



University of South-Eastern Norway
Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Science
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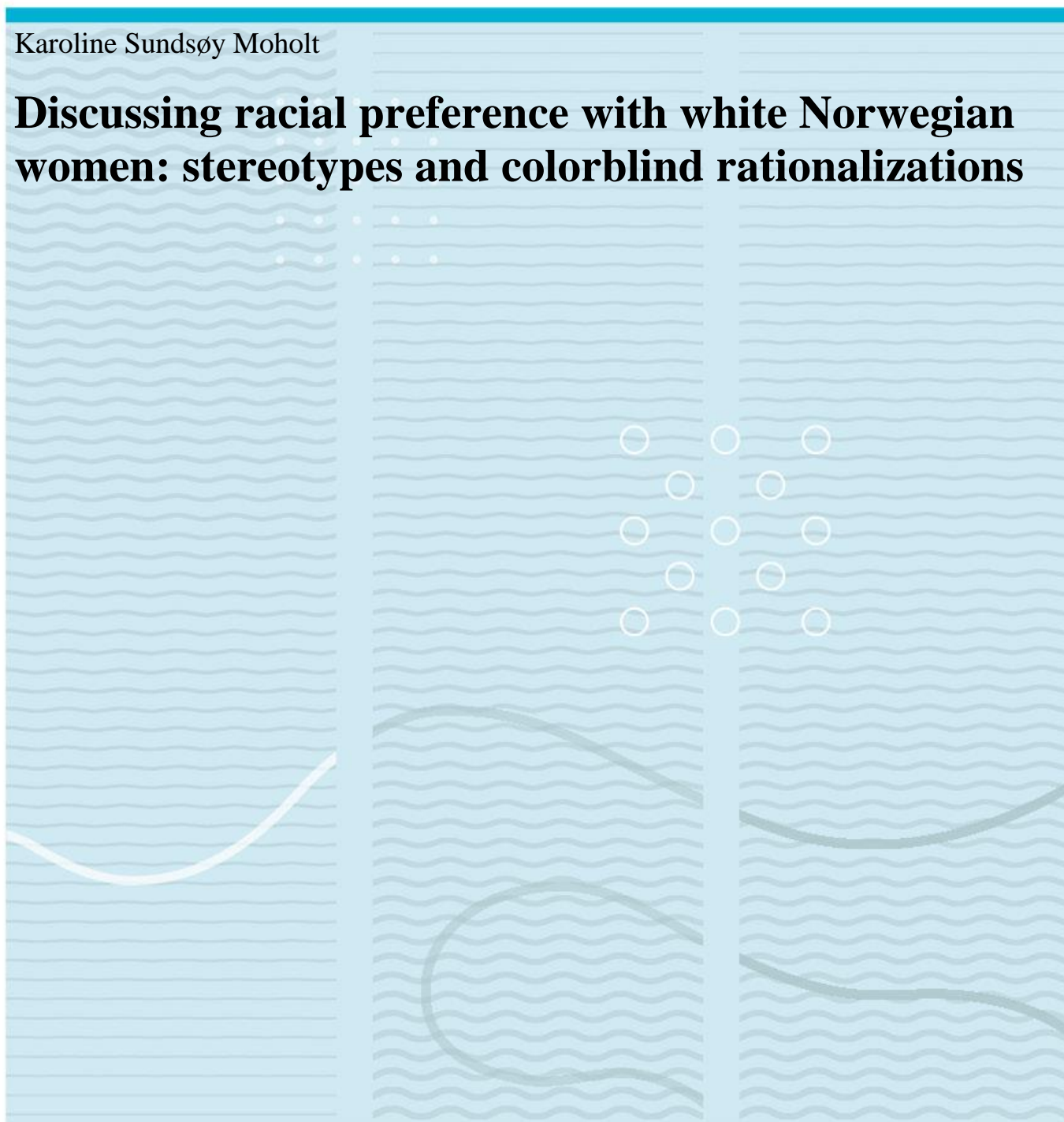
Master's Thesis

MSc Human Rights and Multiculturalism

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Discussing racial preference with white Norwegian women: stereotypes and colorblind rationalizations



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This thesis is worth 45 study points

Abstract

This thesis aims to take a critical look at stereotypes that can be connected to different racial groups and how they work in conjunction with categorizing according to preference. The questions of the thesis are a) Which stereotypes emerge when discussing racial preference with white Norwegian women? b) How are these stereotypes explained by the participants? c) To what degree is personal preference seen as something deeply individual and unique or affected by external factors? Bonilla- Silva's "4 frames of colorblind racism" is used as theoretical framework in order to further understand the participants narratives and how they reason their stereotypes and preference. The thesis presents and deliberates the interviewees applying the "4 frames" and with previous research in mind. This thesis concludes that two examples of common cultural stereotypes from the literature was observed in the interviews: the sexualization of the black man and the undesirability of the Asian man. Furthermore, some features of the frame of "naturalization" was noted in the reasoning of why the participants found Asian men in general to be unattractive. One example of racial narrative through testimony was examined, which had key features of shifting the blame for segregation. The frame "minimization of racism" was not observed during the interviewees, which might be due to the nature of the subject and questions. Finally, the concept of "choice" which relates directly to the frame of "abstract liberalism" was used as a defence of personal preference. Especially in relation to inclusion, the participants felt that the choice was theirs alone, but some admitted to external influence in relation to exclusion of some racial groups. However, exclusion and inclusion are closely related concepts and the interviewees not seeing this link suggests that personal preference is perceived to some degree as exempt from external influence, inexplicable and somehow protected. It is important to encourage further research on the subject in working towards a more inclusive and equal society.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CRT	Critical Race Theory
CRDA	Critical Race Discourse Analysis
SCB	Statistical Central Bureau Statistiska Centralbyrån
SSB	Statistical Central Bureau (Statistisk Sentralbyrå)

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I am grateful to my friends, for always cheering me on, my sister for always lending a shoulder to rest on, my nieces for telling me that the crayon is not “skin-coloured” but peach, my parents for teaching me to always defend those who are vulnerable and lastly my partner, Arthur, whom without I could not accomplish any of this. I love you.

Stokke, Sandefjord

Karoline Sundsøy Moholt

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to try to contribute a meaningful conversation to the topic of racism and how racism affects our daily lives. To try to shine a little light on the mechanisms of categorizing and stereotyping people in different ways, and how in turn that might affect who we let into our lives and what boundaries this can create. Preference is seen as a very personal thing, influenced by ideas of choice and individuality. This thesis will also attempt to discuss to what degree preference is seen as exempt from larger structures of society. In trying to start a conversation surrounding this topic the goal is to ultimately work against racism and towards a more inclusive society. Living more of our social lives online, increased globalization and immigration leads to more multicultural societies with various arising issues, which can be seen in the increased divide of the political climate. But these issues are also opportunities to try to work towards a more tolerant and open way of living in a multicultural society. According to Frantz Fanon, a French West- Indian writer, revolutionary, philosopher and psychiatrist, racism is not a permanent part of a person's "psychic structure" (Hudis. 2015, p.36) but merely habits picked up over a long period of time and influenced by various cultural and social burdens. In claiming that racism is not a universal and fixed problem, Fanon suggests that it can be altered. Fanon's work concerns the social, cultural and human effects of decolonization and is significant in the fields of critical theory, post-colonialism and Marxism. Although he died at an early age at 36, Fanon's work is influential. Among the most impactful- the books "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961) and "Black Skin, White Masks" (1952). According to Hudis (2015) Fanon's humanism is often overlooked or shrugged off as naïve. Fanon positions racism as a dual problem; socio-economic and relational, and states that in order to combat it both sides of the problem must be considered (Hudis. 2015). The example of America battling with racial tension for decades is perhaps fitting for applying Fanon's train of thought here. The Civil Rights Movement in the 60s in America saw enormous progress for the rights of black people. Like the word states however, these are "Civil Rights", focusing on the legal and socio-economic conditions of the group. Though these advancements should not be disregarded in any way nor the problems simultaneously seen as "solved", following Fanon's account

they did only address (for the most part) one aspect of racism: the relational. Take the case of *Loving vs. Virginia*, the case which helped revoke the law that banned interracial marriages in the U.S statewide in 1967 (Collins. 2004). A very important step towards racial equality in the country was made that year, meaning that people who chose to marry someone outside their own racial group would not be prosecuted. Many years later since that and other advancements towards racial equality was made, racial tensions in the U.S are still high and interracial marriages are still at a fairly low rate. In the case of *Loving vs. Virginia*, the legal aspect of a problem related to racism was “solved”. However, it is worth asking; where there any real discussion about *why* this was banned to begin with? What problems do interracial couples face, and would these problems now completely go away? Some of the research show that in the U.S, to this day, many interracial couples still face a lot of discrimination and subsequently problems. Laws are made by humans and often do not come to be in a vacuum. They are shaped by history, culture, relations, attitudes, notions of right and wrong which in turn is fluid and ever- changing. Advancing civil rights for black people in America was a huge step towards equality, but it is perhaps also important to ask why there was a need to fight for equality to begin with? Disregarding and shrugging it off as distant past is possibly not helpful either. This train of thought often presents itself with some problems: Firstly, many atrocities like slavery of Blacks in the U.S or the Nazi’s “final solution” is not *that* far way in the past. Many will have grandparents or great-grandparents who lived through these times. Secondly, and especially in the example of the U.S the racial tensions still appear to be high, so the problem is seemingly not “solved”. Lastly, it is naïve to assume that all the perpetrators or those who benefitted from these acts of racism was just purely evil, because that is unlikely. There is a need to ask what exist in the human spirit that led to these cruelties in the first place. Why are there still so many problems related to people being, believing or looking different? This thesis will try to look further into which stereotypes emerge when talking about preference in conjunction with race and whether personal preference is seen as something deeply personal. In looking at this further, 52 years after *Loving vs. Virginia*, the hope is to try to learn more about why such a ban was needed to begin with and if we still put up bans for ourselves towards others. The nature of racism is multifaceted and layered, and perhaps is not possible to solve in a hundred years.

However; “Marx once wrote that humanity does not pose problems for itself that it cannot solve. Fanon thinks likewise” (Hudis. 2015, p.38).

1.2 Motivation

“But while racism obeys a “flawless logic” that defines a society from top to bottom, it is “not a constant of the human spirit”. It is possible to awaken “an absolute valorization almost in defiance of reality” (Fanon. 2005 [1961], p.235).

This quote by Fanon describes the main motivation for choosing this topic for the thesis. I want the thesis to be a contribution to anti-racist activism and to start a discussion surrounding the subject. Reading Fanon’s “Black Skin, White Mask’s” had a profound effect on me. While I don’t believe it is ever possible for a white person to feel what it is like to look “different” in my country, the book gives a deeply personal account of this feeling of alienation which in turn can lead to understanding. In my circle and throughout my life I don’t think I have met much of this understanding. Personally, the book opened my eyes further to issues that people of color can face, and the severity of the effects they can have. Reading the book led me to having discussions with people I know and learning more about the subject of racial exclusion in relation to preference. Stunned to find out that this is a common thing in my surroundings, and that most people have no issues talking about it because it is personal and have “nothing to do with race”. Some white people even stated that they could never date someone that was not white, but at the same time claiming that it had nothing to do with race- it was just personal. But how could that be? What are our preferences made up of? If it has nothing to do with race why is white preferred by white people? Saying “that it is just the way it is” did not seem like an adequate answer to me, and I therefore wanted to find out more.

“Minorities are often criticized without much corresponding critical self-reflection on the part of the majority. Majority- minority relations in Norway thus illustrates (...) Fanon’s (1986 [1952]) idea about the white person’s blindness” (Gullestad. 2004, p. 194).

This quote by Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad illustrates how racism debates in Scandinavia often focuses on extreme cases and how studies relating to topics of ethnicity, race, integration and multiculturalism often is aimed “outward” towards the minority. This issue is discussed at further length in the section “The Scandinavian context and defining the term “race”” of this thesis. The resistance towards these kinds of subjects first came as a surprise to me. But upon further research, realizing that it was not that surprising after all, being that we Norwegians tend to view ourselves as a model of a modern democracy. This does not mean that Norway is not successful in achieving democracy and many welfares, one of which I am enjoying now- free education. But in Norway there seems to be a resistance towards talking about race and racism, something we view as a non- topic because it is “eradicated”. The idea that equality is already achieved, and we have nothing to work towards, seems a bit lacking in self-reflection. Furthermore, the idea that the minority needs to be fully integrated into our way of life and that our way of life without question is the norm also seems a bit naïve. The fact that most of the research I found on interracial relationships in Norway was regarding Muslim women being better integrated or not enjoying equality, could be regarded as somewhat one-sided. Gullestad (2004) confirms this normative stance on the part of the Norwegian anthropologist research community. This resistance further motivated me to find out more, and “look inward” at the majority, which also influenced the choice of interviewees.

1.3 Research question

The aim with the principle research question is to try to bring into light what stereotypes can emerge when discussing attractiveness of different men from different racial groups. Stereotypes can emerge when there is a common pattern of answering which coincides with previous research being done on the topic. The first subsidiary question is aimed to try and figure out more about what the participants think about these stereotypes and how they would explain them in further detail. The participants are not asked directly about stereotypes, this is “filtered” through a conversation about preference and attractiveness and why some are not seen as attractive. The last subsidiary question is intended to shed a light on to which degree the participants feel that their personal preference is something unique to them. This is related to the idea

that sexual racism is often defended as not being racism or something that is influenced by larger structures, but merely an individual choice.

Principle research question:

“Which stereotypes emerge when discussing racial preference with white Norwegian women?”

Subsidiary questions:

“How are these stereotypes explained by the participants?”

“To what degree is personal preference seen as something deeply individual and unique or affected by external factors?”

1.4 Outline of the thesis

Chapter Two presents the methodology of this thesis, the research design, data-collection process, interview analysis, my role as a researcher, ethical considerations and limitations. Chapter Three is concerned with presenting some of the previous literature and research related to the subject; sexual racism and “new racism”, stereotypes and the perception of difference, interracial connections and attitudes and liberal discourse and the Scandinavian context. Chapter Four outlines the theoretical framework of the thesis working as a foundation to the research; Fanon and his view of “the Self and the Other”, Critical race theory and the politics of colorblindness. In Chapter Five the data collected is analyzed and discussed with the help of Bonilla-Silva’s 4 frames of colorblindness and previous research relating to the subject. Chapter Six gives a conclusion to the research while suggesting further research.

2 METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I will present the methodological outline for this thesis. Firstly, the research questions will be restated:

“Which stereotypes emerge when discussing racial preference with white Norwegian women?”

“How are these stereotypes explained by the participants?”

“To what degree is personal preference seen as something deeply individual and unique or affected by external factors?”

In trying to answer these questions, I will outline my research objectives:

To *discover* what stereotypes can emerge when discussing racial preference with white Norwegian women;

To *learn* how these stereotypes are described through talking about preference and assumptions;

And through these discussions try to *uncover* whether these women see their preference as something they are in control over, and if so to which degree.

2.1 Research design

The research question will be approached through a constructivist perspective, meaning that the view of social reality is that it is constructed. Parsons (2010) views human behavior and choice as being determined by social constructs. Interpretive tools like norms, identities, beliefs are implemented by humans constantly, to better understand and relate to our own reality. The rejection or inclusion of other racial groups as partners in sexual terms or relational, provides a different indicator of the distance white people experience regarding other groups free from restrictions of attitudinal or intermarital data. Furthermore, an interracial marriage is a union between two people and cannot reveal which group (minority or majority) that tend to initiate the connections (Feliciano et al.2008). Although intermarriage is an indicator of the general

wellness of race-relations, it is limited alone. Many individuals may go through life without marrying, but almost everyone will enter into a relationship of some sort or feel desire towards another person (Feliciano et al.2008). This makes the subject of attraction and dating an interesting field to learn more about the complexities of race-relations. Clarifying the context is vital because the context effects the participants and in turn the discourse they generate (Rogers. 2004). Like referenced earlier in this thesis the context of this research on the macro-level/national level is within a Scandinavian democracy where narratives are heavily influenced by liberal ideas. According to some, neoliberalism- which puts emphasis on choice and presumes equality in the present without attributing importance to the past, has become the hegemon as approach to discourse (Harvey. 2005). By recognizing some knowledge as universal or objective, the discourse supports the current hegemony, instead of acknowledging the ideology behind the knowledge. The Methodology of Critical Race Theory often focuses on empowering the narratives of people of color and recognizing that discourses are influenced by race, gender and class divide (Briscoe & Khalifa. 2015). By identifying the voices behind the narratives, and to some degree “revealing the agenda” this form of emancipatory knowledge aims to distant itself from the “objective” at the center and looking from the periphery. Placing the discourse within the context of power-relations further establishes how one should look at the discourse critically. In this thesis there is no narratives from the point of view of people of color, but a critical look at the opinions of the majority towards people of color. As stated before, there is perhaps a lack of research directed at the majority (white Norwegians) and a lack of self-reflectiveness can support the claim that the hegemon “owns” the universal knowledge and therefore does not need to scrutinize it or even look at it. Instead the view is directed outwards; towards those who perhaps needs to conform. This thesis aims to be a look at the majority placed in the center using a critical lens.

2.2 Sample

“In other words, in order to understand the life situations of “immigrants”, one cannot just study “immigrants”. The structures they simultaneously inhabit and have to adapt to must also be explored” (Gullestad. 2004, p.197).

This quote by Gullestad illustrates why for this research it was chosen to interview white ethnic Norwegians. A lot of Norwegian studies regarding multiculturalism is focused on minorities rather than the majority (see “Literature Review”). Therefore, wanting the study to look further at a section of the majority, white ethnic Norwegians were chosen. Some studies have shown that white women are more likely than their male counterparts to state an explicit racial preference (Sakai & Johnson.1997). White men are also more open to dating non-white people, than white women (Tucker & Mitchell- Kernan.1995). In experiments concerning speed- dating, white women have shown a proclivity towards preferring men of the same racial group, and that to a larger degree than white men (Fisman et al.2006). Feliciano and colleagues (2008) study of American women showed that they were four times more likely to prefer dating only within their own racial group, than their male counterparts. Race was shown to be one of the strongest sorting criteria for white heterosexuals; 72% of white women and 59 % of men expressed a preference for race (Feliciano et al. 2008). How can this be explained? It might be because in an historically male dominated society, one’s partner may not be as important for men as women to confirm their “status”. It may also be because women overall might be looking for something more long term in a potential dating partner than men (Feliciano et al. 2008). Because of the research showing that women are generally more proven to show a racial preference, women were chosen for the interviews.

