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Othering in the age of "diversity"

Cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education policy and social studies

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I Foreword

As this dissertation nears completion, there are many people I would like to thank, whose help and support have been crucial in different parts and at different stages of the work. Firstly, to my supervisor Erik Christensen, thank you for your patient, subtle and yet firmly principled guidance, for your calming presence, and for letting me figure things out, catching me before I hit the floor – every time. You have guided me not only through the PhD work, but also through the labyrinths of university life. So many tough decisions have been made easier by running them through you. I am truly grateful. To my co-supervisor Carla Chinga-Ramirez, thank you for your solid, respectful advice, and for your warm and open presence. It blows my mind that we have not actually met in person yet – your presence makes me feel like we have. To Trond Solhaug, who served as my co-supervisor through the first half of the doctoral research: thank you for showing your belief in this project from the start, for constructive criticism – and your quirky sense of humour.

Several experienced researchers have taken time out of their day to share their insights and advice and help me along. Kirsten Lauritsen at Nord University, thank you for helping and supporting me throughout our time together at Nord, and for radiating strength and moral courage. To Knut Vesterdal at NTNU, and Joron Pihl thank you for insightful and constructive comments on my work. Professor Malte Brinkman of Humboldt University, Berlin – thank you for incredibly clearsighted comments on unfinished text, which truly helped me along. And thanks to colleagues Jon Reitan and Leiv Sem for insightful comments and encouraging talks along the way. To my social studies didactics lecturer at Østfold University College, Ronald Nolet. The initial idea was yours – thank you.

Thanks to NAFOL, The Norwegian National Research School in Teacher Education. I could not have asked for a better community for learning education research. The staff, academic leadership and my scholar colleagues in cohort 8 together formed a professional, warm, supportive and fruitfully challenging environment which eased the

pain of growing. Especially thanks to Catrine Halås, my cohort coordinator. Your guidance in a very difficult time was crucial.

To all my colleagues in the social studies department at GLU: thank you for all the department seminars, for feedback and comments on many occasions throughout, and for taking all the hits teaching-wise in these strange and demanding times. To my fellow PhD students, by order of office proximity: Ingvild, Nina, Kathrine, and Ingrid: thank you for the solidarity, company, companionship and support! Our many coffee breaks and lunches, and our unforgettable trip to Spain, our many laughs together, and some crying as well – without you, I would have given up, for sure.

Throughout the process, I have been fortunate enough to present parts of my work to national, Nordic and European networks. The national network for social studies didactics have been an important arena for meeting colleagues and receiving feedback. Also, participants at the Value(s) of Education workshops in 2017 and 2018, organised by the Centre for Practical Knowledge at Nord University, have provided constructive feedback on my presentations, and I extend my thanks to all of you.

My youngest child was 1 when I started this project. By the time I submit the dissertation, he is ready to start school. My eldest has learned to read, swim and obtained a green belt in karate during this time, and has lost eight teeth. My husband has changed jobs twice and finished his specialisation as a medical GP. The dissertation has matured side by side with my family, and even though it has taken its toll, I think we have grown stronger as a team. My greatest, and most sincere thanks are extended to you Kjetil, for your endless patience, for enduring my ups and downs, for being my teammate, conversation partner, and for saying yes whenever I asked for time, space and favours.

Solveig og Johannes, takk for verdens beste klemmer, som har hjulpet meg til å orke å skrive denne «boka». Dere er mye viktigere enn den.

Ingvill Bjørnstad Åberg, Levanger, August 2021

II Samandrag

I ein spent global samtale om kulturelle, etniske og rasemessige kategoriseringar, og i lys av auka medvit i norsk skule omkring pluralitet i det norske samfunnet, er spørsmål om korleis kultur blir framstilt, oppfatta og handsama i skulen, påtrengande. Gjennom eit kritisk og postkolonialt teoretisk rammeverk, utforskar denne avhandlinga korleis kultur, etnisitet og rase er verksame i utdanningspolitikk og samfunnsfag, og diskuterer implikasjonar for utdanning for demokratisk medborgarskap.

Gjennom tre artiklar blir kulturelle, etniske og rasemessige kategoriseringar utforska frå ulike vinklar: Artikkel I analyserer ein utdanningspolitisk diskurs om «mangfald»; artikkel II utforskar samfunnsfaglærarar sine perspektiv på elevane sine kulturelle bakgrunnar; og artikkel III diskuterer teoretisk ulike inngangar til å gripe diskursiv praksis som ein undertrykkande mekanisme i skulen.

Blant funna er ein diskurs som vidarefører ei framstilling av innvandra elevar som dei som *skapar* mangfald, annengjerande førestillingar om norsk kulturell likskap, og tendensar til ei fargeblind tilnærming til kultur i samfunnsfagundervisninga. Samtidig fann eg også tendensar blant lærarar og i den politiske diskursen, til å utfordre smale førestillingar av norskheit. Funna i artiklane gir viktig nyanse til diskusjonen om korleis samfunnsfaglærarar kan utfordre urettferdigheit på grunnlag av kultur, etnisitet eller rase.

I det siste kapittelet diskuterer eg funna i lys av perspektiv på utdanning for demokrati. Eg viser korleis kulturell likskap blir knytt til medborgarskapsomgrepet, og korleis dette gjer at kulturell «annleisheit» blir framstilt som ei demokratisk utfordring. For å kunne utfordre ei kulturalisert førestilling av norsk medborgarskap, og streve etter like demokratiske moglegheiter for alle elevar, argumenterer eg for at vi treng eit teoretisk og samfunnsfagdidaktisk rammeverk for å handtere ubehaget som kjem når den førestilte kulturelle likskapen blir forstyrra.

III Summary

In a tense global conversation about cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations, and in light of increasing awareness in Norwegian education of the plurality in Norwegian society, questions about how culture is conceptualised and dealt with in education, are urgent. Using a critical and postcolonial theoretical framework, this dissertation explores how culture, ethnicity and race are at work in education policy and social studies education and discusses implications for education for democratic citizenship.

Through three articles, cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education are explored from different angles: Article I analyses an education political discourse of "cultural diversity"; Article II explores teacher perspectives on the cultural backgrounds of their students; and Article III discusses two approaches to tackling oppressive discursive mechanisms in education.

Among the findings are a salient discourse sustaining a notion of immigrant students as *creating* diversity; othering imaginaries of Norwegian cultural sameness; and tendencies of colour-blindness in social studies. However, I also found attempts, both among teachers and in political discourse, to challenge narrow conceptions of Norwegianness. The findings provide needed nuance to a discussion about how social studies teachers can challenge injustice on the basis of culture, ethnicity or race.

In the final chapter, I move on to view these findings in light of different perspectives on education for democracy. I show how citizenship is conceptualised as contingent on cultural sameness, rendering cultural Otherness a democratic challenge. In order to challenge such culturalised notions of Norwegian citizenship and strive for equal opportunities for democratic participation for all students, I argue that we need a theoretical and social studies didactical framework suited to deal with the discomfort of an imagined sameness disrupted.

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List of abbreviations

CDA: Critical discourse analysis

CRT: Critical race theory

L97: National curriculum of 1997

LK06: National curriculum of 2006

LK20: National curriculum of 2020

M74: National curriculum of 1974

M87: National curriculum of 1987

NOU: Norwegian Official Report (*Norsk offentlig utredning*)

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1 Introduction

How should teachers approach students' varying cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds in a way which promotes both recognition and equity? Should they differentiate according to cultural, ethnic or racial identities, or will it serve to reproduce patterns of privilege and marginalisation? Is the aim of education for democratic citizenship the promotion of universal values, or is it to develop ways of dealing with fundamental difference? How can social studies education help students reflect critically about questions of culture, race and ethnicity, and engage in fruitful and respectful conversations about them? These questions outline core topics of my PhD work. This dissertation offers a contribution to exploring conceptualisations of cultural difference at the policy level and among social studies teachers. Further, the question of how social studies education could contribute to challenging oppression on the basis of culture, ethnicity and race is discussed, and connected to perspectives on citizenship education.

Norwegian education has, over the past couple of decades, been characterised by increasing awareness of the cultural plurality in society and school (NOU 2015:8, 2015b). There have been several political and pedagogical initiatives to address what is commonly and increasingly labelled "cultural diversity" (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2008; Burner & Biseth, 2016; NOU 2010:7, 2010). In parallel, there is increasing awareness of the topic of democratic citizenship in education policy and curriculum development. In the work of developing the new curriculum (most of it effective from August 1st, 2020) a need was vocalised for the curriculum to feature a clear commitment to education for democratic citizenship (NOU 2015:8, 2015b). This call resulted in, among other changes, the introduction of an interdisciplinary topic called "democracy and citizenship" in the new national curriculum (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019), running through the entire primary and lower secondary track. This raises questions of what constitutes citizenship in a Norwegian context to the agenda.

Globally, politics and public conversations regarding culture, ethnicity and race have changed since I started working on this dissertation. In parallel with my time as a PhD student, which started in October 2016, public debates in the global North concerning social identities and justice have received increasing amounts of public attention. In Europe, the reception of large influxes of refugees over recent years has been on political and media agendas (Jumbert, 2018), fanning public conversation about immigrant policies. In the USA, the building of a border wall toward Mexico to stop immigrants from crossing, brought on much ado both leading up to and after the 2016 presidential election (Rodgers & Bailey, 2020), and the conditions at immigrant detention centres have received massive criticism and accusations of human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In May 2020 the killing of Black American George Floyd at the hands of the police (BBC, 2020), spurred protests under the umbrella of the Black Lives Matter movement, which rippled far and wide (McWhorter, 2018). Views on how much cultural, ethnic and racial identities should matter in social analysis and politics have been many, polarised, and at times harsh.

Political and academic conversations, rhetoric and agendas cross borders, although historical and social contexts vary. Norway is often regarded as a society of equality, founded on egalitarianism (Gullestad, 2006a). Nevertheless, conversations about these questions have turned increasingly polarised here, too (Taraku, 2020). A polarised and harsh debate creates higher thresholds for participation, and those who do participate risk harassment, threats and uncomfortable publicity (Amnesty International Norge, 2019). This is a democratic challenge. Against this societal backdrop, not only of increasing awareness of the plurality in Norwegian society and in schools, but also rising tension between different views on the workings and importance of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations, and the prevalence of privileging and marginalising mechanisms along those lines, the question of how culture, ethnicity and race are conceptualised and dealt with in education is as urgent as ever. This dissertation contributes to shedding light on the workings of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education, both empirically and theoretically.

Pointing out my entrance into the PhD work may serve as an aid in outlining "what the dissertation is about". At the outset, I was curious about discursive constructions of cultural difference in education. My educational background as a social anthropologist and teacher of Norwegian and social studies, and my work experience with teaching Norwegian as a second language to adult immigrants, was probably part of what spurred this curiosity. As I was brainstorming different ideas for the project proposal in preparation for applying as a PhD fellow, I presented this curiosity to my social studies didactics lecturer at Østfold University College, Ronald Nolet. He pointed out the peculiarity that in a Norwegian education context, cultural difference had increasingly been framed as "cultural diversity" over the past decade (see also Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2008; Burner & Biseth, 2016; Fylkesnes, 2018; Fylkesnes et al., 2018; Heggen & Engebretsen, 2012; Westrheim & Hagatun, 2015; Westrheim & Tolo, 2014), and suggested I took that as a starting point. Thus, the idea of exploring "diversity" as a discursive construct was born.

What started as an investigation into the discursive construction of "diversity" in education policy documents gradually broadened in scope, as I realised, particularly through the process of writing the first article, that what was at stake was contingent on broader conceptualisations of cultural, ethnic and racial difference, and historically and geographically situated. Epistemologically positioned at the intersection between critical and poststructuralist views and applying theoretical concepts from within critical and postcolonial theories of education, this dissertation, through three different articles, sheds light from different angles on how conceptualisations of culture, race and ethnicity are in play in education, and discusses some implications for social studies.

This dissertation offers three contributions to the research field of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education. The first contribution is empirical and lies in its investigation of policy discourse about "cultural diversity" (Article 1), and in its investigation of social studies teachers' views on cultural difference among students (Article 2). Further, discussing the policy level and practice level in light of each other

(Chapter 6) contributes to a conversation about how cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations exist and are reproduced in a field of intersection between various discursive and social fields. Such interconnections affect whether conceptualisations of culture work to challenge discrimination on the basis of culture, ethnicity or race – or, as I will show, make it invisible.

The second contribution is theoretical. An important premise of the dissertation is the view that it is a central goal of education, and particularly social studies education, to aid students in the process of developing a practice of citizenship and participation (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). What sort of knowledges, characteristics and processes are valued in education for democratic citizenship, relies on what view one has of democracy, and the degree to which one sees citizenship and social justice as intertwined. The view in this dissertation is that advocacy for social justice is an integral part of democratic citizenship (see e.g. Davies et al., 2018; Martell, 2017; Peterson et al., 2016). It follows that it is the role of social studies teachers to help students both reflect about privilege and marginalisation, inclusion and exclusion in the Norwegian and global societies, and (prepare to) take part actively, conscientiously and critically in public conversation about such issues. Article 3 contributes to a theoretical discussion about how to challenge and transform mechanisms of privilege and marginalisation along the lines of culture, ethnicity and race in a way which retains a possibility of giving nuanced credit to people's intentions as well as paying attention to discursive practices. Further, Chapter 6 explores implications of this stance for citizenship education.

The third contribution of this dissertation lies in connecting discursive representations (Article 1); teacher views (Article 2); and theoretical reflections (Article 3) concerning cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations, with a didactical discussion about the aims and scope of citizenship education. While both ethnicity, race and culture, and democratic citizenship are a concern of all teachers, I hold it to be a concern of social studies teachers to a particular degree: in addition to being a desired aim of education in general, both social justice and democratic citizenship are central topics for the

subject of social studies. Therefore, I see cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations as raising important didactical questions in social studies, as well as questions of teacher professional practice. Such questions are addressed in Chapter 6.

1.1 Research question and overall aim

The dissertation approaches the investigation of conceptualisations of cultural difference through the following research question:

How is cultural difference conceptualised in education policy and social studies education, and how can social studies teachers contribute to challenging cultural, racial and ethnic privileging and marginalisation?

This question is separated into three sub-questions, each tending to a different part of the overall research question:

1. How is cultural difference discursively constructed in recent Norwegian education policy?
2. How are cultural and ethnic categorisations at work among social studies teachers?
3. How could the notion of epistemic injustice mitigate some limitations of anti-oppressive education, in terms of how to approach social, cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations?

These sub-questions are presented as research questions for three separate studies. The first question is explored through a critical discourse analysis of the term "diversity" in two central education policy documents: NOU 2015:8 and White Paper no. 28 2015-2016. The second question is explored through investigating social studies teacher views on students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds and discussing how their views play out in social studies. The third question relates to a theoretical article and does not feature a research question to be pursued empirically. Instead, this question is approached through developing a theoretical argument. The research question and

sub-questions contribute to the dissertation reaching its overall aim, which is to contribute empirically and theoretically to challenging injustice in and through social studies education.

I will now outline the research design for the three studies which make up this PhD work. Then follow some reflections on author positionality, and on the difficulties with writing about complex and contested concepts such as culture, ethnicity and race. Finally in this chapter I give an outline of the organisation of the dissertation.

1.2 Research design

This is a qualitative, interpretive study, based on a critical and poststructural epistemological position, and drawing on theoretical concepts from critical multiculturalism, critical race theory and postcolonial theory. As mentioned, the dissertation features three articles which pursue the overall research question through their own research questions and aims. Article 1 investigates education policy discourse; Article 2 investigates teacher views; and Article 3 provides a theoretical argument aiming to enrich a discussion about anti-oppressive education theory. In Chapter 5 I give an account of findings and points discussed in each study, and how they shed light on the main research question.

While the studies apply different methodologies and analytical concepts (accounted for in Chapter 4), they all fit into an overall epistemological and theoretical (Chapter 3) framework. The design is illustrated in Table 1.

	Title	Material	Research Question	Main focus	Methods	Theoretical framework
1	Diversity is the others: A critical investigation of 'diversity' in two recent Norwegian education policy documents	NOU 2015:8 and White Paper no. 28 2015-2016	*What conceptions of 'diversity' can be discerned in NOU 2015:8 and White Paper no. 28 2015-2016?*	Cultural diversity discourse in policy documents	Critical discourse analysis	Social justice Critical multiculturalism
2	Imagined sameness or imagined difference? Social studies teachers' views on students' cultural backgrounds.	Interviews with teachers	*How do social studies teachers in Norwegian lower secondary school view students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and how may teacher views on culture play out in social studies?*	Teacher views	Qualitative, abductive analysis of transcribed interviews	Critical multiculturalism Postcolonial theory
3	How epistemic justice can work against polarisation in a conversation about cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations	Theoretical literature	*Can the notion of epistemic injustice fruitfully mitigate the risks of polarisation inherent in a call for discursive action?*	Cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations	Theoretical argument	Anti-oppressive education Epistemic injustice

Table 1: Research design, focus and theoretical framework

1.3 A reflexive approach

As mentioned, the study is interpretative, and inherent in such an approach is a commitment to reflexivity: I acknowledge that social, theoretical and personal elements entangle, and affect choices I have made throughout the process (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008). In Chapter 4, I will reflect upon factors which have affected theoretical and methodological choices in concrete terms during the research process. Here, I will first devote a few paragraphs to outlining how my personal, professional and academic pasts entangle, and have contributed to shaping my interests and points of view from the outset – my researcher positionality. Then, I will comment on my presence in the text, as that too mirrors a positionality, or rather, multiple positionalities, in relation to the text. In the following, I do not purport to be exhaustive, or to have discovered or described my own blind spots. Nevertheless, the act of reflection draws attention to the fact that I am situated, and that has undoubtedly affected the research.

Being a child in the 1990s meant growing up in the age of universal humanism and optimism. The Berlin Wall had fallen, we were going to feed the world, and it was possible to heal it too. At school we organised UN Day each year and collected money for poor children living in the slums of Bangalore, singing songs called “Children of the rainbow” and “Siblings of tomorrow”. Exoticising representations of poor, starving, illiterate, dirty, brown and black children in the name of humanism were not even slightly concealed – we rich, well-fed and educated northerners must help the lost ones, and making the world a better place was up to us. This view of the world and my place in it was not challenged or put into perspective until I was a young adult.

During the years 2005-2009, I went on three longer stays abroad, all of them to Thailand (the first and third to the Thai-Burmese border, the second to Bangkok for an academic exchange semester), each of them for just under six months. From each stay on the Thai-Burmese border, I got a deepened (although entirely subjective and

experience-based) sense of differently centred world views, of modes of being in the world far from anything I had experienced in a life where having a passport, steady access to water and being safe from military attacks were not even theoretically questioned.

Also, I sensed an entrenched colonial legacy in the representations of Western and Southeast Asian identities. The first stay had me questioning the neo-colonial narrative of tall, rich, white, altruistic saviours entering a void of poverty and need, bereft of agents and identities, safe for those who constituted the necessary juxtaposition of the Western self – although I did not phrase it like that at the time. The second stay, which was in Bangkok, had me pondering how Burmese refugees in Thailand were represented from the perspective of urban, well-educated, well-endowed Thais. I considered how notions of citizenship entangled with dynamics of power, and processes of inclusion and exclusion (Peterson et al., 2016), based in constructions of culture, ethnicity and religion – although I did not phrase it like that at the time. On the third trip, during which I did anthropological field work for my master's thesis, I went back to the border area, and once again was thrown head-first into questions of ethnic identity, colonial legacy, conflict, orientalist and othering representations and individual agency.

