remain as close as possible to reality in the description of the participants (who wished to remain anonymous) without revealing too much.

**Aqeel** is a 26-year old man, first generation Norwegian, and a student of intermediate technology who has been living outside of Oslo for the last 19 years. He fled from Pakistan with his entire family due to threat and fear of prosecution of his community. Aqeel's father still has close ties with the community in Pakistan, whereas Aqeel has only gone back a few times since he and his family fled. He speaks fluent English, Urdu and Norwegian, works part time locally, and is very involved in his community.

**Soran** (codified name) is a 51-year-old man working as an engineer outside of Oslo. Soran is a first generation Norwegian who came to Norway some 30 years ago with his wife and kids and has been working in his profession since. He keeps close ties to his community (and parts of his family who remain in his native home) and visits once a year. He speaks fluent Norwegian, English and Arabic.

**Afreen** (codified name) is a 31-year-old woman working and living in Oslo. She is a second generation Norwegian from Pakistan. She grew up outside of Oslo and is now actively involved in her community through volunteer and other work. She speaks fluent Norwegian and English.

**Safin** is a 27-year-old first generation Norwegian man from Iraq. He has been living in Norway for the last 17 years. Safin works as an accountant and keeps close ties with his Kurdish Iraqi community in Norway and continues to be in touch with friends and family in Iraq. Apart from a full-time work, Safin is actively involved in community and volunteer projects in and around his town. He speaks fluent English, Norwegian and his native Arabic.

**Taimur** (codified name) is a 42-year-old man living and working in Oslo. He is a second generation Norwegian and grew up in the city. An activist and a writer, he is very involved in forums and discussions on diversity, inclusion and multiculturalism. He lives with his family in Oslo and maintains very close ties with the members of his community.

**Ubaid** (codified name) is a 53-year-old man living and working in Oslo. He moved to Norway from native Bangladesh for his higher education 30 years ago and is a first generation Norwegian. Ubaid now lives with his family in Oslo.

**Meher** (codified name) is a 24-year-old second generation Norwegian woman living in Oslo. Meher graduated with a business administration degree last year and now works part time. An active member of her mosque, she is often involved in activism and discussions in student and youth groups.

**Shaima** (codified name) is a 24-year-old woman studying medicine in Oslo. She is a second generation Norwegian and lives outside Oslo with her family who emigrated from Pakistan. Shaima grew up in a predominantly immigrant neighborhood and works alongside multicultural colleagues. She is involved in her community and sees activism as a part of her life. She speaks fluent English and Norwegian.

#### **4.8. Qualitative Data Analysis**

After months of reading relevant literature, documents and conducting interviews, I had gathered a large body of work and was faced with the question of what to actually do with the information. According to Bryman, this is a very common stage social science researchers go through when they decide to use qualitative method of gathering information. Bryman notes, one of the main difficulties with qualitative research is that it very rapidly generates a large, cumbersome data-base because of its reliance on prose in the form of such media as field notes, interview transcripts, or documents (Bryman, 2012, p.565). This was an important reminder for me that qualitative data analysis has not reached the same degree of codification as quantitative data. What was most helpful was that there are general guidelines that can be followed that can help a qualitative researcher.

For the purpose of analyzing the large body of work that I had accumulated, I used grounded theory, first developed by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in 1967 and cited by Bryman as “..by far the most widely used framework for analyzing qualitative data” (Bryman, 2012, p.567). What grounds the theory is that concepts, out of which the theory is developed, comes from the data collected during the research process, and not prior to the beginning of the research (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.7). Grounded theory allows theoretical ideas to emerge out of the data that researchers gather. In other words, it is a “...theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (Bryman, 2012, p.387). In grounded theory, data collection, analysis, and theory development are in close relationship to one another. As a researcher, I first collected the data, analyzed it and derived concepts, which later formed the basis of more data collection (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.7).

In order to connect data with my research questions, grounded theory has been immensely helpful. During the process of using the grounded theory I have jointly collected, coded and analyzed my data in order to develop my theory (also known as theoretical sampling), broken down data which are given names (coding), reached a saturation of both coding as well as data collection (theoretical saturation) as well as made sure to keep a close relationship between data and conceptualization “..so that the correspondence between concepts and category with their indicators is not lost.” (Bryman, 2012, p.568).

#### **4.9. Interview Data Analysis**

Tom Wengraf in his 2001 book *Qualitative Research Interviewing* has a step-by-step process on what to do after the process of interview is over. He starts with one of the most important point of indexing so that the materials are easy to find when the researcher needs (Wengraf, 2001, p.208). At the end of my field work I had over 400 minutes of raw data in the form of interviews. I set out to immediately make copies of the interview files and kept them away for safekeeping. Since some of my interview subjects were going to be anonymous, I labelled them in such a way that they would respect the wishes of the interview subjects, and at the same time would be easy for me to find when I need the raw data. The next step was transcribing the interviews into words before turning on to analyzing the interview. When it comes to analysis of the data, I used thematic analysis system. Following are some of the stages of thematic analysis I followed:

**Descriptive Coding:** This is stage one of the thematic analysis. At this stage I read through the transcript once so that I had a good sense of what was being said. Then, I read through the transcripts again, but this time I also highlighted relevant materials and made notes. Making notes is an important part of this process and what Nigel King and Christine Harrocks call descriptive coding (King & Harrocks, 2010, p.154). This type of coding is basically labeling my material with one word codes or short phrases to make it as self-explanatory as possible. This is so that when I glance through my transcription materials later I can quickly make sense of what is in there. This process was repeated for each transcript and I refined my descriptive codes as I progressed.

**Interpretive Coding:** This was stage two of the thematic analysis. Here I grouped together descriptive codes that share common meaning and ideas. As King and Harrocks suggested, I kept in mind not to apply specific theoretical concepts in my coding as that may influence my analysis. I made sure that my research question was the guide and refined as I went from one transcription to another.

**Defining Overarching Themes:** This is stage three of the process where I identified some obvious themes that would define key concepts of my analysis. King and Harrocks say that this is where a researcher can draw directly on any theoretical ideas or applied concerns that may be underlying in the study. Here, I let myself not be limited to thinking that there can only be one or two overarching themes and allowed myself to see some of the other nuanced themes that were emerging.

As I was using a thematic analysis approach, it was not enough for me to just provide description of the content. I had to build a story, or a narrative, which told the readers whether or not the findings have contributed to the research questions. Therefore, the extracts that I have chosen from my interviews are not merely quotes or fillers, but they have been chosen with the intention of contributing to the topic. As King and Harrocks suggest, “Choose quotes that highlight the nature of the theme vividly, are easily understood and, where possible, give some sense of the character of the speaker – for instance, showing their use of humor, tone of pessimism, hope or stoicism, and so on” (King & Harrocks, 2010, p.165).

One of the advantages of using grounded theory has been the freedom the method has given me with regards to constant comparisons. Here I broke down data into manageable pieces to compare them according to similarities and differences. I put those that were similar under the same conceptual heading. Then I did further analysis and grouped the concepts together to form themes, in terms of their properties and dimensions. These themes were further integrated around a core theme (or the major theme of the research). These core themes came together and made up the structure of the theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

#### **4.10. Challenges in Realizing this Research**

Shaping this research project has been a rewarding, exciting, inspiring experience. As with any social science research, my project has also not been without its fair share of frustrations, confusions and challenges. As mentioned in the motivation section of this paper, my interest in the media stemmed from my training as a journalist. However, trying to study the media in a country where a researcher is not familiar with the language has brought with it its own set of challenges. It has been difficult to follow what is being said in the media, not understanding the language properly means that as a researcher I could have been missing cultural nuances. However, since I am focusing more on the perception of the Norwegian Muslim community about their views on the Norwegian media, it has worked well to give my subjects the freedom to talk to me about concrete examples where they have felt represented

as well as misrepresented. In the process of selection of interviewees, I made sure that my subjects could understand and speak English fluently as the interviews were conducted in English. Apart from a few words that were hard for my subjects to explain in English, the interviews went smoothly. The interview subjects were free to use Norwegian words, which I took note of and translated later using online translating services. Using a language that is not my subjects' mother-tongue also meant that the interviews were longer, as some concepts had to be explained in detail. However, allowing the subjects the freedom to take their time to articulate their answers helped during the interview.