Omi and Winant (1994, p.68) state that “race is gendered, and gender is racialized”, meaning that racial preferences may be affected by racialized notions of femininity and masculinity that influence mass media and current culture. The focus of the study was on heterosexual women alone. This because a lot of the research found was on homosexual and bisexual men and wanting to explore something different for this thesis. It was also important to focus on one sexual identification because including more could make the intersectionality of the research too complicated. Finally, the preferred age group chosen for this sample is 18-35. This because is close to my own age group and would make it easier to recruit, but mostly because these years (young adult years) are generally seen as formative years in finding a partner or engaging in relationships.

2.3 Interviews

The interviews start with an exercise in choosing 6 pictures from a pile of 25. The 25 pictures are all of “generally attractive” men from 5 pre-chosen different racial groups: “African/Black”, “Central European/White”, “Asian”, “Middle- Eastern/Indian” and “South- American/Latino”. The 6 pictures the participants are asked to choose are 3 that they find most attractive and 3 that they find the least attractive. In many online dating sites, there are boxes to tick in order to filter racial preference (for example; “Black”, “Asian”, “Latino” etc.). The usage of these ways of categorizing people by just ticking a box for your preference might help normalize the exclusion/inclusion (Callander et al.2015). Stuart Hall (1984) points to the fact that every human being is continuously employing different frameworks of analysis and perceptions in a mostly unconscious manner, which help us navigate the world in terms of our own positions, actions surrounding us and the behaviors of others. Images can also be used as a tool to provoke thought. Harper (2002) argues that the use of visual images in interviews could have some useful features:

- Making more sense of the subject being discussed/establishing context
- Looking at a person/object/environment in a pictures or image might evoke thoughts/feelings that are more subconscious or less recognized
- Remembering something or someone that is forgotten/bringing something to the surface

The pictures were gathered from sites which features stock photos: Shutterstock, iStock by Getty Images, Pixabay and Pexels. The data collection method is approved by the NSD and one of their requirements was that pictures would be retrieved from stock photo sites. For this project it is not allowed to include the pictures in the thesis, so they will only be referred to (picture number 1, 2 etc.) and in some cases described in further detail. Much thought was given to choosing the pictures used for the exercise, which will be discussed further in the section on “Limitations”, but worth noting here is that the choosing of 5 pictures of Asian men were especially selected thoughtfully. Previous research on the subject of sexual racism show that Asian men are one of the least

desirable groups, in some cases the least by far (see “Literature Review”). Additionally, a couple of mock trials with pictures confirmed that Asian men could be deemed least attractive in some cases. Knowing this helped the final choosing of pictures. Wanting all the pictures from each group to be as different as possible- to show as much variety as possible, extra thought was given to choosing 2 pictures of Asian men. The previous literature revealed that common misconceptions of Asian men were that they are feminine, not masculine and overall shorter than other racial groups. Therefore, a picture of an Asian man with a beard (a common masculine feature) was included, as well as a picture of a seemingly tall Asian man (showing more of the upper body in relation to background to determine height). This could be used as a helpful tool in trying to “debunk” some of the misconceptions and digging deeper.

When the participants have chosen their 3 most and 3 least desirable pictures, some questions were asked. Wanting the interview to be semi-structured, meaning that the researchers has a guide of questions that he/her wants answering, but the interviewees are encouraged to talk more freely, and follow-up questions are regular (Bryman.2012), only a few questions were designed. The risk with semi-structured interviews and qualitative research is that there is no guarantee for what one might find, or if the findings will be interesting. The pictures worked as a very helpful tool in generating a lot of conversation. The interview structure consisted of “tackling” one picture at a time and answering questions related to that picture. Beginning with the 3 pictures from the most attractive “pile” and ending with the 3 from the least attractive, in order for the conversation to “warm up” and not directly jumping to what might be viewed as uncomfortable for the participants. The interviewees were encouraged to answer as honestly as they felt comfortable with, and if they felt like they did not want to or could not answer a question that was completely fine. If they got stuck or felt uneasy during the discussions further assurance was made. The first question asked about a picture was: “*Why do you find him attractive?*” or in the case of the least attractive: “*Why do you not find him as attractive?*”. These questions are asked in order to try to start a conversation about what the participants find attractive and see if some stereotypical patterns emerge. After answering and following conversation around that question, an imaging exercise was conducted. The participants were asked:

- What do you imagine him to do? (Occupation)
- Where do you imagine him to be from?
- What kind of personality or what kind of man do you imagine him to be?
- What kind of relationship could you imagine yourself to have with him?

Or for the least attractive:

- Could you imagine yourself being in any relationship with him? If not, why?

The imagining questions are asked in order to see if some stereotypes can emerge from looking at a picture, and subsequently how they can be related to what is regarded to be attractive. Finally, two follow-up questions are asked. Firstly, a follow up question was asked regarding Asian men, based on previous research and the mock trials with the pictures. This question was only asked, however, if the participants seemed to not find Asian men attractive through the choosing of pictures. The question asked was: “*Do you find Asian men in general to be attractive?*”. The last follow-up question is related to the idea of individuality and choice in personal preference as was stated as follows: “*Do you think what you find attractive is personal and unique to you or do you think it is influenced by external (outside) factors?*”. This question was asked in order to try to find out more about how connected the participants felt to their preference and whether they saw it as affected by something from the outside- larger structures, norms of attractiveness, mass media etc. Interviews was conducted in Norwegian and translated to English for the thesis.

2.3.1 Interviewees

The interviewees were chosen with a purposive sampling. A snowball sample was used for recruiting participants (Bryman. 2012); starting with people known to me and them recommending participants and so on. It was fairly easy to recruit participants since the profile used for recruiting participants matched my own; white female between 18-35 etc. This is purposive sampling, meaning that what is wanted for the research are people that fit certain criteria's, and are not chosen at random (Bryman. 2012). Below in Table number 1 a presentation of the interviewees featured. Missing from this presentation is a factor of whether the participants saw themselves as frequently engaging with minorities or people of color. This question was not included directly as to not “give too

much away” in terms of the subject. However, some participants mentioned this on their own accord during the interviews, while others did not. The interviewees were informed that the data would be anonymous and that it would be deleted 6 weeks after handing in the thesis.

“Name”/Alias	Real Age	Occupation and Education	Birthplace and current place of residence	Relationship status
“Beatrice”	28	Full time employee 3+ education	Big city, born in small place (countryside)	In a relationship, living together
“Simone”	31	Full time student and part time employee No higher education	Lives in birthplace, small place (countryside)	Married, two children
“Emilie”	26	Full time student and part time employee No higher education	Lives in small city, born in small city	In a relationship, living together
“Annabelle”	30	Full time student and part time employee No higher education	Lives in small city, born in small city	In a relationship, living together

“Hege”	27	Full time employee 3+ education	Lives in birthplace, small place (countryside)	Single
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Table 1: Interviewees- overview

2.4 Interview analysis

Race, identity and power-relations are all social structures created in relation to an opposition. This view of how social reality is constructed can be tied to constructionism and an interpretivist tradition of epistemology (Bryman. 2012). One of the traditions that has taken a strong anti-positivist stance in social research is phenomenology. Phenomenology is concerned with the fact that social reality is not static like natural science, because human behavior is meaningful to its actors. Meaning that human behavior can be considered a result of how individuals interpret the world. (Bryman. 2012).

2.4.1 Stereotyping and Bonilla-Silva’s 4 frames

For her PhD, Törngren (2011) conducted (in addition to quantitative research) qualitative interviews with 28 participants to learn more about attitudes towards interracial relationships in Sweden. She found that views of interracial relationships often suggested a preference for partner corresponding to the degree of supposed difference. There were some correlations between being from a different country or having a different heritage, and being perceived as “different”. The interviewees discussed “visible differences”, “religious differences” and “social differences”, of the three “visible differences” seemed to be the most problematic to discuss. When met with matters they could not discuss in terms of cultural or social differences, but only visible differences the interviewees seemed uncomfortable. “Talking in a colorblind manner” was also observed with in four different ways: “...idea of culture, gender equality, individual choice and the idea that origin does not matter” (Törngren. 2011, p.219). The idea of gender equality and focusing on culture put emphasis on difference- what makes

“them” different from “us”, while individual choice and the idea that origin does not matter is argued in a way that disregards difference. This is contradicting. Colorblind rationalizations can therefore be undermined by the fact that it discounts difference whilst also stressing the importance of it. In conclusion the interviewees often employed these strategies of “talking colorblind” that could be contradicting rather than speaking directly about visible differences.

Research that employs a method of Critical Race Discourse Analysis (CRDA) looks for “...differences, conflicts and agreements” in the discourses of their interviewees, and subsequently recognizing the subjects that conflicting discourses tend to revolve around. (Briscoe & Khalifa. 2015, p.746). In the interview analysis two different aspects of this subject will be further explored; *“talking colorblind”* or *talking about visible differences*. Bonilla- Silva’s 4 frames of colorblindness was used to analyze the data; both when talking about visible differences in terms of cultural racism and when “talking colorblind”. It is important to note that the research question, the following set-up and questions of the interviews tries to “force” a direct conversation about visible differences. It is in many ways the premises of the conversations being had with the interviewees. By choosing a subject which is very direct and “jumps” over a lot of the narrative quagmires of avoidance, it compelled the interviewees to talk about the subject and at the same time reassuring them that it is ok to talk about. Since the research question directly lends itself to the subject of talking about visible differences this is the “route” which is most prominent in the conversation. However, when the interviewees sometimes seem to be at a dead pass in their explanations some features of “talking colorblind” were seen.

2.5 The researcher’s role

Rollock (2012) states that “...those excluded from the center can experience a “perspective advantage” as their experiences and analyses become informed by a panoramic dialectic offering a wider lens than the white majority located in the privileged spaces of the center are able to deploy” (p.65). Given this, it is important to remember that I, as a white Norwegian woman, in this context is in many ways “at the center” as a part of the majority. For a white researcher studying racism critically, it is

crucial to be aware of the groups which are subjugated to racism (Van Dijk. 1993). Often when the intention of random actions of racialization is not malleable or at the least unbiased, there is no further analysis of such events (Gullestad. 2004). Seemingly extreme acts of racism are frequently the one's that warrant the most attention, and the lesser examples of "everyday- racism/racialization" goes more unnoticed. The line between racialization and racism can also seem to blurry, and sometimes there is made a clear distinction to morally validate acts of racialization (Lien.1997). According to Van Dijk, when minority perspectives are taken into account they often can be seen as biased and hypersensitive. This view of minority perspective, and the white perspective as being "perspective-less" needs to be seen in the context of power-structures and the historical foundations for them. In studying the majority critically, this shifts away from a more traditional focus on the issues of minorities (Frankenberg. 1993).

2.6 Ethical considerations

An ethical dilemma with the data collection is not wanting to deceive anybody or "portray" them as "racist". Firstly, it is important to remember that a definition of racism that focuses on structures rather than individuals is to be regarded as "non-judgmental":

"First, readers need to be reminded that I see the problem of racism as a problem of power. Therefore, the intentions of individual actors are largely irrelevant to the explanation of social outcomes. Second, based on my structural definition of "racism", it should also be clear that I conceive racial analysis as "beyond good and evil". The analysis of people's racial accounts is not akin to an analysis of people's character or morality" (Bonilla- Silva. 2010).

Following this statement from Bonilla- Silva, the intentions or morality of the participants or the statements they make should not be put under scrutiny, merely their narratives in relation to larger power- structures. However, the participants may not know this. Therefore, it was important for them to feel comfortable in answering questions. If they did not feel they could answer, got stuck on a question or it was sensed that they felt uncomfortable they were put at ease or the subject was changed.

Being aware of the sensitivity of the subject was important when interviewing the participants. Therefore, letting them know in advance what the interview would look like and what we would do during the interview, before it started was helpful. This allowed them time to understand rather than “springing” it on them. It is also important to note that for the conversations to be as productive as possible, it was key that they actually knew some of what we were talking about. Often, the researcher’s motivation for deceiving participants is to restricts their understanding in order to get a more realistic response. Deception varies in degree, but ethical considerations about deceptions should be made based on decency and academic self-preservation (Bryman. 2012). The interviewees were informed that the research regarded the topics of attraction and multiculturalism.

2.7 Limitations

One of the serious limitations to the research is whether the interviewees are responding honestly when talking about preferences and attraction. The subject is something they might have given a lot of thought or none at all. If they respond honestly to what they feel, is perhaps swayed by not wanting to seem prejudice or racist, given the subject that is being discussed. Hitsch and colleagues (2006) found that individuals who do not specify any racial preference on online dating site nonetheless tend to discriminate certain racial groups. Since misrepresentation might happen when discussing who one might include (find attractive or want to date etc.), it is perhaps useful to focus on the exclusion- who our respondents does not find attractive and discuss that at further length. It is less likely that the respondents would exclude someone they actually found attractive, than include someone they did not find attractive (Feliciano et al.2008). Though exclusion will be the primary focus, especially of the analysis, the inclusion part of the interview is also featured- and to the same degree in the interview (3 negative and 3 positive). This is for two reasons. For one not to “lead” on too much that the focus of the study (which is exclusion). Secondly, it also seems useful to discuss the positive. Here one might get a better picture of what the respondents find attractive, and therefore learn more about what they don’t find attractive. The two things are very much related. Another concern is regarded to the choosing of pictures and the relativity of “attraction” and who is considered to be “generally” attractive. There is no fixed

definition of what beauty is, even though some similarities occur. Furthermore, I personally chose the pictures for the exercise which means that some of my opinions of who is considered attractive may have influenced the choices. Firstly, in regard to what is considered “generally” attractive, this is almost impossible to achieve. The pictures were however chosen from Stock photo sites, which tend to have “generally” attractive people or radiant and happy people featured- to be used in commercials and so on. Furthermore, in order to combat my own influence over the choosing- process I set out to find as much variation of the pictures midst the groups that I could. The only criteria’s being that the men fit the age group (18-35), looked approachable for the most part and had a muted sense of style in the pictures (no overwhelming clothes, lots of tattoos, “crazy” hair color and so on). Lastly on the note of the pictures, and as many of my participants pointed out- it is just a picture. In real life or in another picture the person might look completely different and be perceived in a totally different way. The pictures were used as tools to spark a conversation, and the aim was to make them as diverse and at the same time generic as possible. Another concern is with the topic being so sensitive and complicated. There are so many layers to studying race and racism on its own, and the concept of attraction on its own, combining the two further complicates matters. The subject is also very sensitive and might be considered offensive to some. But just because something might be considered sensitive does not mean it should not be researched further. Especially if the motivation at the end of the day is that the work is anti-racist.

Finally, with a small sample like this, and the with the qualitative features of the research the study is not generalizable. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) claim that external validity, or if the results are generalizable, is difficult in qualitative studies because of specific settings and small samples. Instead of being concerned with external validity this thesis aims towards a more contextual comprehension of behavior (Bryman. 2012).

2.8 Summary

This chapter has examined the methodology in trying to answer the research questions and the practical and theoretical approach towards the research project. In the next chapter of Literature Review, various literature related to the subject will be presented.

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present and discuss some of the already existing literature related to the subject of preferential racism. It is worth noting two points when reading this literature. First, a lot of the literature presented in this chapter is from the U.S. A critical view of race and racism does not have the same tradition in Europe as the U.S, and this will be further discussed in the last section on liberal discourse and the Scandinavian context. Secondly, it is key to mention that all things are not so “black and white” as it might seem. The line between minority and majority is not always twofold or rigid. Colorblindness and sexual racism can also be instigated by people of color. The minority/majority perspective of this thesis relates to the larger structures of power, and the ways it affects individuals is multifaceted. The first section of this chapter will present the topic of sexual racism and how it relates to the concept of “new racism”. Next, more common stereotypes linked to different groups and the perception of “difference” will be discussed. Then, a look at interracial connections and attitudes towards them as possibly relates to how preference is shaped. And finally, as mentioned a look at the Scandinavian context and how that relates to studying race and racism in a liberal society.

3.1 Sexual racism and the “New racism”

3.1.1 Sexual racism and the concept of preference

One of the first definitions of sexual racism described it as “the sexual rejection of the racial minority, the conscious attempt on the part of the majority to prevent interracial cohabitation” (Stemper. 1978, p.11). This process of rejection is complex and can often be related to the concept of personal preference. However, there is dispute over the idea that personal preference is somehow related to racism. With something as complex as desire, can it not be that it is simply something deeply personal and individual, not affected at all by larger structures? Some commentators reject the idea of sexual racism all together and explain it as simply being justified personal preference (Callander et al. 2015). In their study trying to quantify attitudes towards online sexual racism, and further researching a possible link between sexual racist attitudes and broader racist attitudes, Callander and colleagues (2015) found that the interviewees saw no link

between sexual racial discrimination and racism in general. The study furthermore suggested a link between sexual racism and more general displays of racism, like negativity towards multiculturalism. Even though the cross-sectional nature of the research and the usage of a new and unvalidated scale inhibited the research from making any assertions of causality, the findings challenge the notion that sexual racism is not linked to racism in any way (Callander et al. 2015). The unwillingness for the participants to be associated with “racism” might be because of the strong negative condemnation related to the word. Personal choice resulting in discrimination of certain groups on the other hand, seems far less problematic. Why is that?