These three stays in Thailand stay firmly rooted as bodily, performative experiences of normalisation and othering mechanisms which were not entirely one-dimensional (being positioned as a single, female Westerner also meant that I was frequently sexualised, seen as weak, and subjected to a sort of benevolent ridicule). I think it is safe to assume that these experiences, in intersection between the personal and the academic, have affected my fields of interest to a significant degree. It was *experience* which first led me to question neo-colonial representations of Western and non-Western identities, but then I sought out academic perspectives to satisfy my need to find another approach, another story I could settle in. At this point I no longer aim to settle, not because I do not sometimes have the urge to, but because I believe that

settling for Stories will only move – not eradicate - the margins of who fits into the story and how.

There are also different author positionalities present in the text. Throughout the process of researching and writing this dissertation, both I and the research project have changed. From being a fresh PhD student making initial research plans and outlines; via trying out the role of a researcher doing empirical investigations; to actually making attempts at empirical analyses which would be accepted for publication; from reading up on epistemological, theoretical and methodological literature, via attempting to chisel out my own position, to testing the limits of that position in the face of complex problems and questions; from being a student taking courses and writing exams, via writing mainly for the eyes of my supervisors, to trying to establish a voice as an academic writer. All of these positions have been in play during the course of the PhD, and are present in the text.

In that sense, the "I" of the dissertation is a volatile character, not only because behind the "I" also lie various roles: student, researcher, writer; and authorial positions in relation to the text; but also since different parts of the text have been written at different points in time: looking back at and commenting my own research from three years ago; positioning myself in relation to current debate; revising older texts as my perspective develops. I have shaped the text, made practical, methodological, theoretical, epistemological and textual choices, aiming for coherence and consistency in a product which by no means appears naturally in the world as a consistent unit, clearly separated from its surroundings. Entrenched in the different "I"s lie personal subjectivities and issues also, which are not visible in the text, yet affect it. We make sense of things, not blindly or impartially, but situated, and surrounded by a context.

One of the textual choices I have made, is not to shy away from the use of "I". I want to show explicitly that there is a person behind the words, making choices. And I want to be able to comment directly on those choices, because I believe it will make it easier for the reader to understand the process – and make up their mind as to whether they

accept the choices or not. This is founded on the belief that interpretive research is inescapably influenced by the choices made by the interpreter, nevertheless "maintaining the conviction that studying selected (well considered) excerpts of […] reality can provide an important foundation for knowledge production which opens (rather than closes), which gives opportunities for understanding rather than insists on 'truths'" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 20 [my translation]). Hopefully, I have been able to maintain such reflexivity throughout the dissertation.

1.4 Writing on essentially contested concepts

The reader may have noticed that I have used various phrases concerning "culture, ethnicity and race". I sometimes use "culture" or "cultural difference", and sometimes I include "ethnicity" and "race". This is deliberate, although possibly not entirely uncontroversial. Culture, ethnicity and race may be safely characterised as essentially contested concepts (Gallie, 1955), in the sense that they are notoriously hard, and probably impossible, to define once and for all, providing ample space for theoretical, ideological and political contestation. Framing a concept as essentially contested implies a perspective that the terminology surrounding it is disputed, or disputable, and that different actors may use terms in different ways, reproducing and legitimising different perspectives. Acknowledging this implies that I proceed to approach the terminology of culture, ethnicity and race with some caution.

The contested nature of the terms culture, ethnicity and race, makes it challenging to pin them down in a definite manner for research purposes. Nevertheless, it is important to stick to a consistent terminology. I will now briefly clarify the understanding of culture, ethnicity and race applied in this dissertation, and explain the reasoning behind my choice of terminology. The theoretical underpinnings and methodological implications of how I apply notions of culture, ethnicity and race, will be elaborated in Chapters 3 and 4.

This dissertation features a view of *culture* as social practices, rooted in ideas of commonality and belonging (Alghasi et al., 2009). Further, I hold a processual view of culture, meaning that culture is seen not as a stable, clearly distinct social practice, but rather as continually under construction and negotiation. Notions of culture are linked to processes of identity construction (Hall, 2011, pp. 3-4), which must be seen as historically and geographically *situated*, although not *determined* by these contexts.

In line with Kiwan (2016), *ethnicity* is viewed here as overlapping with, but also distinct from, culture, as it refers to beliefs of common descent, grounded in notions of common customs, physical traits or collective memories of a common destiny. The concept of ethnicity used here is relational, as it refers to categorisations which arise in relation to a nation-state, and is concerned with culture, as well as conceptions of blood-relations or kinship. Further, it is constructivist, in the sense that is views ethnicity as real insofar as it has real consequences, but not in a primordial, natural sense (Kiwan, 2016, p. 6).

Race is a categorisation with roots in European scientific and colonial history. The concept of race as a biological categorisation emerged in Western thought, where the separation of humankind into different races based on physiological traits, entailed essentialist descriptions of unsurpassable biological differences. This framework served to justify colonial conquest and atrocities in the name of Western civilisation. The idea of biological race as a concept is all but abandoned. However, it continues to have practical, social and political significance. Thus, the workings of race as a social category are subject to research in a range of fields, although the use of race as a category for research is contested (Kiwan, 2016, pp. 7-8). I will return to the theoretical implications of this in Chapter 3. Suffice it now to emphasise that it is not as essentialised or neutrally descriptive categories I apply the concepts of culture, ethnicity and race in this dissertation, but as socially produced categories. By applying them I accept that I am a positioned actor, and I remain cautious of that fact throughout the dissertation.

As outlined above, at the start of this work, I concerned myself with "conceptualisations of culture". As the project gradually broadened in scope, so did terminology, as I turned toward referring to the scope of my work as concerned with "cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations". This means that terminology is somewhat shifting throughout the three studies. In the first article I applied theoretical concepts which captured political and power aspects of cultural representations, rather than racial aspects, while in the second and third articles, I entered discussions where racial categorisations were more salient. When referring to my own empirical investigations where I set out to explore "conceptualisations of cultural difference", or "culture and ethnicity", those are the terms I will use, whereas I will use "race" when referring to analyses capturing racial aspects. Further, when referring to analytical discussions, theoretical perspectives, or other research where the notion of "race" is salient, then I will use it. The overarching phenomenon explored in this dissertation is cultural categorisations, while ethnicity and race are also seen as salient and important categorisations, and as entangled with culture.

The question of whether, and how, the notion of race as a social categorisation of theoretical value could be fruitfully applied in a Norwegian education context, is hotly debated, among other things because the Norwegian context may rightly be viewed as distinct from a Northern American one (see e.g. Breidlid, 2020; Brekke, 2020a, 2020b; Kolshus, 2020; Røthing, 2020; Wig, 2020a; Wig, 2020b). This is an important question. My choice not to apply "race" consistently throughout the dissertation should, however, not be viewed as a rejection of the notion of race as a significant social category that can fruitfully be researched.

1.5 Outline of the dissertation

The dissertation is organised as follows:

In Chapter 2, I give a historical-socio-political context to the study. First, I position the study within a context of paradoxical Norwegian self-understandings based in notions

of egalitarianism. Then, I move on to account for some of the tensions between inclusion and differentiation which have characterised the history of unified education in Norway. Moreover, I give a brief account of how education policy and curricula in the post-war period have conceptualised education for democratic citizenship. Central research contributions in the fields of social studies education and concerning conceptualisations of culture and cultural difference in Norwegian and Nordic education are then outlined, in order to show how this study contributes to and further develops these fields of research.

In Chapter 3, I provide an outline of my epistemological foundation within critical and poststructuralist theory, as well as theoretical concepts upon which I have drawn in the analyses. I will show how these concepts – with roots in critical multiculturalism, critical race theory and postcolonialism – provide a useful framework for analysis and discussion in this study. Ultimately, what this dissertation is *about* is social justice, and, in the final section of Chapter 3, I comment on how the theoretical foundation is connected to understandings of justice.

Chapter 4 accounts for methodological choices and choices concerning method, and discusses strengths, limitations and possible weaknesses of the methodology and methods I have chosen. Here, I show methodological implications of the theoretical position outlined in Chapter 3. Concrete issues regarding method such as selection, and methods of analysis are also accounted for here, and reflected upon. Finally, I address limitations and risks of the chosen methodologies, as well as some ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 gives a brief summary of each of the articles and shows how they contribute to shedding light on the overall research question.

In Chapter 6, I pick up discussions from all the three articles, and discuss some of their findings and points in relation to education for democratic citizenship. This chapter moves further than each of the articles could do on their own. It can be seen as an extension and further development of key issues touched upon in the articles, in light

of perspectives on education for democratic citizenship. Education for democratic citizenship was a field which kept sticking around in the background throughout the work with the articles, and I therefore take Chapter 6 as an opportunity to view points from the articles from that angle. This is a relevant perspective for social studies education any day. These days, I also find it highly called for in the immediate Norwegian education context, given the focus and attention granted to democracy and citizenship in the new curriculum.

Throughout the dissertation I aim to shed light on the overall research question – *How is cultural difference conceptualised in education policy and social studies education, and how can social studies teachers contribute to challenging cultural, racial and ethnic privileging and marginalisation?*

2 Context of the study

This study is situated in Norway and, thus, is positioned within a certain historical and contemporary societal and political context. In this chapter I will outline three fields of tension which have been, and are, at work in shaping Norwegian education in terms of approaches to cultural difference. These are: egalitarian imaginaries of national culture; tensions between inclusion and differentiation in education; and tensions between different understandings of, or models for, democracy and citizenship. In lining up these areas of tension, I provide contextual perspectives which all contribute to painting an overall picture of the landscape where conceptualisations of culture and ethnicity are at work in education.

It is a foundational assumption in this dissertation (which I will elaborate on theoretically in Chapter 3) that words and phrases do not just describe reality more or less accurately, they also serve to establish premises which shape understandings of reality. Regarding the topic of this dissertation, conceptualisations of culture and ethnicity are not simply referred to through language, but also created and sustained through language. Education policy and curricula are thus seen as part of a discourse which works to create, sustain or challenge mechanisms of inclusion or exclusion.

I will start in 2.1 by outlining a Norwegian sociocultural landscape characterised by paradoxical constructions of equality and difference, showing that cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations at work in education discourse connect to historical representations of national identity. Then, in Section 2.2, I provide a brief historical context of tensions between notions of inclusion and differentiation in Norwegian education, because outlining the borders of inclusion in education pertains to the overall question of normalcy and deviance – what should education be, and for whom? Further, the studies of conceptualisations of cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations are seen as raising questions concerning education for democratic citizenship. Therefore, in Section 2.3, I provide an outline of movements between different accentuations and notions of democracy and citizenship in Norwegian post-war

curriculum history. While each of these topics is substantial, and worthy of dissertations in its own right, these outlines are focused on showing how cultural imaginaries, political aims and processes, and currents in education policy and theory all intertwine, shaping, and being shaped by, conceptualisations of cultural difference in education.

Regarding previous research, the study is situated within the research fields of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education, and research on social studies education. Previous research within these fields will be outlined in Section 2.4. Section 2.4.1 accounts for recent research on conceptualisations of culture, ethnicity and race in education, and in Section 2.4.2 I outline recent research concerning social studies. The aim of these two sections is to show that this study contributes to, and further develops, the outlined research fields.

2.1 Paradoxical notions of cultural difference in an egalitarian imaginary

Like most nations, Norway has a long history of immigration (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008) and ethnic diversity (Hansen, 2004), with indigenous groups such as the Sami, and old minorities such as Jews, Kven and Forest Finns, travellers such Roma and Romani groups, and extensive trade-based immigration along the coast. However, ethno-nationalistic ideas established themselves particularly during the processes of the establishment of the Norwegian constitution in 1814 and independence from Sweden in 1905 (Eriksen & Sajjad, 2015, p. 91). Nation-building efforts in the 19th and 20th centuries aimed at creating a sense of community, and promoted a narrative of cultural and socioeconomic equality (Eriksen, 1993), perpetuating an assumption of an originally homogenous population, only recently turning increasingly "diverse". Egalitarianism has been central to Norwegian self-understandings, and this identity construction also has a political face, in that it serves to justify the existence of a Norwegian national state. In the post-war era, when social democratic governments (for the most part) ran the development and expansion of the extensive Norwegian

welfare state, “equalisation” had both a socioeconomic (Telhaug et al., 2004) and a cultural (Rugkåsa, 2012) side. This dual cultural and political image of equality is a central mechanism in the studies and discussion of this dissertation.

It has been argued that equality is conceptualised in Norwegian self-understandings through an “imagined sameness” (Gullestad, 2002), where equality is seen simultaneously as a cultural characteristic, and a prerequisite for being considered equal in value. According to Gullestad, cultural attachment to Norway is conceptualised through symbolic notions of kinship, and national identity is ascribed ethnic, or racial, connotations (Gullestad, 2002, 2004, 2006b). As a cultural trait, and a prerequisite for Norwegianness, equality as sameness does not promote the accentuation of any kind of difference, whether rooted in culture, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual identity – or economic wealth. In a similar vein, anthropologist Marie Louise Seeberg writes of the notion of “equality” as a cultural premise in Norway, associated with national identity, and intertwined with political governance through, among others, one unitary school for all students (Seeberg, 2003). This coupling of social equalisation and cultural standardisation creates a paradox where the definition of normality, based in equality, creates deviants – Others – as a side-effect (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015; Rugkåsa, 2012).

In an increasingly globalised world, Norway has over the past four or five decades seen more immigration than previously (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008), and technological and commercial developments mean that Norway hosts more varied cultural impulses (Eriksen & Sajjad, 2015). This entails that the sustainability of an “imagined sameness” is challenged. Political terminology concerning immigrants has also shifted during these decades, and this might be seen in light of shifting conceptualisations of the relation between immigrants and non-immigrants as groups, and in relation to the welfare state. In the early 2000s, terminology in immigrant policies shifted notably from one of “integration” (which dominated in the previous decades), to one of “diversity” (Heggen & Engebretsen, 2012). This might seem like a change which challenges the imagined Norwegian sameness referred to above. Indeed, “diversity” is

the opposite of "sameness" and seems to embrace cultural difference as a newfound characteristic of Norwegian society. However, there might be reason to question the degree to which "diversity" actually challenges sameness as a dominant imaginary of Norwegian culture. It has been pointed out that while "integration" retains the possibility of political discussion (what degree of "integration" is to be desired is not predetermined by the term itself), diversity is normatively saturated (it seems inherently good) (Heggen & Engebretsen, 2012). It is politically difficult to argue that we should put limits on the degree of "diversity" we aim for, while, at the same time, it is not inherently clear what "diversity" actually refers to – it could refer to almost any kind of variation, and thus refers to none in particular (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2008). It has been argued that through the shift from "integration" to "diversity", political dilemmas and value discussions concerning how the welfare state takes care of immigrant citizens, are swept under the rug (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2008; Westrheim & Hagatun, 2015), in favour of an individualised and de-politicised discourse.

In education policy discourse, a shift toward "inclusive education" took place around the mid-1990s (Lund, 2017a). Inclusion, it was thought, should extend to all students, although the means of inclusion was the incorporation of all into a (albeit extended) national identity based in common knowledge and language, creating a paradoxical effect of exclusion (Hilt, 2016a). Further, a terminology of "diversity" emerged in education policy around the same time. Since around 2000, several education political and professional initiatives aiming at broadening the perspectives and notions of cultural normalcy in school and teacher education (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2008) were framed in terms of "cultural diversity". At the same time, however (as I will elaborate on in Section 2.2), Norwegian education has seen the introduction of various standardising tools. These developments can be seen in connection to global education policy trends, where neoliberal ideology and technological and economic globalisation (Sleeter, 2008) are seen as leading to a spread of individualism and an emphasis on diversity, somewhat paradoxically coupled with standardising and economised

thinking in education (Martell, 2017, p. 3). While, in light of a monocultural education history in Norway (which I will outline in the next section), calls for attention to "diversity" do seem timely, there is reason to question its workings in political discourse, and the extent to which it serves to challenge injustice – or cover it up.

Against this backdrop, questions are raised about the opportunities for acknowledging, recognising and including cultural and ethnic differences in Norwegian education. Further, questions of how to accommodate cultural difference in school intertwine with tensions between inclusion and differentiation in terms of organisation and pedagogical approaches. This tension is reflected in Norwegian curriculum history, as I will now move on to outline.

2.2 Inclusion and differentiation in Norwegian education: a historical sweep

In the above section, I gave an outline of a central tension in Norwegian self-understandings connected to equality as both cultural and political characteristic, and how discursive representations of such understandings have shifted. Here, I move on to outline how education policy and curricula since the Second World War have worked to draw lines between normalcy and deviancy, and how that interplays with notions of cultural difference. I do this as a way of positioning my explorations of notions of cultural difference in relation to a larger picture concerning how normality and difference have been conceptualised in modern Norwegian education.

Education necessarily involves standardisation. As the institutionalisation of the production, development and transference of knowledge and skills, education, by definition, seeks to mould its subjects in particular ways, to transform them in the image of "good citizen". The notion of the good citizen, and thus, the shape of the mould in a given society, is both historically contingent, and contemporarily contested. Questions of what sort of difference is desirable, acceptable, unwanted or illegitimate within the frames of the standardising system, are historically situated.

The Norwegian school system is largely unified (Nilsen, 2010), and its development in the post-war era was characterised by strong social democratic policies with economic and social equalisation as a foundational aim (Fasting, 2013). Education was a central part of the extensive welfare state and, through providing free and compulsory education for all, schools were considered a crucial instrument in the pursuit of social justice (Lundahl, 2016, p. 4). (There was also a nation-building side to this argument, which touches upon how notions of a "good citizen" were constructed as a Norwegian identity, and how education would promote it. I will explore this further in Chapter 6.)

In the 1970s, a wave of decentralisation following radical political tendencies swept over Scandinavia (Telhaug et al., 2004). Support for a centrally run education system gradually weakened, as arguments for decentralisation and individualisation gained ideological ground (Lundahl, 2016, p. 7). Where the notion of one, dominant body of knowledge to be disseminated in all the country's schools had been foundational to the social democratic, centralist model, questions of power in knowledge production now came to influence education policy. Individualisation also had a concrete classroom aspect: in 1975, Norwegian education policy committed to a principle of "adapted education" (Nilsen, 2010), which builds on a notion of equity through individual differentiation. In order to maintain an inclusive system, schools were required to provide differentiated pedagogical approaches to accommodate different students, rather than separating ordinary schools and classes from "special schools" or "special classes" (Nilsen, 2010).

Throughout the 1990s, neoliberal political ideals became increasingly widespread, and affected public policies in many fields of society throughout large parts of the world (Birch & Mykhnenko, 2013). In Norwegian education policies, individualisation was followed by marketisation, guided by ideals of local and personal choice, measurability and competition. The social democratic notion of "unitary school" (*enhetsskolen*) was exchanged for "comprehensive school" (*fellesskolen*) (NOU 2014:7, 2014), which seemed a little bit less rhetorically monolithic. While the 1997 curriculum (hereafter L97) was characterised by a centrally defined canon (Gundem et al., 2003), the

subsequent 2006 reform (hereafter LK06) represented movement away from centrally defined content to focusing on learning outcomes (Imsen et al., 2017). This meant that classroom implementation of the curriculum was established locally to a larger extent than before while, at the same time, the organisation of the subject curricula as measurable outcomes, indicated a "management by objectives" approach influenced by neoliberal theories of governance. This can be seen as connected to an overall instrumental discourse where knowledge outcomes and a view of the students as future productive resources influenced education policy (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006). Further, more relaxed laws regarding the establishment of private schools were implemented in 2005, with individual choice as a central argument (Lundahl, 2016, p. 5). In a similar vein, school choice reforms together with the introduction of national tests, the results of which were made public, introduced a competitive element to school performance. Similar developments have been seen in the other Nordic countries, albeit to varying degrees – Sweden and Denmark have seen a greater privatisation than Finland, Iceland and Norway (Lundahl, 2016) – and this has been attributed to tighter connections between education policy and economic policy advocated by, for instance, the OECD (Pettersson et al., 2017).