Language was also an issue while I was trying to gather and read literature about the specific topics. Finding detailed literature about media and immigration in Norway written in English was challenging. However, my professors suggested to me that looking at other Western European authors will help me understand the topic. I have used Norwegian authors who have written in English as much as possible. Where they have not be available, I have used other European authors to understand and explain.

Narrowing down the research area has also been a learning process. As a student of multiculturalism, I was familiar with multicultural theorists and could use the theory learned in our classes as a foundation for the thesis. However, as the research evolved it became clear that explaining multiculturalism in media was not possible only through multicultural theories. I also needed to understand theories around media, inclusion and representation. As advised by my professors I started to study cultural/media theorist Stuart Hall in detail and Hall opened doors to other scholars such as Teun van Dijk, Edward Said, Iris Marion Young, Foucault and Gramsci. These scholars helped me build the bridge between multiculturalism, power, representation, inclusion and media that was much needed to tie the arguments together.

Finding interview subjects was another challenge. I was looking for a specific type of subjects—they had to be Norwegian, Muslim, with immigrant background who were consumers of news (online and print newspapers, television or radio). I also wanted diverse voices—diverse in age, sex, background, education. While it was easier to find male interview subjects through the snowball sampling method, it was more difficult to find women interview subjects. I had to intensify my method and use social media as a tool for snowball sampling to find interview subjects. Still, the ratio of men to women is a little bit higher, even though I have tried to bridge the balance as much as possible. Additionally,

access to some of the potential interviewees was not possible due to limited time and resources.

#### **4.11. Ethical Considerations**

Social science research must also ensure that it follows ethical standards. Ethics are the “rules of conduct in research” (Walliman, 2006, p.148). Bryman lists four ethical principles that E. Diener and R. Crandall (1978) focused on—avoiding harm to the participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, and deception. The researcher has to ensure that the writings about the community will not diminish their rights—have unreal portrayal or show them in a negative light. As recommended by Norway’s National Committee for Research Ethics in Social Sciences and Humanities (NESH), I made my motives clear so that my research subjects understood the limitations and expectations (NESH, 2006, p.20).

Majority of my participants wished to remain anonymous, and as a researcher I have respected their decision, as well as the ‘do no harm’ principle and taken steps to ensure that their privacy is protected. In the labeling and transcription of interviews I have used coded pseudonyms and the files are safely encrypted in my personal computer that only I have access to. As NESH recommends, reusing data is not allowed and identifiable personal data collected by one researcher for one purpose should not be used by another researcher (NESH, 2006, p.18). As mentioned before, I received approval from the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) before I started my interviews and have followed the advice given by the Center. As agreed with my research subjects and NSD, the data and the interviews that I collected will be deleted when the written thesis is handed in and when I have completed my oral defense. This will ensure that the raw material and data that I collected will not be reused after I have completed the research.

The NESH guidelines stresses on the obligation to inform research subjects (including where the funding comes from), recommends that researchers ensure freedom, self-determination and protect privacy (NESH, 2006, p.11-12). The interview subjects have signed a free and informed letter of consent which lists the reason for the research, where the funding comes from, their rights as an interview subject and their wish to remain anonymous.

Stealing content from other researchers and publishing as your own, or plagiarism, is a breach of social science ethical standards. Referencing work with bibliography and in-text citations—paraphrasing and quoting—as well as the use of footnotes and endnotes, can help avoid this breach of ethics. As a researcher I have cited and referenced correctly (not just



early on but also subsequently) (NESH, 2006, p.25) and have given the most accurate reference so that it can be verified easily.

## 5. Interviews and Findings

In this chapter, I present the data I gathered during my fieldwork. This was an important aspect of the research as it gave me the opportunity to understand the issues through the point of view of my subjects. While choosing the relevant respondents for my research I ensured that they were diverse in terms of genders, age groups, professional, as well as immigrant backgrounds. I got to experience the joy and happiness of them talking about their past, present and future and also their disappointments, and frustrations.

### 5.1. Norwegian Public Media

On the question of what they understood by Norwegian public media the respondents mention major television, radio and newspapers (both digital and hard copies). One of the respondents said he got his news from radio and two respondents said they get their news from a combination of television news (NRK and TV2) and newspapers. My respondents read *Aftenposten*, *VG*, *Dagblad*, *Nettavisen*, *Klassekampen* and the digital news version of the NRK. Three mentioned Facebook as a source of news. However, on further exploration, the respondent explained that they read the news shared through the pages of *Aftenposten* and *VG* on Facebook.

### 5.2. Stories that Connect

When asked about the types of stories in the public media that is representative of them, the respondents talked about articles and stories that focus on immigrants and those with immigrant backgrounds working hard and succeeding. They argued that those stories, highlighting the positive aspects help with the perception that Norway is becoming more multicultural. The respondents were also interested in news that dealt specifically about the wave of refugees arriving in Norway and Western Europe in 2015. This is because they themselves identified with the stories of the refugees (as they had also taken similar journeys in the past), or because they felt that the media was not doing justice to the stories of those who were arriving in the country. One of the respondents, a first generation Norwegian, talked about his desire to see stories that explore the issues surrounding those who are caught between Norwegian culture and the one that they left behind and how they are trying to belong to one without feeling like an outsider.

*“The news that interests me are the news that I can relate to—stories where immigrants have done good”* (Safin, 2018).

*“I like to read stories about people like me, first, second, third generation immigrant who are trying to belong and are caught between two cultures” (Aqeel, 2018).*

*“Positive stories show that the new members of the country are trying to do good. And that, in a way, we are all the same— we want to work hard and contribute to the society, and to the new country that we all belong to” (Safin, 2018).*

*“Of course, I am interested in news overall, but what interests me more, since the refugee crisis, is how Muslims are represented in the media, because the trend is not going in the right direction” (Afreen, 2018).*

*“I want to read about what the refugees who came here since 2015 are doing...they had to leave their homes and had to flee terrible conditions, so I am interested in learning how they are coping now. You could say those are the stories I relate, to as I have also gone through similar experiences.” (Soran, 2018).*

*“I read a story recently about a Syrian girl who has been in Norway for three years and she continues to get good grades and make her community, school and classmates proud. That shows that everyone can make it here, right?” (Safin, 2018).*

### **5.3. The Power of Stories**

I found a general sense of disenchantment among my respondents about the type of stories that Norwegian media covers when it comes to the Muslim community. They argue that they connected more with stories about everyday Muslims, living their lives, raising their families and doing well. Each of my eight respondents talked about how there are more negative stories about Muslims than positive. When asked to think about the last positive story they read, each of the respondents had trouble remembering. They argued that negative portrayal of the Muslim community contributes to making them into outsiders, as always conspiring, trying to take advantage and scheming. It creates an image that the Muslims are different from the majority of Norwegians—that Muslims are to be suspected, that they are oppressive, oppressed and terrorists.