Choice is often seen as something deeply personal and rooted in the core of a person’s individuality. This view on choice is reflected in who the individual sees themselves possibly being or not being in a relationship with, and this awareness negates the idea of difference (Törngren. 2011). By directing the focus towards individual choice, rather than the views of the group, the notion of preference is steered away from addressing the existence of racial prejudice (Bonilla-Silva. 2010). In her research, Törngren (2011) found that explaining preference through personal choice allowed the interviewees to validate their preference, and at the same time seeming tolerant. According to Törngren, personal choice is a very strong way of naturalizing and explaining preference in finding a partner. Hesitating with seeing sexual discrimination based on race as racism might also be because the person in question might have these preferences themselves (Callander et al. 2015). If you are acknowledging that these preferences can be interpreted as racist, you in turn might feel that you are admitting to being racist if you are excluding certain groups intimately. In his research of online gay dating sites, Brandon Robinson (2015) found that little is actually understood about how race and prejudice affect online interactions. Callander and colleagues (2015) stated in their research; “...very little is understood about people’s attitudes towards sexual racism or whether those attitudes differ from broader racist attitudes” (p.1). By comparing men’s attitudes towards sexual racism online and broader racist views, the latter research concluded that there was a close link. This challenges the idea that racial selection is merely a case of personal preference. In fact, other studies have shown that most heterosexual online daters seek out someone from their own racial group first (Lin and

Lundquist. 2013). Some findings show that when it comes to dating for white heterosexuals, race is a stronger sorting criterion than education or religion; "...for example, 72% of white women and 59% of white men express a preference for race, while only 42% of women and 23% of men express a preference for religion" (Feliciano et al. 2008, p.45). This same study from America also suggested that heterosexual Asians, blacks and Latinos were more probable to include white people as possible dates, than whites them. "This suggests that whites, as the dominant group in U.S society, remain in the privileged position of being able to facilitate or hinder the full incorporation of minorities (Feliciano et al. 2008.p,51).

There are examples of racialization in conjunction with sexualization. Andrea Smith (2005) links the beginning of racialization in the U.S with the sexual violence colonizers afflicted upon Native Americans. Patricia Hill Collins (2002) references the objectivization of black women by white men during slavery, justifying them being raped, bought and sold. Black men on the other hand, were historically portrayed as hypersexual, violent and known to be hostile towards white women (Davis. 2003). In his research, Robinson (2015) concludes that sexual and social rejection towards gay men of color in cyberspace were often not seen as racist. His research is based on in-depth interviews with 15 gay men of different race participating on the same gay online-dating site. This echoes Törngren's findings; by explaining preference through personal choice the respondent validates racial or cultural exclusionary processes. Furthermore, Robinson concludes that "...larger racial structures influence interpersonal engagements" (2015, p.318). Feliciano's study (2008) concluded that; "...whites' racial preferences are the product of a gendered racial formation process, as manifested in historic relations and contemporary cultural portrayals of men and women of color (p.52). Most of Robinson's informants preferred white males (also those of color). No further specificity or a particular brand of whiteness was sought out, just whiteness itself (Robinson. 2015). This preference for "whiteness" can sometimes also be internalized in people of color, leading them to perhaps having an aversion toward their own racial group and others that are not white (Holland. 2012). If whiteness is seen as the norm, it is also important to point out the complexities of intersectionality when speaking of race and sexuality in the same context. Assimilation of gay people being

also perceived as “different”, makes queer people of color even more vulnerable, and strengthens the white heteronormativity (Cohen. 1997).

“Seeing people of color as individuals will not only challenge white supremacy but also its complementary power structure heteronormativity” (Robinson. 2015, p.328).

In the context of dating among gay and bisexual men, some research has found that white men tend to encounter the least amount of discrimination and often being the most desirable (Callander et al. 2013). Callander and colleagues (2015) findings shows that men who identified themselves as white tended to be less critical towards sexual racism and more negative towards multiculturalism when compared to men who identified with other racial groups. White men often being deemed most desirable by other gay and bisexual men (Callander et al.2013), might explain why they are less critical of sexual racism. Perhaps it does not affect them to the same degree as other racial groups. When comparing white people to people of color, Robnett and Feliciano (2011) found that the former was far more probable to date within their own racial group.

3.1.2 The “New Racism”

Patricia Hill Collins (2004) defines term “new racism” as the recreation of historical belief about black sexualities in new conceptual forms, which are relied upon to defend the discrimination and social exclusion of people of color. This form of new racism is dispersed through the mass media, the internet being a globalized outlet for manipulating ideas of people of color. To normalize racism on the internet, neoliberal discourses surrounding personal preference is often used (Robinson. 2015). The fact that a lot of research on the subject has focused on cyberspace, may be due to a perceived remoteness that the format provides. Online interaction can be anonymous, detached and disingenuous, often creating an effect of behaving in a way you might not do face to face (Suler. 2004). The behaviors studied in these cases may also be applicable to non-online interaction and gives a unique opportunity to learn more about a social phenomenon (Callander et al .2015).

Websites with the thematic of interracial union, mirror's society and reproduces certain images and notions about these unions that exists in "the real world". Childs (2005) categorizes American Websites concerning this subject into three general groups: support-sites and pro-organizations, pornographic and dating sites that fetishizes these unions, and lastly hate group sites. According to the researcher, all different sites have their problems. The pro- sites recognize that "mixed" couples are presented with problems in their life and the need for coming together but employ many strategies of colorblindness. For example, the right to self-identity with no racial group at all, except that of the human race. Also lacking from the websites researched and labeled as pro-multiracial, is a discussion of institutional racial inequalities in the U.S. By not talking about systemic racism in the country, racism is described as something that can affect anyone equally- also white people. White privilege is subsequently disregarded. This, according to Childs (2005) can feed into the idea that blacks or other people of color is equally opposed to interracial unions, a notion that is often used as an argument against interracial relationships. If people of color are self-segregating, it is less to be done about that. The second kind of Website that fetishizes interracial sex, places this kind of union in the category of a "specialty" or "novelty" and heavily draws on historical images of especially black sexuality. Popular is the image of the white woman either being a "slut" or a naïve virgin being seduced by a black man. Images of oversexualized black women also occur. Many of the dating sites that focuses on interracial as a specialty, curiously at the same time state that "...love is colorblind" and "find a love that transcends color" (Childs. 2005, p.177). These sites that market themselves towards interracial unions, whether that be dating or purely pornographic, see themselves as "anti-racist" and promoting a multi-racial society. That may be, but at the same time these sites are fetishizing people of color and consequently stereotyping them whilst at the same time disregarding the concept of race and systemic racism that exist in the U.S. Lastly, the Websites that focus on hate towards interracial unions, present some interesting findings. Firstly, there is no colorblind strategy of not acknowledging race being employed, race is openly being discussed. It is worth noting that the link between extreme racism and openly discussing race and its implications, may be part of the reason that so many have reservations to discussing differences in terms of race. Similarly, to the pornographic sites, historical ideas of black sexuality are being

reproduced, though with more emphasis on the dangers of it, not the pleasures. Though many of the views stated on these kinds of hate sites may seem extreme and appalling, they mirror some more common views, like for example the low number of interracial marriages in the U.S and attitudes towards interracial relationships. The low number of interracial marriages are used as an argument on one of the hate sites for how difficult it is to “implement widespread biological amalgamation” (Childs. 2005, p.180). The author concludes that: “...the Web sites reflect the dominant ideologies about black-white couples in the larger society: interracial relationships are not the norm or most people’s preference; the couples are overtly sexual or sexually deviant; and the relationships create problems such as children. Furthermore, it is evident that many sites consider interracial couples as deviant- a fetish to be watched, a cause to be celebrated, a problem to be fixed, a quest to be fulfilled” (Childs. 2005.p, 181).

When there is less contact with people from a different racial group than your own, studies have shown that opinions about these groups are swayed by how the mass media depicts them (Armstrong et al.1992; Ford.1997; Fujioka.1999; Greenberg.1972; Power et al.1996). Some black American creators see interracial relationships as a problem to the “Black nationalist- inspired agenda”. Many of Spike Lee’s films illustrate this by censuring these kinds of relationships, seeing them as harmful for the race (Collins. 2004, p.262). One of the reasons why this may be seen as harmful is because of the disproportionate number of black male/white female unions compared to black female/white male in the country, with the latter being far more underrepresented. Patricia Hill Collins states that for a black man in America to “choose” a black woman, in many ways can be viewed as an act of rebellion (Collins. 2004). Hollywood portrayals of interracial unions are often of a white man and an “exotic” woman of color and featuring a kiss between a black man and a white woman is still seen as the “kiss of death” for studio executives. Furthermore, when such unions are depicted, they are often not successful or long- term, but rather sexual and deviant from the norm (Childs. 2005). In the 1967 movie “Guess who is coming to dinner” a white woman brings home an African- American man to meet her parents and presents him as her fiancé. The movie was celebrated as groundbreaking at the time (interracial marriage being legalized in the U.S the same year), but it still works to uphold racial stereotypes of

black men. The black man in the movie, portrayed by Sidney Poitier, is submissive and not sexualized in any way. Furthermore, he is a doctor, perhaps to somehow “soften the blow” of his skin color (Collins. 2004). This illustrates how people of color being portrayed in media is ever changing and always being negotiated but are nevertheless often being “filtered” through the racial hierarchy dogma.

3.2 Stereotypes and the perception of “difference”

“The gaze of the Other has fixed me into this bodily-schema, but I am not merely an object” (Hudis. 2015, p.51).

Race-relations has changed throughout history, and also what the majority views as “different”. But what is the purpose of viewing someone as different? How do we decide who or what is “different”? Allport (1979) explains the functions of categorization; “categories are invented rationally, function as a guide for our daily lives and help to solve problems in a simple way.” (p.20-22). Some state that how humans categorize is linked to what is viewed as “ordinary or natural”. People do not see their own group or category, for them it is simply viewed as natural or the norm (Goffman. 1990). Some studies have shown a link between who is identified as culturally different with how visibly different “they” are perceived to be from “us” (Andreassen. 2006; Pred. 2000; Hervik. 2011; Matteson. 2005). According to Cantle (2000) the “degree of difference” is significant in how groups of people are perceived. Degree of difference, meaning how unlike one is from the majority. Identifying difference can lead to prejudice, stereotypes and a fear of the different (Törngren. 2011). When we perceive what is different, we interpret that and attach meaning to it. The assessment of difference is relational and ever changing. Blumer (1958) states that; “the collective image of the abstract group grows up not by generalizing from experiences gained in close, first-hand contacts but through the transcending characterizations that are made of the group as an entity” (p.5-6). Before being included in the white majority, Italian, Polish and other European immigrants were perceived as “other”, with racial slurs and stereotypes connected to their identity (Feliciano et al. 2008). Some even argue that this type of assimilation is happening now in the U.S with Latino people, portraying them as “honorary whites” (Bonilla-Silva. 2004). In one of the studies we will look at later on in

this chapter, conducted by Feliciano and colleagues, the findings showed that Latinos were the most “accepted” of the out-groups for both white men and women, supporting some claims that Latinos in the U.S to some degree are being assimilated into the white dominant group more than other groups. This led the study to focus more on Asian/white and black/white relations, which typically has a more tainted history when it comes to intermarriage and interracial relationships in the U.S (Feliciano et al. 2008).

In a study of over 100 gay men looking for sex on the internet, Wilson and colleagues (2009) found that racial stereotyping can be defined as “...inferred beliefs and expectations about the attributes a sexual experience will take based on the race of the partner involved in the process” (p.400). Many sexual assumptions about different groups were revealed in the study. For example, an fetishization of black men as aggressive and having large penises, Asian men for being sexually inferior and having small penises. Both groups were in the lowest realm of sexual racial desirability. The study also found that these assumptions worked in the context because they were filtered through a “preferential” discursive frame (Wilson et al. 2009). In Robinson’s (2015) research, he also found that the informants found black and Asian men the least desirable. Historically, black men have often been viewed merely in terms of their bodies; whether that be bodies representing work and physical strength or threatening bodies signifying deviant promiscuity (Collins. 2004). Black men are often seen as “hyper-masculine” and aggressive. These perceptions can have negative connotations, seeing black men as dangerous and criminals, but also have “positive” implications by viewing black men as strong and assertive and in turn create admiration. Collins (2004) states that black men’s bodies are vastly sexualized and objectified in modern mass media. This has also been stated to be the case in relation to common Norwegian stereotypes; black men being viewed as predominantly *sexually* attractive (Fredriksen. 2001; Gotaas. 1996). In contrast to stereotypes about black masculinity, Asian men are repeatedly depicted as lacking in masculinity, being asexual and weak-willed (Fung. 2001; Phua. 2007). The film and television industries portrayal of Asian men are usually trademarked by Asian men as martial artists, robotic and lacking in personality (Brooks and Hebert. 2006). Furthermore, Asian- American representation in film and television is low, when compared to other racial groups (La Force. 2018). Black women

can often be presumed as lacking in both physical and social characteristics of idealized (white) femininity, according to Collins (2004). Additionally, Coltrane and Messineo (2000) found that black women in television commercials are seldomly depicted as beautiful or the object of romantic or sexual attention, when compared to white women. While black women can often be perceived as lacking in femininity, Asian women are frequently portrayed as “hyper-feminine” and exotic, and also often being seen as “good wives” because they are thought to be docile and submissive (Koshy. 2004; Moran. 2001).

Feliciano and colleagues (2008) states that based on historical American black and white relations between men and women in addition to modern portrayals of these relationships, white men should be less likely to enter into a relationship with a black woman than a white woman with a black man. When looking at American white/Asian relations, the opposite would be shown, according to the same study; white women are more likely to exclude Asian men, then white men are of excluding Asian women. Feliciano and colleagues ‘study of over 1500 heterosexual white men and women online dating support these claims. When looking at black exclusion, their findings showed that white men were over two times more likely to reject black females than white women rejecting black males. The most prominent finding was in the vast difference in white male and female attitudes towards romantic involvement with people of Asian descent. Here, white men were much more inclusive of Asians than white women. In fact, white women were approximately 11.8 times more likely to exclude Asian men than white men Asian women. These results were striking; in comparison white women were only two times more likely to rule out Latinos. The findings were consistent with a probable outcome based on how Asian men often are portrayed in American popular culture. Negative images of Asian men as feminine or asexual may be a reason for their exclusion. For example, white women who stated height preferences were more probable to exclude Asian men (height being associated with ideas of masculinity). In both genders (white male/female), Latinos seem to be the preferred group, even though white woman were far less open to an interracial relationship than white men (about four times less likely). In conclusion, white American women were less open to a relationship with someone outside their own racial group than white men, and Asian men being the most unlikely to engage in a relationship with. White American men

were generally more open towards dating outside their own racial group but had a clear idea of which group were the least desirable; black women. Furthermore, the study concluded that racial preferences for dating amid white heterosexuals in this selection were strongly influenced and swayed by stereotypes created in the intersectionality between race and gender. The study gives some sustenance to the claim that heavily gendered cultural stereotypes about certain groups contribute to forming racial preferences (Feliciano et al. 2008). In her book “Eating the Other: Desire and resistance”, Bell Hooks (1992) describes how white culture is frequently seen as boring or plain, and how this affect the objectivization and consummation of people of color to “flavor” the whiteness. This can often be illustrated through sexual encounters with people of color and sexually objectifying them based on race. This is how stereotypes can work in a different way; instead of rejecting because of race, one is being lured in because of it. It becomes a way to “test” out something different, and ultimately has some of the same affects as exclusion; objectifying and reducing people of color to their stereotypes.

In his findings, Robinson (2015) states that race-based sexual stereotypes “masks” people of color’s individual characters- for example what they like or their interests otherwise. In her research on race, Owen (2004) found that when race was not listed as a criterion in searching for a partner, emphasis what often put on hobbies or similar interest to find likeminded people.

3.3 Interracial connections and attitudes

Ultimately, I decided that if anything in life is personal, and therefore free from social obligation, it is our intimate relationships. And I took comfort in the fact that are many, many ways to show love for my people. Nevertheless, I was, and remain, acutely aware that, in symbolic terms, marrying outside the race is easily seen as a rejection of Black people, and of Black women in particular. And symbols matter” (Dalton. 1999, p.125).

In this passage, Harlon Dalton- a Yale professor, ordained minister and writer talks about reconciling the choice of marrying a white woman with the plight of African American people. Again, the concept of “choice” is mentioned as an important liberal

value. Choosing who to enter into a long-term relationship with should be entirely up to the individual, preferably motivated by love. But is it really that simple? Is love something that exists separately from history, cultural determining and politics? (Nelson. 1997).

Historically racism has shown itself in the fear of people from different races engaging in relationships or “mixing”. During times of slavery in America, interracial sex was viewed as “deviant” as a way of hindering white women from engaging with black men (Childs. 2005). White men engaging with black women was also in theory seen as deviant, but in practice White men often raped black women (often their own slaves) (Collins. 2004). Interracial unions could also be seen to threaten racial hierarchy by distorting the lines between black and white (Frankenberg. 1997; Lyman 1997). This is echoed in a speech by James Baldwin in 1963: “...What is upsetting the country is a sense of its own identity. Where we are now is that a whole country of people believe that I am a “nigger” and I don’t and the battle is on. Because if I am not what I have been told I am, then it means that you’re not what you thought you were either. And that is the crisis” (Baldwin. 1963; Brown. 2000, p.31). When thinking about relations between white people and people of color, it is important to consider the white “self-image”. If white people see themselves as the norm or the dominant group in society, they are perhaps (unconsciously) acting in way that support that. And engaging in a relationship with someone from what can be perceived as the subordinate group does possibly not coincide with that (Childs. 2005). Interracial couples in America today face a lot of the same stigma about their personality and sexuality: white women who engage with black men often experience being viewed as “lower class”, “dirty”, “sexually promiscuous” and only looking for sex. Similarly, black men who engage with white women experience being labeled as only looking for sex and being “predatory”. On the other hand, some couples engaged in a white-man/black-woman relationship seem to experience less judgement overall than black-man/white-woman relationship. Why is that? In a male dominated society, the black-man/white-woman union is traditionally seen as the most disturbing to the status quo (Childs. 2005).