Critics of individualisation and marketisation have contended that the result of an increased element of individual choice and a somewhat widened supply of school alternatives (although the development in Norway is modest even in a Nordic perspective) may be that schools (paradoxically) "[…] become more homogeneous, based on socio-economic and ethnic factors, contrary to the older, post-war vision of schools being arenas for exchange and learning for children from diverse backgrounds" (Lundahl, 2016, p. 8). What seems to be indicated here, is that while it was perhaps thought that marketisation of education would lead to a diversification of educational options, and constitute a break with a monolithic unitary system, this has not necessarily been the case.

However, the historically tight integration of comprehensive schooling in the post-war decades did not necessarily live up to such a vision of equal and enriching encounters

between students from different backgrounds. While the nation-building mission of unitary education outlined above was fuelled, in part, by ideas of inclusion and social justice, it simultaneously worked toward cultural standardisation (Rugkåsa, 2012, p. 39), and served to justify Norwegianisation of ethnic minorities such as the indigenous Sami people, as well as people of Kven, Forest Finn, Romani and Roma backgrounds (Engen et al., 2018). In the case of the Sami, heavily assimilative policies have been enforced throughout the history of unified education, only officially ending in the 1970s (Huss, 2016). The 1970s and 80s saw the introduction of Sami content in the curricula (particularly in relation to Sami students' newfound right to receive education in Sami), and, in the 1990s, work began on developing full curricula in Sami (Olsen, 2019). Nevertheless, the overall effects of assimilative policies are still lingering, according to recent research on representation of the Sami in Norwegian school textbooks (Ekeland, 2017; Eriksen, 2018b) and curricula (Olsen, 2019).

In terms of ethnic, religious and cultural plurality, then, Norwegian school can fairly be characterised as historically monocultural (Pihl, 2000), due in part, paradoxically, to social justice-oriented struggles for inclusive education, understood as equal opportunities for education of equal quality. Thus, approaches to culture, ethnicity and race in education, in addition to being affected by notions of national identity construction, fall into the axis of tension between standardisation and differentiation which is a central characteristic of Norwegian education discourse.

Moving on, I will outline briefly how notions of, and approaches to, democracy and citizenship have developed in policy and curricula in the post-war period.

2.3 Democracy and citizenship in Norwegian education: a historical sweep

As mentioned, the strong welfare state that developed in Norway (as well as the rest of Scandinavia) in the post-war era, rested largely on social democratic ideals (Fasting, 2013), and these also entailed a set of ideals concerning the role of education in

developing the ideal citizen. A unified educational system based on a conception of the development of "good citizens" as a central role of schools, entailed values such as solidarity, social cohesion, loyalty and equal rights (Telhaug et al., 2004, p. 143). It was thought that through economic equalisation aided by an extensive welfare system and equal rights and opportunities for a good education, citizens would develop a greater national loyalty and sense of belonging. In other words, the promotion of social justice (in a material sense) would contribute to the development of the ideal social democratic citizen (Telhaug et al., 2004, p. 147).

In the period of relative political radicalism in the 1970s, the notion of a centrally defined ideal citizen and national culture was questioned. Concerns such as minority rights, self-autonomy of rural communities, and environmental protection were pitched against the instrumentalist, industrially and economically geared, big-unit social democratic national project (Telhaug et al., 2004, p. 148), of which schools were thought to be an essential part. Democratic competence was now thought to include an ability to question power, argue for the rights of the marginalised, and partake in decision-making and dialogue. The curriculum of 1974 (hereafter M74) has been characterised as featuring a deliberative understanding of democracy (Briseid, 2012, p. 56), because of its emphasis on democratic participation.

The subsequent curricula of 1987 (hereafter M87) and L97 saw a turn toward focusing on identity and community as a basis for democratic upbringing. M87 stressed school's role in installing a common set of values and national identity in students (Briseid, 2012, p. 57), whereas L97 went further in explicitly defining content thought to constitute a common knowledge base (Telhaug et al., 2004, p. 152). In both, democracy was linked to Christian and humanist values, which in L97 were implied as a central foundation for a national culture (Briseid, 2012). A strongly defined canon was justified with (among other things) a democratic argument: a common knowledge base was seen as important for equal distribution of competence for democratic participation, and in order to avoid undemocratic manipulation of the people. While the underlining of a common culture may indicate a communitarian understanding of democracy, the

justification given in L97 also features a more deliberative ideal of creating conditions for best arguments to prevail – as well as a, perhaps liberal, thought of individual skills and knowledge as central to achieving this (Briseid, 2012, p. 59).

M87 and L97 also featured strengthening of the rights of minority students concerning education adapted to their specific needs. However, multicultural accommodation was mostly limited to designated "reception classes", and, particularly in L97, viewed as temporary support measures, intended to prepare the students for regular participation in ordinary classes (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015). In terms of the tension between inclusion and differentiation outlined previously, then, we see that minority language students were subject to an idea of organisational differentiation which seemed to include them only partially as recipients of this common content. This may indicate a flipside to the coin of "common knowledge" as a basis for citizenship, which is that it serves to delineate prerequisites for inclusion which create exclusion as a necessary side-effect (Olson, 2012).

National curricula are not developed in a vacuum. While the 1980s and 90s saw the spread of multicultural political ideas throughout much of the Western world, implying a de-emphasis on a shared national culture in favour of granting more or less substantial rights to immigrant groups, since the early 2000s such ideas gradually lost traction and were replaced by policies founded on a principle that "the multicultural society can only function on the basis of some minimal convictions shared by all of its members" (Joppke & Morawska, 2003, p. 15) – what Joppke and Morawska (2003) framed as "the return of citizenship". This development entails a resurgence of discussions about what sort of values, virtues, or attitudes could reasonably be expected from a good citizen. Such a shift can be seen in EU policies in the 1990s and early 2000s, as an increased focus on common knowledges and values in policies on citizenship education (Olson, 2012; Osler & Starkey, 2006; Ross & Davies, 2018). Underlining European identity as a basis for citizenship, EU education policy explicitly aimed for redefining a European "we", with political, economic, social and cultural faces – a notion which has also been criticised for reproducing mechanisms of exclusion

(Olson, 2012, p. 80). Thus, the tendency in L97 to link democracy to Norwegianness (albeit attempting to include "new impulses" in the notion of national culture) can be seen as connected to similar processes in the EU. These tendencies actualise a dilemma concerned with outlining a common value base where democracy is connected to notions of national identity. Similar faces of such a dilemma are explored in Article 1 in relation to recent Norwegian education policy regarding citizenship education. I will return to this in Chapters 5 and 6.

Throughout the 1990s, the notion of citizenship was coupled with individualist ideals (Biesta & Lawy, 2006), as a market-based ideology gained more ground. Several scholars have described a neoliberal shift in education policy since the 1980s more or less worldwide (e.g. Apple, 2000; Giroux, 2008; Sleeter, 2008). In Europe, increasing globalisation, technological development and increased geographical mobility among many Europeans, were conceptualised through a notion of the "knowledge economy". EU policy efforts to develop a "flexible, employable European citizen" resulted, among other things, in the Bologna Process of standardising higher education (Fejes, 2008). Here, education was seen as investment in the citizen as an asset in the global economic competition between nations (Telhaug et al., 2004, p. 150). A view of the citizen as a consumer and an employee gradually gained traction in Norway as well. Norwegian education reforms and changes in policy and law referred to in Section 2.1, seem to have shifted the focus away from "traditional social democratic values such as solidarity, community and tolerance" and toward narrower, instrumental goals of education in line with the focus and recommendations of the OECD (Hilt, 2016b, p. 668), and it has been argued that this shift undermined "thick", or experience-based, notions of democracy in education (Lieberkind, 2015). As mentioned in the previous section, these shifts were manifest in LK06, as centrally defined content was exchanged for "competence aims" and learning outcomes (Imsen et al., 2017, p. 573).

The underlying understanding of democracy and democratic citizenship in LK06 is said also to have shifted toward a liberalist tendency, particularly in the sense of individualisation (Briseid, 2012, p. 61), albeit still entertaining deliberative ideas: while

competence aims regarding democracy include points such as ability for critical thinking and co-determination, the level of detailed knowledge aims in LK06 nevertheless seems to shift the focus toward individualised acquirement of measurable competences, away from a deliberative ideal (Briseid, 2012, p. 64). This is especially relevant for social studies. The concepts of "thin" and "thick" understandings in education for democracy refer to a distinction between knowledge-oriented education *about* democracy on the one hand and, on the other, teaching *for* and *through* democracy, moving beyond knowledge goals and focusing on experiences, and developing critically-minded students who are prepared to change society (Biesta, 2006).

In the core curriculum of LK06 (which was a continuation of the core curriculum from L97), it was stated that education must "promote democracy, national identity and international awareness" (The Royal Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 5). One central criticism of LK06 was that it featured a vague mandate and unclear understanding of democracy. Coupled with the tendency in LK06 already mentioned, of focusing on measurable learning outcomes, the result has been described as teachers having to choose between fact-based knowledge about democracy and experience and critical thinking skills (Stray & Sætra, 2015). Some research suggests that many social studies teachers see education for democracy as something more than acquisition of knowledge, and focus on critical thinking as an important democratic skill (Sætra & Stray, 2019), although others have suggested a prevalence of "thin" conceptions of democracy and citizenship among Norwegian teachers (Biseth & Lyden, 2018; Eriksen, 2018a).

2.3.1 Democracy and citizenship in the 2020 curriculum

In the new curriculum, effective from August 1st 2020 (hereafter LK20), core elements have changed from LK06, including notions of democratic citizenship. Although a thorough evaluation or exploration of underlying assumptions regarding the meanings ascribed to democracy and citizenship in LK20 could have been interesting and relevant

here, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation. I will, however, point to some immediate implications of the changes which I outline, as a foundation for further discussion in Chapter 6.

One of the documents I analysed in Article 1 was NOU 2015:8, commonly referred to as the Ludvigsen Report, after committee head Sten Ludvigsen. This report was part of the preparatory work for LK20. Among the recommendations in the report, was a clearer and broader focus on democratic citizenship in social studies, and that such a focus should orbit around a goal of "democratic competence" (Stray & Sætra, 2015, p. 468). Further, whereas LK06 emphasised individual and labour market oriented skills, and measurability, NOU2015:8 explicitly aimed for a broader understanding of "competence" which the authors viewed as more compatible with the overall democratic mandate of Norwegian education (Stray & Sætra, 2015, p. 469). However, Børhaug (2017) contended that the Ludvigsen Report featured a vague terminology and unclear conceptualisations of the aims and scope of education for democratic citizenship, and that notions of citizenship were de-politicised and individualised.

Nevertheless, LK20 claims to be dedicated to limiting the number of explicitly defined knowledge aims, and provides a new definition of "competence" which includes ability to gain and critically evaluate knowledge, not "mere" acquisition (Ministry of Education and Research, 2019, p. 11). It remains to be seen whether this serves to take some of the pressure off of social studies teachers pointed to in Briseid's (2012) article, leaving more space for "thicker" notions of democratic citizenship.

In Article 2, I discussed social studies teachers' views on cultural difference and how their views might affect how they approached subject content such as democracy. Considering that notions of democratic citizenship seem to be linked to cultural notions of equality at various points throughout curriculum history, there is a need to discuss how conceptualisations of cultural difference might play out in education for democracy in light of the new curriculum. To tie this back to the research question of this dissertation: how cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations are at work in

education may affect how education for democratic citizenship is conceptualised and approached. In turn this affects students' real opportunities for democratic participation. This observation underlines the double challenge for social studies teachers facing the task of teaching about, for and through democracy: cultural normalisation and othering constitutes both a topic to teach about as a democratic challenge, and a classroom challenge of providing the necessary tools for participation for the students present. I will discuss this further in Chapter 6.

Seen against such a backdrop of curriculum and education policy history, it becomes clear that processes of knowledge production are central to understanding how culture, ethnicity and race are conceptualised and dealt with in education.

2.4 Previous research

Research in a Nordic context on the prevalence and effects of cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations in education in general, has been conducted within several different fields, including education policy, teacher education and curriculum research. Moreover, contributions home in on different research objects, such as school practices, teachers, preservice teachers, and students. When it comes to social studies, research on conceptualisations of culture, ethnicity or race in a Nordic context so far seems to have focused mainly on curricula and teaching materials. In the following two subchapters I will outline recent research, in order to show that this study fills a gap in the research fields of conceptualisations of culture in education in general, and in social studies in particular, within a Norwegian context. These are both international research fields, and while there are significant international contributions here, I mention the international fields only briefly, and dwell for the most part on the Nordic and Norwegian contexts.

2.4.1 Cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations in Nordic education

There is a significant amount of research internationally concerning how cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations are at work, conceptualised and dealt with in education. Due to the sheer volume of existing work, as well as the wide range of terminology applied in exploring these fields, I will limit the international references to include commonly cited, and influential empirical contributions.

Wide-spanning empirical overviews include Stevens and Dworkin's (2014) *Handbook of Race and Ethnic Inequalities in Education*; Palaiologou and Dietz' (2012) *Mapping the Broad Field of Multicultural and Intercultural Education Worldwide*; and Banks' (2009) *Companion to Multicultural Education*. Other highly influential and widely cited works internationally from the past decades include James Banks' many publications on multicultural education (e.g. Banks, 2011; Banks & Banks, 2010); Gloria Ladson-Billings' development of the notion of culturally relevant pedagogy as well as critical race theory, and intersectionality in education (e.g. Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016); and Christine Sleeter's contributions to critical multiculturalism (e.g. Sleeter, 1993, 2001, 2008, 2013). Further, Marilyn Cochran-Smith's works on social equity (Cochran-Smith et al., 2016), and David Gillborn's explorations of whiteness and colour-blindness in education (e.g. Gillborn, 2006, 2015, 2019) are important contributions. In addition to being influential theoretical works, these publications have contributed empirically to the prolific research field of culture, race and ethnicity in education.

As this study is situated in a Norwegian context, I find the Nordic research field to be the relevant immediate research context. As noted above, the Nordic countries have had somewhat similar developments of welfare states and education policies since the Second World War (albeit with variations). As I will show below, several empirical studies on Nordic policy and curricula have pointed to othering tendencies in conceptualisations of culture in education, speaking to the tendencies pointed to in 2.1

and 2.2 about the connections between cultural and political aspects of equality as an aim of education.

There is a body of Nordic research which analyses discourse and terminology related to how culture, ethnicity or race are conceptualised in education. Analyses of discourse in Finnish teacher education have found that references to diversity and multiculturalism pointed mostly to immigrant students (Holm & Londen, 2010), and had rather vague or non-existent connections to questions of justice (Hummelstedt-Djedou et al., 2018). Studying teachers' understandings of "diversity", Lund (2018) found it to be vague, and lacking in commitment to multicultural work, whereas Osler and Lindquist (2018) discussed how the term "diversity" risked covering up structural discrimination, and argued for applying a terminology of "race" in empirical investigation. In analysis of Norwegian teacher education policy discourse, Fylkesnes (2019), found a discourse of cultural diversity perpetuating hierarchical notions of Norwegianness and non-Norwegianness, along racial lines. Similar normalising and othering tendencies were seen in a study by Burner and Biseth (2016) which analysed the education policy approach "Competence for Diversity", aimed at raising teachers' ability to provide culturally relevant education to students with various cultural backgrounds. Also within Norwegian teacher education research, conceptualisations of culture have been described as simultaneously vague and othering (Fylkesnes, 2018; Fylkesnes et al., 2018).

Research on curricula includes Morken (2009), who described a "hierarchy of minorities" in Norwegian national curricula, where educational rights differentiate judicially different cultural minorities – placing immigrant students at the bottom. Further, Zilliacus, Paulsrud and Holm (2017) investigated Finnish and Swedish curricular discourses finding somewhat more strongly essentialised representations of cultural identities in the Swedish national curriculum than the Finnish one. In an extensive exploration of how ethnic and religious minorities were presented in Norwegian textbooks for upper-secondary level, Midtbøen et al. (2014a) found that while the Sami national minority were fairly well represented overall, this was not the

case with other minority groups. Further, an implied “Norwegian we” of cultural majority origin was present in much of the text material.

Teacher views or attitudes concerning what is variously labelled “student diversity”, or multi- or interculturalism, have also been researched within a Nordic context, using different frameworks and terminology. There is research on teacher views, perceptions, and perspectives, finding ambivalence toward multiculturalism and multilingualism (Björklund, 2013), and concern among teachers about a lack of institutional support (Gunnþórsdóttir et al., 2019; Obondo, 2018; Obondo et al., 2016). Some studies point to varying levels of awareness or reflection concerning student “diversity” among teachers (Acquah et al., 2016; Hummelstedt et al., 2021; Itkonen et al., 2015; Niemi & Hahl, 2018), and Skrefsrud and Østberg (2015) argue for challenging representations of immigrant students as “deficient”, while pointing to the risk of perpetuating reifying and static ideas of “diverse” students’ cultural identities within a resource-oriented framework as well. Hyry-Beihammer et al. (2019) address beginning teachers’ emotions and moral negotiations in the face of classroom diversity. In a study of vocational education in Sweden, Rosvall et al. (2018) found knowledge gaps among teachers concerning the construction and significance of race and ethnicity, while Midtbøen et al. (2014b), in their investigation of teacher approaches to curricula concerning ethnicity, race, culture and religion, found a prevalent perspective of colour-blindness among teachers. In a classroom study focusing on education about racism, Svendsen (2014) found a lack of acknowledgement that the concept of race had anything to do with racism. Similarly, in a recent classroom observation study in Norway, Eriksen (2020) found that racism was taboo, yet “elusively present” in classroom conversations. Her argument to apply a theory of affect both analytically and as a pedagogical tool, resembles the argument I make in Article 2 for applying a pedagogy of discomfort in the face of colour-blind approaches to cultural, ethnic and racial difference. In a recent study, Burner and Osler explored the experiences of a Turkish-Norwegian teacher, finding that Norwegian idelas of equality contributed to exclusion and minoritisation of her, and of immigrant students (Burner & Osler, 2021)

There are several studies addressing how to prepare teachers or pre-service teachers for working in "culturally diverse" classrooms. In a recent Norwegian study, Thomassen and Munthe (2020) found varying degrees of self-reported competence among teacher students. In a study of teachers in Swedish-speaking Finland, Mansikka and Holm (2011), found both positive attitudes and colour-blind approaches to teaching immigrant students, while Rosnes and Rossland (2018) pointed to a need for theoretical knowledge and reflection among Norwegian teachers. Some studies consider the effect of workshops or courses as efforts to raise teacher awareness and knowledge. Krulatz et al. (2018) found awareness of multiliteracy to be somewhat improved after a workshop for teachers working with linguistically diverse students. In a Finnish study, Acquah and Commins (2013) found both respect and competence to be improved after taking a course on multiculturalism, while Alemanji and Mafi (2018), on the other hand, criticised a multicultural framework for not paying sufficient attention to power, and risking the reinforcement of racist structures. Dervin (2015) noted the importance of helping teacher students reflect critically on the quality of such courses. This study contributes to developing a nuanced framework for teachers' and pre-service teachers' critical awareness of the workings of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations, as well as reflecting on their own preparedness to deal with them in class.