*“I think an average Muslim doesn’t come up in the media. What comes out in the news are stories about the one wearing niqab...the scary [sic] ones, or the ones that think women shouldn’t go out of the house, or that all gay people should be killed. People find that interesting. Even I would find those stories interesting because it is so extreme. An average Muslim’s story is not interesting” (Shaima, 2018).*

When probed further about what she means by “average”, Shaima explains,

*“By average, I mean someone like me. I am a Muslim, I pray. Islam says I have to pray five times, and I may not do that all the time, but I don’t go around saying extreme things that make people scared. I am just a girl who thinks Islam is the right choice for me but not in an extreme kind of way. I don’t see Islam as something difficult. I see Islam as a way to make my life easy. But stories like mine hardly ever come out in the media here”* (Shaima, 2018).

*“Often in the Norwegian media, men are portrayed as terrorists and women are portrayed as oppressed. We are seen as being suspicious, we often have something to hide, and we are always conspiring to harm”* (Taimur, 2018).

*“I was contacted once by the media a few years about participating in a program where I was to talk about being a Muslim woman in Norway. I was so happy this was finally happening and I agreed. They called me back an hour later to tell me that they couldn’t talk to me because I don’t wear a hijab and they wanted someone who wears a hijab in the story. I was shocked and disappointed. An average Muslim woman, like me, is not interesting to the media”* (Afreen, 2018).

Respondents argue that they are aware there are those in the Muslim community that had different values than them. That their way of thinking may fall under the liberal category of Muslim thoughts. The interview participants were concerned that they were generalizing while trying to make the distinction between an average and an extreme Muslim. They argued that using these examples were important as they were trying to make a point that media often does generalize and takes the most sensational and controversial aspects and propagates those ideas as the norm.

All eight interview participants talked about how when there is a story about something bad happening somewhere and the perpetrator turns out to be Norwegian Muslim of certain immigrant background, the media makes sure to highlight that. Whereas if there is a positive story and it happens to be about Norwegian Muslim of immigrant background, the media tends to ignore the immigrant background and only highlight the Norwegian nationality.

*“When something bad happens, a criminal case, for example, they don’t say who did it, they will just say a man/women of immigrant (often Muslim) background did it.*

*When they do that, it makes me feel like I am not fully Norwegian because I have an immigrant background. On the other hand, you know, when something good happens—the other day there was an article about fashion. Basically the title was ‘Norwegian Mahad on the runway in Paris’. Mahad’s Somali background was suddenly not important. He was suddenly just Norwegian. However, say, if Mahad had stabbed someone, it would say, ‘Muslim man of (insert xyz immigrant background) stabbed someone’. It is absolutely frustrating” (Afreen, 2018).*

Additionally, they explained that when the media *does* talk to someone from the community, it is usually someone who has left the community for various reasons and doesn’t have many positive things to say. This, they argue, is done deliberately because those in the media have found a voice ‘within’ the community that reinforces the stereotype that the media wants to perpetuate.

*“Voices of people who were a part of the Muslim community before and those who have left (for various reasons) are more prominent in the Norwegian media. They choose these subjects because they tend to reinforce what they want to say— that these particular Muslims left their community because it is too conservative. But that is not the story of the entire community” (Afreen, 2018).*

#### **5.4. Fear of the Changing World**

Respondents explained that the reason for this skepticism towards Muslims is related also to world events and how Muslims are portrayed worldwide. They argue that news is very much influenced by the world events and the media may have the agenda to cover only one side.

*“When they read about the activities of what the Islamic State is doing in Syria and other places they think that is what Islam is. I have some friends who asked me if that is what Muslims do, and whether killing other people is what Islam tells us to do” (Aqeel, 2018).*

*“Media represents what is very much in demand. In fact, media’s agenda is led by the demand from the public. There’s a demand for an anti-immigration agenda based on events that happened on and since 9/11 and then again due to ISIS and the refugee crisis” (Ubaid, 2018).*

*There is a percentage of the population who have this fear of the unknown and media and political parties play on this fear and create a division in the society (Taimur, 2018).*

One respondent talked about how not all Muslims in the media are talked about negatively. The reason that there is a negative perception in the media is because the new Muslim immigrants have a different cultural background and their differences are more obvious.

*“We can just separate....if it is the Muslim people we are talking about, we see the scenario which happened after the war in Bosnia and all the Muslims who were given asylum in Norway. They were not talked about in a negative way. Not like the Muslims who are coming from Afghanistan....This is because the Bosnian people are more European, or are European, I should say, and also they have the way of life which is more compatible in Norway, unlike the Afghan people who are coming here” (Ubaid, 2018).*

This was re-confirmed by other participants who argued that the way they looked and their overt differences (culture, language, skin color) made them susceptible to being put in a certain category because they were not like the rest, and judged accordingly.

*“I used to work as an assistant car salesman, so I had to stand in the middle of the mall and get attention of the people to talk to them so I could eventually sell the car. People used to be apprehensive about coming to me and asking me questions. I don’t feel different, so I would go to them to talk, and they could see that I was not very different from them. They would then relax and ease up a bit. I think they didn’t approach me because they thought I was different. That I was not like them” (Aqeel, 2018).*

*“If it was a white person selling that car, they would have absolutely not been afraid to approach them, because they wouldn’t look different” (Aqeel, 2018).*

## **5.5. Telling Our Own Stories**

One of the other reasons given by the respondents in the lack of balance when it comes to the news about the Muslim community is because of the fact that there just aren’t enough Muslim people telling their own stories. When it comes to articles, especially about women

and the hijab debate, on social and gender issues the women respondents felt that the Norwegian media was making big assumptions without talking to Muslims.

*“Most issues discussed in the Norwegian media, pertaining to Muslims, and especially women, are told from a one-sided perspective. They talk about how oppressive hijab is, without talking to Muslim women who actually wear the hijab. How can you trust that story to be complete when it is told totally from an outsider’s perspective?” (Meher, 2018).*

*“When anyone reads the Norwegian coverage of Muslim women’s issues, one comes off thinking that Norwegian Muslim women have absolutely no power. There is a sense that we have to save these poor women who have no voice. They are sitting at home and doing what the men want them to do. As a Muslim woman, I can say that is rubbish. My question to the Norwegian media is, do they even know who the Norwegian Muslim women actually is? Who is telling these stories about us?” (Afreem, 2018).*

*“The misrepresentations in the media about the multicultural community is because they are not written by multicultural people, it is time that we wrote our own stories,” (Aqeel, 2018).*

*“I have two magazines coming to my house, one from a shopping center, and another from the streets of the west part of Oslo. And most of the time, I don’t see a single black or Asian face. It makes me sad because that is not the reality. That is not the Oslo I live in, which is becoming more and more multicultural. Why isn’t that reflected in these magazines? I don’t think we deserve that in 2018” (Ubaid, 2018).*

*“The reason that my community gets stereotyped and misunderstood is because our story is not told properly. My story is told by an outsider. Let me write my own story, hear me talk about my experiences from me, not from another person” (Aqeel, 2018).*

## **5.6. Talk To Us, Not For Us**

There was a general perception amongst the participants of my interview that there wasn’t enough dialogue happening in the Norwegian communities between various age, ethnic, and nationality groups. The participants were open to being asked questions about the way they dress, the way they celebrate festivals and generally about their religion and culture. They

believed that the programs such as the 2011 campaign ‘Tea Time’ started by the Norway-based non-government organization the Norwegian Center Against Racism are positive initiatives and must be encouraged. Tea Time campaign encouraged Norwegian Muslims to invite non-Muslims home for a cup of tea. The respondents argued that this program encouraged people from both sides to sit down together, and talk openly to each other, ask questions and share about each other’s lives. They believed that this is a way to dispel myths about each other, destroy stereotypes, blur the boundaries that have been created over the years, keep prejudice in check and create an environment of mutual understanding and respect for each other’s family, culture, religion and the way of life.