Törngren (2011) found in her qualitative research that many interviewees stated that interracial marriage was controversial and could lead to problems because of the

cultural differences between a couple. By focusing on potential problems for the couple and showing sympathy, the focus is shifted away from oneself. But by further examination of how cultural differences is discussed there emerges a clear view of what is perceived as “us” and “them” (Frankenberg. 1993). Furthermore, this division of “us” and “them” as being incompatible and problematic in a relationship, only strengthens ideas of racialized differences. Törngren (2011) states in her findings that there is a correlation between the projection of views towards interracial connections and individual preference. This might indicate that there is a link between the perception of societal reactions towards an interracial relationship affecting individual preference somehow. According to Moran (2001) and Frankenberg (1993), respondents admitted to the actuality of racist views about interracial marriage by concentrating on other people’s prejudice. Törngren (2011) describes this idea of intolerance towards interracial marriage being applied as a defense for not personally getting involved in an interracial relationship. What is noteworthy about this idea, is that there seems to be a discrepancy between the sense of individual choice and the awareness of the group position. Törngren (2011) states that this reflects the intricacy of attitude development as both an individual and collective process. Similarly, Erica Childs (2005) found in her research that while most of the white respondents stated that they had no personal problems with interracial unions, they were certain that someone else would have. This sort of “outsourcing” of prejudice is perhaps a strange manifestation of justifying not wanting to personally engage with people from different races. Additionally, claiming to not have an issue with interracial relationships while simultaneously offering up arguments against it can be understood as a form of “symbolic racism”, a way of veiling own racist viewpoints (Childs. 2005). Common arguments against interracial relationship include the following. Firstly, the problems that come with being in a relationship with someone of a different race and/or culture. Secondly, how family or society in general might respond, fearing a negative outcome. And lastly, how the children that might come of such a union will fare in life, being dealt such a “difficult” hand (Childs. 2005; Törngren. 2011).

An American 2008 study examining racial preferences among approximately 1500 heterosexual white men and women online, sought out to learn more about racial

hierarchies through the topic of dating (Feliciano et al. 2008). The study was partially motivated by the fact that racial attitudes among whites in the U.S were improving gradually, but this was not reflected in intermarriage rates. Reasons for having positive attitudes towards intermarriage, but not seeing oneself engaging in these connections may be due to many factors. For one, the person in question might not want to seem racist, and therefore altering personal views when asked. Secondly, one might agree to intermarriage on a more intangible level and being less open to it in certain circumstances. Lastly, it may just be down to the fact that the individual in question does not interact with someone outside their own racial group in their daily, therefore ruling out the probability of marriage (Feliciano et al. 2008). The “Contact Hypothesis” states that the more an individual interacts first hand with someone outside their own racial or ethnic group, the more tolerant that individual becomes (Allport. 1979). This challenge the idea of “us” and “them”, and seemingly would also have an impact on interracial relations. Törngren’s (2011) quantitative study lends support to the Contact Hypothesis; people who stated to be have interracial friendships were more positive towards interracial relationships.

Level of education seems to be essential in shaping not only race and sexuality- related behaviors, but also general attitudes towards different groups as well. More positive attitudes towards multiculturalism is often linked to higher education (Dunn.2004; Dunn, Forrest, Burnley & McDonald.2004; Oliver & Mendelberg.2000). For example, Jeffries (2009) found that Black and Latino gay and bisexual men with higher education were less likely to adapt to sexual race-related patterns. Bobo and Massagli (2001) found that respondents with higher education tended to voice more positive racial attitudes.

3.4 Liberal discourse and The Scandinavian Context

3.4.1 Liberal discourse

The idea of “choice” is a key for the liberal ideal in Western democracies (Callander, Newman.2015). Törngren (2011) found that in some instances the concept of “choice” is described as something uniquely or typically Swedish. In discussing the theme of sexual racism there often seems to be a conflict between the individual’s *right* to select

one own's partner, and the exclusion of some groups. Because this idea is closely linked to freedom (the *freedom* to choose) and rooted in a person's feeling of individuality, stating that it might be connected to larger structures may feel imposing and also stripping the person of their freedom to control something so personal. Economic policies in a liberal ideology often put an emphasis on individual responsibility, and in help to veil structural inequalities. When minorities achieve some civil rights, they can be viewed as legally equal to everyone else in practice, and racism can be perceived as not existing (Robinson. 2015).

Some argue that gender equality discourse is essential to how Nordic nationals view themselves and their country (Hübinette and Lundstrøm. 2011; Keskinen. 2009). Views of Muslim women being oppressed and treated badly by Middle Eastern men (Törngren. 2011) and a narrative by Nordic women that they are "progressive" and "liberal", whilst women from third world countries are "religious" and "domesticated" (Yang. 2009, p.245), facilitate in shaping a dichotomy that people from "here" are not compatible with people from "there" in a relationship. The intersection of gender and race-illustrated in this example further complicates how prejudice can be understood.

Briscoe and de Oliver (2012) state that neoliberal ideology helps to cover up signs of institutional racism and simultaneously encouraging blame upon those experiencing racism for not functioning/integrating. John Gray (1986) suggest that at the center of contemporary thought is liberalism or "liberal humanism" and points out a few characteristics of the liberal order; universalism, individuality, equality or classlessness and the notion that people and institutions can be enhanced. The key concepts of liberalism like "freedom" also made way for a free market and competition and the focus on individualism hindered explanations of larger structures leading to inequality (Bonilla- Silva. 2010). If all are free as individuals all are free to "make it". Bonilla-Silva (2010) also points to the fact "...that modernity, liberalism and racial exclusion were all part of the same historical movement" (p.75). However, there are also many examples of liberal language being employed to serve disenfranchised groups (for example, the civil rights movement in the U.S). Liberalist ideas in its purest form are certainly admirable and worth striving form. The use of colorblindness as a tool to

justify unfair situations, is merely a rearticulating of central elements to liberalism (Bonilla- Silva. 2010).

3.4.2 The Scandinavian context and defining the term “race”

“It came as a surprise when I found out that in Swedish academia “you are not supposed to use that kind of language”; a language that divides people into categories. However, not using the analytical concept of race does not mean that research into *race as ideas of race* is absent from Swedish academia and society. The question of why it is so wrong to talk about race becomes even more confusing, especially when many studies take up issues of racism, antiracism, racialization and even ethnic racialization” (Törnngren. 2011, p. 58-59).

For this thesis, and in studying racism and stereotypes, the term “race” is subjectively preferred over ethnicity. Using the term “race” is complicated in a European context, and elsewhere in the world. American sociology tends to define race as a social reality rather than a biological one. (Törnngren. 2011). Racial formation process, which views race as socially constructed is broadly accepted (Omi and Winant. 1993). Social scientist has long agreed that race is a social and psychological construct, and not rooted in biology (Brown. 2000). How do we define race in trying to answer the research question? By skin-color, facial features and so on? The death of “race” and replacement by allegedly more objective terms like ethnicity or nationality, is widely conveyed (Omi and Winant.1993). An ethnic group can be defined as; “...possessing some degree of coherence and solidarity composed of people [...] aware of having common origins and interests” (Cashmore et al. 2004, p.142). The wide and somewhat vague idea of ethnicity can confuse and perhaps complicate studies about racism, antiracism and racialization. Törnngren argues that “Failing to see and talk about the role of visible differences is akin to failing to recognize the effects that the visible differences have on some groups of people and their social lives” (2011.p,59). Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad stated that more energy is used in denying racism than identifying it and contesting it (Khazaleh. 2011). The preferred use of ethnicity over race is widely contested in Scandinavia, some parts of Europe and to some degree the U.S. Much of this can possibly be prescribed to the legacy of the Second World War atrocities and

post-colonialism (Törngren. 2011). In the US however, it is perhaps harder to escape the term because of the legacy of slavery and ongoing institutionalized racism. For this subject, and doing it in a setting like Norway, it is important to define the terms used as clearly as possible. Being aware of the controversies tied to using a term like race is imperative. Where ethnicity is less controversial, it also complicates the subject for this thesis. What qualifies as an ethnic Norwegian? Do you have to be born here, but your parents can be from a different country? Or do so and so many generations back have to be born in Norway?

So how can we define race for studying this subject? Not as a biological marker for personality traits, nor as a purely ideological concept with no grounds in physical reality (Omi and Winant. 1993). Omi and Winant (1993) suggest a “racial formation” approach: recognizing the significance of historical context and thinking within the framing of racial categories that exist and the social construction of race. This thinking of the term must be concerned with contemporary relationships and apply in an increasingly global world. Cantle parallels race with “our present perception of difference: “Race has therefore been used to classify people in a variety of hierarchical patterns, and has been constructed based on religion, nationality, social class, ethnicity- as well as physical characteristics, particularly skin color- to present a deterministic model of social relations” (Cantle. 2005.p,113). Using exclusively terms like ethnicity could exclude the factors of physical appearance that is of interest. That being said, it is not only physical appearance alone that is of interest but meaning connected to it. How people meet the world and how the world meets them, and in turn what place that gives them in society- is interesting for exploring this subject. A definition of the concepts of “race” in this context can be as follows: “...a socially constructed idea evoked by visible differences” (Törngren. 2011, p.43).

Sayaka Osanami Törngren conducted a mixed method research on interracial relationships for her PhD dissertation in Malmö, Sweden. Her findings showed that attitudes towards interracial relationships were generally positive. Although, among those who were positive, the majority interacted with people of different ethnicities than their own on regular basis (Törngren. 2011). In Sweden and Norway gathering meaningful statistics for this subject is harder because of how an interethnic marriage is

defined: by citizenship or country of birth, not ethnicity or racial category (Törngren. 2011). In Norway from 2008-2010 8,6 % of all marriages were estimated by data from two EU surveys to be between someone from the native country and someone from a foreign country (Eurostat. 2012). According to SSB in Norway, 18,6 % of all marriages in 2001 were between an ethnic Norwegian and someone “foreign”. For ethnic Norwegian men with “foreign” women in 2001, 69% of them were non- Western. For ethnic Norwegian women with “foreign” men, 42% were non-Western (SSB. 2004). Looking closer at the statistics from SCB in Sweden, Crester (1999) found that intermarriages with people from outside the Western European realm were not that common. Statistics from SCB in 2010 includes intermarriage patterns of Swedes with immigrant parents, showing the number of Swedish-born people with Swedish- born parents in an intermarriage was at 5% for women and 6% for men. It is important to note that the majority of the foreign born married to Swedes (with Swedish-born parents) were from mainly Nordic or European countries. This data suggests a pattern of racial homogamy in marriages amongst Swedes with Swedish-born parents. (Törngren. 2011).

Like mentioned earlier it is preferred in a Scandinavian context to speak of “culture” or “ethnicity” rather than “race”. Pred (2000) states that differences like physical attributes and skin color are understood as cultural differences in Swedish society. Cultural racism can be defined as a way of placing people in categories of “us” and “them” and in turn viewing the culture of the “other” as lesser (Essed. 1990). But are both of these terms sufficient in discussing the subject at hand? There are many different definitions of “ethnicity”, but one thing almost all of them share is the idea that one ethnic group enjoy a shared culture (Cornell & Hartmann. 2007; Fenton. 2003). So, if one ethnic group can be defined by a shared culture, who is viewed as ethnic? Are all different groups of people perceived as ethnic? Frankenberg (1993) and Pieterse (1996) argue that the majority often do that see themselves as being a part of an ethnic group. This again evokes the idea of “us” and “them” and who is perceived as different from the perspective of “us”. Furthermore, according to Hervik (2011) people being associated with the term “ethnicity” in the Scandinavian context is often “non-Western” people. Furthermore, Matteson (2005) states that being viewed as Swedish is often linked to the idea of being a white European. Hernes and Knudsen (1990) states that nine out of ten

majority Norwegians use the word “immigrant” when speaking of people of “dark skin color” exclusively. By categorizing groups of people by “shared culture” when discussing the subject at hand, there can occur many different problems. This also evokes ideas about us and them; “them” being the ones with the culture. First, the term is very vague and broad, Gullestad (2004) states that the word is “...a complex and polysemous concept in Norway” (p.190). Secondly, culture can be linked to something distant in the past. People may have a heritage from a certain culture, but not be personally concerned with that culture at all. Thirdly, visible differences cannot always be linked to culture. A black man born in Norway, may feel completely connected to Norwegian culture. Does that mean that he is never in his lifetime aware of the fact that skin color is viewed “different” than the norm? Both culture and ethnicity cannot be seen as adequate terms to discuss “difference”, and others suggest the same (Törngren. 2011; Cattle. 2005). Studies have shown that children as young as six months perceive difference in gender and skin color and try to make sense of the difference (Katz. 2003; Bronson and Merryman. 2009). Other studies show that consciousness of one self in terms of which race one belongs to, is established around the age of four or five (Piskacek & Golub. 1973; Tatum. 1997; Warner. 1987). However, some researchers stress the difference between viewing racialization as a natural process or a structural one. Because recognizing what race one belongs to is something that can happen at an early stage in life, it is easy to view it as completely natural and completely inherent. Finding the answer to such questions is very difficult, but according to some racialization is not a natural perceptive process. “Visibility, in the sense of prominent features that are invested with particular meanings, is not natural and universal but is historically specific and culturally produced and reproduced through fleeting and shifting negotiations (Gullestad. 2004, p.186). It seems to be the old tale of heritage or environment, or maybe in some cases there is suggested that environment morphs with heritage and shapes it. Others also lend credence to the idea that racialization is not natural, but profoundly rooted in history and something that happened slowly and gradually. With hundreds of years of European imperialism and domination, phenotypical meaning was linked to different appearances (Goldberg. 1993; Winant. 2000). This process is fluid, relational and ever-changing, as described in the example of other immigrant groups (like Italians) being gradually included in the group of

“white” people. It therefore seems very hard to use a term which does not sufficiently regard the role of visible differences when discussing stereotypes linked to various appearances.

Norwegian social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen claims that it can be hard for people who “look different” from the mainstream to break away or hide from their “ethnic identity” (Eriksen. 1993.p,5). Törnngren argue that “visible differences have a master position and evoke perceptions of economic, religious and social differences” (Törnngren. 2011, p.43), meaning that what you *see* is attached to feelings and meanings that contributes to shaping the idea of race in a society. For instance, Gerholm (2003;2000) asserts that a Danish- Swedish marriage is not viewed as being interracial in the same way that a Swedish- Gambian marriage is, and this has an effect on the treatment the latter couples experience from their surroundings in Sweden.

The general image Norwegians have of their country is that it is fairly blameless in regard to colonialism. Norway has supported anti- apartheid laws in South-Africa, civil rights law in the U.S and often played an important role in peace-talks (Middle East, Sri Lanka, Colombia). Being a peaceful and democratic country is something Norway prides itself on. This, together with the fact that Norway in many ways is country with liberal values and perhaps has a predisposition to see racism as an individual problem, may be the reason why racism is not widely or/differentially discussed in Norway (Gullestad. 2004). Attention towards someone who looks different is something that some might claim is natural and nothing to take to seriously in a Norwegian setting. Often if the person who is being looked at (for looking different) have themselves to blame if they are offended, frequently being described as “too sensitive” (Lien. 1996), hostile or even that they are the ones “hung up” on skin color (Gullestad. 2004). It is only when race is discussed, that it becomes a problem. “Playing the race-card” is an argument that is often used when discussing race or racism. There is no problem existing separately, race only becomes a problem when one “makes it” a problem- often by trying to discuss systemic or relational problems (Childs. 2005).

Some might say there is a huge difference between just looking and recognizing the “different” and reacting negative towards it. Racism takes many different forms, and the one often being under scrutiny in Norway is that of the extreme kind, the kind linked

towards a few radical individuals. This lends itself to the idea that habitually in Norway, racism is seen as an individual problem or an anomaly rather than a structural problem with many different faces. Merely labeling people as “too sensitive” when they experience attention or various assumptions frequently because of their perceived “difference” presents itself with some problems. Firstly, just because there is no malicious intent, does not necessarily mean that the intent is positive. Secondly, the experiences can have a negative impact on the person being affected by it, especially if it is a regular occurrence. Thirdly, it is perhaps not sensible to give more importance or attention to the fact that the majority is “scared” of doing or saying something incorrect, rather than the minorities feelings of being continuously seen as different, experiencing discrimination and/or feeling alienated (Gullestad. 2004). It is worth asking which group might be the most affected by such a scenario. Many emphasize full acceptance of Norwegian culture as a condition for being fully integrated. What can be seen as a negative consequence of this is the rejection of anything that might be perceived as different and in turn incite the majority, in order to be “wholly integrated” and approving of the majority’s hegemony (Hervik. 2002).

3.5 Summary

There is research that show sexual exclusion based on race, but little is actually understood on the subject of sexual racism. This is partially since the subject often is seen as irrelevant, because personal preference is individual and not linked to overall racist beliefs. Patricia Hill Collins (2004) concept of “new racism” states that historical racist beliefs are reinvented with new conceptual forms and dispersed through the internet and mass media. This “new racism” is gendered and affects race relations between people of color and white people, but also amongst people of color. “Degree of difference” is often determined in relation to the majority or the “white” and can lead to a fear of the different and stereotyping. Lastly, when studying race and racism in a Scandinavian liberal setting it is important to be aware of the controversy related to the term “race” because of the politics of colorblindness, as well as a reluctance to researching the majority in a critical way- due to Eurocentrism. In the next chapter we

will examine the theoretical framework of this thesis, which along with the literature will help us analyze the data found in the interviews.

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Critical Race theory and Fanon's writings inspired by Hegel have in common the notion that identity and sense of self is constructed. Different categories are created to better understand the world, and for Fanon this is illustrated through the example of "us" and "them". CRT also acknowledge that categorizing people is a powerful tool in creating power structures. CRT focuses on how identities are not equal, and how various institutions and the politics of colorblindness are complicit in this, while Fanon's focus tends to be more on the relational and psychoanalytical effects of racism. Race, identity and power-relations are all social structures created in relation to an opposition. This view of how social reality is constructed can be tied to constructionism and an interpretivist tradition of epistemology (Bryman. 2012). One of the traditions that has taken a strong anti-positivist stance in social research is phenomenology, which is closely tied to the hermeneutic tradition (Bryman. 2012). Phenomenology is concerned with the fact that social reality is not static like natural science, because human behavior is meaningful to its actors. Meaning that human behavior can be considered a result of how individuals interpret the world. (Bryman. 2012).