There is also some research taking a student perspective. Focusing on schools as systems, Hilt (2016b, 2017) has described dynamics of inclusion and exclusion for immigrant students, while Chinga-Ramirez (2015, 2017), Hilt (2015) and Mathisen (2020) all have explored immigrant students' experiences, finding mechanisms of normalisation and othering along the lines of race and ethnicity. Further, Midtbøen et al. (2014b) found that minority students reported a sense of exclusion, and barriers to "Norwegianness". In a 2018 study, Solhaug and Osler (2018) explored variables connected to what they termed "intercultural empathy" among students, finding information and understanding of "cultural diversity" to be important predictors.

Specifically addressing a Norwegian context, a number of books and anthologies have been written in recent decades addressing various aspects of "diversity" in education. Pihl (2005) has written critically about the workings of categorisations of normality and difference in Norwegian education through investigating how pedagogical evaluation of the skills and abilities of ethnic minority students was often fraught with ethnocentrism. A book edited by Hauge (2014) discusses and provides examples of deficiency- and resource-oriented perspectives on "cultural diversity" in Norwegian education; while Westrheim and Tolo (2014) provide critical perspectives on the task of balancing unity and diversity in an increasingly multicultural Norwegian society. In a research anthology, Bakken and Solbue (2016) provide a collection of contributions revolving around the education political initiative "Competence for Diversity", and Lund (2017b) has edited an anthology dedicated to shedding light on, and discussing, what constitutes inclusive practice in Norwegian education, emphasising recognition and resource-oriented approaches to "diversity", as well as the importance of critical reflection as part of school practice. In a 2018 anthology focused on language, history and religious education Engen et al. (2018) give an overview of recent research concerning "education for diversity". Writing of "diversity in education" has been considered timely and called for in the Norwegian education research context lately, and these contributions have provided important insights and perspectives on this dissertation's immediate field of study.

To sum up this subchapter: there is a significant amount of research internationally, and a substantial amount within a Nordic context, showing that discursive constructions of, and views on, cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations are often at work in ways which perpetuate othering mechanisms, and that education often does not sufficiently encourage either teachers' or students' critical awareness of themselves in the world, and in relation to such othering mechanisms. While there is some research exploring a specifically Norwegian context, there is still a need to shed further light on this field. My own research contributes to these conversations by shedding light on discursive constructions of cultural, ethnic and racial differences in

recent education policy in Norway, as well as exploring teacher perspectives. Further, the research outlined above shows that there is a need for frameworks for teachers to develop critical awareness of how to approach and deal with cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations without lapsing into essentialising and stereotypical representations on the one hand, and reductive, universalist colour-blindness on the other. This dissertation contributes both empirically and theoretically toward filling this gap.

2.4.2 Cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations in social studies

Internationally, there is a body of research focusing on social studies teachers' conceptions of race, culture or ethnicity among students, or categorisations along those lines as it pertains to social studies subject topics. Some found unwillingness to consider race a structural phenomenon (Crowley & Smith, 2015), and resistance toward including native populations' perspectives in social studies (Scott & Gani, 2018). A connection between race consciousness and cultural responsiveness has been described (Pelkowski, 2015); Martell and Stevens (2017) found a distinction between individually and structurally oriented race consciousness, and Martell (2018) has described different kinds of culturally relevant practices.

While there is significantly less research focusing specifically on social studies in a Nordic context, there is an important body of work shedding light on conceptualisations of, and approaches to, cultural, ethnic and racial categories in social studies education. Mikander (2016, 2017) has pointed to de-politicised representations of globalisation in her analyses of Finnish social studies textbooks (both history and geography). Similarly, Røthing (2015) has analysed how the topic of racism was conceptualised in curricula and social studies, finding that it was represented as something which happened elsewhere, or long ago. Further, both Ekeland (2017) and Eriksen (2018b) have conducted analyses of representations of the Sami in Norwegian textbooks, using postcolonial and anti-oppressive theories respectively, both revealing othering representations.

In a recent study of social studies classrooms for second language learners, Walldén (2021) found a discursive perpetuation of Western-centric ideas of different parts of the world, shaping and limiting the possible subject positions available to second language students.

There seems, however, to be less research in a Norwegian or Nordic context linking cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations in education to notions of citizenship and social studies education (although Kristin Gregers Eriksen's very recent PhD dissertation is a notable exception (Eriksen 2021)). In addition to the empirical contributions of the first two articles, in the fields of education policy and teacher views respectively (I refer the readers to each article for a more detailed account of their contributions), the dissertation as a whole contributes to discussing how notions of citizenship are connected to notions of Norwegian culture, and how cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations could fruitfully be discussed in education for democratic citizenship.

3 Epistemological and theoretical foundations

Knowledge production always rests on a set of assumptions. Among these are assumptions about the nature of knowledge (epistemological position), and, in the case of social research, theoretical assumptions about the workings of the social world. In this chapter, I will show how this project is grounded in a space influenced by critical and poststructuralist epistemologies (Section 3.1), before outlining the approach to culture which underlies the dissertation as a whole (section 3.2). In Section 3.3, I will show how the studies draw on various theories aiming at addressing questions of culture, ethnicity and race in education which fall under the overall epistemological umbrella outlined in Section 3.1.

Before moving on to the epistemological positioning, I will note that this project rests on an assumption that human access to meaningful knowledge about the world is mediated through our interpretations, and these interpretations are conducted in a historical, social and cultural context. That is not to say, however, that I find all interpretations to be equally acceptable. They cannot be made in ways which are contrary to the limitations of the physical world, even though the framework used to describe and understand the physical world is constructed by humans. Moreover, interpretations may be more or less useful, depending on the purpose; more or less just, depending on perspective (Crotty, 1998, pp. 47-48); more or less in accordance with applied standards of reason. Accepting that these standards of reason are socially constructed, does not necessarily imply deeming them arbitrary, and leaves the door well open to making assertions about the social world. Thus, while I do not reject the possibility for making truth claims, in social research it is often more relevant and justified to talk of reasonable and convincing interpretations (Crotty, 1998, p. 41).

In order to fulfil an overall aim of interpreting a small part of the social world in a way which seems reasonable and meaningful to my readers, it is necessary that I account for the position from where interpretation is done. A reflexive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, pp. 19-24) entails that I account not only for research outcomes, but

also how these are affected by my situatedness, and acts of negotiating with different theoretical points of view. In Chapter 1 I reflected on my personal-academic situatedness upon entering the PhD work, and in Chapter 4 I will reflect on the concrete choices I have made at different points during the studies for each article. In the following, I will convey my theoretical position and reasonings.

3.1 Negotiating critical and poststructuralist epistemologies

Acknowledging that our interpretations of the world are historically situated, and socially and culturally constructed, entails a task of questioning how. In this project I started out with paying attention to cultural and social constructions in the form of a critical approach. Critical theory commonly refers to a wide canon of thought originating in sociological and philosophical circles around the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in the interwar period – the so-called Frankfurt School. While critical theory does not constitute a unified school of thought, common to contributions subscribing to a critical view is a goal of critiquing social injustice, not "merely" describing the world (Thompson, 2017, p. 1). In that sense, this project is fuelled by an aim of not "just" bringing about empirical knowledge, but also of raising awareness of factors that shape that knowledge (Thompson, 2017, p. 2). This entails paying attention to how power, privilege, marginalisation and injustice play out and are reproduced in social and cultural structures (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 283), and exploring underlying assumptions which support (or challenge) such mechanisms (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 284). By inciting critical awareness of underlying assumptions, it is claimed, critical theory not only enables us to critique injustice, but also provides a tool for resistance in a way not immediately available to research aiming to be purely descriptive. This project pays attention to such structures and assumptions through analysing discourse in Article 1, and teacher perceptions of cultural difference among students in Article 2.

Further, through focusing on unveiling mechanisms of power at work in discourse, and mechanisms of normalisation and othering (concepts I will elaborate on in Section 3.3.2), I draw on ideas associated with poststructuralist thought. One way of "summing up" poststructuralist ideas (a paradoxical enterprise, perhaps), is that it is a way of historicising political thought (Dillet, 2017, p. 517). Through efforts such as Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of texts, paying attention to their inner workings and assumptions (Smith, 2010, p. 146); Foucault's genealogies, exploring the historicity of linguistic terms and concepts that come to be accepted as true (Feder, 2010, p. 56); and Lyotard's critique of the concept of grand narratives (Smith, 2010, p. 144), poststructuralists put language at the centre of their investigations of knowledge construction. Typically, poststructuralist critique takes as its point of departure that oppression is *produced* by discourse (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 50). In its eagerness to historicise knowledge, then, poststructuralism seems to go further than critical approaches in relativising it (Dillet, 2017, p. 517).

Among the questions which distinguish critical and poststructuralist thought from one another, is their take on the relation between knowledge and power. I will now draw an outline of the position taken in this project, because it has a bearing both on the application of theoretical concepts (on which I elaborate in the subsequent subsections), and methodological choices, which I will account for in Chapter 4.

3.1.1 Knowledge, truth and power

Regarding the relation between knowledge/truth and power, this project is positioned in a space influenced by French sociologist Michel Foucault (1981) – although I do not to the same extent as Foucault reject the possibility for truth claims. Through exploring the historicity of discursive concepts, Foucault intended to bring attention to how discourse is at work in shaping (and being shaped by) legitimate knowledge, always influencing (and being influenced by) power relations (Foucault, 1981). *Truth* in Foucauldian thought is interesting first and foremost in terms of scrutinising the

discursive mechanisms which produce "truth-effects" (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999, p. 22).

One limitation to this approach is that it may weaken the possibility of taking a normative stand in terms of injustice: if "everything" is discursively produced truth-effects of a power-knowledge regime, then nothing is more nor less problematic than anything else (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 378). This lack of separation between truth and power can be critiqued for being in danger of reductionism (Fricker, 2017, p. 56), and while I do, in line with Foucault (1981), hold that knowledge is discursively constructed – and emphasise the investigation of the legitimising effects of discourse – I am not convinced that it is fruitful in this dissertation to treat knowledge (or, by extension, mechanisms of privilege and marginalisation) as mere discursive *inventions*.

While there is tension between critical and poststructuralist thought regarding their conceptions of truth, rather than viewing it as a question of either-or, it could be seen as a continuum. At the extreme ends, there is absolute rejection of the possibility for making truth claims on the one side, and absolute rejection of relativism on the other. There is, however, ample space for negotiation between the two extreme ends. Thus, this dissertation is positioned in a field of tense co-existence between a post-structuralist aim of deconstructing power mechanisms at work in discursive constructions on the one hand, and a critically oriented insistence on the possibility for making normative judgement on the other. As I move on, then, I reject a purely constructivist notion of knowledge, while nevertheless contending that attention to the legitimising effects of discourse is needed.

3.2 Culture, ethnicity and race in education

Moving on to the theoretical approach to culture in education applied in this project, I will start by outlining my view of culture (Section 3.2.1), as it comprises a fundamental assumption shaping the project from the start. Then follows a brief historical context to approaches to culture, ethnicity and race in education 3.2.2. These sections provide

necessary context for positioning the theoretical perspectives applied in this project, which I will then move on to outline in Section 3.3.

3.2.1 Cultural categorisations

The epistemological foundation outlined above is supplemented by a relational, performative, processual and non-essentialist view of culture. That means that cultural categories, while often perceived as significant, are not viewed as absolute, reified and in clear contrast to each other (Alghasi et al., 2009, p. 7). Rather, culture is viewed here as a fundamental aspect of human activity (Eriksen, 2017, p. 27), linked to practices, habits, processes of identification and meaning-making, and notions of belonging. In that sense, culture is seen as a universally prevailing concept. Further, imaginaries perceived as outlining the borders between different cultures serve as categorisations which also create and sustain notions of *not* belonging, of belonging to the *Others*.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations intertwine. While it is cultural categorisations which have been defining the project from the start, the imaginaries I investigate have both ethnic and racial aspects as well. As I will elaborate in Section 3.3, this dissertation pays attention to how such imaginaries persist, and may result in exclusive notions of Norwegian citizenship.

While this project does apply "culture" as a primary concept for research, it does so with some caution, because granting "culture" the status of a social category which matters to the extent that it is worthy of research, inherently entails a risk of reification, of reproducing it as a category of distinction, discursively, theoretically and methodologically. In the words of Yasmin Gunaratnam (2003) (writing about race and ethnicity, but the reasoning may be extended to culture), there is tension between "[…] the need to work with highly defined categories of ethnicity in order to undertake research that challenges social inequalities, and the recognition that such categories are socially and historically contingent and situated" (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 18). The view of culture (as well as race and ethnicity) as contextually and dynamically

constructed, and socially and historically situated, means that while their workings can (and should) be researched, it has to be done not by taking them as a given, but by constantly questioning them as significant categories. Gunaratnam describes the need for a theoretical space which recognises the dynamic constitution of social identities, while at the same time grasping the embodied experiences of individuals (Gunaratnam, 2003, pp. 5-7). This entails maintaining a focus on the social category in question, but not by applying it as a neutral, descriptive category, but as a socially and discursively produced category (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 32) which, because of its historical significance, still has lingering effects. This perspective is present in Article 1, which explores how cultural difference is discursively produced as "diversity" in recent education policy, and in Article 2, where I explore teacher views on how to approach cultural difference in class. There, the question of culture as a significant category is very much in play. In Article 3, the question of how to deal with cultural and ethnic categorisations is explored theoretically and here, too, culture, along with ethnicity and race, is treated as a socially and discursively reproduced category.

An overall critical/poststructuralist approach implies, moreover, that I am prone to pay attention to mechanisms of power, in relation to social categorisations. Through investigating policy discourse in Article 1, and teacher views of students' cultural and ethnic identities in Article 2, I shed light on how constructions of cultural categories related to Norwegianness and non-Norwegianness affect the space for dealing with cultural, ethnic and racial identities in school, and the possibilities for discussing discrimination, racism or other forms of marginalisation. Article 3 takes the existence of oppression along the lines of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations as a starting point, and thus very much includes power aspects in the discussion.

Theoretical concepts develop historically, and I will now move on to give a brief outline of some historically significant theoretical approaches to culture, ethnicity and race in education. Questions of the importance of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education are many and complex, and there is a plethora of theoretical contributions dedicated to exploring and understanding them. The below is not meant as exhaustive

accounts, but to provide a backdrop against which the theoretical position of this study is placed, before moving on to account for the concepts applied in the studies.

3.2.2 Multicultural education

Attention to culture in education has long roots. A most central contribution originating from the era of the American civil rights movement in the 1960s, is multicultural education. The major goal of multicultural education as described by central theorist James Banks (2009), is "to restructure schools so that all students acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to function in ethnically and racially diverse communities […]" (Banks, 2009, p. 14), applying a *culturally responsive pedagogy*. The latter is described by James Banks et al. as the inclusion of culturally relevant content for all students, "to help bridge the gap between what students already know and appreciate and what they are to be taught" (Banks et al., 2001, p. 198). In a further development of this discussion, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995) argued for a culturally *relevant* pedagogy, which she described as "not only address[ing] student achievement but also help[ing] students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate" (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 469).

However, multicultural education has been subject to criticism from different points of view[1]: from a standpoint of antiracist education it has been accused of applying an essentialised and static notion of culture, and of *deracialisation* (May & Sleeter, 2010a, p. 7). Another critique of multicultural education which stems from a critical pedagogical tradition, is that it falls into the trap of applying a "banking" model of knowledge, by treating culture as something fixed; as content which can be taught, or

[1] Curiously, multicultural education and multiculturalism in political theory have developed without very much connection to each other. The political idea of multiculturalism entails granting more or less substantive rights to citizens based in belonging to different cultural groups (e.g. Kymlicka, 1995). This has been criticised from various points of view, grounded for instance in egalitarianism (Barry, 2002), feminism (see e.g. Phillips, 2007) and with reference to the sustainability of universal welfare systems (Brochmann, 2015). This debate is, however, not immediately related to conversations about multicultural education. Some authors have attempted to abet this (e.g. Reich, 2002), but it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to pursue this conversation.

transferred as an object (May & Sleeter, 2010a, p. 9). The aim of critical pedagogy is to create awareness of structures of privilege and marginalisation. Developed from a Marxist perspective, critical pedagogy prioritises analyses of oppression along the lines of class and has in its turn been criticised for blindsiding racial or racialised oppression. This study applies concepts associated with efforts to address these criticisms, stemming from theoretical strands of critical multicultural education, critical race theory and postcolonial education.

3.3 A critical and postcolonial approach

I will now account for the theoretical legs on which the analyses in the empirical studies stand, some of which have developed as answers to criticisms of multicultural education and critical pedagogy. The aspiration of the following sections is not to account in depth for each theoretical tradition which has influenced this PhD work, but rather to outline the dissertation's own theoretical foundation, as well as the concepts which have influenced the analyses and discussions in the articles.

3.3.1 Critically examining the workings of culture, race and ethnicity in education

One theoretical position which addressed the alleged shortcomings of both multiculturalism and critical pedagogy, was the field of antiracist education (Troyna, 1993). Originating in a British context, antiracist education accused multicultural education of ignoring structural discrimination along racial lines. Rather in parallel, but in an American context, critical race theory (CRT) (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016) focused on examining the structural (in particular, the legal) roots of racial discrimination in the USA. Later, CRT has been applied in European contexts as well (Gillborn, 2006). While, as is so often the case, CRT is not one unified school of thought, key points include a view that […]"'race' is socially constructed and that 'racial difference' is invented, perpetuated, and reinforced by society[…]" (Gillborn, 2015, p. 278). One central

argument of CRT is that whiteness is constructed as normative, and that in order to unveil this implicit normativity, race must be put forward as a significant analytical category (Vue & Newman, 2010, p. 781). The notion of colour-blindness which was an ideal goal of civil rights movements of the 1960s and beyond, is accused of being misleading, and not adequately addressing the needs of suppressed coloured minorities (Vue & Newman, 2010, p. 780). Instead, CRT places race at the centre of analysis, simultaneously underlining that various social categories intersect (Gillborn, 2015).

Insofar as I pay attention to constructions of difference along cultural and ethnic lines, I share some of the lines of reasoning foundational to critical race theory. However, while I apply critical race theory and consider it a fruitful line of thought, I do not in this dissertation, to the degree suggested by CRT, grant primacy to the concepts of race or whiteness. This is partly due to how the scope of the studies has developed (as outlined in Chapter 1). Further, I remain cautious of a mechanism, which has been associated with CRT, of posing the question in a way which already has the answer embedded. This reasoning connects to an important dilemma, namely the inherent danger of lapsing into a sort of determined essentialism, where race, ethnicity or culture are already assumed to be salient social categories, and therefore shape the analyses – from research question to interpretations. Methodological aspects of this dilemma are discussed in Chapter 4. Theoretically, I seek to resolve it by underlining the importance of applying a contextualised and dynamic notion of social and cultural identity – in line with the approach to culture outlined in Section 3.2.1. Thus, I hope to mitigate the risk of essentialising cultural identity and reproducing categories of difference.

A theoretical strand which has sought to address what could be perceived as a unilateral focus on race (or culture or ethnicity), is critical multiculturalism. This approach emerged in the early 2000s (May & Sleeter, 2010a, p. 10) as an answer to critiques of both liberal multicultural education, and CRT. While drawing on points from both CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016) and critical pedagogy (Freire, 2014), critical multiculturalism aims to provide a broader framework for considering social

categorisations in education in terms of privilege and marginalisation, "including, *but not necessarily limited to* racism" (May & Sleeter, 2010a, p. 10 emphasis in original). As previously pointed out, the understanding of the workings of social categories here should be not as neutral, descriptive categories, but categories which are discursively and socially reproduced (Gunaratnam, 2003).