The participants of the research argued that the issue of dialogue is important in two ways. First, they explained that the absence of dialogue creates a society where prejudice and stereotypes about a minority community can fester. If you are a journalist or media person growing up in an environment that has narrow definition of diversity, you end up not questioning these assumptions. If the newsrooms, that are not diverse, also do not challenge these prejudiced ideas, you end up multiplying those stereotypes through your writings and reportage. Therefore, dialogue in the society is important to create a tolerant media. Secondly, a tolerant media means that certain myths and prejudice about a community is clarified and dispelled. A media that is sensitive creates a society that encourages further dialogue, that respects multiculturalism and that fights against conservatism. The respondents note that they see plenty of opportunity for a dialogue. They applauded the role that the media played in bringing communities together after the 7/22 attacks in Norway. They also added that while dialogues are happening in neighborhoods, they are in a smaller scale and need to expand.

*“I would rather that people asked me questions about my headscarf, than make assumptions about who I am and what I am about. I can explain my choices, that is fine. Just don’t make assumptions about me. Ask me questions. Talk to me, not about me. Talk to me, not for me” (Meher, 2018).*

*“People in Norway are interested in their neighbors, friends, colleagues, people in their community. What we need to do is stop and talk to each other, ask each other how we are doing, find opportunities to participate in each other’s lives whether it is during festivals, or football match, or community meetings. That is how we dissolve these ‘boundaries’ that has been created” (Safin, 2018).*



*“We have witnessed the powerful role media played in bringing all Norwegians together after the 22 July, 2011 attacks in solidarity and kindness. At that time it could happen because the country was mourning and there was a need to listen to each other. And we did. Norwegian media allowed it to happen, without prejudice. We talked to each other. We listened to each other. That kind of sensitivity is the need of the hour as we deal with issues of inclusion and diversity in Norway” (Taimur, 2018).*

*“Recently the national public television NRK followed a Muslim person during the holy month of Ramadan to understand how Eid is celebrated. It was a feel-good, positive story that showed Muslims as normal people, who did normal things with families, had ambition, and took care of each other and neighbors. I am not saying that they should just follow a Muslim person. What I am saying is that the media needs to acknowledge that Norway is diverse, and that people follow different religions and cultures and they have their own way of doing things and showcase that. This could mean focusing on the Norwegian Jews, Norwegian Hindus, Buddhists. That is how you build tolerance” (Shaima, 2018).*

*“All these debates surrounding arranged marriage v. forced marriage, why Muslim women choose to wear hijab, about social control etc., have to be debated with a Muslim person who can talk about this. Listening to both side gives media the diversity of voices and affirms that even if we are different, we are actually the same and that we all have the same values and beliefs (Afreem, 2018).*

### **5.7. The (Un)apologetic Immigrant**

In my interviews I was also told by multiple respondents that they felt a profound sense of responsibility to be flexible to the Norwegian way of life. One of the respondents argued that while Norway wants to promote the fact that it is focusing on integration and that all have the same responsibility, the playing field is not as levelled as one would think. In the same vein, another respondent argued that there is an unbalanced focus on the responsibility of the immigrants when it comes to integration. They felt that it was not justified that the onus of integration was solely on the immigrants. Meanwhile, one participant argued that the immigrant Norwegians also need to be patient when it comes to white Norwegians adapting to the idea of integration. He argued that Norway is new in terms of receiving foreigners and that the country needs time to adjust to the new reality of multiculturalism.

*“In a sense I understand the apprehension Norwegians feel towards newcomers. I don’t think I would behave much differently if newcomers came in my own country. Therefore, I feel that as a minority I have to be flexible, I have to put more effort to being accepted and integrated. If I resist and I am negative, I will be rejected”* (Soran, 2018).

*“If you want to live in harmony, you have to adjust to the society that you are in. That is important to me”* (Shaima, 2018).

*“Sometimes the debate is too much about the minorities integrating themselves and that is fine and they should become a part of the society that they plan to live in, but integration goes the other way as well”* (Afreen, 2018).

*“Integration should be a two-sided operation. But in practice (in Norway) it is not like that. It is like the state is sitting on a high chair and telling the minorities to go backwards and forwards and sideways or telling them to sit down or stand up..if the playing field was more equal, why, as a Muslim man, do I have to always feel like I have to apologize for being a Muslim? Why do I always have to clarify that I don’t support terrorism? ”* (Taimur, 2018).

*“If we demand any change, culturally from the Norwegian population, we should also give time to the Norwegians to change themselves”* (Ubaid, 2018).

## **5.8. Short Summary of the Findings**

- 1) Participants of this study believed that the stories that highlighted the hard work of Muslims in Norway, stories that focused on newcomers persevering despite challenges, articles where immigrants are working hard and contributing to the society are the stories of the ‘average’ Muslim Norwegians. The respondents of this research related closely to those kinds of narratives and read those stories the most. Of particular interest, amongst the interview subjects, were stories about the immigrants who entered Norway during the refugee crisis, the lives the new immigrants are leading, and the challenges and successes they have had during their time in Norway (Safin, 2018), (Afreen,2018), (Shaima, 2018), (Soran, 2018).
- 2) The respondents of the study said that success stories, articles with a positive slant that feature Muslim Norwegians of immigrant background are rare the media. According to them the media is more interested in, and features stories about the

minority community that are negative. They argue that the negative stories give an incomplete picture of the community. The reason that media is so occupied with negative stories, they assert, is because they reinforce stereotypes, which helps sell news (Shaima, 2018), (Taimur, 2018), (Afreen, 2018).

- 3) Findings also suggest that global events (terror attacks, the refugee crisis, war in the Middle East), influences how Muslims are treated in the media in Norway. This, in turn, has a direct impact on how they are also treated in the society and in the perpetuation of the 'fear of the unknown' (Aqeel, 2018), (Ubaid, 2018), (Taimur, 2018).
- 4) The participants suggested that the one-sided perspective about the Muslim Norwegian community comes from the fact that most stories are written by someone who doesn't have the proper knowledge about the community. They call this an the 'outsiders' perspective. This includes not only the number of multicultural journalists in the newsrooms but also the lack of multicultural voices and sources quoted in in general stories (Meher, 2018), (Aqeel, 2018), (Afreen, 2018), (Ubaid, 2018).
- 5) When it comes to dialogue, the participants assert that the lack of dialogue in the society is reflected in the media. Stories about the Muslim community misses nuances and sensitivity and becomes a tool for the perpetuation of stereotypes. This, in turn, impedes further dialogue and encourages fear and suspicion to fester (Meher, 2018), (Safin, 2018), (Taimur, 2018), (Shaima, 2018), (Afreen, 2018).
- 6) The participants also felt that it was the responsibility of the newcomer to adjust to the rules of their new country. However, they argued that they have to often apologize and clarify who they are. The apprehension towards Muslims comes from the fact that integration has been a one sided affair (with immigrants adjusting to the new society) and that it has to be a two-way street. Meanwhile, the respondents also added that integration takes time, and that Norway is still new to this and therefore needs more time (Soran, 2018), (Shaima, 2018), (Afreen, 2018), (Taimur, 2018), (Ubaid, 2018).

## 6. Analysis

In this section, I analyze the findings from my fieldwork and link them to my readings of the literature that is available on this topic. I then connect these ideas to the research questions to explain how they shape the theory.

I set out in this study with the intention of exploring the ideas of multiculturalism, representation and inclusion in the Norwegian mainstream media as understood by Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background to explore if they perceived the media to be sensitive to their stories. I went into this research with an assumption that the Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background did not think that the mainstream Norwegian media sensitively represented them. During the course of my fieldwork, this assumption was confirmed. The respondents to this research argued that their stories were being accurately portrayed by the Norwegian media.