4.1 Fanon and "the Self and the Other"

Post-colonial theory looks at the legacy of colonialism and imperialism, and the politics of knowledge and power. Foucault claims that power is not coercion but is maintained and grows through and internalization of power. Those who hold the power is therefore not always aware of it, and through a supposed subjectivity is reinforcing it (Foucault. 1982). The dominant position can be viewed as that of the former colonial power, or the "Western world" which exist in a dichotomy with the "Non-Western world". For example, the field of Anthropology was formed within the structural disparities of colonialism and consisted much upon traveling far way to learn more about people regarded as "culturally dissimilar" (Gullestad. 2004). A critique of post-colonialism is for its focus on cultural essentialism and undermining of universal values (Chibber. 2013). In focusing on one particular race, culture or persons point of view, we risk losing what we share in common. Post-colonial theory and similar critical theories can be viewed as lacking in objectivity and narrated from the point of view of the

marginalized, which may have an “agenda”. In the field of postcolonialism, there is little agreement about its disciplinary boundaries- which often leads to a debate about the field’s legitimacy. Especially important for this thesis is how the “post-colonial” identity is constructed, which is evident in Fanon’s work. Fanon always stated that all racism was made up of the same structures, meaning that the racism seen in colonial times is no different from that seen in the Western sphere like in America (Hudis. 2015). His analysis of racism is inspired by Hegel’s analysis of self-consciousness; Firstly, the person is unaware of his position in the world, after achieving consciousness. In the second stage the subject tries to strive for self-consciousness by understanding himself in relation to the Other. “The subject is driven by a desire to negate this otherness of the external world by positing itself as an absolute (...) In other words, *I want to be recognized as absolute- and so do you*” (Hudis. 2015, p.43-44). According to Hegel’s dialectic this relationship will ultimately end in “a fight to the death”. But the subject soon realizes it cannot exist without the Other, and therefore enslaves him (“Master and Slave Dialectic”). Though the Slave is subordinate to the Master, the latter could not exist without its inferior counterpart, therefore creating a somewhat symmetric power balance (Hudis. 2015). Consequently, the Slave being aware of his position and that the superior *is* dependent on him, it is actually easier for him to ultimately be free from how he is being perceived/his position than the Master who lacks “self-certainty of himself as an active subject” (Hudis. 2015, p.45). Though the Slave has gained some self-awareness and a mind of his own, he still does not gain recognition from the Master. Therefore, the battle for recognition remains unsettled. On some points Fanon differs somewhat from Hegel. Fanon (1952) states that the relationship is not as co-dependent as Hegel would have it. The Master does not recognize the Slave, and therefore is not dependent on him in the creation of his own identity (Fanon. 1952). The black person constantly sees himself in relation to the white person (what he is not) and is always reminded of how different he is. While the majority feels secure in their absoluteness and position as “the norm”. The majority’s unawareness of their own position calls for self-reflecting and being highly critical of unchecked ideas and assumptions (Gullestad. 2004). In “Black Skin, White Masks” Fanon (1952) draws upon Hegel’s “Master and Slave Dialectic” and “Phenomenology of Spirit” to further understand his positioning in the world as a black man. He also

takes inspiration from Sartre's perspective on being a colonized subordinate but disagrees with his views on other subjects. Fanon states that he can not escape the "gaze" of the Other, no more than the Other can escape his. The relationship creates two entities that feeds upon each other. There can be no black without white, for there is no such thing as a "pre-existing black essence" (Hudis. 2015, p.31) and black people are negatively defined according to what they are not- white. This view is not part of some natural and pre-determined reality but produced and shaped within the structures of history and colonialism. Like mentioned before, discrimination depends upon the notion that somebody is inferior to others. Seeing difference, and subsequently trying to make sense of one's own position in relation to that difference, creates the idea of "us" and "them". Even seemingly minor or insignificant episodes of experiencing racializing can have a negative effect on the individual, illustrated in the example when Fanon encounters a boy saying to his mother while passing him in the park; "Look, a Negro!" (Fanon. 1952, p.91). This leads Fanon to constantly see himself in the third person- mirroring DuBois "double consciousness" (Memmi. 2014) and being aware of his own appearance and skin color. This focus on bodily schema separates the black man from for example the Jewish, who to some degree can pass unnoticed. While attempting to understand his place in the world, Fanon employs different strategies, like mimicking the Other or approaching the Other, and the Other moving away in disgust; "*Maman, look a Negro; I'm scared!*" (Fanon. 1952, p.91). In many ways this leaves the black man a slave to his appearance (Fanon.1952).

In "Black Skin, White Masks", Fanon tells a story of Mayotte Capecia who wrote about her life as a black woman in Martinique in the story "I am a Martinican woman". Mayotte is black but desires only white men. Her grandmother was white, something she prides herself in, but does not understand her choice to marry a black man. How a black woman could desire anything other than a white man is unfathomable to Mayotte. However, she knows that in the eyes of a white man she will never be truly respected: "*I would have liked to marry, but with a man. Only, a colored woman is never quite respectable in the eyes of a white man- even if he loves here, I knew well*" (Fanon. 1952, p.25). Mayotte not understanding her grandmother's choice resonates with a lot of other Martinican woman living in France according to Fanon. He states that many

colored women see the choosing of a French white man as a step in the right direction; the sort of “dilution” of the race with whiteness. For Mayotte and other women of color, according to Fanon, it is hard to understand why “...choose to go back there once you’ve escaped?” (p.30). The notion that white men are less inclined to choose a woman of color or respect them as equals if they do, does not deter Mayotte and others like her. It is the fight for a place alongside a white man that will eventually give them Hegel’s “subjective certainty” (p.27) according to Fanon. This kind of confirmation of the Self will lead Mayotte one step away further from the Other. She has learned all her life that white is beautiful and something that is worth striving for; “All I know is that he had blue eyes, blond hair, a pale complexion and I loved him” (p.25). Mayotte speaks of a white man she has fallen in love with. But it is not necessarily *him* she loves. When describing what she loves about him, she lists everything that makes him white, or his racial signifiers. It is more the idea of whiteness that Mayotte is in love with. Much is similar with the relationship between the black man and the white woman, following Fanon. The black man sees the hierarchy of the world, and that white is on top. He also desires whiteness, and to be white. To be recognized as white can be achieved through the love of a white woman: “By loving me, she proves that I am worthy of a white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man” (p.45). The black man understands that in order to achieve some sort of recognition as white, this can be pursued through the love of a white woman. However, the relationship between a black man and a white woman also display a sort of power struggle where women are used a commodity. To “get back” at the white man for all that he has put the black man through, he uses the white woman and “sullies” her. Like we have seen previously there are differences in gender when it comes to interracial connections. Female/male power structures also influence relationships across racial categories. Fanon tells of a man called Jean Veneuse contemplating marrying a white woman; “And so I wonder whether I’m any different from the rest and if I marry you, a European woman, I wonder whether I won’t look as though I’m stating that not only do I despise women of my own race, but drawn by the desire for white flesh that has been of limits to us Blacks since the white man rules the world, I am unconsciously endeavoring to take my revenge on the European female for everything that her ancestors have inflicted on my people throughout the centuries” (p.51). Here the female is used a tool to inflict harm

upon the white race, whether that be unconsciously like in this example, but also consciously as Fanon points out. Jean Veneuse also talks about how potentially choosing a white woman could be seen as a rejection of black women. As we saw, according to Collins (2004) the choosing of a black woman for a black man is often seen as an act of rebellion. Finally, Fanon also points to the idea of “choice” in having racial preferences. Fanon refers to Paul Morand’s “Magie noir” where a “mulatto” girl tries to explain why she prefers white men over black men; “” *I don’t like the Black man,*” she says *“Because he’s a savage. Not savage in the cannibal sense, but because he lacks refinement.” An abstract point of view. And when we point out that some Blacks might be superior to her in this respect, she objects to their ugliness...An attempt is made to explain to her the canon. Her nostrils flare and she is short of breath: “I can choose who I want as a husband”*” (p.40). Here the idea of “choice” is also used as a defense when it seems that all other resorts of arguing this preference falls short. This sort of argument that one has a choice as an individual, and that that is an unyielding human right, is hard to argue against and often ends the discussion.

4.2 Critical race theory

Van Dijk (2001) states that; “*members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders (the elites), have more or less exclusive access to, and control over, one or more types of public discourse*” (p.356).

The theoretical approach of this thesis is influenced by the American sociology’s idea of race, where race is viewed as a social reality and not a biological one. Törnngren (2011) argues that; “...race is a social reality because the lives of the people who are categorized as *different* according to their *visible differences* are manifested through *discrimination* and racism” (p.46). Critical race theory, drawing on perspectives from critical legal studies and radical feminism, looks at how white supremacy and law plays a continuous role in racial domination and argues against the institution of the liberal order and critiques the teaching of colorblindness for upholding these structures; “...critical race theory questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, Enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law” (Delgado & Stefancic. 2012, p.3). CRT also critiques liberalism for

ignoring the issue of intersectionality, by trying to solve things at half-measures and leaving major groups dissatisfied. It claims that racism is so deeply embedded structures and consciousness that change needs to be “all at once”, or there is a risk of the system swallowing up the little change made and a return to the status quo. Also central to CRT is studying “whiteness” in a critical way. Similar to Post- colonial ideas of power relations, CRT views “whiteness” as the normative standard. Other groups are defined in relation to “whiteness”; meaning what they are not. This view is often strengthened in the public eye; portraying the other as exotic and different. CRT views “whiteness”, comparable to Foucault, as something that objectively understood as perspective-less and indeed without a race. White being the standard renders no need for a category (Delgado & Stefancic.2012). According to Collins (2000) people who do not themselves encounter oppression, often have difficulties understanding how their actions or attitudes continue to sustain others subordination.

According to CRT racism has some distinct features (Delgado & Stefancic. 2012). Firstly, it is in many ways considered not acknowledged. Colorblindness in the form of presumed equal opportunity, which demands same treatment for all, can help to cover up the most blatant of discrimination. Secondly, a feature of racism termed “interest convergence” describes how material interest align with racial inequality and often renders little incentive to eliminate it. Thirdly, CRT also states that race and racism is a social construct, and not natural, inherent or fixed. Racial categories are invented by humans and can be manipulated and changed when needed. A fourth feature of racism is “differential racialization”; this describes the shifting of racialization toward different minority groups throughout history by the dominant group. Assumptions and stereotypes of one group may change over time, and this shift is often controlled by the needs or feelings of the majority. One example of this is the treatment of Japanese Americans during and after WW2 in comparison to modern day America (Delgado & Stefancic. 2012). Connected to the idea of differential racialization is the ideas of intersectionality and anti-essentialism. A person does not have a fixed, uniform identity, and everyone can have coinciding and contradictory identities that are influenced by time in history, politics, religion, class, gender and sexuality. This idea collides somewhat with Fanons idea that all racism is built up of the same structures at the basis. CRT points out the dangers of all minorities banning together towards racism, because

of the complexities of intersectionality and the risk that some may end up better than others depending on the varieties of identities within the mere generalization of “minorities”.

4.2.1 Identities and Categorical thinking

In many online dating sites, there are boxes to tick in order to filter racial preference (for example; “Black”, “Asian”, “Latino” etc.). The usage of these ways of categorizing people by just ticking a box for your preference might help normalize the exclusion/inclusion (Callander et al.2015). Stuart Hall (1984) points to the fact that every human being is continuously employing different frameworks of analysis and perceptions in a mostly unconscious manner, which help us navigate the world in terms of our own positions, actions surrounding us and the behaviors of others. This thought relates to the Hegelian perspective of the Self and the Other, in which the need for categories is crucial to achieving self-awareness (what I am is what I am not).

Within the framework of CRT there is generally a divide seen; between the “realist” school and the “discourse analyst” school. While the realist school of thought is mostly concerned with the “real world” issues such as legal injustice, racial poverty and incarceration, human rights and equality and immigration, the discourse analyst branch tends to focus on notions and categories with which society structures and comprehends race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic. 2012). The realist division builds on the idea that racism is a mainly a result of the materialist interest and wants of the majority and aims to change that. The discourse analyst camp on the other hand, tries to put emphasis on “...issues, such as identity and intersectionality, that center on categorical thinking. They are likely to examine the role of ideas, thoughts, and unconscious discrimination” (Delgado & Stefancic. 2012, p.136). Materialist often criticize the discourse analyst movement for not putting enough emphasis on the “real” issues which they mean affect people of color the most. The discourse analyst points to the fact that many of the burden’s humans carry are mental, and that it is necessary to discuss honestly and openly about the subjects in order to break free from the chains of certain thought patterns or frames of discourse and start to create new ones. The analysis of the interviews done for this thesis will draw from this branch of CRT because it focuses on

the thought patterns and assumptions that may lie in the unconscious. Or it may be that these thoughts or assumptions are simply never be discussed because as we have described “every-day” racialization or racism that seem to be almost mechanical rarely renders a second thought. The analysis will also draw from one of the key features of liberal discourse, according to CRT; colorblindness.

4.2.2 “Racism without racists”

“That is because we can only get to the positive- the overcoming of the affective disorder associated with discrimination and racism- by staring the negative in the face and tarrying with it. Rushing too fast over the negative will make it harder to comprehend the depth of the problem as well as trivialize the effort to overcome it” (Hudis. 2015, p.30).

Bonilla- Silva (2010) recognizes five discursive features of colorblind racism which he has gathered through several in depth interviews with white Americans. Firstly, he points to the reluctance of whites’ using racial language in articulating their own racial opinions. Secondly, he recognizes some “sematic moves” which whites use a sort of rhetorical armor; “I am not racist, but...”, “I don’t know”, “I don’t believe that, but...”, “Some of my best friends are...” (p. 105). All these rhetorical strategies act as defense to fall back on if one ventures to far out in what one might deem as “dangerous racist territory”. Third, the role projection plays in whites’ racial discourse is observed; for example, by pointing out that people of color are the racist ones (discussing racism towards whites) and arguing that people of color are self-segregating. This shifting of blame works as a powerful tool in leaving the responsibility for mending the situation with the other party. Fourth, Bonilla- Silva points to the role of diminutives in colorblind race conversation to “soften” their statements; for example, instead of saying “I am against interracial marriage” the respondents might say “I am just a bit concerned about the welfare of the children” (p.114). Lastly, he shows how due to the sensitive nature of the subject, many whites end up talking incoherent or being inconsistent in one’s arguments. This sort of intrusion into unchartered territory mirrors the view that racially charged language should be forbidden in the political environment of colorblindness.

Storytelling is a central part of colorblind racism according to Bonilla-Silva (2010) as another tool in trying to make sense of the world, and there are two main types of storytelling; *story lines* and *testimonies*. Story lines are often communal and generic accounts that share much of the same framework and language. They are ideological and seen as “a matter of fact” narratives about race and racism. “What makes these story lines “ideological” is that storytellers and their audiences share a representational world that makes these stories seem factual” (p.124). Meaning that the people that see these stories as absolute truths often live or operate in the same social spaces and therefore reinforces the factual nature of the account. Testimonies on the other hand are usual personal to the person telling them. The narrator is usually a part of the story or is close to someone who is part of the story. This “firsthand” account of a history brings a level of genuineness and emotion that story lines cannot. However, firsthand testimonies are nevertheless also filtered through broader racial narratives and views on the world. Examples of major storylines of colorblind racism that Bonilla-Silva (2010) discovered in his interviews are; “The past is in the past”, “I didn’t own any slaves”, “If the Jews, Italians, and Irish have made it, how come the Blacks have not?”, “I didn’t get a job (or a promotion), or was not admitted to a college, because of a minority” (p.125-134). The fact that discrimination based on skin color or other racial or ethnic features is viewed at tantamount to “illegal” in modern democratic societies, creates the illusion that such things do not occur and is not an issue to be discussed (Gallagher. 2003). Examples of reoccurring testimonies fall within the following groups; “Stories of interactions with Blacks”, “Stories of negative interactions with Blacks”, “Stories of positive interactions with Blacks”, “Stories of disclosure of knowledge of someone close who is racist” and “Other personal stories” (like “Someone close to me married or dated a minority” and “I used to have very good black friends) (p.134-144). All of these are tools for whites to navigate tense discussions about race, and these narratives also help confirm existing ideas about race and racism. They reinforce each other and in turn can be reinforced by various media outlets. They are furthermore strengthened by the fact that in a country like America today, most racial groups live for the most part segregated lives (Bonilla-Silva. 2010). Meaningful interactions leave the assumptions and opinions of these story lines and testimonies to go generally unchecked.

“Color blindness, by virtue of keeping matters of racism and discrimination under wraps- and refusing to raise the subjects for fear of offending or sowing division- actually goes against every bit of modern research on how the brain processes racial stereotypes and can influence our behaviors in a way that causes us to act on them” (Wise. 2010, p.166).

Colorblindness as an ideal or an end to achieve is commendable. To live in a world where color truly does not matter should be something to strive for. It is worth noting however that there is perhaps a difference between merely “seeing” color and color not being significant for behaviors towards each other or equal treatment. This lends to the discussion of the line between racialization and racism and trying to imagine a world where nobody *sees* color is perhaps an interesting exercise at the very least. Many who subscribe to critical race theory believe that race is so entrenched in our thought patterns and societal structures, that the everyday workings of the world will not change to help many minorities out of their subordinate positions, but only warrant reactions towards the truly offensive of racial prejudices (Delgado & Stefancic. 2015). The effects of colorblind policies can on the other hand also be less admirable, when it covers up difference and helps keep those in need in their place. Take for example the Supreme Court in the U.S which holds that it is unethical for the law to take any note of race or even to alleviate any past wrongdoing (Delgado & Stefancic. 2015).

Childs (2005) found in his interviews with several American interracial couples that some employ “color-blind strategies” and some “race-conscious strategies”. Amongst the couples that put less emphasis on the role of race in their relationship, many stated that a “positive outlook” and empowerment were important reasons for doing so. Furthermore, discussing race seemed to put a restraint on their feeling of personal freedom and individualism. They chose to not acknowledge any opposition that may exist, and objecting being put into categories that they saw as separating (Childs. 2005). Couples who seemed to choose a different strategy, that of a race- conscious approach, appeared to be more willing to acknowledge and challenge disapproval by society and systemic racial issues. The self-awareness of the role race played in their identity as an individual and their relationship, was seemingly empowering for them in contrast to the other group of couples. Childs (2005) states that both these strategies is a way for

couples to "...negotiate their relationships and others' responses to them in order to make sense of the contradictory and conflicting racial narratives" (p.42). Furthermore, Childs argues that the strategy of colorblindness is problematical because it can (often unintentionally) camouflage or naturalize relationships that are (sometimes unconsciously) influenced by "privilege and subordination" (Childs. 2005, p.43). Additionally, according to the author there is a problem with seeing the world as colorblind, this directly contradicts the fact the majority of couples (in the U.S) are matched by race, and those who are not are seen as deviating from the norm and being labeled "interracial".