Within education, implications of a critical multicultural framework which links questions of social categorisations to questions of power and politics, are that reproduction of cultural, ethnic and racial categories in education policy, curricula, subject content, and teacher practices are all seen in light of its ideological underpinnings (May & Sleeter, 2010b). In this study, such a focus is salient in Article 1 through a critical investigation of policy discourse in terms of cultural categorisations, and in Article 2, where teacher views on cultural difference are interpreted through critical attention to which conceptualisations of Norwegianness are perpetuated, and how this affects their approaches to subject content pertaining to cultural, ethnic and racial minorities.

A critical multiculturalist approach supports a notion that education *about*, or *for*, cultural minority students (Kumashiro, 2002) does not sufficiently challenge unequal power relations on the basis of social categorisations. Here, the development of a critical/poststructuralist stance referred to as anti-oppressive education, has been argued to address the need for *transformation.* Developing what he termed "education that changes students and society" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 50) – and based on an understanding of injustice as discursively produced – Kumashiro (2000; 2002) argued that *discursive action* – to alter our discursive practices regarding privileged and marginalised groups – is a necessary effort to challenge oppressive structures. While I find this argument well-founded and important, I do, in Article 3, point out a few weaknesses regarding the lack of credit this perspective potentially grants to people's intentions. This is duly explored in the article. Suffice it here to note that it serves as a pointer to didactical dilemmas concerning how to approach anti-oppressive work, pursued in Chapter 6.

3.3.2 Othering*:* a notion with postcolonial roots

Postcolonial theory refers to a canon of thought which focuses on the material and epistemic workings of Western colonialism, and aims to show how colonial logic is still at work today. Stein and Andreotti (2016) phrase the basis for postcolonial theory thus:

> […] despite the formal political decolonization of much of the world, many elements of colonialism continue to contribute to the production of racial and cultural hierarchies, and highly uneven distributions of wealth and resources (Loomba 2007). Hence, within postcolonial studies, decolonization is understood to be 'an unfinished project' (Kapoor 2004: 630). (Stein & Andreotti, 2016, p. 230)

In order to challenge the production of cultural hierarchies, postcolonial work must pay attention to knowledge production, "with particular attention to the production of knowledge about the Other and the Western/European self" (Andreotti, 2011, p. 3).

A central concept in postcolonial thought, is the notion of Orientalism, a term introduced by literary historian Edward W. Said (2003), and characterised as "style of thought, based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'" (Said, 2003, p. 2). The Oriental subject, Said argued, was represented by colonial powers as irrational, childlike, and different (Said, 2003, p. 40), and this constitution of the Orient served to justify colonial dominance (Said, 2003, p. 3). Within this framework, representations of a society cannot be separated from questions of power.

Based on the line of thought presented in *Orientalism* (Said, 2003), Jamaican sociologist Stuart Hall suggested a conceptual division of "the West and the Rest" to denote a socio-historically constructed ideological category, a notion of "a society that is developed, industrialized, urbanized, capitalist, secular, and modern" (Hall, 2018, p. 142). The idea of the West, according to Hall, is part of a "system of representation", which serves as a way of comparing Western and non-Western societies in a hierarchical way, where the West is equalised to being "good", "developed" and

"desirable" (Hall, 2018, pp. 142-143). In a similar vein to Said (1978), Hall argues that the notion of the West was a necessary discursive construction for the justification of the colonial expansion of Europe, framing colonial rule as a civilising mission (Hall, 2018).

These notions of orientalism and "the West and the Rest" provide the foundation for understanding the notion of *othering*, which is a central notion in this dissertation. Within the field of psychoanalysis, the *Other* designates a corresponding relationship between identifying oneself and identifying the Other (Thomas-Olalde & Velho, 2011, p. 28), where they are mutually constitutive of each other, and serve to distinguish one another. In the context of a postcolonial framework, the process of othering and the notion of Otherness is connected to operations and discourses of colonial power. Through discursive constructs, colonial subjects were discursively subordinated in a racial hegemony, as non-western and non-white, and labelled as exotic, different Others, simultaneously reaffirming a Western self (Hall, 2018). Such exoticising discursive concepts reaffirm what Hall (2017) labels Eurocentrism or Western-centrism, and even though the colonial era is, formally speaking, a thing of the past, othering, Eurocentric and exoticising discourses persevere. Moreover (and perhaps obviously), the reach and scope of othering discursive constructs pertaining to race, culture and ethnicity are not confined within the borders of former colonial powers, but rather work as a system of representation delineating, as already noted, the West and the Rest in conceptual terms which go beyond national borders.

Essential to outlining and revealing othering mechanisms, is also the mirror concept of normalisation, whereby the Normal is delineated from the Other. In a concrete sense, normalisation is connected to an observation that in a text there will always be a set of unsaid assumptions (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 55-60). In a more abstract sense, normalisation draws boundaries which include some and exclude others, on the basis of (often unspoken) criteria. That which counts as normal appears obvious, it goes without saying (Fahlgren & Sawyer, 2011). Those who do not live up to the idea of normality are viewed as deviant. Conceptualisations of culturally normal and culturally

different may appear as neutral descriptions, but through investigating what *goes without saying*, it is possible to draw attention to normalising and othering mechanisms.

Even though the colonial ties of Norway (and the rest of the Nordic countries) are usually considered weak, it has been argued that idealised national imaginaries are tightly connected to Western "civilising" projects (Mulinari et al., 2009). In outlining the Norwegian context in Chapter 2, I pointed to claims that constructs of national identity feature normalising and othering mechanisms, which fit comfortably under the heading of postcolonial perspectives. Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad (2002) introduced the concept of *imagined sameness* as a way to conceptualise Norwegian self-understanding. An egalitarian political framework combined with a nation-building effort in the image of cultural and ethnic homogeneity, she has argued, serve to sustain a racialised and deterministic identification of immigrants as *different* in Norway. These notions are discursively reproduced, and Gullestad's analyses provide clear illustrations of how normalisation, through discursive constructions of the culturally normal, the *same*, simultaneously entails othering mechanisms through excluding (especially the coloured parts of) the immigrant population from this sameness (Gullestad, 2002, 2004, 2006a).

Mechanisms of normalisation and othering feature as a central concept throughout this dissertation. In Article 1, I argue that one of the central features of a political discourse of cultural diversity is a division between Norwegian majority students, who *experience* diversity, and immigrant and cultural minority students, who *create* it – creating a normalising image where majority students are not culturally diverse. In the analysis in Article 2, I find that some teachers display *discomfort* in the face of talk of cultural difference. This can, in part, be understood as related to an imagined sameness disrupted.

Postcolonialism in education aims at challenging these and similar patterns of Eurocentric or Western-centric systems of representation in school, through

emphasising “the connections between knowledge, power, positionality, cultural assumptions and identity” (Andreotti & Souza, 2012, p. 3). In that sense, it can be framed as a social justice effort focusing specifically on mechanisms of oppression and marginalisation at play in the representation of cultures.

3.3.3 Aiming for social justice

To sum up the chapter so far: I have outlined a critical and poststructuralist epistemology and theoretical approach. I have contended that this epistemological and theoretical foundation is well suited to explore and discuss mechanisms of privilege, marginalisation and oppression, as well as how categorisations of culture, race and ethnicity work together with notions of national identity. Further, I hold that these mechanisms are also political, and related to power structures, both historical and contemporary. Finally, I have linked these mechanisms to education.

Ultimately, this dissertation is *about* social justice. In accounting above for a mechanism of cultural othering based in postcolonial theory, I imply that I see othering as connected to both discursive and material mechanisms of privilege and marginalisation. With regard to education, this notion draws, among others, on Kevin Kumashiro’s (2002) writings on anti-oppressive education, where he describes mechanisms of social injustice focusing on how some groups are Othered in society, while some groups are privileged (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 44). This stance implies a conceptualisation of injustice which includes both material aspects, and what could be termed relational aspects such as power, the ordering of social relations, and recognition (Gewirtz, 1998, pp. 470-471). Further, it is in line with arguments made by Indian economist Amartya Sen, that we need a broad conception of justice in order to be able to address people’s actual opportunities in life. He suggested judging a society not only by its institutions, but “by the extent to which different voices from diverse sections of the people can actually be heard” (Sen, 2009, p. xiii). This perspective chimes with the understanding of Miranda Fricker (2007), who has developed a conceptualisation of injustice which is distinctly epistemic. Fricker outlines the

mechanisms creating epistemic injustice and discusses its consequences and how to challenge it. As Article 3 takes a rather close look at Fricker's theoretical construction, suffice it here to note that a broad conceptualisation of justice includes an epistemic dimension as well.

In various parts of the dissertation, discursive, relational and epistemic aspects of injustice come into play, and this pulls toward the overall aim of the dissertation – to contribute empirically and theoretically to challenging injustice in and through social studies education.

Moving on to Chapter 4, I will explore the methodological implications of the theoretical positioning outlined here. Working with an aim of questioning taken-for-granted knowledge about the social world which may work in unjust ways, carries with it both methodological possibilities, challenges and risks, which I will attempt now to address.

4 Methodology

In this chapter I will account for methodological choices in relation to the research questions (both overall and for each study) and discuss some methodological dilemmas that have come up during the course of the studies.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, each of the studies approaches the workings of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations from different angles: policy discourse in Article 1; teacher views in Article 2; and discussion of theoretical approaches to mechanisms of injustice in education in Article 3. The table below sums up the overall research question and the research questions, material and methods for each article.

Overall research question	**How is cultural difference conceptualised in education policy and social studies education, and how can social studies teachers contribute to challenging mechanisms of privilege and marginalisation along cultural lines?**		
Article	Material	Research Question	Methods
1	NOU 2015:8 and White Paper no. 28 2015-2016	What conceptions of 'diversity' can be discerned in NOU 2015:8 and White Paper no. 28 2015-2016?	Critical discourse analysis
2	Qualitative interviews with social studies teachers	How do social studies teachers in Norwegian lower secondary school perceive students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and how do their perceptions of culture play out in social studies?	Qualitative, abductive analysis of transcribed interviews
3	Theoretical literature	Can the notion of epistemic injustice fruitfully mitigate the risks of polarisation inherent in a call for discursive action?	Theoretical argument

Table 2: Research questions, material and methods

The chapter proceeds as follows: I will start by discussing some overall methodological implications of a critical and poststructuralist approach for each article (Sections 4.1.1-4.1.3). In Section 4.2, I reconnect with reflexivity, and revisit the dilemma of reproduction of social categories, theoretical aspects of which were discussed in the previous chapter. Then, in Section 4.3 I account for the processes of choosing and applying methods, both for accessing empirical data, and analysing it. In addition to accounting for the methods of critical discourse analysis (4.3.1) and interviews (4.3.2), Section 4.3.3 provides an account of the process of selecting and gaining access to schools for the empirical investigation, where I comment on the notion of avoiding "bias" as a hallmark of valid research. This section also outlines the turn of events which led me to write a theoretical article, since that choice was made largely for practical reasons which had to do with the process of gaining access to the field. Moving on to Section 4.3.4 I revisit the abductive method of analysis applied in Article 2. Finally, in Section 4.4, I consider some ethical questions and dilemmas.

4.1 Methodological implications of a critical/poststructuralist approach

In the theoretical outline in Chapter 3 I briefly alluded to the methodological implications of applying concepts from critical race theory, critical multiculturalism and postcolonial theory. The implications involve paying attention to how constructions of social categories such as race, ethnicity and culture may be sustained or reproduced in unjust ways. Further, they advocate situating the production of knowledge and social categories historically and geographically. At the same time, it is necessary to apply a nuanced and dynamic understanding of cultural, ethnic and racial identities as discursively constructed categories.

I have sought to attend to these implications through exploring political discourse using a framework of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) in Article 1, and teacher views using a hermeneutical/abductive methodology in Article 2. In Article 3, I develop a theoretical argument, negotiating with perspectives from within critical and critical-

hermeneutical frameworks in order to further develop an anti-oppressive stance. I will now account for how these methodologies are in coherence with the theoretical framework I have outlined.

4.1.1 The reach and scope of discourse

In accounting for the position taken in this project on the notions of knowledge and power (Section 3.1.1), I contended that I see them as mutually constitutive (Foucault, 1981), although I do not wish to conflate them (Fricker, 2017). This stance speaks also to a distinction concerning the reach and scope of discourse: if one entertains a notion that truth is nothing but discursively produced truth-effects, then discourse, by extension, is viewed as an all-encompassing, historically situated system of representation, delineating and normalising the realm of truth. In this dissertation, the reach and scope of discourse is seen as less than all-encompassing, although while it could be seen as merely one aspect of social practice (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999), it is a central, perhaps the most central, aspect. In terms of social justice, the difference is whether one understands structures of privilege and marginalisation as discursively *produced*, or merely focuses on their discursive *legitimation*.

However, this does not have to be an either-or issue. I hold that there is room for a dynamic positioning where different levels of social analysis (from text analysis in a contemporary, local setting all the way up to genealogy) entail a possibility for applying a notion of discourse as more or less limited in scope (up to a point, as mentioned in Chapter 3.1.1 – namely the possibility for truth claims). The purpose of discourse analysis in both understandings is to point out implicit assumptions which provide rules and guidelines for meaningful statements; and they both pay attention to the power- and knowledge-producing aspects of language. Moreover, discourse analysis in both understandings aims to show how "any discourse involves excluding procedures which not only exclude themes, arguments and speech positions from the discourse, but also produce outsiders, […]" (Åkerstrøm Andersen, 2003, p. 3).

Article 1 features an understanding of discourse as rather limited in scope, when it applies a framework of critical discourse analysis as its analytical tool. In Article 2, when drawing on notions from postcolonial theory, a wider notion of discourse is implied. I mention this distinction here even though Article 2 does not feature a discourse analysis, because I find it worth a clarification when moving between different levels in the understanding of discourse.

4.1.2 The critical potential of a hermeneutical approach

The application of a hermeneutical/abductive method in Article 2 is made possible by an understanding of hermeneutics as a critical venture, building on the assumption that language is not mere exchange of information, but constitutive of opinions and attitudes (Habermas, 1981, p. 71). The attention to power relations and structures implied by critical and poststructuralist theories can be conceived as a "triple hermeneutics" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 348). While "simple" hermeneutics concerns itself with individual understandings of the world, and "double" hermeneutics with interpreting how such understandings come to be, triple hermeneutics has an added focus on the structures and processes which shape taken-for-granted assumptions guiding our interpretations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, pp. 348-349). The attention paid in Article 2 to prevailing imaginaries of cultural "sameness", and notions of school as a culturally neutral place, constitute such a third layer of hermeneutical interpretation. I will elaborate in concrete terms on how interpretation was made through applying an abductive method in Section 4.3.4.

4.1.3 Developing a theoretical argument

When writing a theoretical article, there are always choices to be made: just as choice of methods coupled with analytical frameworks shape the outcome of an empirical analysis, choice of theoretical perspectives in the development of an argument will enable some points of view, and overlook, disable, or undermine others. In Article 3, two aspects of the theoretical framework of anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro,

2000; Kumashiro, 2002) are critiqued, as I apply notions from the virtue ethical concept of epistemic injustice developed by Miranda Fricker (2007). I will outline below (in Section 4.3.3) the process of deciding to write a theoretical article in the first place, as it was not part of the original research plan. Here, I will account for the choice of perspectives for the crossing of swords, once that decision was made.

The choice of anti-oppressive education and epistemic injustice is not random. The starting point was an aching, not-yet-articulated, sense that the critical, bordering on poststructural theoretical perspectives I was surrounding myself with at the time, were unsatisfactory to me in some way. Struggling to point out in concrete terms what the problem was, there was a sensation of dogmatism, that once I professed to these theories there was no turning back – there was no standing on the edge of the water – I either jumped in, or I remained on the shore, rendering the fruits of the sea of critical perspectives unavailable to me. I have eventually learned to articulate this sensation (paradoxically, perhaps) as a scepticism about Grand Explanations. On the one hand, I was tempted to apply concepts from various critical theories, and more than a little fascinated with Foucault's world of power and discourse. On the other hand, concern for being stuck in a worldview where the answers were already there as part of the worldview, because the questions were also already there, did not go away, and I was searching for a way to settle it.

At some point, I no longer recall exactly where my head was at, metaphysically, my supervisor suggested I read Miranda Fricker's (2007) *Epistemic injustice: Power and the ethics of knowing*. As I did, I realised that not only was it possible to swim in the shallow end and draw "somewhat" on Foucault, it was also possible to articulate a critique of, and thus further develop, a theoretical stance in the borderlands between critical and poststructuralist theory without losing sight of injustice. In relation to questions of how to challenge injustice in social studies and education for democratic citizenship, I believe Article 3 is a fruitful contribution to such a conversation.

4.2 Revisiting reflexivity

In Chapter 1.3 I accounted for how personal and academic experiences and choices intertwine and affect my interests and focus. The research process, as it progressed, induced processes of reflection in relation to research questions, terminology, selections, interview questions, and analyses. As mentioned, I subscribe to a view that "different linguistic, social, political and theoretical elements are entangled in the knowledge-development process of constructing and interpreting empirical material" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, pp. 19-20 [my translation]). This makes it necessary, as part of a commitment to transparency, to show some of the things that have been going on "behind the scenes" in the process of constructing and interpreting data.

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008), reflection can be conceptualised as "interpretation of interpretation" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 20), as "attempting to break out of a certain frame of reference, and see what this frame does not manage to say" (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 488 [my translation]). In Chapter 3, I accounted for an epistemological and theoretical foundation, and, in Section 4.1, I outlined methodological implications of that foundation. The aim of both was to show consistency, and that the choices I have made make sense in relation to my research questions and overall aim. Simultaneously, however, I wish to point to weaknesses and limitations of theoretical perspectives and methodological choices. This is an essential measure to maintain credibility and a sense of the scope of the research (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, pp. 537-538). In the following subchapter I will reflect further upon a central dilemma in critical research, which concerns the risk of reproducing the social categories one is criticising. In the remainder of the chapter, as I account for choices of methods and the process of analysis, I sustain the effort to discuss the process reflexively, showing how choices were made and why, and their strengths and limitations.

4.2.1 The dilemma of critical analyses: reproduction of social categories

In Chapter 3, I declared the need for caution when handling social categorisations. The risk of essentialising social categories is inherent in all critique, and my own research is no exception. Through choosing to apply "cultural background" as a relevant category in my studies, I actively participated in sustaining a discourse where this is so – potentially at the expense of other insights, and with a risk of "fixing" culture as an essential conceptual category (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 19). This creates a dilemma where analytical clarity on the one hand and nuance or complexity on the other seem, at least at first glance, to be opposing one another. Here I will use points from the articles to illustrate some methodological implications of this risk.

In Article 1, I analysed the discourse of cultural diversity in two Norwegian education policy documents, and found it to reproduce a notion of diversity as *created* by immigrants and *experienced* by "Norwegians" (Åberg, 2020). I discussed how "diversity" had come to denote a depoliticised discourse which did not adequately address inequities related to cultural difference, such as structural discrimination and social problems. While this issue is not contingent on one term alone, using "diversity" as an example here serves the purpose of illustrating the difficulties with breaking out of a spiral of naming and reproduction of categories: once we come to associate a term with an overall discourse we find problematic, and we want to address that problem, we have to describe it; scrutinise its mechanisms, discuss its consequences. In doing that, there is a risk of inadvertently giving concession to the premises of the discourse, such as a separation between Norwegian students and Other students, thereby contributing to its continued existence. In the case of "diversity", it has become such a common term, that trying to describe my research in everyday terms without using it, tends to sound artificially complex and out-of-touch.