After having found the answer to the first question, I asked the research participants why, according to them, were they not properly represented in the media, and what types of portrayals and stories would they connect to. I believe that these two questions are linked and the responses from the interviews resonated with the literature that I read for this thesis. I connect the responses and elaborate on the reasons in the section below.

When it comes to the kind of stories that are representative of the community, the respondents were found to connect more to those that also reflected their own lives, family, experiences, and history. They argued that they kept an eye out for positive stories while reading news. They watched out for stories where immigrants were doing well despite various adversities. When asked to give an example of the last positive story they read, they had to really pause and think back. I asked them to keep that question in mind and I revisited it over and over during the course of the interviews. What was striking was that while the respondents were able to tell me the types of stories they could connect to, they still could not think of examples of specific positive stories they had last read during our 45 minutes – one hour interviews.

The reason negative portrayals get featured more, they explained, is because of the world events—9/11 attacks, ISIS war, violent events that have been the result of Islamic fundamentalism, means that the Muslim community is often seen as being conservative. This point resonates with the arguments put forward by Modood, who asserts that while multiculturalism should celebrate differences formed by immigration, that is not often the case because this ‘difference’ is also the reason why there are negative portrayals of the

community. He links this to the anti-Islamic wave that has spread throughout Europe because there is an understanding that Islam is intolerant and is in opposition to the liberal western values. Modood explains that Muslim minorities are not treated the same as other racial minorities because of their religion and that attitude is reflected in the media. According to Modood, the media takes anti-Muslim sentiments less seriously, which can lead to bias in the framing of the news items including the negative portrayal of the members of the community. This understanding that Islam and the Muslim community are in conflict with the western ideas of liberalism also has other effects. The respondents talked about how acquaintances, colleagues and even friends often tell them that they do not particularly like Muslims, or they are scared of Muslims. They talk about having to constantly apologize for being a Muslim.

By now we understand that the media has a role in agenda-setting as well as framing the news so that it fits in with the selective attention-span of the audience. Scholars such as Triandafyllidou, Modood, van Dijk and Casanova have long argued that positive news about migrants and immigrants in Europe are an exception. Similarly, Hall has argued that minorities are often stereotyped in the mainstream media. According to van Dijk, more often than not immigration is portrayed as invasion, immigrants as groups that are intent on taking advantage of the system and migrants as the 'others'. The respondents to this research listed similar portrayals often featured about their community in the Norwegian media and noted that this kind of framing has a profound impact on the way that the majority views their community because it inculcates fear and bias. Empirical evidence from 2014 shows that that constant exposure to negative images of a particular community leads to prejudice (Danilova, 2014). The respondents feared that there are more negative portrayals of the Muslim community in Norwegian media and that negative narrative is helping suspicions in the society to grow.

News production is an intricate process, where certain issues that are considered newsworthy are played up while the others are discarded. Media theorist van Dijk has argued that the groups that are considered less powerful, less interesting and less important are often the ones that are discarded, ignored and overlooked by the media. During the interviews, the respondents of this project often talked about feeling powerless because the stories they connected with were not told. Therefore, the issue of power relations between those who have access to media and tell their stories and those who do not, cannot be ignored.

Hall asserts that the audience create meanings from the media they consume. Keeping that in mind, the respondents argue that the selection of news in the Norwegian media ignores

their voice because they are less powerful, are not important, and can be ignored. According to them news focuses too much on the negative narrative that gives credence to the prejudice because there is no one inside the newsrooms who can challenge that echo chamber of homogenous ideas. It is argued that the unequal power relations between the majority and minority leads to stereotypes—which fixes group meanings and limits the range of perceptions about the group. The respondents say that they often feel like the ‘other’ as their differences are not seen as something one should celebrate but something one should be threatened by. They argue that the power relation is unequal because Norwegian newsrooms are mostly white and homogenous, that there is racism in the European media and prejudice is legitimized by the dominant white elite discourse. Like van Dijk the respondent assert that the white journalist will have close sources that are white. Because multicultural or ethnic organizations still do not have the resources to organize properly—hold press conferences, issue statements and provide expert opinions, what does end up in news stories are the same sources who talk about issues in similar narratives as before. Therefore, immigration continues to be seen a problem, minorities as intruders, ethnic news as news about immigrants that can be conveniently lumped together with news about crime and violence.

According to Hall, the meaning that media gives helps create consensus in the society. However, the respondents to this research argue that if consensus is being created in Norway, it is without the inclusion of their voices. Certain people or groups in the society have had power to drive the discourse, and the opinions as well as the experiences of these handful have become standardized and accepted as the established one. Dominant ideas, which exclude the point of view of minorities, becoming a regularized ideology conflicts with the diversity and acceptance of a multicultural society .

The respondents want their stories told by the people of their community and decry the lack of Muslim representation in the newsrooms. This is in line with Modood, who wants heterogenous news rooms that ‘nurture Muslim voices’ and asserts that diversity in the newsrooms means that anti-Muslim opinions will get as much credence as racism. Multicultural newsrooms also mean variety in stories, angles, and the inclusion of minority voices. If Norway is to truly be considered multicultural, the respondents argue, their voices should not just be included in stories that concerns their community, but in all types of stories that concerns the Norwegian society.

Another important argument put forward by the respondents was that inclusion of diverse voices in the media creates dialogue in the society. According to them, if we see

people living differently and yet striving for the same things—good family life, peaceful communities, good jobs, working to better the society—that makes the majority understand that we are, after all, not that different. But the respondents of the interview argue that there is another side to this. They assert that the reason there is under/mis representation of their community in the Norwegian media is because those who control the stories are not sensitive to diverse stories, which is why there is no space for them. They say that the element of dialogue is still missing in Norwegian neighborhoods, and that has hampered representation in the media. This, they say, is a double-edged sword. The absence of dialogue aids the stereotypes to fester, grow and get stronger. This exclusion in the society feeds the media because the journalists who rule the newsrooms are a product of that society. A better presence of minorities in the newsrooms can diminish this, but newsrooms, the respondents re-assert, are still not diverse enough. Therefore, what is being produced are stories based on the ideas that haven't evolved and news that encourages stereotypes. They explain that the stories that paint the members of their community in a negative light and refuses to focus on positive stories of everyday Muslims feeds into the stereotype. The result of reading and being exposed to such stories about the Muslim community makes the majority, non-Muslim people fearful. Suspicion and fear does not lead to an environment where dialogue is possible. So the cycle continues as time goes on—as citizens (some of whom end up as journalists and news makers) grow up in a society that does not communicate, they continue to be influenced by one-sided views, embrace that as the norm and inject the same stereotypical ideas back into the society.

Here, I want to link this response to thinker Paulo Freire who argues that the acknowledgment of the other should be the central focus of human existence. Human beings cannot exist apart from each other because we need each other. To prevent us from connecting is to make us less human. Modood and Taylor note that identities cannot be created in isolation, which is why we need to recognize the 'other', acknowledge our differences, to grow our minds, to limit radicalism and to co-exist in a fast-changing society. Like philosopher Parekh they argue that it is not enough to say that dialogue is central to multiculturalism because dialogue is actually foundational to multiculturalism. When the majority dominates the public discourse, which often happens, it does not create an environment where dialogue is encouraged. Parekh and the respondents want us to envisage a multicultural society that doesn't just allow the minorities to live-as-they-wish relativism, but

encourages genuine dialogue where minorities have a space, and where they can express their point of view.