4.2.3 The 4 "frames" of colorblind racism

Through interviews with college students and response from surveys, Bonilla- Silva (2010) was able to establish "4 frames of colorblind racism" which were used by the majority of the white respondents; "*Abstract Liberalism*", "*Naturalization*", "*Cultural Racism*" and "*Minimization of racism*" (p.74). *Abstract liberalism* describes a re-framing of liberal values to fit appropriately within a racial narrative. The idea of "equal opportunity" and that everyone gets "a fair shake", is used to argue against policies like affirmative action. If everyone has the same opportunity, it is up to the individual to get good enough grades to get into college. Giving a person of color an advantage is seen as unfair to the white student that might have gotten his spot. Liberal concepts like "individualism" and "choice" are also employed in for example arguing against forced integration. Everyone has the right to choose where they live and where they send their kids to school. The second frame of *naturalization* is a way of describing a racial issue as simply natural or "the way it is". This comes into light when discussing the issue of this thesis; sexual racism. Attraction is purely individual, and preference is natural, inherent and absolute. Preferring one racial group over the other can merely be explained by "That is just the way it is" or "I don't know why". The frame of *cultural racism* is a frame that depends upon cultural arguments like for example the assumption that "Blacks are lazy" or that "Asians are especially hardworking". These frames are more hidden and softened in modern times, but nevertheless there. Take for example the statement that "Blacks are lazy". This presumption can be seen in the argument against

affirmative action; less people of color get into colleges, and since there is no unfairness involved the only logical conclusion must be that they are not as hardworking. Finally, the frame of *minimization of racism* focuses on the presumed fact that everything is “better now”. The past is long gone, and the discrimination is for the most part a thing of the past. If you claim that there is still racial inequality you risk being met with the argument that people of color are “hypersensitive”, “playing the race-card” or “using race as an excuse”. When using these frames to analyze a conversation or discussion about race, Bonilla- Silva (2010) points to the fact that his findings show that the frames are rarely used in unison but rather often times mixed and interchangeably. Secondly the frames can be voiced in various manners, and this is important to take note of; whether the statement is voiced with outrage or sympathy makes a difference. Different levels of compassion towards underprivileged people can be shown within the same frame.

4.3 Summary

Fanon’s ideas of “the Self and the Other” inspired by Hegel is important for understanding the power-structures of race relations, also in today’s society. These structures affect not only how white people view people of color, but how people of color can view themselves, by “whiteness” being the thing that is desired. This has an impact on interracial unions and how people from different racial group view and relate to one another. Critical race theory looks critically and actively at white privilege and structures of oppression. The politics of colorblindness is used as a tool to further white dominance by attempting to make race a “non-issue”. Bonilla- Silva’s (2010) 4 frames of colorblind racism examines how narratives of colorblindness is implemented to justify racial inequality. In the next chapter we will use this theoretical framework to analyze the data.

5 INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

Firstly, a table (table 2) will present an overview of pictures chosen and not chosen. The following Figure 1 is an overview over how the interviews were approached and analyzed. The context of where the interviews took place is Norway, a liberal democracy. The participants are all part of the majority or the hegemon as white individuals and being all considered as ethnic Norwegians. In discussing preference and assumptions linked to various appearances there were examples of talking about visible differences and “talking colorblind”. Bonilla- Silva’s (2010) 4 frames of Colorblindness are used to analyze discussions. Firstly, when talking about visible differences, which the questions encouraged, different stereotypes emerged. These can be linked to previous research, but also to the frame of *cultural racism*. Although this frame is considered a frame of colorblindness, it was useful when applied to common cultural stereotypes. The 5 racial groups are listed below, also with words that were frequent in describing the groups which emerged in the interviews. The frame of *naturalization* is described in relation to defending views of excluding Asian men. Testimonies are used as a powerful racial rhetorical tool according to Bonilla-Silva, and we present one example of that from the interviews. The frame of *minimization of racism* was not prevalent during the discussions, and some thought is given as to why. The last frame of *abstract liberalism* is examined in the discussions about choice relating to personal preference, and what the interviewees feel shape preference: individuality or external factors? When looking at the reasoning for these questions it is important to remember the context, which is a liberal democracy where the frame of *abstract liberalism* perhaps is very relevant.

Group	Most attractive	Least attractive	Not chosen
"African / Black"	4	2	0
"White / Central European"	4	5	0
"Asian"	1	3	3
"Middle-Eastern / Indian"	4	0	2
"South-American / Latino"	1	4	0

Table 2- Pictures chosen: Least and most attractive, not chosen. Five different racial groups.

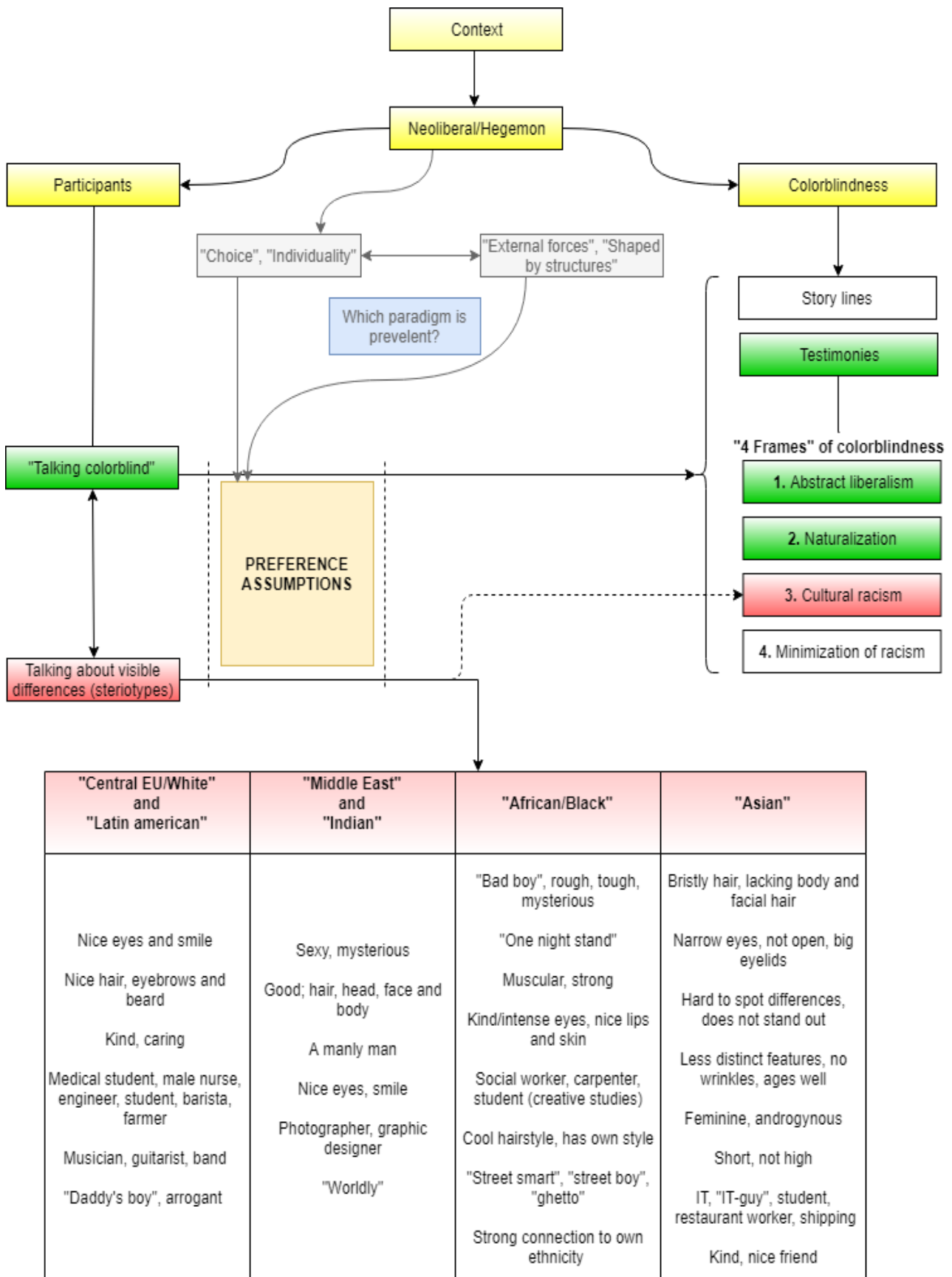


Figure 1- Interview analysis overview

5.1 Talking about visible differences: Stereotypes and Cultural Racism

5.1.1 The sexualization and mystification of the black man

Of the 5 pictures of black males, one picture (picture nr. 3) was chosen as most attractive 2 times by participants called “Simone” and “Hege”. The four other pictures were chosen one time respectively; most attractive (picture nr.16 by “Emilie” and picture nr.14 by “Beatrice”) and least attractive (picture nr. 24 by “Annabelle” and picture nr.12 by “Beatrice”).

The stereotypes connected with black males were seen several times during the interviews/discussions. However, in the example of picture number 16- which was chosen as most attractive one time, these stereotypes seem to be less or if not at all prevalent. Picture nr.16 is described by “Emilie” as a student, perhaps studying something creative. She likes his eyes, stating that they are more “intense” with his dark skin. She states that she likes his skin, lips and beard. “Emilie” imagines that he is a very social and outgoing type, the type of guy that is always busy. When asked what kind of relationship she could see herself having with a man like that she states; “maybe long-term or marriage”. In this example it seems as if the interviewee is able to see beyond some more common stereotypes. She does not avoid talking about race- she mentions his “dark skin” but seems to make up a story about the person in the picture that is less influenced by common stereotypes about black males. This could be influenced by the clothes individual wears in the picture, his hairstyle, style of picture, setting in picture or his facial expression. Different pictures can create different results. The choosing of picture nr.14 also had a lot in common with the choosing of picture nr.16. “Beatrice” describes the man in picture nr.14 as someone who looks nice and caring and wearing nice clothes and being “put together”. She also describes him as being tall and “broad-shouldered” and resembling the singer Usher (another black man, proving that she sees the color of the man). “Beatrice” states that she imagines the man works with graphic design.

In picture number 3 there was more common stereotypes about black men seen. Why this is, could be hard to decipher. The picture is darker (in black and white) and the person in the picture has a different hairstyle (less groomed) than the person in picture nr.16. The 2 participants who chose picture number 3 (“Simone” and “Hege”) are also different people than the participants who chose picture number 16 and number 14 (“Emilie” and “Beatrice”). The fact that picture number 3 was chosen a couple times (one of the most popular pictures) does not echo some research that has concluded black and Asian men are least desirable in a dating setting (Wilson et al. 2009; Robinson. 2015). However, these studies were done with a homosexual male sample, and at a much larger scale than this rather small interview sample. It is worth mentioning however, that the popularity of picture number 3 operates simultaneously with a sexualization/stereotyping of the individual in the picture. The male in picture number 3 is several times described as a “bad boy” or as “rough” or “tough”. “Beatrice” also described the man in the picture as attractive but being too much of a “bad-boy” for her taste to choose him. The word “muscular” is often used. In fact, this word is used by a “Annabelle” who did not choose any black men as most attractive but chose picture number 24 of a black man as least attractive. She describes how she is usually very “keen” on black men and find them to be “muscular”. This description, alongside the description of the man in picture number 3 as “muscular” and “strong” corresponds with Collins’ account of how black men historically have been viewed in terms of their bodies; representing work and strength or something threatening (Collins. 2004). “Hege” states that she imagines the man in picture number 3 working with something physical; like a carpenter. Furthermore, the man in picture number 3 is described as “mysterious” several times and also categorized as a “one-night stand”. Bell Hooks (1992) idea of “eating the other” where the black body is sexualized and fetishized as something to “spice up” your life could perhaps explain this type of portrayal. The man in picture number 3 is one of the more popular pictures but at the same time this seems to be because of a sexualized idea of the black man. When asked if a potential relationship could go beyond a one- night stand “Simone” stated that such a relationship would be “a turbulent one”. Black men are often portrayed as overly sexual or objectified in mass media (Collins. 2004), and common Norwegian stereotypes also frequently describe black men as predominantly sexually attractive (Fredriksen. 2001;

Gotaas. 1996). Furthermore, Collins (2004) also states that traditionally relationships between black men and white women, when portrayed by media, if portrayed as “turbulent” and “short-term”. There are also common perceived attributes linked to a sexual experience with people of different racial groups (Wilson et al. 2009). The man in picture number 3 is additionally described as someone who has “a cool style” and “cool hairstyle” and also a “street boy” and someone who is “street-smart”. When asked what they imagine his occupation to be the answers range from “uneducated/” street-boy”, “carpenter” and “social- worker”. Maddox and Gray (2002) states that a common stereotype linked to black people in general is that they are uneducated. Bonilla Silva (2010) frame of *cultural racism* was used several times by respondents in his research. Some of the cruder examples were of interviewees stating that black people were overall poorer because of their general “laziness”. Generally, though, the interviewees used the frame in a more subtle manner, like “Jay”, who reasoned why he thought blacks were fairing worse in America; *“Hmm, I think it’s due to lack of education. I think because if they didn’t grow up in a household that afforded them the time to go to school and they had to go out and get jobs right away, I think it is just a cycle that perpetuates things, you know”* (p.89). “Jay’s” statement is subtler but is still influenced by the idea that black people are generally less educated and that that is due to a “vicious cycle” rather than some fault in the system. The cultural argument is different and more refined than the biological argument, according to Bonilla- Silva, in that it doesn’t directly state that is because of some biological or genetic deficiency that people of color are being labeled in different manners. But if you follow the cultural argument further, many similarities to the biological arguments is found. If for example black people are generally “lazier” or “less educated”, and the reason is not historical injustice or systematic oppression, then that lends itself to the idea that they are fundamentally different somehow. Their “culture” is the way it is because they are the way they are, if it is not due to other external factors. Saying that it is “cultural” can cover up a lot of opinions that otherwise might be viewed as too extreme and outdated. The black man in picture number 3 being described as “carpenter”, “social worker”, “uneducated”, “street-boy” aligns with the cultural frame. As we saw, the man in picture number 3 was by far the most stereotyped of the black males, for whatever reason that may be. It seemed as if though the interviewees got caught up in an idea of a stereotypical black

man when looking at his picture, and this influenced their answers. When asked where they imagine him to be from most of the answers say the U.S, that he is “Afro-American” and one more specific answer was that he is from the “East coast of America. A place where you know there are a lot of colored people”. “Hege” specified that he might be from the “ghetto”. It seems as if though the assumptions connected to the man in picture number 3 is more influenced by mass medias and popular culture’s portrayals of black males and that these images are related to American portrayals of black men. When asked about the connection between black males and the idea of the “bad- boy”, “Simone” answered:

“I don’t think it is a coincidence at all. How they are portrayed. What weight the media puts on various events. In USA for example; crime amongst dark people. It spreads and sticks in your subconscious. I have a lot of dark friends that are not “bad-boys”, so it is a mix between what the media feeds you and the fact that the man in the picture (nr.3) is a little bit serious and mysterious”

Simone’s narrative describes how even in Norway it is possible to be influenced by the media in different countries. The U.S having a history of complicated black/white relations and being huge in the Television, music and movies- industry may be factors to consider. As described previously, when there is less contact with people from a different racial group than your own, studies have shown that mass media tends to fill in the “blanks” in terms of forming an opinion about that group (Armstrong et al. 1992; Ford. 1997; Fujioka. 1999; Greenberg. 1972; Power et al. 1996). While there was not a in depth conversation about the interaction with other groups than the ones that the participants could racially identify with, it seems as if though the man in picture number 3 evoked some sort of idea of a stereotypical black man portrayed by the media. “Hege” talks about the idea that she imagines the man in picture number 3 to be particularly in touch with his “roots” or his “ethnicity”. By “Hege” seeing him as someone who is particularly connected to his “roots” resonates with the view that the majority tend to view the Other as the ones with culture (Frankenberg. 1993; Pieterse. 1996). According to Hervik (2011), people who are associated with the term “ethnicity” are usually non-Western, and Matteson (2005) describes a link between being viewed as Swedish and being a white European. The more connected to your culture you are the more different

you are from “us”. As we have seen, the degree of difference is important for how various groups of people are perceived (Cantle. 2000) and identifying difference can in turn cause stereotypes, prejudice or fear of the different (Törngren. 2011). The man in picture nr.3 could be viewed as being especially different, or notably representing a particular culture, which led to him being stereotyped and objectified in a way that none of the other black men in the other 4 pictures were. Whereas stories about the 4 black men in the other pictures were relatively varying; why they found them to be attractive, what they imagined their occupation to be, what kind of person the participants imagined them to be etc., the man in picture number 3 was described in a very similar manner by the two participants who deemed him to be most attractive. Furthermore, the explanations they gave is similar to the narrative of the hyper-sexualized and objectified black man. Other participants who did not choose picture number 3 also mentioned how they are affected by this narrative; “Beatrice” describing the man in picture number 3 as a “bad- boy” and “Annabelle” stating that she is usually very “keen” to be involved with “muscular” black men.

5.1.2 Unattractive or not for consideration: The Asian male

Of the 5 pictures of Asian males represented in the interview, one was chosen as most attractive; picture nr. 20 by “Beatrice”. One picture, picture number 22 was chosen as least attractive 3 times by “Beatrice”, “Simone” and “Emilie”. The remaining three pictures were never chosen as most or least attractive (picture nr.: 19, 21 and 17). Because of the research suggesting that that Asian males would be overall the least desirable, a supplementary question was asked about whether the participants found Asian men in general to be attractive, and if not- why. This supplementary question was asked after the picture- choosing and discussions about the pictures.

The man in picture number 20 was the only Asian man to be chosen as most attractive by one participant; “Beatrice”. She describes the man as “looking as if he is tall”, “nice hair/European-looking hair” and a “nice smile”. She says that he has “kind eyes” and imagines him to be working in shipping. When asked if she finds Asian men in general to be attractive however she replies that she usually does not:

“Men from Asia are not usually the most attractive to me. I wonder if has something to do with their height, that many of them are quite short? And I don’t think that is very attractive being that I am tall myself. Maybe it has something to do with their eyes to? And many of them have flat and “bristly” hair. Not that is should matter, but that is just my prejudice I suppose...”