In empirical research, the risk of reaffirming categorisations often manifests as difficulties with avoiding posing questions in ways which already have the answers embedded, while, on the other hand, staying within the field that one wants to

investigate. For me, the process of writing the interview guide for Article 2 (which I will outline in more detail in Section 4.3.2) was challenging in this regard, since I wanted to ask teachers about their thoughts regarding cultural difference in social studies, without imposing a premise that this was necessarily experienced as salient and important in their everyday professional lives. I reasoned that the terms I chose to apply in my questioning, potentially (by no means certainly) significantly affected (by no means determined) what sort of associations teachers could reasonably be assumed to have. In other words, my social experience and theoretical situatedness and assumptions constituted a discursive practice which was part of what shaped the outcome of the research (Gunaratnam, 2003).

I attempted to overcome this dilemma by asking open-ended questions and inviting the teachers to object to my questions if they found them irrelevant or (mis)leading. By inviting the teachers to reflect on the discourse of the interview, the aim was to avoid locking the application of social categories as a given, with a certain pre-defined content. However, the teachers were all white, aged between 35 and 60, and appeared "ethnically Norwegian", and there are no guarantees that the couple of us did not share social situatedness or world view to a degree which made any radical shifting of social categorisation rather unlikely, at least on the basis of situatedness alone. Nevertheless, by actively raising the question of terminology in the interview I did open up a potential space for reflection about it. And, as pointed out by Gunaratnam (2003, p. 33), if the categorisations suggested resonate with lived experience, then it is reasonable to address that in research.

Moreover, through applying an inductive approach to my interview material in the beginning of the analytical process of Article 2, introducing theoretical concepts abductively, the risk of confirmation by design was, hopefully, mitigated.

While it is true that critical approaches lend themselves to accusations of essentialism and reductionism to some degree, such criticism is contingent on an ideal of research where the research questions inhabit no implicit premises – no assumptions about the

social world. In line with my epistemological conviction, I do not believe that is possible. That is not to say, however, that we should cease looking for other possible, and equally credible, explanations or perspectives than the ones we suggest in our analysis.

4.3 Choosing and applying methods: the interconnected "why" and "how"

In this section, I will account for choices regarding method, and discuss strengths and limitations of the methods I have chosen. When it comes to data generation and access, questions of theoretical justification and practical circumstances intertwine, and so in order to answer the question of why I made the decisions I did, I will go via an outline of the timeline of making these decisions. Here, it will become clear that the research design has changed during the course of the studies. The choice to write a theoretical article is meshed together with the timeline for selecting and gaining access to schools for Article 2. Therefore, I will account briefly for that choice in Section 4.3.3, where it belongs chronologically. I have attempted to make the timeline as clear as possible, without lapsing into a pure referral of events with no methodological interest.

Moving on, I account, in Section 4.3.1, for the choice of a critical discourse analysis in Article 1, and, in Section 4.3.2, for the choice of interviews in Article 2. Then, in, Section 4.3.3, I account for the process of selecting and gaining access at schools, which, as mentioned, includes the turn of events which led to the choice of writing a theoretical article. This is followed by a revisiting of the abductive-hermeneutical approach to analysis in Section 4.3.4. For the purpose of avoiding repetition of the articles, this is not an extensive account of methods or methodology for each study. Rather, the aim of the following is to discuss some aspects of methodological choices and limitations which did not fit into a strict article format.

4.3.1 Critical discourse analysis (CDA)

As mentioned, the first article focuses on policy discourse by conducting a critical discourse analytical investigation of the term "diversity" in two fairly recent and central education policy documents. Importantly, here I treat "diversity" as a linguistic realisation of certain conceptions of cultural difference and thus, examining the discourse of "diversity" is a route to examining conceptualisations of cultural difference in the documents. This link is not self-explanatory and so, before commenting on the choice of CDA as method, I will briefly outline the course of some preliminary searches I made in education policy documents, which may serve to justify the link:

Before venturing on the analysis, I did a rough search through a range of education policy documents, to gain an overview of the policy field. In this preliminary overview I searched for the term "diversity" and its derivatives, and took note of how often it was used, and what it referred to. The picture that emerged was this: first, "diversity" was on the rise. From being mentioned four times in 105 pages in a White Paper with a generalised focus in 2008 (Ministry of Education and Research, 2008), it occurred 21 times in 112 pages seven years later (NOU 2015:8, 2015a). Second, "diversity" occurred comparatively rarely in documents focusing on particular groups such as particularly gifted students (six times in 103 pages) (NOU 2016:14, 2016), persons with special needs (14 times in 263 pages), or Sami language in education (ten times in 342 pages) (NOU 2016:18, 2016) – compared to immigrant students (135 times in 418 pages) (NOU 2010:7, 2010). This served to strengthen my impression that "diversity" often inadvertently referred to immigrants, and thus provided a necessary justification for moving on with the analysis of the two selected documents treating "diversity" as pertaining to a notion of cultural difference. In order to pursue the research question: *What conceptions of 'diversity' can be discerned in NOU 2015:8 and White Paper no. 28 2015-2016?* I conducted a linguistic analysis of "diversity" in these two documents, selectively utilising concepts of CDA as described by Fairclough (2003).

So, why CDA? In order to answer that, I will first argue why I find it fruitful to examine political discourse. In a political discourse, the question of how difference is conceptualised defines the space for political action. By describing various types of difference as problematic, neutral, or beneficial, the scope for political initiatives is defined. If, for instance, economic differences are represented in a political discourse as a structural problem, it follows that doing something about it is a political matter. If, on the other hand, it is represented as a question of individual efforts and attitudes, then it is no longer a political responsibility. Similarly, if difference along cultural lines is represented as a question of, say, food preferences, clothing, and musical traditions, then it would seem that tolerance for cultural difference is not really a political matter, but a question of individual open-mindedness. If, however, a policy document takes the prevalence of institutionalised and historical discrimination as a premise for describing the conditions for different cultures to co-exist in a society, then the ensuing conversation is a lot different – it becomes a political issue.

The CDA approach devised by Fairclough provides a comprehensive methodological set of guidelines for textual analysis, which I have applied selectively in the first study (I refer readers to the article for a more detailed account). An important reason for applying Fairclough's framework in Article 1, is the consideration that textual analysis can identify the legitimising effects of texts (Fairclough, 2003, p. 219). It is my contention that policy documents tend to aim for legitimacy of their own representations of the world, for the very concrete purpose of winning support for the suggested policy which follows. Therefore, I find CDA to be well-suited for analysing policy documents. Another important, although somewhat pragmatic, reason is that CDA is considered the most well-developed method-set as of yet for conducting discourse analysis (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999, p. 72). In terms of limitations of my application of CDA, it is a textual analysis. In Article 1, I did not expand the scope of the analysis beyond the text, although I did discuss the implications of implicit assumptions pointed out in the analysis.

To the extent that education policy discourse affects the curriculum (after all, that is the aim), it directly influences descriptions of subject content in social studies as well as other subjects. Moreover, coupled with a theoretical framework of critical multiculturalism, this method of analysis is well suited to shed light on how power mechanisms affect social and cultural categorisations in more or less unjust ways. Although it is not my intention to equate political discourse with school practices and possibilities, I do hold that political discourse is part of what produces and reproduces social and cultural categorisations which are subject to investigation also in Article 2. In this way, analysis of policy discourse sheds light on the overall research question: *How is cultural difference conceptualised in education policy and social studies education, and how can social studies teachers contribute to challenging cultural, racial and ethnic privileging and marginalisation?*

4.3.2 Interviews

Article 2 is dedicated to approaching the research question: *How do social studies teachers in Norwegian lower secondary school view students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and how do their views on culture play out in social studies?* It is based on a hermeneutical/abductive analysis of qualitative, semi-structured interview material, exploring teacher views about students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

In agreement with Adams (2015, pp. 493-494) I hold that qualitative, semi-structured, individual interviews provide access to the teachers' thoughts and reflections in a manner not immediately available to other qualitative methods such as focus groups or, for instance, written reflections. Individual, semi-structures interviews are considered suitable for topics which may cause teachers to hesitate sharing openly in focus groups (Adams, 2015, p. 494). Further, they allow teachers to elaborate at their own convenience, as well as leave sufficient space for me to ask follow-up questions. Thus, I consider it a form well-suited to limiting the risk of reproduction and essentialisation of social categories commented on in Section 4.2.

In addition to the methodological reasons for basing the analysis in Article 2 on interviews with teachers, there is also a practical reason: Initially, I planned that both Articles 2 and 3 would be dedicated to the practice field – social studies teacher practices and their reflections. I intended to base Article 2 on observational material, and Article 3 on interviews. The initial reasoning was that observations would give me an impression of teacher practices, and provide important context for developing a focus, and questions to ask teachers in interviews later. For reasons concerning access difficulties (I will elaborate on this process in Section 4.3.3) observations were taken off the table, and the interviews remained. Thus, while the reasoning for choosing to do interviews in the first place was still valid, the questions and focus of the interviews would no longer be developed on the basis of observations. The (involuntary) decision not to do observations, meant that something was lost, and this also affected the interview material. I lost the opportunity to gain thicker, more contextual descriptions of conditions which might play a part in the teachers' perspectives and how they answered my interview questions. These are important limitations to the analysis in Article 2, which I have taken into account also there.

Developing the interview guide

When preparing to conduct interviews, I pondered the question of how to ask teachers about their views pertaining to cultural differences, without imposing it as a category which did not resonate with the teachers' experiences. As already mentioned, there is a recognised risk of reification associated with researching social categories (Gunaratnam, 2003), and it is necessary to take steps to mitigate that risk. In order to avoid taking culture or ethnicity as a given in the interviews, thereby limiting the possibilities for how the teachers might answer, I found it necessary to work out an interview guide (appendix at the end of the dissertation) which phrased questions openly enough that they genuinely invited the teachers to object to the premises of the question if that appeared necessary to them. In close cooperation with my supervisor at the time, I mulled this over for quite some time, evaluating different

terms and phrases in terms of how leading they might appear. The guide was also tested and refined in three test interviews.

The guide was eventually organised as a question bank separated into broad topics, where the first topic was the most general (choices and dilemmas in classroom situations). When inviting the teachers to participate, the investigation had been presented under a headline of "accommodating diversity and difference". The idea was that I would ask about difference, and if the teachers brought up cultural and ethnic differences themselves, that would be a clear indicator that they found it salient. If they did not bring it up, I would ask about it specifically, but in a way which left it an open question. As previously mentioned, I also invited teachers to object to the relevance of my questions if they found it warranted. I took care to introduce each topic with open questions, and then turning more specific as the conversation developed. The questions in the guide were considered optional and, in the interviews, I prioritised asking follow-up questions over covering everything laid out in the guide.

Moving on, I will account for the process of selection. While I will briefly comment on Articles 1 and 3, it is Article 2 which needs the most elaboration here, as it featured the most extensively empirical approach.

4.3.3 Selection: methodological principles and practical reality

For Article 1, the documents I analysed were chosen as they were the latest policy documents at the time dealing with education in general (as opposed to selected groups of students, or focusing on specific topics). Thus, I considered them to be indicative of the most recent education policy tendencies.

Below is an elaboration of some points related to selection and access for Article 2 which I wish to include both for the sake of transparency, and because it affected Article 3. Moreover, I wish to comment on the notion of selection bias, as it speaks to the risk of reproduction of social categories mentioned in Section 4.2.

Selection criteria, categories and 'bias'

Regarding Article 2, selection was approached strategically (Patton, 2002, p. 230, although he uses the term "purposeful sampling"), meaning that I had a set of criteria that I looked for in schools. As contended in the article, I wanted to obtain a wide selection in terms of students' backgrounds (along the lines of reasoning presented by Patton, 2002 as "heterogeneity sampling"). Delineating selection criteria is a process of categorisation, and the risk of reproduction of the categories one wants to examine critically is important to consider here: the aim of gathering a set of different student populations with regard to cultural background, can be criticised as indicative of a preconceived categorisation of people into cultural groups. How could I go about exploring teachers' notions of cultural difference in a way which did not assume, practically by design, that it would be salient? On the other hand, assuming that the cultural backgrounds of the student population were of no consequence whatsoever, and could be ignored as a selection criterion, would be similarly preconceived. While I did aim for (and eventually achieved) a wide range of constellations, from student populations with a 50-50 split of country origin, to schools with a small minority population, to a highly pluralised mix, I will argue in Section 4.3.4 that these categorisations did not affect the analytical process: through applying an abductive analytical approach, any assumptions I should have about the salience of cultural background as an important category of difference for teachers, did not determine the outcome of the analysis. Moreover, as discussed in Section 4.2, I hold the accusation about confirmation bias as not quite to the point, as it stems from a notion of social research as neutral, where reliability and validity are measured in terms of replicability and "objectivity" by design, which does not pay heed to the epistemological foundation of this project.

Gaining access: a practical matter with consequences for methods

Having a set of criteria and finding schools which fitted them was only the start – gaining access was the next step. I will now elaborate on that process, not only for the

sake of transparency, but also because this process directly caused changes to the overall research design.

In accordance with the original research design, I set out with the intention of securing agreements to do both observation and interviews. The criteria for selection were, as mentioned, based in the composition of the student population – I wanted a breadth of different constellations of student backgrounds. Then, I asked around. Since I work in teacher education, I have colleagues and acquaintances who have knowledge about the schools in their region and might provide suggestions. I got several suggestions, and approached the schools in the following three ways:

Some schools I approached by asking the principal for permission and suggestions. Some principals replied, and suggested teachers who might be interested. I visited five schools in total after being "forwarded" by principals in this way. Some teachers I pre-interviewed, and with others I conducted a "trial observation", without recording, and only taking brief notes. In the end, this approach secured one agreement for further observation and interviews.

Another point of entry was through suggestions of individual teachers I could ask. In particular, my co-supervisor at the time had three suggestions. Initially two of the teachers were willing to participate, but then one of them (commendably) withdrew after talking to his students and realising they were not comfortable with the idea of being observed. In the end, this approach also secured one agreement.

At this point in time, two circumstances limited my options regarding the empirical investigation. First, a lot of time had passed, me visiting schools, doing pre-interviews and informal observations (none of which could be used as data material, since no consents had been signed at this trial stage), and only securing two agreements. Second, I fell ill and had a leave of absence which lasted for more than a year. Eventually I decided, in agreement with my supervisors, that for the sake of progress, I would limit the empirical investigation to focus on interviews. I then changed my strategy when approaching schools or teachers, and instead of asking about both

classroom observation and interview, I only aimed for interviews. While at that point I had already video recorded quite a lot of sessions at one school, I ended up not analysing that material for the PhD project. In order to obtain the breadth of student backgrounds for which I aimed, I still needed at least two more agreements, so I kept inquiring, through a third, and more informal approach. Eventually (I omit details here for the sake of anonymisation), I secured an additional three agreements. I now had five teachers willing to give interviews.

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008), credibility and richness of interpretive research may come about via one out of two routes: either through extensive empirical support, or through a process of creatively intertwining empirical material and theoretical perspectives in an interpretive process (2008, p. 540). Through abductive analysis, Article 2 features a qualitatively new understanding of an excerpt of reality (2008, p. 540), and therein lies its credibility.

Moving on, I will comment briefly on the choice to write a theoretical article, before accounting for the decision to apply an abductive method of analysis of the interview material.

Choosing to write a theoretical article

As a consequence of the narrowed scope of the empirical investigation accounted for above, I assumed I would no longer have enough data material for two empirical articles and, given the timeline and my health at the time, there would not be sufficient time to put off observations to a later point, or pursue a different empirical design. Together with my two supervisors I decided that, given the theoretical aches I had been pondering throughout the process, writing a theoretical article was a viable and fruitful alternative. While the empirical investigation did not go according to plan, the dissertation has gained theoretical depth through Article 3. Relating empirical discussions to theoretical and principled discussions is a valuable outcome, and the combination of empirical and theoretical articles in this dissertation amounts to a contribution to the research field on both levels.

4.3.4 Revisiting the abductive method

The decision to apply an abductive method of analysis in Article 2 was not part of the original research plan, and I find it necessary for the sake of transparency to account for how I arrived at that decision, as well as giving a little more detail than what would fit in the article about the procedure in the initial stages of analysis.

Initially, what I had planned for this article, was a methodology combining a critical and grounded theory framework. This was in line with the original design, which would be more empirically grounded with an observational study forming an important foundation. My initial approach to the material was therefore to conduct several rounds of content-based coding, trying out various *sensitising concepts* (Charmaz, 2014, p. 117). This is a tried and tested way of starting inductively, gradually introducing analytical concepts in the coding and categorisation process.

However, throughout the coding and categorisation process, I kept having the impulse to cross-code certain sections as "discomfort", as a sidenote to whichever coding system I was trying out. This code did not really fit into a pattern in which I could easily place any of the other codes. If I organised the codes by topic – what was being talked about – discomfort could turn up all over the place, as long as the conversation in any way touched upon cultural difference. If I attempted to organise the codes by approach to cultural difference (which was a clear way in which the teachers exhibited different points of view) it seemed that discomfort did not follow any (at least to me) detectible pattern. This constant re-occurrence of discomfort was unexpected to me. At this point in time I was set on an idea that I could somehow detect a pattern of attitudes and approaches which I could discuss in light of the political discourse I described in Article 1 – this would be mostly in line with the grounded theory described by Charmaz (2014). However, what I gradually came to realise, was that abduction could be a way of capturing this element of unexpectedness, and of not fitting into a pattern, in the material. An abductive analysis can be explained as entailing:

> […] the interpretation of one simple (often surprising) instance, according to a hypothetical overall pattern which, if correct, explains the instance in question. The interpretation should then be strengthened through new observations (new instances). (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 5 [my translation])

According to Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008), abductive analysis has empirical material as its starting point, but in contrast to inductive analysis it does not reject theoretical preconceptions, and might use theoretical concepts and insights in the interpretation – not as a mechanical application of a theoretical model, but rather as a source of inspiration. The analytical process could be seen as an interpretive circle, not entirely unlike hermeneutical forms of access, where empirical material and theoretical concepts are interpreted and re-interpreted in light of each other (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, pp. 55-56). In Article 2, the surprising instances in question were the occurrences of discomfort which kept reappearing in the material.

I mentioned above that I saw discomfort appearing in the material in connection to cultural difference. There was one important exception to this – the notion of discomforting difference "stuck" to much of the material, but it did not stick to all of it. In one of the interviews, while the teacher expressed that a lack of time and resources made the accommodation of any kind of difference in class very difficult, she did not express notions of discomfort in relation to cultural difference in particular – nor did she really express a clear absence of discomfort. As the analysis progressed and I made the choice to focus on discomfort, I was unable to find that this particular interview added to the analysis, either as a source of nuance, alternative interpretations, contrast, nor did it really weaken the findings in the other interviews. There just were not enough points where this interview was about the same things as the other ones. Eventually, no extracts from that interview made it to the final analysis. While this may serve as an important reminder that the findings in Article 2 are particular, the value of the abductive analysis is, first and foremost, grounded in the interpretive process, the method of homing in on a finding, and interpreting that finding and theoretical

perspectives dialectically in a hermeneutical movement (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 540).