The respondents strongly feel if the non-Muslim Norwegians and Muslim Norwegians had more interactions, more dialogue, that would help break down the barriers where both communities can make their mind about the other through honest dialogues and discussions, and not through the pre-conceived notions that have developed via the dominant negative ideologies about Muslims in the media. But, they note, that kind of dialogue is missing in the society in Norway, which is also seen when the Norwegian media doesn't do as many stories about minority communities, which further fuels misconception about the community. They say that one-sided portrayal manipulates the narrative in Norway. This resonates with Freire who says that dialogue cannot be viewed as something that can be used to domesticate, dominate or manipulate because true dialogue checks the excesses of power, respects recognition, leads to revolution and keeps democracy healthy. The respondents agree that media can be a very effective tool for dialogue, but if the media refuses to address the issue of this 'other' and only gives space to dominant ideologies, the minorities are sure to feel oppressed and silenced.

Discussions around inclusion and representation, especially in the media, is not possible without addressing the issue of 'differences'. The respondents have argued while they are Norwegian and may have grown up with similar values and ideas as the majority Norwegians, they are often made to feel different. Swiss, linguist Saussure asserts that differences are important because it leads us to be curious, which leads to dialogue with the 'other'. On the flip side, as the anthropologist Mary Douglas has noted, not all 'differences' are good—whatever doesn't quite fit into a mold may also disrupt the system. The respondents argue that the Norwegian media doesn't quite know how to deal with the idea that Muslims are different. Therefore, it either ignores them, or portrays them negatively, which hinders further dialogue.

One respondent talked about creating opportunities for dialogue — in cafes, sports grounds where their children meet, music trips that parents accompany their children to, clothes and food stores. But majority said they did not feel that the non-Muslim Norwegian community was ready for that kind of approach. It is clear from the analysis above that most respondent felt very strongly about the need for dialogue, but majority of them wanted the state, local governments or non-government organizations to facilitate these dialogue opportunities. What was also missing from our conversations was a more critical look, by the



respondents, inside the Norwegian Muslim community itself. It was my observation that the respondents didn't examine their liberal outlook from a critical angle. While they acknowledged the presence of other viewpoints, they weren't interested in including those voices as 'Muslim voices' as they were more conservative and 'extreme'

Additionally, when it comes to telling their stories the respondents weren't able to reflect on whether having alternative sources of voice—Muslim run newspapers, television channels, radio stations would help bring their stories forward and contribute to multiculturalism. On integration: most respondents thought that integration was positive and necessary for multiculturalism and dialogue. That is, as long as both minority and majority could have an equal say. However, I found a general sense of concern amongst the respondents that integration, while good in theory, may mean giving up their community and families' values. For some of the respondents there was such a thing as "too integrated".

I believe the reason this study of multiculturalism is different is because it puts MPI's media indicator under a microscope and studies it from the perspective of the rapidly growing Muslim community in Norway, a country that is fast-adapting to multicultural policies. The fieldwork that I conducted gave a lot of importance to the idea of voice and why it is especially important to a community that is often ignored or misunderstood by the mainstream media. Separating the Muslim community from their religion is difficult, but I have attempted to do so in this thesis because this is not a religious exploration. While respecting the link between the two (Islam and community), I focused my attention on the point-of-view of the respondents to make a sociological exploration. This study makes a clear link between multiculturalism and the need for representation/inclusion in the media. With the aid of media theorist Hall and multiculturalist Modood, I answer why the power of stories in the media is so important, and how the presence and absence of dialogue in the society influences media, which in turn, promotes or discourages dialogue in the society. Most importantly, I believe my biggest contribution to this discussion is why ownership to your own narratives and telling our your own stories is fundamental to multiculturalism.

One of the limitations of my study lies on the fact that all my respondents are of liberal background. I think this study would have benefited more if I were able to include voices that are considered more 'conservative'. My respondents talked about the Norwegian media being partial in including more conservative voices in their stories as it confirms the media's stereotypes. As a researcher, I would have liked to explore this with the members of the community who are considered 'outliers' by the respondents I interviewed to answer

whether there is a fair representation of conservative voices in the mainstream media, or whether the voices that the mainstream media focuses on are only the 'liberal' ones. Although my attempt was to include diverse voices, it was difficult to get access to conservative groups. That combined with time and language restriction, I was unable to expand my interview field. Future studies exploring Muslim voices should include both groups to examine what types of news sources members of both group follow. This will help answer what liberal as well as conservative Norwegian Muslims feel are the correct portrayal of their community.

In short, the findings of my field research confirms my assumption and answers my research questions. Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background feel that the Norwegian media is not representative of/is sensitive to their stories. The stories they identify with are the stories of hope and courage. They argue that the portrayal that accurately describes them are positive portrayals where members of their community are shown to be working hard and contributing to the Norwegian society. However, those types of portrayal are missing in the Norwegian mainstream media. World events including global terror attacks, the ISIS war has given the world an impression that Islam is in opposition to liberal western ideas. This kind of thinking not only means that the members of the Muslim community have to constantly apologize and clarify, but also that the portrayal of these communities in the mainstream media often becomes negative. This is a prejudiced image of Islam and of the Muslim community, and it hinders dialogue between their community and the rest of the society. In the absence of dialogue, fear and suspicion of the 'other' festers. Media thrives on what is 'newsworthy' and negative portrayals can often be 'played up', so those images end up being perpetuated. This, aided by the lack of opportunity for the minorities in the Norwegian newsrooms, leads to the continuation of the stereotype through the media. When it comes to power relations, the majority's opinions become normalized. Whereas media should have been a tool for dialogue, it becomes a tool for the propagation of stereotypes. Therefore, if Norway were to truly embrace the ideas of multiculturalism, there is a need in the society to not be inundated by the stereotypical ideas of the 'other', but a need to cross the aisle and dialogue with those who are 'different', to respect and give ample space to the diversity of opinions and voices.

## 7. Conclusion

I started this research with two specific questions: first, whether the members of the Norwegian Muslim community with immigrant background perceive the Norwegian mainstream media to be representative towards/sensitive of their stories. Second, if the respondents felt the mainstream media was not sensitive to/representative of their stories, a) what, according to them, were the reasons. Additionally, b) what types of portrayals of their community would sensitively represent them, and also justify multiculturalism in Norway.

A 2016 report by SSN estimates the number of Muslims in the country to be close to 200 thousand which is four percent of the total population (Statistics Norway, 2017). A research that narrows the immigrant groups further, including projections on growing Muslim populations in Europe shows that the community will make up to 17 percent of Europe in the next 30 years (Pew Research Center, 2017). Nations in Europe have understood that the world is becoming multicultural and have moved away from policies that marginalize and assimilate minorities and have actively pursued policies to politically accommodate national minorities, as well as minority communities formed due to immigration. These multicultural policies have challenged the *status quo* and homogeneity of Europe, and have also opened itself up to criticisms. Critics argue that multicultural policies have created parallel communities, those policies are illiberal and that multiculturalism promotes group rights instead of individual rights. World events such as 9/11, terror attacks in Europe, the wars in the Middle East and South Asia, and the refugee crisis have only given these critics and those who oppose multiculturalism more impetus.

Amidst all these criticisms, multiculturalism has persevered. Banting and Kymlicka's MPI shows that the countries in Western Europe are embracing multicultural policies. Taking the MPI as the base, I have honed this research down to Norway—which scholars have argued is also seen to be making progress on development of multiculturalism policies (Tolley, 2011, Lybæk & Stokke, 2016, IMDI, 2009). In this research, I have narrowed the study down to look at one particular indicator of the MPI—the media and how inclusive, sensitive and representative it is of the minorities.