When asked why she chose the man in picture number 20 despite of the fact that she generally don’t find Asian men that attractive, she responded:

“When I think of Asian people that is not what I imagine them to look like. I think he looks more Western...”

When questioned about what about him makes him look “more Western” and whether that was the reason why he was more attractive to her, she answered:

“Hmm...yes maybe a little bit? Some have very large eyelids and small eyelashes so that you can’t see the eye that well, if you know what I mean? If seems like he (picture nr.20) has more open eyes maybe...But he has kind eyes and a nice smile, and that is lovely no matter where you are from. It may be possible that it is because he looks more Western that I find him attractive. But if he would have been African or South-American then I would’ve been pretty interested I think, even though that is not considered Western”.

“Beatrice’s” account is quite interesting. She was the only one who found an Asian man amongst the picture to be attractive. Yet she states that she generally doesn’t find Asian men all that attractive and that the man in picture number 20 was possibly attractive to her because he looked more “Western”. She describes him as “tall” even though she has a general view of Asians being “short” and says he has “kind eyes” while describing Asian eyes as something that is less attractive. “Beatrice” also does not seem to have any issues with other racial groups like “Africans” or “South- American” in terms of attractiveness, so the issue is not as simply as merely being off put by the “different” or the Other. Is the issue in “Beatrice’s” statement about Asian men that they are too different? She did choose one Asian man, and her explanation for that is that he has what she views to be “un-Asian” features, meaning that he is perhaps closer to

something familiar? Viewing categories as something that is invented by humans to simplify and help us navigate the world (Allport. 1979) what is considered “natural or ordinary” often does not need a category (Goffman. 1990). Even though “Beatrice” chose an Asian man as most attractive and states that she generally finds “Africans” and “South-Americans” to be attractive, Asian men in general- or her view of Asian men in general might be too far away on the scale of different?

The response towards Asian men in the rest of the interviews were mostly negative. One picture (picture nr.22) of an Asian man was chosen three times as the least attractive and was one of the most unpopular pictures. The participants who chose him as least attractive imagined him to be from “Japan”, “South-Korea”, “Thailand” and “Germany”, and when asked what they believed his occupation to be the answers varied from “student”, “working in restaurant” to “IT” and “IT-guy”. When asked if they found Asian men in general to be attractive all of the five participants answered “no”. This corresponds to Feliciano and colleagues (2008) findings that heterosexual white women were approximately 11.8 times more likely to exclude Asian men than white heterosexual men excluding Asian women. This American study showed that Asian men were by far the least desirable amongst heterosexual white women. Studies amongst homosexual men also found Asian men (alongside Black men) to be the least desirable groups (Robinson. 2015; Wilson et al. 2009). This relates to this experiment where the pictures of Asian men were the least popular of all (one picture being chosen as least desirable 3 times and 3 of 5 pictures never being chosen at all).

Common stereotypes linked to Asian men are in many ways the opposition to stereotypes linked to black men. Asian men are often depicted as less masculine than other men, being asexual and weak-willed (Fung. 2001; Phua. 2007). These stereotypes were seen multiple times in discussions with interviewees. Many assumptions were disclosed when talking about the man in picture number 22- which was chosen as least desirable three times, and also in the follow-up question about Asian men’s desirability in general for the participants. One of the things that was mentioned often, relating to Asian men’s appearance not being appealing was comments about the “eyes” of Asian people. Almost every participant mentioned that the eyes was “to small”, “not open”, “too closed” and stressed the importance of open eyes. When shown a picture of and

Asian man with relatively open eyes (picture nr.17), the response was unchanging. The man in picture number 17 has comparatively open eyes (size measure) when compared to other men in the picture of other races. However, the respondents still felt like there was something unattractive about the eyes and glance of Asian men. When asked if it could be the fact that many Asian's have hooded eyes (some had made that comment) many responded that that may be the case, but most not elaborating on the subject. There were many examples of respondents talking incoherent or inconsistent when encouraged to think further about this subject. The subject did not seem to be to uncomfortable for them, but they seemed to "hit a wall" when trying to figure out why certain "Asian features" were unattractive to them. When asked about the fact that for example many white men have hooded eyes the response was still unchanging. It seems as if they still felt the way they did about this feature of Asian men but was not able to explain fully why. Some respondents described Asian men as "feminine" or "androgynes", but not all shared this assumption. Feliciano and colleagues (2008) state that Asian men's portrayal as feminine and asexual in American popular culture could be an explanation for their exclusion amongst white heterosexual women on the dating scene. Asian men were also described by participants as "not having distinct features" and "looking too young" and this was linked to the idea that "they age well" and "do not get wrinkles". Having "distinct features" was for many respondents desirable in a man and seen as something masculine. Two other common assumptions that was discussed at further length. Firstly, the idea that Asian men has "bristly" hair on their heads and "no facial hair" and lacking in "body hair". Secondly, the assumption that Asian men are short, or at least shorter than most other men. When "Simone" was probed further on the comment that she does not like the man in picture number 22's hair, because it is "thick and black" and this being contradictory because she had previously described how she liked "hairy men", she explained:

"I like his hair (Middle Eastern man in picture nr. 2) because it is thick and seems soft. This man's hair (Asian man in picture nr.22) seems bristly to me and not something you would want to run your fingers through"

The assumption that Asian men are lacking in facial or bodily hair was also very prevalent in the discussions and many respondents stated that they liked "hairy men"

and that hair was an important feature in judging attractiveness. When shown a picture of an Asian man with a beard (picture nr.19) the participants seem to hit an impasse again. Some deflected the subject by commenting on the man's ear tattoo and stating that that was why he was not attractive. Others merely answered that he was simply not attractive, not commenting on the facial hair. Another assumption that frequently mentioned by the interviewees was the idea that Asian men was shorter in general than other men, and that short men were usually less attractive. Feliciano and colleagues (2008) found in their studies that white women who stated a height preference (height being associated with masculinity) were more likely to exclude Asian men. When shown a picture of a seemingly "high" Asian man (man in picture nr.20) some of the participants responded in the same way; sticking to their statements. Some claimed that the man in the picture was an "exception" and as we saw "Beatrice" described him as more "Western- looking".

Another interesting feature of the discussions that was unique to the Asian men in the pictures, was the fact that most of the respondents seem to have a positive idea of the man in picture number 22's imagined personality. "Emilie" describes the man in the picture:

"Immediately I get the impression that he is a very nice guy. First impression can be so wrong. It is easy to judge. He could be a nice friend. But if I were single I would not pursue him out clubbing"

"Simone" account was somewhat similar:

"I think in terms of personality he seems very nice. Nothing that deters me there. In this case it is almost only because of appearance. My gut is telling me that he has a very nice personality, it is just the physical that does not match"

When asked if she could see herself in a relationship with the man in picture number 22, and whether getting to know him would possibly make him more attractive to her, she answered:

“He is the kind of guy that you are in a relationship with for a long time. But not for me because of his appearance. I would not pursue him because of that. Things would probably be different if you get to know the person first. I think I would find him attractive eventually after we would got to know each other, because he looks so nice”

The example of Asian exclusion and stereotyping in this exercise corresponds to Feliciano and colleagues (2008) findings that heavily gendered cultural stereotypes contribute to forming racial preference and exclusion. The fact that none of the interviewees found Asian men in general to be attractive and listed various visible features that could in some cases be viewed as inconsistent, is interesting when thinking in terms of the cultural frame. For example, when stating that Asian men are unattractive because of their lack of bodily or facial hair, and subsequently being shown a picture of an Asian man with facial hair, the arguments did not change. Whether stating that the man in the picture was the exception, focusing on other features of the man or still claiming that the facial hair did not change his unattractiveness, the respondents seemed to cling to a general idea of Asian masculinity which would not change by being shown some pictures that disproved their statements. The general idea that Asian men were more feminine and unattractive persisted. Whereas in the example of the sexualization of the black man in picture number 3 was influenced by a cultural stereotype of black men as hypersexual and mysterious, the cultural stereotype of Asian men as asexual and feminine was more prominent amongst all the pictures of Asian men and in a more general view of them. While the common stereotypes of black men were heavily tied up to one picture (number 3), in the case of Asian men there seemed to be a more general stereotype affecting all the pictures, except the one picture (number 20), which was described as more “Western- looking”. The black man in picture number 3 was described with some common cultural stereotypes, and this stereotype seemed somewhat “clearer” to the participants. Some used examples of famous black men from popular culture; “Idris Elba”, “50 Cent”, “Usher”. As we saw, “Simone” even reasoned that this stereotype could be linked to the media portrayals of black men as criminal and dangerous. In trying to decipher some common stereotype of Asian men and their potential origins however, the participants seemed more unaware or able to see a link to something other than mere personal preference. Could this more general idea come across as vaguer because there is not such a strong cultural stereotype of the Asian

man in the media as that of the black man? Are the stereotypes harder to grasp and to debunk because of this?

5.1.3 Seeing beyond the stereotypes: The other groups

According to Owen (2004), when less importance is put on the race of a person when looking for a significant other, more emphasis tends to be placed on other things like hobbies or similar interest. When seeing “beyond” the stereotype it is perhaps easier to see the different personalities and unique qualities of a person. Race-based sexual stereotypes can also often “mask” people of color’s individual and personal traits (Robinson. 2015). In the examples of the “remaining” groups a much more varied response came into light. The three groups; “Central European/White”, “South American” and “Middle-Eastern/Indian” showed a much more varied response in the choosing of least/most attractive and also in the descriptions of features and imagined occupations, personalities etc. Some pictures were described in a similar manner, like for example picture number 6 of a white man which was chosen as least attractive 3 times and several times described as “too arrogant”, “spoiled”, “not nice”, “too shallow” and “into himself”. This may be due to the picture portraying what appears to be a model or a typical image of a “daddy’s boy” (which is a term used to describe young people who live of their parent’s money). “Emilie” described the man as looking like a typical Norwegian contestant on the reality show Paradise Hotel, which gave her negative associations. “Annabelle” also claimed to have negative associations connected to the man in the picture, which she had gained in her line of work (service worker). The fact that the man looked like a model gave credence to the notion that he was “shallow” and “too into appearances”. The fact that the man was white perhaps made it easier for the participants to associate him with people they had met in real life, seen on Norwegian television or to think that he was a typical “daddy’s boy”- which is a somewhat Scandinavian phenomenon.

The rest of the pictures from the “remaining” groups received a varied response not revealing any strong similar patterns which warranted a lengthy discussion. Some were described as seemingly “nice”, “outgoing” and “considerate” while others were labeled as “arrogant”, “mean-looking”, “closed off”. Imagined occupation varied from

“musician”, “in a band”, “hip-hop artist”, “guitarist”, “male nurse”, “doctor”, “engineer”, “student”, “photographer” to “farmer”. Some had “nice smiles”, “nice eyebrows”, “a good beard”, “nice neck” while others were described as having “crooked teeth”, “tacky clothes”, “too thin” and “too childish- looking”. Among the “White/Central European” group the response was very middle of the road; 4 times chosen as most attractive, 5 times chosen as least attractive and none never chosen. One picture of this group, however, was very unpopular (picture number 6 with 3 times chosen as least attractive). The “South American/Latino” group was not very popular with one time chosen as most attractive and 4 times chosen as least attractive. However, in this group no pattern of reoccurring themes was seen or discussed. “Middle Eastern/Indian” men were one of the most popular groups. The men in some of the pictures were described as “masculine”, “sexy”, having “nice hair” and “nice beard”, “pretty eyes” and by one participant (“Hege”) as being “sexy and mysterious” (picture nr.2). Not one participant mentioned religion regarding the pictures of the “Middle-Eastern/Indian” men or in any of the other interviews in general. However, when asked what kind of man she imagines the man in picture number 2 to be (picture of a seemingly Middle Eastern man), “Hege” answered:

“He looks like an exciting guy. Kind of open. Kind of open in terms of...well, he is of foreign ethnicity. But it doesn’t look like he...(thinking). That he doesn’t identify with a certain group. Kind of an open guy that travels a lot and is worldly in a way. If you know what I mean”

“Hege’s” comment might suggest that she clearly sees that he is a Middle Eastern man but suggest that he is somehow further away from “a certain group”. That could mean that she does not identify him as particularly religious, in touch with certain values related to religion or culture, or that he seems to be better integrated into a Norwegian or Western society. Many immigrants in Norway are from Middle Eastern countries and many are Muslim. Whether “Hege” was insinuating that the man was not a Muslim or particularly in touch with his Muslim roots is hard to say, but the comment could seem to suggest such a train of thought. In most of the American studies on sexual racism referred to in this thesis, Latino’s were the preferred “outside” group amongst both heterosexual white men and women and homosexual white men (Feliciano et al. 2008;

Wilson et al. 2009; Robinson; 2015). The assimilation of Italians, Polish and other European immigrant groups into the white majority in America, is compared to the modern day argued gradual assimilation of Latino's into the white majority as "honorary whites" (Bonilla-Silva). Furthermore, when viewing racial categorizing as constructed and not natural or inherent, it lends itself to the idea that these ideas can shift and change over time. In the "Middle Eastern/Indian" group, 2 of the pictures were never chosen as least or most attractive, while the remaining 3 pictures were chosen 4 times together (1 picture 2 times and 2 pictures 1 time respectively). The fact that the "Middle- Eastern/Indian" group were popular in this exercise might be due to the fact that this particular racial group is a fairly common part of Norwegian society? "Hege's" account could support such a train of thought, viewing the man in picture number 2 as "open" and "not identifying with a certain group". A way of interpreting this could be that "Hege" views the man as not religious and "well-integrated". This, combined with the fact that this group was popular and that no mention of religion or Islam was made by any of the participants, could mean that interviewees perceive the "Middle Eastern/Indian" group as well integrated or familiar to them. The lack of any noticeably patterns of reoccurring assumptions or stereotypes amongst the remaining groups could suggest that the perceived degree of difference is perhaps closer and not deterring for the participants. That is not to say that there is no stereotypes or incorrect assumption linked to any of this groups, but this data is not generalizable at all. Therefore, any pattern looked for was merely done so to be able to find a subject to have meaningful discussions around. Choosing to discuss what was observed as clear patterns of stereotyping and preferential treatment (supported by the findings in the literature), seemed more meaningful than discussing at length more exceptional or not as reoccurring themes. This does not mean that these fewer reoccurring stereotypes are not also linked to larger prejudice ideas about certain groups, but in this case, they were not prevalent enough compared to other issues.

5.2 “Talking colorblind”

5.2.1 “Naturalization” in the case of the Asian Male

The case of the pictures of Asian men and especially picture number 22 is perhaps were a strong exclusion based on appearance alone was seen. In most of the other cases were participants talked about the pictures chosen for least desirable, the reason listed were more varying. Often the case was that they did imagine the person in the picture to have a bad personality, the clothes he wore was not attractive or specific physical features were listed that did not show the same pattern that was the case in discussing the Asian men in the pictures. None of the participants found Asian men in general to be attractive, and the reasoning was almost always completely similar. That made for some interesting discussions about the subject were the participants often met a wall in arguing why they felt the way they did. It is also worth mentioning that none of the other 3 pictures of Asian men were ever chosen as least or most desirable, something that “Hege” mentions in answering the question about whether Asian men in general was attractive to her:

“At least they were not in the “no” pile. They all seemed to have nice personalities”

This was also an interesting feature of the exercise, the Asian “group” of pictures were the least chosen overall. In every other group (except “Middle- Eastern & Indian” were 2 was not chosen) every picture was chosen at least 1 time (most and least desirable). Even though the “Middle Eastern/Indian” group had 2 pictures that was never chosen, the group was otherwise popular- the remaining pictures being chosen as most attractive 4 times altogether. While the Asian “group” had three picture that was never chosen or up for consideration. Since the answering often seemed to hit an impasse when discussing why certain features were unattractive or why some assumptions were linked to Asian men, it seemed sensible to again think of the degree of difference perceived. Like Blumer (1958) maintains, the abstract perception of the group is formed through transcending descriptions of the collective group rather than through first- hand connections. When there is a lack of first- hand connections, and the degree of difference is perceived as far prejudice and incorrect assumptions can often paint a certain picture, fed by mass media and popular culture. Asking some of the participants

the question of whether Asian men's appearance was simply too different for them produced various answers:

"Simone" disclosed:

"I don't know. It is a very difficult question to answer. I think for me personally, I don't have many Asian people in my circle. That, plus the fact that I don't have many images from media and so on maybe makes it harder for me to relate it to something I know. I relate appearances to something I am familiar with from my personal life. Like for example one guy can be attractive because he reminds me of a good friend. When I see the pictures of Asian men I don't see anything I know. And that is very important to me, to see something I know and love"

Simone's answer is interesting. She states that she has not got many Asian people in her circle. Like the "Contact Hypothesis" states, the more interaction a person has with someone outside their own racial group, the more tolerant that person becomes (Allport. 1979). Additionally, she mentions that she does not relate images of Asian men to portrayals of them by popular culture. Here, "Simone" feels like she cannot relate the pictures shown to her to personal connections and maybe resorting to images by mass media she is also lacking in respect. As we have seen, mass media often works as a filling in the "space" in creating an overall image of a certain group when there is a lack of personal relations (Armstrong et al. 1992; Ford. 1997; Fujioka. 1999; Greenberg. 1972; Power et al. 1996). Here, "Simone" accounts that she is lacking in both and therefore it is hard for her to relate it to "something known" and subsequently find Asian men attractive. Others were in some disagreement when asked whether or not Asian men were unattractive because of them being seen as too different;

"No, I don't think so. Maybe it's a subconscious thing. But they are just not that appealing"

"Hege" answered. When asked the same, "Emilie" answered:

“No, not necessarily. What is different for me? If I were to go after someone who is similar to me I would choose someone with blue eyes and blond hair. But I am open to pursuing someone who has a different skin color than me. I could be attracted to that”

Here both participants seem reluctant to attributing their lack in preference for Asian men towards them simply being perceived as “too different”. Some studies have shown that there is a connection between who is perceived to be culturally different and how visibly different they are from ourselves (Andreassen. 2006; Pred. 2000; Hervik. 2011; Matteson. 2005). Furthermore, Emilie defends her preference with explaining that she thinks that she is open to pursuing “other” people of color, meaning another racial group other than her own- as long as that racial group is not Asian. This coincides with Beatrice’s account as we previously saw when she described why she was not attracted to Asian men. She explained that she was usually very into South-American and African men, meaning that she did not see herself having any problems with men looking different. Emilie’s account is very similar. Is it possible that the participants place all other racial groups in their mind under one umbrella, and that in seeing some as attractive difference is therefore not perceived as a problem to them? As we have seen in previous research there is a difference in how racial groups are perceived which are affected by a number of factors. Is it possible that the participants fail to see that Asian men are too far away on the scale of difference for whatever reason and that is perhaps why they are not attracted to them as a whole? When using attractiveness of other racial groups as a defense or an explanation it is perhaps worth asking if that explains the issue fully if we are to differentiate between different racial groups and how they are perceived separately.