The analytical idea I then pursued – the overall pattern which I used to interpret discomfort abductively – was notions of Norwegianness described by the Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad as "imagined sameness", hence the article title: "Imagined sameness and discomforting difference". The analysis advanced in a dialectical movement – interpreting bits of the interviews where discomfort appeared, or was discussed, in light of the notion of imagined sameness (supported also by other theoretical concepts based on similar theoretical understandings) and discussing the notion of imagined sameness in light of feelings of discomfort.

Having accounted for the events and reflections which made me choose an abductive method, I will now move on to consider some ethical questions which come into play when using that method, and more generally when using critical and postcolonial frameworks.

4.4 Ethical considerations

It is a primary ethical principle that research should not harm the participants. This entails that research should be conducted so as to protect human rights and integrity, as well as the personal security of the participants (NESH 2016). All participants in the empirical investigation have provided their informed consent, and have been anonymised in accordance with the guidelines of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data, as a first and obvious measure to ensure that my analyses could not be traced back to them.

The principle of not causing harm also entangles with questions of how to adequately represent participants' voices (Midgley et al., 2014). I have used interview material to draw out a few features. Both taking a critical approach, and using an abductive method of analysis, as outlined above, mean that there is a risk that the teachers I interviewed feel that my analysis does not reflect the overall gist of what we talked

about. It is true: there are many aspects of the interviews which I have not included. However, I have not intended to give a "full" representation of all the aspects of what we talked about. Neither is this in any way an attempt at characterising the teachers or their practices. I went with an analytical idea and discussed those aspects of the material which are relevant to shedding light on that idea. That is a characteristic of an abductive approach. The nature of interpretive research is such that the aim is not to mirror exactly the experiences of the participants. The reflexive approach (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008) applied in this dissertation entails that I acknowledge my own presence in the analytical interpretations (Midgley et al., 2014, p. 2), and account for how the analysis is an entanglement of participants' voices and mine. That being said, I have wholeheartedly attempted to give a nuanced and fair representation of the features I do discuss.

Another important research ethical principle is to take steps to avoid the risk of deception (Bryman, 2015, p. 120). This concerns both the above point about how the outcome of the research might not "mirror" the teachers' views or expectations, and the question of how I presented the research project when I invited participants to join. The invitation to join is attached at the end of the dissertation, and will show how I presented the project in a rather open manner. The advantage of an open presentation is that I could not at the time know exactly which topics from the interviews I would pursue analytically, and there was little risk of me ending up using the material in other ways than what I had presented. The disadvantage is that it might be hard for participants to get a realistic impression of what I was actually interested in. One measure to mitigate this, was taking care in writing the interview guide, as outlined above. In this way, the participants had more than a little say in what topics ended up being salient in the interviews. As well as lowering the risk of confirmation bias (as discussed in Section 4.2), this served to mitigate the risk of deception.

When asking for interviews, I am asking the teachers for a favour. They take time out of their already busy schedule to talk to me about things that have no immediate gain for them in their daily professional lives, apart from perhaps – hopefully – providing an

opportunity to talk about some things they find important. I have asked them to share their thoughts about some of their students, and, as I have mentioned, some of the things we talked about sometimes brought up dilemmas, choices, difficult considerations, or general discomfort. As a fresh PhD student, a woman, inexperienced in teaching, and younger than most of my interviewees, I did not have a feeling of having the upper hand in terms of power or authority in any of the interviews. The fact that I could then walk out with a recording and go on to treat their statements analytically in a process out of their control, nevertheless constitutes a great ethical responsibility. I feel grateful to the teachers who were so gracious as to allow this.

5 The articles

In the two previous chapters I have accounted for the epistemological, theoretical and methodological foundations of this project, and made some elaborations regarding methods of study. In this chapter, I will briefly account for the key empirical and analytical points of the three studies. For in-depth discussions of each analysis, I refer readers to the articles.

I repeat the overall research question here: *How is cultural difference conceptualised in education policy and social studies education, and how can social studies teachers contribute to challenging cultural, racial and ethnic privileging and marginalisation?*

The three articles shed light on the main research question in different ways. Articles 1 and 2 explore empirically how cultural and ethnic difference is conceptualised in policy and among social studies education respectively. Among the key findings were a discursive separation in the discourse of cultural diversity, between Norwegian and non-Norwegian students in Article 1; and expressions of discomfort in the face of cultural difference perceived as disruptive among some teachers in Article 2.

Article 3 embarks on a critique of some arguments made by Kevin Kumashiro (2000; 2002), writing within a tradition of anti-oppressive education, and suggests that the notion of epistemic injustice, developed by philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007, 2017), can provide some nuance to a discussion of harmful discursive practices, by differentiating between wilful and unintended harm. The aim of the critique developed in Article 3 is to contribute fruitfully to a conversation about how to deal pedagogically and didactically with questions of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations such as the ones explored in Articles 1 and 2.

I will now account briefly for the main findings and points discussed in each article.

5.1 Article 1: Diversity is the others

Article 1 features a linguistically oriented discourse analysis (further accounted for methodologically in Chapter 4) of the discourse of "cultural diversity" of NOU 2015:8, and White Paper no. 28 (2015/2016). The main findings were that the discourse of cultural diversity featured in the two analysed documents represented diversity as *increasing*, thus implying a notion of a starting point of cultural homogeneity. The origins of this increasing diversity were quite consistently pointed to as outside of Norway. Further, in describing diversity in school, there was a discursive distinction between cultural majority pupils, who *experienced* diversity, and pupils of cultural minority origin, who *created* it. These traits, I claimed, amount to normalising and othering mechanisms in the discourse of cultural diversity, which I discussed in terms of an imagined Norwegian community (Anderson, 1991) of cultural homogeneity. An interesting difference between the NOU and the White Paper in this regard, was that the NOU ventured a call to expand the register of the "Norwegian" (although linguistically the register was quite narrow in the NOU itself) – in the White Paper there was no such call. I will pick up this point in Chapter 6.

Another finding briefly discussed in Article 1, was that the discourse exhibited notions of tension between diversity and democracy. While I did not systematically analyse the two reports' conceptions of democracy or democratic competences, the two quotes I did analyse were striking in their difference of approach. Both represented diversity as somewhat of a challenge to democracy, but while the NOU stressed competencies such as listening, accepting differences of opinion, and reassessing one's views, the analysed extracts in the White Paper treated democratic competences as a question of knowledge and support. The article discussed the conception of tension between diversity and democracy in light of deliberative (Gutmann, 1993) and radical (Giroux, 1991) theories of democracy, which differ markedly in their conception of the role of differences – as a challenge to be overcome through democracy; or a necessary prerequisite for it, present by definition. If a discourse of cultural diversity represents diversity as something apart from the Norwegian, then it matters how the aim and

scope of democracy is envisioned in terms of dealing with cultural difference. In Chapter 6 I discuss this point in light of perspectives on citizenship education.

Thirdly, the article discusses the risk of de-politicisation inherent in an individualised and culturalised discourse. There is not much room in the discourse as described here, to discuss structural forms of discrimination, whether along cultural, racial, social, economic, gender, ability, religious or other lines. Thus, even though the NOU explicitly expressed an aim of challenging narrow conceptions of Norwegian culture, the discourse of cultural diversity which the NOU itself featured, did not offer tools to venture such a challenge. On the one hand, "diversity" referred, mostly, to non-Norwegianness, on the other, the reference was implicit enough that racism, discrimination and injustice were not part of the conversation. This leaves insufficient space for teachers to address social injustice along the lines of culture, race and ethnicity as part of their teaching.

5.2 Article 2: Imagined sameness or imagined difference?

Article 2 is an empirical analysis of interviews with social studies teachers at lower secondary school in Norway. Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were analysed by applying the concepts of imagined sameness (Gullestad, 2002), colour-blindness (Gillborn, 2019) and a pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas, 2015). Paying attention to teacher perspectives on cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations both in terms of how they reflected about their students' backgrounds, and how they reflected about subject content, this study discusses both pedagogical and didactical implications for social studies.

The study found two different, prevalent views among teachers: one where cultural difference was represented as disruptive of an imagined Norwegian sameness (Gullestad, 2002) and a source of discomfort. This view was often accompanied by evasion of differences perceived as disruptive. Two reasons for evasion were discussed – the teachers' expectations of what could cause discomfort for students, and the

teachers' own discomfort. The other prevalent view was one which to a certain extent challenged and relativised notions of Norwegianness and Otherness. Mechanisms of normalisation and othering in terms of culture were weakened, and "diversity" was treated more as a state of normalcy.

The findings were discussed through perspectives from a pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas, 2010, 2015; Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017). A pedagogy of discomfort contends that education for social justice must encourage the students to challenge cherished beliefs about themselves in relation to the world, and that this process necessarily entails discomfort (Zembylas, 2015). The task for teachers, then, is to harness discomfort and use it for pedagogical, and, I argue, didactical purposes. This task entails dealing both with (teacher expectations of) students' discomfort and one's own.

5.3 Article 3: How the notion of epistemic injustice can mitigate polarisation

Article 3 is a theoretical article which points to a tension in the field of anti-oppressive education, focusing on an argument made by Kevin Kumashiro (2000; 2002; 2016). Kumashiro argues that in order to be transformative, in the sense of challenging and transforming oppressive structures and practices through education, teachers and students should labour to alter harmful citational practices. While an important and well-argued theoretical contribution, I argue that the focus on discursive practice inherent in Kumashiro's stand risks creating a prerequisite of being familiar with the historicity of various terms pertaining, for instance, to cultural, ethnic or racial categorisations, in order to be taken seriously. I argue that if the focus on discursive performance is heavy, it might create a situation where people's intentions receive too little attention, and where people are excluded (or exclude themselves) from the conversation. This entails a risk of polarisation, which potentially poses a serious democratic problem.

I move on to argue that the notion of epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007, 2017) entails the potential to mitigate the weaknesses of focusing too much on discursive performance, by creating a theoretical space for distinguishing wilful and unintended discursive harm. Without falling into the trap of arguing that discursive performance does not matter; or that good intentions alone are enough; or that it is always wrong to exclude someone from a conversation, I argue that a call to critically scrutinise one's own prejudices could fruitfully be extended both to those who frequently allow themselves to commit oppressive discursive acts against marginalised groups – and to those who frequently accuse others of committing such acts without paying sufficient heed to their intentions.

Moving on to the final chapter, I will take main points and findings from the articles and discuss them further, in light of perspectives on education for democratic citizenship.

6 Key points and implications of the study

As outlined in the previous chapter, the three articles shed light on the main research question in different ways. Articles 1 and 2 explore empirically the workings of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education policy and among social studies teachers respectively, whereas Article 3 discusses theoretically how to challenge and transform oppressive practices along the lines of culture, race and ethnicity.

In each of the studies, cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations are framed as a question of challenging and transforming oppressive practices in education. However, I have also contended throughout the dissertation that the mechanisms through which cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations are at work, and how such categorisations are approached in the classroom, may also be seen in light of education for democratic citizenship. Perspectives on democracy and citizenship have been brought up at various points in the articles, but the limitations of the article format did not permit me to pursue them in any thorough way. I wish now to discuss some implications of findings and points in the articles concerning education for democratic citizenship. As accounted for in Chapter 2, the new Norwegian overall curriculum places significant emphasis on democracy and citizenship, and a discussion about how education for democracy is conceptualised in relation to discourses on cultural difference, is well called for.

There are two ways in which I wish to make the connection between cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations and education for democratic citizenship: first, I contend that my findings concerning cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education policy and teacher views, imply a tendency of representing notions of citizenship as contingent on characteristics or values which are seen as connected to cultural identity. Based on this contention, I go on to discuss how the prevalence of privileging and marginalising mechanisms along cultural, ethnic and racial lines risks perpetuating notions of deficient citizens who need to be included into the democratic mindset of the majority.

Second, the studies have implications for citizenship education[2] because they have shown that questions about cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations, and oppression along those lines, have tended to invoke a degree of discomfort among teachers. I will discuss didactical possibilities and limitations for dealing with discomfort[3] in citizenship education. This relates to considerations of what norms and goals for democratic interaction should be the aim of citizenship education. In that way this discussion touches upon central issues of what in curricular terms would be called democratic competence. Questions of how to outline and promote such competences are of general interest in modern education. Moreover, in light of what seems to be increased emphasis on democracy and citizenship in LK20, these questions are highly and immediately relevant in the Norwegian context.

The chapter proceeds as follows: in Section 6.1, I discuss how the findings from the empirical articles suggest that both mechanisms of de-politicisation and colour-blindness create and sustain a false notion of a neutral majority when cultural, ethnic and racial categories are discussed. In 6.2, I show how this guise of neutrality enables the perpetuation of a notion of citizenship which is implicitly contingent on a cultural form of sameness. This is seen as connected to views on democracy as identity-based

[2] The research field of citizenship education is vast, and there are many different theoretical approaches to citizenship education. Kiwan (2016) outlines four different approaches, which differ in policy aims and pedagogical approach. These are moral, legal, participatory and identity-based notions of citizenship education. Moral citizenship education focuses on developing common values; the legal approach is focused on formal equality and human rights; a participatory approach is concerned with civic skills and political literacy. Further, identity-based citizenship education can be sub-divided into nationally oriented, globally oriented and multicultural modes of citizenship (Kiwan 2016, 13-14). Research on citizenship education is certainly tangential to my research, and theoretical approaches to citizenship education might have added insightful perspectives to the discussion in this chapter. However, the main gist of my research concerns mechanisms of othering and normalisation in policy and social studies education, and in discussing culturalised notions of Norwegian citizenship, I focus on conceptions of citizenship as they have been discussed in political theory. While this last chapter moves further than each of the studies, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to go in-depth on this extensive field.

[3] The topic of dealing with discomfort also touches upon the research field of controversial issues, which deals with questions of how to deal with racism and extremism in education. Such questions have been explored in a Nordic context for instance by (Mattsson, 2018; Moe et al., 2016; Moldrheim, 2014; and Sjøen & Mattsson, 2020). My focus is on discursive mechanisms and representations of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations, and their workings in citizenship education, and while this certainly has some tangential aspects with the field of controversial issues, I nevertheless find it to be a less than satisfactory label as a general description of the field covered in this dissertation.

and consensus-seeking, and implications for citizenship education are discussed. Moving on to Section 6.3, I discuss how experiences of discomfort in the face of perceived disruption of cultural sameness such as the ones pointed to in Article 2 may be used productively in citizenship education, and how such an endeavour may be aided by the concept of a community of disagreement (Iversen, 2014). Finally, in Section 6.4, I sum up the contentions and arguments made in the dissertation, showing how they contribute to answering the overall research question.

6.1 De-politicisation and colour-blindness: the cover of neutrality

In Article 1, I argued that there was not much room in the discourse of cultural diversity to discuss structural forms of discrimination, whether along cultural, racial, or ethnic lines – in other words, the discourse was de-politicised. While the NOU expressed a concern to challenge narrow conceptions of Norwegian culture, "diversity" on the one hand referred, mostly, to non-Norwegianness, while on the other, the reference was implicit enough that racism, discrimination and injustice were not part of the conversation. Similar tendencies have been noted also by others (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2008; Fylkesnes, 2019; Hummelstedt-Djedou et al., 2018; Westrheim & Hagatun, 2015). In such a de-politicised discourse, representations of cultural difference may seem like neutral descriptions, while at the same time the analysed documents, paradoxically, serve to justify political decisions and are, as such, installed with the potential for political action, or inaction. Such mechanisms have been described before in the context of citizenship education: Dina Kiwan (2016) writes of a neoliberal myth of Western societies having overcome problems of racism. The consequences of such a myth, she writes, are "a socio-political context emphasizing notions of equality yet, at the same time, not recognizing the structural embeddedness of social divisions of race, class, gender, sexuality and citizenship status" (Kiwan, 2016, p. 10). In the case of cultural diversity, as long as it is framed through perspectives which do not enable the description and exploration of structural discrimination, then political decisions will not deal with structural discrimination either. If racism is not

represented as having a structural side, there is no need for anti-racist education involving anything but lectures on individual virtues. If anti-Muslim sentiment is framed as an individual flaw, there is no need to address systemic mechanisms or political rhetoric as part of the problem.

There are similarities between a de-politicised discourse and the tendencies of colour-blindness discussed in Article 2, because they both prevent critical scrutiny of mechanisms of privilege and marginalisation along the lines of cultural, racial and ethnic categorisation. These two mechanisms may be seen as interactions between a political side and a cultural side of purported neutrality, a duality described and explored also by others (Borchgrevink & Brochmann, 2008; Chinga-Ramirez, 2017; Gullestad, 2002; Rugkåsa, 2011; Seeberg, 2003). This is captured by the notion of "imagined sameness" which, according to Gullestad (2002) is both a normative and an organising principle. Drawing on Gullestad, Marie Louise Seeberg (2003) writes:

> The Norwegian concept of 'equality' (*likhet*) […] appears to be primarily a general and cultural concept rather than mainly a political one. […] Norwegian modernity is built on ideas of the continuity of a traditional egalitarian society, and firmly rooted in popular ideas of 'equality'. (Seeberg, 2003, p. 12)

In my empirical material, considerations of avoiding minefields, of underlining agreement, or shielding students from negative attention, led some teachers to avoid talking about cultural, ethnic or racial differences. When this is framed not as a structural issue, but an individualised issue; neither pertaining to questions of privilege, nor a possible source of negative experiences, both a de-politicised discourse and colour-blindness have the effect of obscuring mechanisms of cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations which may have privileging and marginalising effects – under a cover of neutrality. By framing school as – ideally – a neutral place, and focusing on commonalities, the forms of difference which were perceived as disruptive, were obscured. Similar obscuring or avoidance of talking about cultural difference has been described also by Seeberg (2003), and she writes:

> One might reasonably have expected a school system like the Norwegian one, where people with all kinds of background spend their days in close interaction, to provide an optimal basis for learning to deal with social and cultural differences. […] In my material there is, however, little indication of the teachers or the curriculum attempting to give pupils a basis for talking about, or dealing with, the differences that the pupils found to make a difference in school as well as in Norwegian society. Nor did school provide tools for critical reflection on different ways of dealing with such differences. On the contrary, there was a systematic evasion of such differences. (Seeberg, 2003, pp. 27-28)

As pointed out in Chapter 2, one of the ideas of a social democratic unitary school system, was exactly to create a common place of interaction between people from different parts of society, as a basis for developing understanding, tolerance, and national solidarity (Telhaug et al., 2004). However, what Seeberg (2003) pointed out was that it did not work like that in her study, and she pointed, among other things, to that the schools lacked the tools for reflecting critically on how to deal with differences. This point is in line with those who have rejected contentions that exposure to the Other alone will serve to increase tolerance and understanding (see e.g. Andreotti et al., 2015).

Further, Seeberg (2003) witnessed "systematic evasion" of talking of cultural differences. Similar mechanisms of avoidance or colour-blindness have been pointed to also by Eriksen (2020); Mansikka and Holm (2011); and Midtbøen et al. (2014b). Such a mechanism leaves very limited space to address challenges stemming from cultural, racial or ethnic categorisations. Calls to challenge "White-, male-, upper-middle-class-, heterosexual-, Christiancentric perspectives" on social questions (Martell, 2017, p. 4) are well known by now, and are ventured from across a spectrum of critical and postcolonial education theories (e.g. Andreotti, 2011; Apple, 2000; May & Sleeter, 2010a). This is, of course, not easily done if questions of cultural, racial and ethnic categorisations are evaded for the sake of avoiding minefields, or out of consideration for students' (or the teacher's own) comfort. Such purported neutrality of the majority

perspective can be understood through critical race theory, contending that racial constructions entail an implicit normativity, disguised as neutrality (Vue & Newman, 2010). We could say, then, that the tendencies of de-politicisation and colour-blindness explored in this study are connected respectively to political and cultural (and ethnic and racial) aspects of a notion of Norwegianness as characterised by equality understood as sameness – a cover of neutrality.