The MPI indicator for the Norwegian media shows little or no evidence of more inclusion of minority issues. I study this from an even narrower standpoint—the understanding of multiculturalism, inclusion and representation of Muslim voices in the Norwegian mainstream news stories from the perspectives of the Norwegian Muslim community. During the starting of this research I had my assumptions about the kind of

responses I would get—that the respondents would not agree that the Norwegian media represents them sensitively. As mentioned earlier, my suspicions were confirmed during my field research.

It is important to clarify here why media is central while talking about multiculturalism. With media pervading our ever day lives, it is impossible to ignore the influence it has on us. The power it has on personal choices, public opinions and even national agendas are well documented. For a society meanings are important, and it is the media that circulates these meanings (Hall, 1997b). Media has an important role as a watchdog in keeping autocrats at bay to curtail excesses of power. It is also an important element in promoting human rights, in democratization of a society, in promoting values of tolerance and integration (Triandafyllidou, 2013 & UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1995).

The respondents of my field research understand the power and influence media has in Norway and argue that the portrayal of their community in the Norwegian media is not representative of who they are. News stories tend to focus on the negative aspects of the community and downplay the positive stories. The respondents argue that the story of an ‘average Muslim’ doing what an everyday person usually does is not newsworthy because it is not sensational enough. They assert that the way in which the media portrayed the Muslim community during the 2015 refugee crisis was unfair. If the media wants to do justice to the stories of those who arrived during that time, they should, for example, do follow-up stories, and see how the Muslim refugees who came three years ago are doing.

The interviewees said they very rarely see stories in the Norwegian Media they connect to. According to them, there are more positive stories than negative in the Muslim community, if the media is only willing to investigate. The respondents argue that the media doesn’t do that because there are already set ideas about how Muslims live, behave, and interact and a story of an average Muslim going about their everyday lives, unsettles and disrupts the discourse that argues that the Muslim community is different (Shaima, 2018) (Aqeel, 2018).

Multiculturalism, especially in the context of the Muslims in Europe, which is formed by migration, is about differences (Modood, 2011). Through the research I found that the Muslim community that I interviewed were trying to assert their differences by embracing their uniqueness and pushing for positive stories (Shaima, 2018) (Afreeen, 2018). However, the constant negative portrayal of their community also tended to bring negative feelings.

They argued that they always needed to clarify what kind of Muslims they were, and apologize for their community (Taimur, 2018). Anthropologist Mary Douglas argues that difference should be a good thing, but the respondents argued that in Norway it is not yet seen as a positive thing. They explain that the idea of difference challenges the *status quo*, which not everybody likes, because what the society understood as ‘normal’ becomes disturbed. This became clearer in my discussions with the participants when they linked the incorrect and misunderstood portrayals of Muslim men—who are portrayed as angry and oppressive and women as those without voice or agency within the Muslim community. They connected these types of portrayals in the Norwegian media to those in the newsrooms not really understanding what to do with the idea of difference that Muslims have introduced in the Norwegian society (Taimur, 2018) (Afreen, 2018).

The lack of inclusion and misrepresentation in the media can also be explained by the power relations that are existent in the Norwegian society. Scholars such as Modood have argued despite countries embracing multiculturalism through policies, racism has persevered in Europe. This is also affirmed by van Dijk who asserts that there is racism in the European media. He links this to the unequal power relations in the society, which has given birth to this stereotype and racism against minorities, especially the immigrants. Media theorist Hall argues that discourses in the society are not innocent and the media has a hidden ideology. More importantly, the respondents argued that the media produces whatever is in demand. World events since 9/11 have created an environment where people are less trusting and more suspicious of each other. They argue that the media capitalizes on this. That combined with the news about the involvement of fundamentalist Muslims in the terror events, becomes a perfect fuel that media can use to tell people to fear. The casualty of this is that all Muslims end up being demonized (Ubaid, 2018), (Aqeel, 2018) (Taimur, 2018). The respondents argue that a multicultural media understands nuances and goes beyond headlines and superficiality to give a true picture. Unfortunately, they explain, the Norwegian media is not yet there.

The scholars I have explored in this paper explain that racism stems from the unequal power relationships within the media—that there just aren’t enough minorities in the newsrooms. The respondents of this research also focus on the idea that the reason that the stories of the Muslim community is being misrepresented is because there just aren’t enough Muslims in the Norwegian mainstream media newsrooms (Afreen, 2018) (Meher, 2018) (Ubaid, 2018) (Aqeel, 2018). They urge the readers to question who is writing/telling these

stories. Misrepresentations usually happen when outsiders tell someone else's story without deeper understanding. The respondents want to tell their own stories, and they want to be in control of their own narratives (Aqeel, 2018), (Afreen, 2018), (Taimur, 2018), (Ubaid, 2018).

Their ideas resonates with Hall's, when he argues that there is a need to "flip the discourse", fix the stereotypes in the media through resistance. Limited image effects the way the society perceives the real world. Dominant ideologies that are interested in maintaining the *status quo* must not have space in a multicultural society, the respondents argue. Diversity in the newsroom means not only diversity in the content but also inclusion of multicultural voices in everyday stories (Ubaid, 2018). The respondents echo Hall, van Dijk and Modood when they say that seeing Muslims, minorities, multicultural voices in the media normalizes their presence. It helps to avoid sensationalism and check prejudices and stereotypes. Most importantly, they argue that it helps promote healthy dialogue because it limits fear and suspicion and creates a space where all communities feels safe to discuss, negotiate, argue, agree and disagree on issues that are important to the society (Meher, 2018), (Safin, 2018), (Taimur, 2018), (Shaima, 2018), (Afreen, 2018).

An important point that came up during the fieldwork was the issue of dialogue that was discussed in detail by the respondents. They explain that Norwegian media, through its meager focus on positive stories and bigger emphasis on negative portrayal of the community is perpetuating suspicion, which is not conducive to dialogues. Multiculturalists such as Taylor, Hall, Modood, Parekh have long argued that intercultural dialogue are one of the foundational pillars of multiculturalism. My respondents argue that the element of dialogue is missing in the Norwegian society. This has resulted in the mistrust about minorities, and about those who are different. This fear, prejudiced, racism is being legitimized by the media, which is already not inclusive, and also spreading doubt about multiculturalism in the Norwegian society. They call this a 'vicious cycle' where lack of dialogue in the society is festering prejudice, stereotype and racism, and this in turn is being used by the media to spread further suspicion. The end result is that people are afraid to talk to each other, to their neighbors, friends, colleagues, which leads to no dialogue between the communities...and the cycle continues. The respondents wished to live in a society where those from outside the Muslim community would *to* them and not *for* them (Meher, 2018) (Safin, 2018) (Shaima, 2018).

As a Master's thesis, my research was constrained by language, time and resources. What could have been illuminating is to explore a case study of a country in the West that has

embraced multiculturalism in media to understand and analyze the kinds of victories and challenges media in that particular country faced on its way to achieving a multicultural media. I believe that there is a huge potential in conducting a more in-depth and larger study on the need for a diverse and inclusive media in Norway, a country that is fast becoming multicultural. More research can be done on the inclusion of the national minority groups and other immigrant communities in Norwegian mainstream media linking it to inclusion and multiculturalism.

This research is not about the MPI but having studied the media indicator of the MPI to understand the trend of multiculturalism in Western Europe, I feel that a brief comment about the MPI is important. While the MPI shows a general trend of western democracies embracing multiculturalism, the indicators used are very specific and narrow. For example, if inclusive media is one of the pillars of a multicultural society, it is important to understand how is it actually being measured in the MPI. I found that the parameters used, including the definition of ‘public media’ vague and incomplete. While the indicator covers issues of representation in various countries in terms of hiring and licensing, it doesn’t measure the evolving (or stagnant) coverage of stories about inclusion and representation, or ethnic sensitivity in the content of what the media creates. Hence, while the MPI is useful in trying to understand the overall direction countries are taking, it doesn’t quite give a nuanced view.