In trying to explain further in depth why they did not find Asian men in general to be attractive, the participants gave many similar accounts. As we have seen some attributed their “unattractiveness” to different perceived facial or bodily features. “Simone” accounted that she was lacking in something familiar in the images of Asian men, and that that was important for her to find them attractive. “Beatrice” and “Emilie” argued with the fact that they did find other racial groups to be attractive, while “Hege” stated that she thought it could maybe be a “subconscious” thing. “Beatrice” and “Emilie’s” account can also be interpreted to be a subconscious thing. First, the answer that they do

find other racial groups attractive does not fully answer the question about why they don't find Asian's to be desirable. This just works as a sort of deflection. Or it could just be that they don't fully understand why and are trying to figure out why this group in particular is apart from the others- in other words it could be that they just don't know why. Additionally, no bad character traits were linked to the pictures of Asian men. In fact, some of the participants stated that the men in the pictures looked like really nice guys, and that it was merely because of appearances that they excluded them. When trying to discuss why exactly Asian men was viewed as less attractive more in depth, the participants seemed to hit an impasse, as we saw with "Hege" stating that it might be some unconscious reason, while "Beatrice" and "Emilie" to some degree deflected from answering. Most of the participants simply stated that they were not attracted to Asian in general as a matter of fact. When asked why, they listed specific facial and bodily features like we have described. When shown Asian men that did not possess those particular features (men with beard, seemingly tall men, open eyes etc.) most of the participants either got stuck in their reasoning, deflected or said they "Did not know why..." or "It is just the way it is". In his research, Bonilla- Silva (2010) used the frame of *naturalization* to try to decode the meaning of, amongst others, the statement "That's the way it is". In his research naturalization was used in different ways, one of them to justify a preference for white people as partners. Words like "natural" and stating that "that's the way it is" was seen many times. This normalization of a social phenomenon entails that this exclusion is inherent and absolute and defies explanation or further investigation. But as Bonilla- Silva states; "...as social scientists know quite well, few things that happen in the social world are "natural", particularly thing pertaining to racial matters" (p.85). Also, when viewing racial categories as a social construct like CRT and Fanon does, subsequently racial preferences could neither be viewed as natural or inherent. In Bonilla- Silva's research he saw naturalization being used as a defense in conjunction with the notion of segregation and self-segregation. That people liked to surround themselves with people from their own racial group was described as a natural thing; "...we all try to stay with our own kind so, therefore, you know, they get along better with their own people or whatnot". When asked if she had ever been attracted to someone from a minority group the same respondent answered; "Um no, just because I wasn't really attracted to them, you know,

I'm more attracted to someone that's kinda more like me. But, you know, and I wouldn't say that, I mean, I like if he's good looking or not, you know, it's not that, it's just that I'm more attracted to someone white, I don't know why [laughs]” (p.86). This respondent illustrates how many of the people Bonilla- Silva interviewed saw segregation as “a matter of fact” and something that you cannot necessarily change. To uproot people to move to other places, or to “force” them to socialize with someone outside their own group and subsequently possibly engaging in relations with them could be seen as a breach of privacy and right to choose. The picture exercise and following interviews for this thesis did display some features of naturalization. When asked to describe in further detail why Asian men were not attractive in general most ended up on the conclusion that it was a “subconscious thing”, “it is just the way it is” or that they did not know why. Many respondents seemed fairly honest in describing facial and bodily features that they found unattractive, but that might be due to the nature of the questions asking directly about it. Where most of the interviewees differs from Bonilla- Silva’s findings is in using naturalization and segregation in conjunction. For the most part the participants gave many accounts of people outside their own racial group that they found attractive. No one gave an account stating that it is natural to “be with your own kind”. Although some stated that they did not have many people outside their own racial group in their circle, while other gave example of socializing with different groups, none stated that it was natural to choose someone from your own racial category. In the example of Asian male there was seen some resort to naturalization, but only in terms of reaching an impasse and not knowing completely *why* it was the way it was and stating that they did not know or that it was “just the way it is”. One example of deflecting on the topic of racial preference with arguing self-segregation was seen, and we shall discuss that next.

5.2.2 Testimonies

In disregarding white privilege, Childs (2005) states that racism is presented as something that affects everyone equally, also white people. This idea can attribute to the notion that people of color are also opposed to interracial unions. Testimonies of this sort leave the blame with the other party. If minorities or people of color chose to self-segregate, it is harder to fix that from a “white” point of view. This can be viewed as a

sort of deflecting or sharing of the blame and subsequently the responsibility for fixing the problem. Examples can also be seen where respondents “admit” to the existence of prejudice towards interracial unions by referring to other people’s racist views (Moran. 2001; Frankenberg. 1993). When trying to answer a question about why she did not find Asian men in general to be attractive, “Emilie” answered:

“Some people are just not attracted to Asians. I have a friend that is half Asian and half Norwegian, and she would never enter into a relationship with a Scandinavian man. I think the dark man was very attractive [referring to picture number 16]”

Here “Emilie” uses a testimony about someone she knows to further her argument. Bonilla- Silva (2010) states that testimonies provide a sense of authenticity and emotion that only “personal” experiences can offer. They are often used to try to convince someone of a certain point of view or to gain approval. Though they might often seem personal, testimonies often have a common set of features relating to racial issues. They function in different ways to amongst others save face when conveying what might be perceived as racist views, suggesting nonracialism and improving upon an argument. In this example “Emilie” tries to strengthen her argument or justify excluding Asian men in general by telling a story of someone she knows who is Asian who excludes Scandinavian men. This works to firstly suggest that some Asians self- segregate, and secondly implies that racial exclusion works equally both ways. Furthermore, “Emilie” also mentions that she did find a black man to be attractive, reminding of her inclusion of another group- even though that is not related to question of whether she found Asian men in general to be attractive.

5.2.3 “Minimization of Racism”

The frame of *minimization of racism* was seen in different ways in Bonilla- Silva’s (2010) research and interviews with DAS respondents and college students. By stating that discrimination towards people of color was not as prevalent anymore, respondents were able to make racism less of an issue. This connected to another display of minimization of racism, where participants blamed people of color or minorities for “always making race an issue” or “using it as an excuse” (p.91-94). These arguments

are powerful in conjunction with each other: firstly, racism is made an “non- issue” by pointing to the fact that it was much worse before. Secondly, people are then presented as “over-sensitive” and “using race as an excuse” when claiming that they are being discriminated against- because as stated first, discrimination is no longer an issue. In the interviews, no displays of the minimization frame were seen. This does not mean that this frame has never been used by the interviewees in their daily lives, or that it has. In this context, however, no such arguments were made. Firstly, that may very well be down to the nature of the research and the questions asked. When asked directly and specifically about questions related to race, there is perhaps less need to try to downplay the role of race or avoid it. When asked about certain questions in the setting of academic research, the participants are given the “ok” to share about topics they normally would perhaps avoid. Secondly, it may be down to the differences of societies between America and Norway. Race- relations in the U.S are much tenser due a number of historical issues, and resentment between different groups will not be completely comparable in a Norwegian setting. These two factors combined, resulted in no clear examples of minimization in the interviews.

5.3 The idea of “choice” in shaping preference: Abstract Liberalism

The idea of “choice” and the freedom to choose is seen as key concepts of liberal thought (Gray. 1986) and in some cases “choice” is seen as something that is uniquely or typically Swedish (Törngren. 2011). This idea is linked to a person’s sense of individuality, which is also a key concept of Liberalism- viewing everyone as unique and apart from the whole. Therefore, implying that larger structures might affect something that is seen as personal and individual, collides with traditional liberal thought which is for the most part prominent in Norwegian and Scandinavian culture. According to Bonilla- Silva (2010), when white people’s colorblind stories are challenged by pointing to the fact that they mostly live segregated lives from people of color, they can resort to the argument of naturalization; “That is just the way it is”, or they can reason abstract liberalism by claiming that it is an individual choice to live where you live and socialize with whom you choose. When the participants were asked whether or not they saw their preference as something deeply personal or something that might be affected by the outside (media, general ideas, stereotypes, what is

considered the norm etc.) different answers were seen. “Annabelle” stated that she knew herself well enough to know her needs and continued;

“I have never been attracted to a special type of person. Many people have a certain type. Some want blond hair, blue eyes and so on. I have always been attracted to guys who look different. But the personality is the most important part.”

Here, “Annabelle” might suggest that she feels that her preference is something that is personal to her, by stating that she knows her needs well. This resonated in “Hege’s” statement, which also talked about how preferences change and become more personal when you grow and get to know yourself. “Annabelle” also implies in her account that she is more open to different people and does not conform to a special type of guy. She implies that she likes someone “who looks different” after stating that some need blond hair and blue eyes- which following her reasoning could be considered the norm. When answering the same question, “Emilie” said;

“I think it is both [external and personal]. If I answer about what I think is attractive, then I think that that is very personal and individual for me. When speaking about what is not so attractive, like some pictures you showed me gave me associations to people from bad reality shows, then I think it can be influenced. But when I think of what is most attractive, then it is my opinions.”

“Emilie’s” statement is interesting. She feels that the pictures she had a more negative reaction to clearly showed that she was influenced by different things, but when it came to the positive, she felt that it was more personal to her. Why she felt that there was a difference is hard to say. Maybe it is easier to see the negative impacts outside factors can have, or maybe she felt like the positive was more personal because it relied more on personality or perceived personality. She also, alongside the others, stated that she did not find Asian people in general to be attractive, but explained further in relation to the previous question;

“I have never had any bad experiences or associations to Asian people. That I did not choose them does not mean that they have a bad personality. Asian people around me, in my work and school, I have no bad experiences. But when it comes to whether I find

them attractive it is just appearances. I don't think they are ugly, I am just not attracted to them. Which is personal to me. Appearances says very little about who you are."

Here "Emilie's" reasoning shifts a bit. She says that she has no bad associations with Asian people. She states that in the case of Asian men it is purely appearances that makes her not attracted to them. But differing from her previous statement where she said that what she is not attracted to could be affected by outside factors, she states here that her finding Asian men unattractive is based on appearances alone and personal to her. It may be that in the case of Asian men this is an exception to her. She refers to some of the pictures she had a negative response to being that it reminded her of a certain type seen in bad reality shows. While in the case of Asian men there seems to be a more general exclusion based on appearances that she feels is personal to her. In all the other research referred to in this thesis, and in the small sample of this research, Asian men were the least desirable. They were also the only group which every participant admitted to not finding attractive in general. Though this might seem to be a more general pattern of excluding, the fact that "Emilie" perceives it as something personal is worth noting. "Simone's" record is similar to "Emilie's" in some regards;

"I think I have pretty good control over what I find to be attractive and nice. On a scale of 1 to 10; maybe a 7. When it comes to what I don't find attractive however, I think there is less control from my side and more influence from the outside- maybe a 4 on a scale of 1 to 10. I think small details of a person's appearance you find attractive is more personal. You have the general idea of who is considered attractive and not attractive. But preferences can also change. My husband was not my "type" before I met him, but now I feel like he is or people that look like him."

"Simone's" account is somewhat similar in the fact that she implies that what is not attractive is more influenced by the outside. Stating that what you find to be attractive seems to be harder to attribute to be influenced by external factors. "Simone" also focuses on details as being to a larger degree related to something personal and also states that preferences can change. Attributing what one finds attractive to being influenced by external factors, might be interpreted as a "giving up" control over something that one sees as deeply personal and important. This view of individualism, as we have seen, is an important feature of a liberal society. This directly relates to a

person's feeling of freedom and in this case freedom of control. If what a person thinks is attractive is in fact influenced by external factors, it might be hard for the participants to "admit" it to others or themselves, or they might not even know that that is the case. In Fanon's example of the "mulatto" girl she uses choice as defense for not choosing a black man. The way she stated this is different from what was shown in the interviews, but there are some similarities. Stating that something is personal is also an effective way of ending an argument. Like Bonilla-Silva stated this display of *abstract liberalism* can also be used in conjunction with naturalization; "That just the way it is, and that is personal to me".

5.4 Summary

Some common stereotypes described in the literature review linked to black males as hypersexual and mysterious were seen during the interviews with the participants when discussing visible differences. Similarly, stereotypes of Asian men as asexual and feminine were also seen, as well as a "general" exclusion of Asian males which is comparable to some research which finds Asian men as the least desirable "out-group" for white heterosexual women and also gay men. Many of the stereotypes found here can be linked to the frame of *cultural racism* (Bonilla-Silva, 2010) in which old misconceptions about people of color are reinvented and reformulated to "fit in" in a modern society. In all the other "out-groups" ("Middle-Eastern/Indian", "White/Central European" and "South American/Latino") no clear pattern of stereotyping was found, suggesting that it might be easier in these cases for the participants to see beyond the stereotype to some extent. The frame of *naturalization* was seen in the case of the participants trying to explain why Asian males in general were not attractive, in resorting to a belief that the preference was somehow inherent or that they did not know why. One example of storytelling in the form of *testimony* was seen as an attempt to justify exclusion of one racial group, by shifting responsibility and claiming self-segregation. The frame of *minimization of racism* was not prevalent during the discussions, this might be due to a Norwegian culture being different in terms of openness than the U.S and/or that talking about visible differences was encouraged and "made safe". Finally, the frame *abstract liberalism* was seen in the participants reasoning on "choice" in

relation to preference. For the most part, preference was described as something personal and inherent within the individual and to some degree inexplicable, though some participants acknowledged that outside or external factors may contribute to create a negative image and lead to exclusion. In the case of inclusion, the participants felt this was personal. However, it is worth noting that exclusion works in direct opposition to inclusion and the two things are very much related.

6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In chapter 5 the data from the interviews have been presented and discussed. This thesis aims to answer what stereotypes emerge when discussing racial preference with white Norwegian women. Additionally, to take a closer look at how these stereotypes are explained and reasoned by the participants. And finally, to discuss to what degree the participants perceive preference as something that they have autonomy over. The data have been examined employing Bonilla-Silva's "4 frames of colorblind racism" and with standing research in mind. Findings suggest that two common cultural stereotypes emerge, and that some of the 4 frames are used in attempting to explain these stereotypes as well as reason for preference as a personal choice.

6.1 Conclusion

1. Common cultural stereotypes witnessed in the discussions

Two common *cultural* stereotypes described in the literature were seen in the interviews; the sexualization of the black male and undesirability of the Asian male. The stereotypes are gendered and shaped by history, culture and the medias portrayals of different racial groups. One picture (picture number 3) of a black man revealed specific sexualized stereotypes that can be linked to historical images and medias portrayals of the black male. Other similar comments on black men in general were also made. Popular cultures image of Asian men as asexual and feminine were observed in the interviews. Additionally, the undesirability of Asian men seemed to be more in general and unyielding than with the example of the black male which was more specific and tied to objectivization.

2. The observation of colorblind frames in trying to reason for preference

Bonilla Silva's frame of *naturalization* was seen when the participants tried to describe why they did not find Asian men in general to be attractive. When they seemed to meet an impasse with their reasoning they often resorted to explaining as "that is just the way it is", meaning that they view it as a matter of fact or something inherent and absolute. One example of storytelling in the form of a testimony was observed in defense of

preference by claiming self-segregation. The frame *minimization of racism* was not seen in the discussion, which might be due to the nature of the questioning or because racial tensions are much higher in the U.S than in Norway.

3. Seeing “choice” as personal, influencing only rejection

Finally, when discussing whether the participants saw their preference as something, they had full autonomy over or something that was influenced by external factors, an implementation of the frame *abstract liberalism* was observed through the concept of “choice”. Especially in relation to inclusion, the participants felt that the “choice” was something they had control over, but some admitted to external influence in relation to exclusion of certain racial groups. However, exclusion and inclusion are closely related concepts and the interviewees not seeing this relation suggests that personal preference is perceived to some degree as exempt from external influence, inexplicable and inviolable.

6.2 Limitation to the research and future works

Complex nature of the subject

As discussed before, the subject is very complicated and multifaceted. Trying to fully understand preference alone, requires an interdisciplinary understanding of not only society but also how the human mind works which is not an easy task. Combining the subject of preference with race further complicates the subject. A lot of different factors influence an issue like sexual racism. Take for example portrayals by media and their affect on individuals. That is another subject that needs to be explored in order to get a better grasp of *why* and *how*. In the case of white women finding Asian men to be among the least desirable group, there perhaps needs to be a closer look at Asian representation in the media. Nevertheless, simply because the subject is complicated is not to say that it should not be attempted to study it, and that there is a need for more research in order to better understand the workings of racism in conjunction with preference and sexuality.

Internal and external validity

Firstly, a generalization in this case is not possible, but also not something that was sought after. The aim of this thesis was a more comprehensive understanding of the subject. However, because of the complicated nature of preference it is worth noting that also internal validity is harder to achieve. As we have seen, so many things can influence preference, and this thesis should be viewed as an attempt to further learn more with the knowledge already in hand.

6.3 Concluding remarks

There is a need for further research on this subject in the setting of Scandinavia even though the topic of race and racism might be viewed as too sensitive, irrelevant or inappropriate. Törngren's PhD was extremely helpful in understanding more about the topic in a Scandinavian context, but there needs to be more. Finally, I feel that these conversations should be encouraged and not censored in furthering freedom of expression and anti-racist work.

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