One of the limitations of this research that future studies on Muslim voices in Norwegian media should address is by including the view points from and the conservative sides. Through the snowball sampling method, I was able to get details about those on the conservative side, and my intention was to include more voices, access was difficult. Further studies can address and explore whether the Norwegian media actually gives more space to conservative Muslim voices (as argued by the respondents of this research), or if those on the conservative side feel that their view points are suppressed. I believe, a deeper analysis will bring out the nuances and narratives that are found within the Norwegian Muslim community.

Additionally, there is also the possibility to study exactly how media laws in Norway are embracing the idea of multiculturalism— if and what kind of policies are being formed to make media more multicultural. That research should be supplemented by an in-depth examination on the changes taking place within the Norwegian media houses, where production companies, news channels, newspapers, radio stations are independently changing regulations within the organization to embrace more inclusive and multicultural policies, and diverse newsrooms and newsmakers. This kind of study can be expanded to include all forms

of media. Therefore, I see the prospective of a longer multiculturalism research project documenting diversity and inclusion in not just news media but also in popular media—television programs, news, documentary and fictional series as well as films and cinema.



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## Annexes

### Annex 1: Interview Guide

#### Introduction and Public Media

1. Tell me about yourself (name, age, where you live, where you were born)
2. Can you explain what public media means to you?
3. Do you consume media?
4. How do you consume media, what kind?
5. Do you read, watch, listen to news?
6. What kinds of news sources do you follow?
7. What types of news stories interest you?
8. What was the last story that you read/heard/saw on public media that you liked?
9. What types of stories do news sources actually focus on?
10. What types of stories do you see/hear/read that you don't like?

#### Multiculturalism

11. What do you understand by multiculturalism?
12. Can you, in your own words, explain what integration means to you?
13. What do you understand by assimilation?
14. Do you think Norway is getting more multicultural?
15. If yes, how is the public media becoming more multicultural?
16. If no, can you explain how it is not becoming multicultural?

#### Identity and Representation

17. Are the stories that you see/hear/read on public media representative of you?
18. If yes, how are they representative of you?
19. If no, how do you think are they not representative of you?
20. Does the news story represent your culture?
21. What does identity mean to you?
22. Do you see/hear/read news stories that represents the identity you identify with?
23. How does it/does it not represent the identity you identify with?
24. Can you give me an example of the stories that would represent you?
25. Do you see yourself in the stories that you see/hear/read on public media?
26. What kind of stories would you like to see/hear/read that represents your religion, culture, identity?
27. Do you feel yourself misrepresented/misplaced in public media?



28. If yes, how do you feel misrepresented/misplaced in public media.
29. If no, how do you don't feel misrepresented/misplaced in public media.
30. Do you think that the stories you see/hear/read in the Norwegian public media about your culture, religion, community helps multiculturalism or hold back multiculturalism in Norway?
31. How do the stories you see/hear/read in Norwegian public media at present helps multiculturalism in Norway?
32. How do the stories you see/hear/read in Norwegian public media at present discourage multiculturalism in Norway?
33. What kinds of stories in the Norwegian public media do you think will be more representative of a multicultural Norway?

### **Dialogue**

34. Do you think dialogue between communities is important.
35. Can you think of an instance where dialogue has played an important role in breaking stereotypes?
36. Is there an environment to conduct dialogue in Norway. How?
37. What are the challenges w/r/t conducting safe and productive dialogue?

## Annex 2: Approval from Norsk Senter For Forskningsdata



Ådne Valen-Sendstad  
Papirbredden – Drammen kunnskapsark Grønland 58  
3045 DRAMMEN

Vår dato: 12.12.2017

Vår ref: 57184 / 3 / EPA

Deres dato:

Deres ref:

### Tilråding fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 7-27

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 14.11.2017 for prosjektet:

57184                      Multicultural Norway and the Norwegian Public Media: An exploration of Norway's move towards multiculturalism through the perception of Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background.

Behandlingsansvarlig              Høgskolen i Sørøst-Norge, ved institusjonens øverste leder

Daglig ansvarlig                      Ådne Valen-Sendstad

Student                                  Mallika Aryal

### Vurdering

Multicultural Norway and the Norwegian Public Media: An exploration of Norway's move towards multiculturalism through the perception of Norwegian Muslims of immigrant background

Høgskolen i Sørøst-Norge, ved institusjonens øverste leder Ådne Valen-Sendstad  
Mallika Aryal

Etter gjennomgang av opplysningene i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon finner vi at prosjektet er unntatt konsesjonsplikt og at personopplysningene som blir samlet inn i dette prosjektet er regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. På den neste siden er vår vurdering av prosjektopplegget slik det er meldt til oss. Du kan nå gå i gang med å behandle personopplysninger.

*Dokumentet er elektronisk produsert og godkjent ved NSDs rutiner for elektronisk godkjenning.*

## **Vilkår for vår anbefaling**

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med: •opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon

- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

## **Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet**

Dersom prosjektet endrer seg, kan det være nødvendig å sende inn endringsmelding. På våre nettsider finner du svar på hvilke [endringer](#) du må melde, samt endringsskjema.

## **Opplysninger om prosjektet blir lagt ut på våre nettsider og i Meldingsarkivet**

Vi har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet på nettsidene våre. Alle våre institusjoner har også tilgang til egne prosjekter i [Meldingsarkivet](#).

## **Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt**

Ved prosjektslutt 31.08.2018 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Se våre nettsider eller ta kontakt dersom du har spørsmål. Vi ønsker lykke til med prosjektet!

Vennlig hilsen

Dag Kiberg

Eva J. B. Payne

Kontaktperson: Eva J. B. Payne tlf: 55 58 27 97 / [eva.payne@nsd.no](mailto:eva.payne@nsd.no) Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering  
Kopi: Mallika Aryal, [maryal@nyu.edu](mailto:maryal@nyu.edu)



# Personvernombudet for forskning

## Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

---

Prosjektnr: 57184

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the project is to use the theories (and criticisms) of multiculturalism to analyze whether interculturalism and intercultural dialogue is the new form of multiculturalism. The student will explore whether members of the Norwegian Muslim community with an immigrant background perceive the Norwegian public media as representative/sensitive towards their stories.

### INFORMATION AND CONSENT

According to your notification form the sample will receive written and oral information and will give their consent to participate. The information letter we have received is well formulated, but we ask that the following changes are made:

- please edit the sentence 'Informants choice for anonymity (if requested) will be respected' so that it is made clearer that informants will actively be given a choice about whether or not they wish to be made anonymous in the publication.
- please change the end date of the project to 31.08.2018 (the date within which the data material will be made anonymous) cf. your notification form.

### SENSITIVE DATA

It is indicated that you intend to process sensitive personal data about ethnic origin or political/philosophical/religious beliefs.

### PUBLICATION

Based on the information letter, informants will be given a choice whether or not their personal data will be made anonymous in the publication.

### INFORMATION SECURITY

The Data Protection Official presupposes that you will process all data according to the Høgskolen i Sørøst- Norge internal guidelines/routines for information security. We presuppose that the use of a mobile storage device is in accordance with these guidelines.

### END OF PROJECT AND ANONYMISATION

The estimated end date of the project is 31.08.2018. According to your notification form the data material will be made anonymous by this date.

Making the data anonymous entails processing it in such a way that no individuals can be recognised.

This is done by:

- deleting all directly identifiable personal data (such as names/lists of reference numbers)
- deleting/rewriting indirectly identifiable personal data (i.e. an identifying combination of background variables, such as place of residence/ workplace, age and gender)

Prosjektnr: 57184

- deleting digital audio recordings