Further, we could say that while a de-politicised discourse of cultural difference means that there is little room to address material aspects of cultural, racial and ethnic injustice; colour-blindness means that injustice understood as a lack of recognition of cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds, is not addressed. This cover of neutrality can also be seen in light of postcolonial insights that while the West depends on the Other for its self-representation, this dependence is "continuously disavowed" (Stein & Andreotti, 2016, p. 231) – treated as non-existent. Instead of framing Norwegianness as situated and partial, it is framed as a neutral, universal state to be desired.

Now, Article 2 points to other tendencies too, of challenging representations of Norwegianness as neutral, or characterised by harmonious sameness. Thus, it would be an overstatement to claim that "systematic evasion" such as the one described by Seeberg (2003) characterised the whole of the material. However, the fact that both the NOU in Article 1, and some teachers in Article 2, identified a task of *challenging* narrow conceptions of Norwegianness, does not support a case for opposing the claim that dominant conceptions of Norwegianness were narrow in the first place. Indeed, in the NOU, the challenge was even explicitly phrased, indicating that the authors of the NOU were of the opinion that such a challenge was necessary (NOU 2015:8, 2015b). Rather, these tendencies of challenging dominant conceptions could be seen as indicative that no discourse is totalitarian, that terms and conceptualisations are constantly negotiated and renegotiated, and installed with different capacities for action. Using a postcolonial lens, the explicit call for expanding the register of what counts as Norwegian, could be characterised as a reform effort (Stein & Andreotti, 2016), aimed at improving the framework of education policy by disturbing discursive

constructions perpetuating othering and exoticising representations of "diverse" students. It is worth noting, then (only briefly mentioned in Article 1), that the call to challenge narrow conceptions of Norwegianness was not included in the White Paper which followed the Ludvigsen Report. Although analysing the processes of transition between the NOU and the White Paper is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it seems safe to assume that this call was not found to fit the purposes of the White Paper, for whatever reason. Interestingly enough, this resembles a change noted by Biesta and Lawy (2006) (see also Kiwan, 2016, p. 17) where, in the context of curricular reform in England, the scope of "citizenship" was significantly hollowed-out compared to the recommendations made by the advisory board. This does seem to illustrate the point that discursive negotiations are politically and ideologically saturated.

A de-politicised and colour-blind notion of cultural difference has another obscuring effect, namely that of sustaining a guise of neutrality under which notions of citizenship may be coupled with cultural imaginaries of Norwegianness. I will now discuss this mechanism, and show how it entangles with the question: what should be the aim of citizenship education?

6.2 Culturalised notions of citizenship

As outlined in Chapter 5, discursive traits analysed in Article 1 featured a notion of a normal student which was rather narrow in terms of cultural background, against which culturally "diverse" students were juxtaposed. I have shown how this can be seen as an expression of an imagined cultural sameness of Norwegian students, a construction which was, as outlined in the previous section, also prominent in Article 2.

A finding which was more briefly discussed in Article 1, was that the cultural diversity discourse exhibited expressions of tension between diversity and democracy. Coupled with the most central finding in Article 1 – the discursive construction of cultural diversity as something stemming from outside of Norway – we see the contours of a

notion of democracy as inherently *culturally* Norwegian, and threats to democratic values as the result of foreign influence. I refer to this mechanism as notions of democratic citizenship being *culturalised*. I will now move on to outline my line of reasoning concerning this point, showing how a culturalised notion of citizenship has ethnic and racial connotations, and implies an understanding of democracy as identity-based and consensus-seeking.

Before making any more contentions about "notions of citizenship", it might be useful to ground them in a theoretical landscape. Modern citizenship theory emerged fully in political theory after the Second World War (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). Importantly, "citizenship" here refers to theoretical and political discussions about what sort of rights, obligations, values and virtues should characterise a good and proper citizen, rather than the thinner, formal meaning of citizenship as legal status in relation to a state. In Norwegian, this distinction is captured through the terms *statsborgarskap*, referring to the formal status of being a citizen, and *medborgarskap*, which refers to conceptions of what characterises a good citizen. After T. H. Marshall's 1949 threefold, rights-based definition of citizenship as consisting of civil, political and social rights (Marshall, 1950), discussions in subsequent decades turned toward focusing on what sort of virtues, attitudes and characteristics were necessary for a "functioning citizenry", and how such virtues could and should be developed (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). This shift is often referred to as moving from a "passive", toward a more "active" notion of citizenship (Hvinden & Johansson, 2007).

A common criticism of ideas that citizenship should be based on a common set of values, identity or virtues, is that they do not take the reality of culturally or otherwise pluralistic societies into account (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994). Discussions about how to delineate what the common values should be, and how citizenship virtues are to be taught, have not been settled, and it has long been recognised that groups may be, and are, excluded from a common notion of citizenship based on, for instance, cultural, religious, or gender-based difference from a historically dominant norm (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 370). After a multicultural turn in the 1980s and 90s led to the

proliferation of ideas of differentiated citizenship and various forms of accommodation of cultural and ethnic minorities, it has been claimed that the 2000s have seen a "return of citizenship" (Joppke & Morawska, 2003) or even the "return of assimilation" (Brubaker, 2001) in political and theoretical conversations. These developments entangle with questions of immigrant policies, especially in young nation-states (such as Norway, as outlined in Chapter 2) where the dominant national narrative depicts it as culturally and ethnically homogenous up until the onset of labour immigration on a larger scale (Joppke & Morawska, 2003). Within such a narrative, the question of creating a well-functioning citizenry, becomes one of integrating immigrants into a citizenry already sharing central characteristics.

The concept of citizenship can be considered essentially contested (Biesta, 2011), and any attempt to outline it requires a normative positioning, whether explicit or implicit. Applied to political discourse, an emphasis on education for democratic citizenship such as the one seen in LK20, is laden with the potential for filling the notion of citizenship with meaning. As is the case with "diversity", as I have pointed out above, it would immediately seem difficult to argue against an increased focus on education for democratic citizenship. However, what is meant by citizenship matters, as does its "operationalisation" in the curriculum[4].

The imagined cultural sameness of Norwegian students pointed to in this study, coupled with tendencies of representing of "diversity" as a democratic challenge, create a space for imagining virtues of democratic citizenship as a feature of this Norwegian sameness, and as something "Norwegians" already have. As pointed out on several occasions throughout the dissertation, the imaginary of Norwegian sameness has connotations of kinship and ethnicity, and even race; is associated with specific cultural content such as a tendency to seek agreement and similarity; and has a

[4] This point touches upon perspectives of a "hidden curriculum" as outlined and explored for instance by Giroux and Penna (1979). While this is a relevant perspective, which undoubtedly would provide valuable insight into relations between social and political processes, curricula and practices, it falls a little to the side of the scope for the dissertation. That being said, the analysis in Article 1 could very well serve as a starting point for exploring the new curriculum through a hidden curriculum framework.

political as well as cultural face (Gullestad, 2002). In terms of theoretical distinctions, this conception seems tilted toward framing citizenship as an identity, and perhaps even toward a *de sanguinis* – ethnic, or kinship-based – notion of who are readily accepted as proper citizens, an idea usually associated with discussions about citizenship in a legal sense (Joppke & Morawska, 2003). As pointed to in Chapter 2, policies in Western Europe have in the past two decades tended toward notions of citizenship as based in European identity. For instance, Olson (2012) has argued that conceptualisations of citizenship promoted by the EU, created a notion of a European "we" which was territorially independent and endowed with a sort of cosmopolitan capital, thus serving to sustain historical mechanisms of exclusion. As a discursive mechanism, then, implicit culturalisation of citizenship leans on a connection between citizenship and identity, where that sense of identity entails both cultural characteristics and symbolic notions of kinship. Thus, it serves to reproduce – and disguise – a sort of marginalisation concerning who are considered proper members of society which mesh together cultural, ethnic and political aspects.

Seen through a postcolonial lens, a culturalised notion of citizenship based on a connection between cultural identity and democratic values, is sustained by othering representations of people with "foreign" backgrounds. These representations serve as a necessary juxtaposition which sustains a notion of democratic superiority of Norwegians, based in their culture. At the same time, the connection between Norwegian culture and democratic values masks a central dilemma involved in trying to establish a certain content to be shared: who is in a position to outline answers to the questions of the "content" of citizenship? As pointed out in Chapter 2, historically legitimised majority perspectives will tend to dominate the agenda when outlining what this substance (such as culture, religion, values, identity) should be (Kymlicka & Norman, 1994, p. 370) and, indeed, it does seem that the analysis in Article 1 provides an illustration of this. The exclusionary mechanisms entailed in defining a specific content to notions of citizenship (Olson, 2012), can be connected to a distinction between outlining a substantial content (such as identity or values) and outlining

certain procedures or processes for democratic interaction. I will return to this perspective in Section 6.3.

In addition to leaning on a connection between citizenship and cultural identity, a culturalised notion of citizenship, invoking conceptions of sameness and harmony, and downplaying difference, will possibly tend to connect democracy to a goal of agreement. This can be seen as linked to a goal of reaching consensus in democratic interaction as a measure of success, commonly associated with deliberative democratic ideas (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004). Theories of deliberation have some important strengths compared to ideas of democratic decision-making as a pure competition for votes. Its participatory nature has been argued to be better suited to ensure "learning democracy" than aggregatory models (Biesta, 2011), and ideals of communicative rationality are meant to secure a fair representation of different perspectives. However, a goal of consensus has some weaknesses when applied to pluralistic societies. If agreement cannot be reached, then the ones who are deemed to be "in the wrong" are, by extension, morally at fault because they have failed to adhere to principles of reason outlined by deliberative theories, such as the obligation to accept the better argument (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004, p. 46). In a culturally pluralistic setting, this line of reasoning easily lends itself to Euro- or Western-centric ideas of representing civility in the face of less democratically-minded Others (Hall, 2018), and fails to recognise power inequalities (see e.g. Gutmann & Thompson, 2004), for instance between cultural majority and minorities. Within an imaginary of Norwegian cultural sameness serving as a qualifier for citizenship virtues, those who are imagined as culturally different are the ones challenging democracy. In my material in Article 1, one of the challenges which was associated with increasing "cultural diversity", was a lack of democratic attitudes. Seen from within a deliberative democratic perspective, then, it is the Others who make consensus more difficult – especially if democratic-mindedness is viewed as contingent on a certain cultural identity.

The degree to which democratic values are represented (albeit implicitly) as connected to a notion of a specifically Norwegian cultural identity in education policy and curricula, has implications both for how the topic of democracy is approached as subject content, and how students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds are met and recognised in terms of their capacity for democratic citizenship. As seen in Article 2, some teachers tended to evade cultural difference as a topic, arguing, among other things, that one had to avoid "minefields", "stepping on toes" or otherwise causing discomfort in terms of cultural differences. In the article, I discussed this through the notion of colour-blindness (Gillborn, 2019). However, this might also be understood as a form of consensus-seeking, based in a cultural notion of the necessity of agreement. Either way it may potentially result in a tacit reproduction of a mostly monocultural notion of citizenship, a mechanism which is poorly suited to expand or challenge privileging and marginalising representations of Norwegianness.

Further, a culturalised notion of citizenship risks framing students with "non-Norwegian" cultural backgrounds in a deficiency-perspective. Inherent in a purported neutral perspective outlined in Section 6.1, which evades cultural, ethnic and racial difference and makes them hardly visible on a structural level, is a risk that some students are seen as representing a "lack" of citizenship (see also Nicoll, 2013; Olson, 2012; Sandberg et al., 2016), in need of being shaped into a mould of Norwegian citizen along the lines of cultural sameness and consensus-seeking – rhetorically camouflaged as neutrality or equal treatment. Deficiency-oriented representations of immigrant students have been described before in a Norwegian context (Chinga-Ramirez, 2017; Hauge, 2014; Pihl, 2005), and indeed, Article 2 showed instances where teachers seemed to hold foreign students to be less familiar than Norwegian students with democratic ideals.

I would like to emphasise that while I do point to similar mechanisms in education policy and teachers' views, the point here is not to suggest that there is a straight causal link between policy (or curriculum for that matter) and teacher practice. Rather, it is my contention that the underlying cultural premise of equality as sameness both

influences, and is influenced by, the process of curriculum development (which is a political as well as professional process) and teacher practices – in other words, that knowledge production and representation are socially, historically *and* politically situated, and discursively reproduced. This perspective chimes with postcolonial insights where systems of rule and systems of representation are seen as mutually constitutive, and historically situated (Andreotti & Souza, 2012)

On the other hand, the material from both Articles 1 and 2 showed intentions and tendencies of challenging dominant cultural notions. For such a challenge to happen, however, teachers must also critically examine their own conceptions of Norwegianness and how they might play out in the classroom, as discussed in Article 2. Moving on to Section 6.3, I will explore further how experiences of discomfort in the face of perceived disruption of cultural sameness may be used productively in this endeavour, aiding a goal of a citizenship education which disrupts narrow, culturalised notions of citizenship.

6.3 Discomfort and disagreement in citizenship education

In light of the mechanisms of privileging and marginalisation which sustain and are sustained by a culturalised notion of citizenship, I see reason to discuss some possibilities and limitations of using discomfort as a didactical tool in citizenship education. I will discuss how education for citizenship may be framed not just as a question of knowledge, nor just as abilities for critical reasoning, but as a practice, a performative approach to discomfort and disagreement. In the following two subchapters, I will suggest two perspectives which might be helpful in moving toward a conversation about didactical approaches to the issues discussed so far: some possibilities and limitations of using discomfort as a didactical tool; and some reflections about dealing with disagreement in citizenship education.

The mechanisms discussed in Section 6.2, where a cover of cultural and political neutrality serves to reproduce notions of citizenship as contingent on certain

imaginaries of Norwegianness, are directly relevant to the classroom realities of doing education for democratic citizenship: if the tendencies of discomfort at the talk of cultural difference found in Article 2 are prevalent also elsewhere (that is, of course, an empirical question), it seems that citizenship education is potentially an uncomfortable affair for many social studies teachers. While both Article 2 and the above points in 6.1 and 6.2 underline the necessity of critically scrutinising and challenging imaginaries of Norwegianness which keep such discomfort alive, I nevertheless find it imperative to take discomfort in the face of perceived cultural disruption seriously, and discuss the question of how to deal with its workings in the classroom.

There are two reasons for this. First, while we could aim to eradicate the othering mechanisms of an imaginary of Norwegian cultural sameness altogether, this is not likely to happen any time soon. Even if we believed it to be possible, eventually, to turn a narrative of Norwegian citizenship away from cultural sameness, in the meantime we would need a tool for dealing with realities where this was still a prominent mechanism potentially affecting citizenship education. Second, I find it warranted out of compassion for the teachers I have interviewed and understanding of the perspectives I have explored.

In Article 2, I discussed how concepts from a pedagogy of discomfort could constitute a constructive tool for approaching the discomfort of perceived disruption of an imagined Norwegian sameness. Zembylas and Papamichael (2017) address teacher discomfort in the face of cultural differences, noting how a teacher's own discomfort inhibits educational exchange with students, and prevents them from seeing their own attachments to certain perspectives, stories or outcomes (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017, p. 3) in terms of subject content. They point out that teachers often "struggle to navigate their discomforting emotions in productive ways" (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017, p. 4), and they argue for looking at discomfort through a lens of *empathy*:

> […]pedagogies of discomfort and empathy […] may create opportunities to address these uncomfortable feelings by acknowledging these feelings in pedagogically productive ways and by offering compassionate support instead of more 'traditional' approaches that may avoid acknowledging and addressing these feelings. (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017, p. 6)

Empathy, they write, entails seeking to understand and put oneself in the situation of the Other. Moreover, empathy involves an emotional and cognitive openness necessary for tolerating the discomfort of ambivalence. As a tool in the face of discomfort, Zembylas and Papamichael (2017) argue for applying empathy strategically: through empathising with "difficult" emotional reactions or knowledges of their students (possibly in spite of one's own emotional or cognitive condemnation of the views or knowledges that are put forward), teachers may be aided in navigating uncomfortable situations.

The concept of strategic empathy is relevant also at a different level in this dissertation: while the research in this study has been conducted mainly out of concern for how the goings-on in school affect students, the process has also brought me closer to the horizons of the social studies teachers I interviewed. And, while I spent some time in Article 2 pointing out opportunities for the teachers of dealing more constructively with discomfort, that does not mean I do not credit them with having good intentions or concern for the welfare of their students. Applying a lens of empathy (whether strategic or not) has some common elements with granting a fair share of credit to people's intentions (as discussed in Article 3). Both notions – empathy and nuanced credit to intentions – pay heed to the possibility of a gap between someone's cognitive convictions and their emotional reactions, and both require a genuine effort to put the other person's perspective under the spotlight. They both acknowledge that situations of disagreement, discomforting difference or even conflict are very rarely black and white, and offer possibilities for learning to live with ambivalence, doubt, reconsideration and partiality. The concept of strategic empathy, then, may be applied both to teachers facing uncomfortable and difficult views and knowledges among their

students, and to researchers encountering the same among teachers. Thus, it may serve both as a fruitful pedagogical approach to dealing with discomfort; as an analytical tool; and as a methodological-ethical argument concerning how to approach discomfort among teachers as it appears in research material.

In the context of a unified educational system with egalitarian traditions (albeit challenged in recent years), approaches to cultural, ethnic and racial differences are affected both by political ideas of national identity constructions, and pedagogical tensions between standardisation and differentiation outlined in Chapter 2. Teacher discomfort in the face of perceived disruption of an imagined sameness must be understood against this backdrop, as must their opportunities for acknowledging, recognising and including cultural, ethnic and racial differences. This is not to say that we should sweep mechanisms of cultural or racial othering under the rug, blindly "empathising" with those who perpetuate them or, in our opinion, do not sufficiently challenge them (and this goes for teachers and researchers alike). Extensive empathy may result in an impossible ideal of taking another perspective entirely (Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 254). Writing in the context of education for "global-mindedness", Andreotti et al. (2015) suggest the concept of *visiting* as an alternative metaphor for dealing with difference and unfamiliar perspectives. Visiting, they write:

> […] tries to work through [the discomfort of being in an unfamiliar place]. […V]isiting entails locating oneself in a different place, not with the ambition to think and feel like others in that place do, but to have one's own thoughts, feelings and experiences in a location that is different from one's own – a location where one is with and in the presence of others, exposed to the world, and open to being taught by unpredictable teachers and teachings (see Biesta2013). (Andreotti et al., 2015, p. 255).

As an approach to difference which might be perceived as disruptive, applying strategic empathy should, then, not be conflated with taking a relativistic view, but rather as an

act of visiting. This approach acknowledges that processes of dealing with knowledges that are perceived as disruptive, are emotional processes[5].

Further, the concepts of strategic empathy and visiting underline the performativity of dealing with discomfort, taking into account that neither knowledge alone, nor cognition alone is sufficient if the goal is to deal constructively with discomfort as a didactical tool. This is also in line with perspectives from anti-oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2000; Kumashiro, 2002) which contend that, in order to reach a goal of transformation (in the sense of fundamentally challenging the students' sense of their positionality in the world and in relation to oppressive mechanisms and practices), a phase of crisis and resistance is necessary. Visiting and strategic empathy may provide tools for facing such resistance with compassion, understanding, and endurance.

Now, discomfort does not always embody a didactical potential, and there is certainly reason to be cautious about seizing, or even creating, uncomfortable situations for the purposes of encouraging critical reflection and transformation. As Røthing (2019) writes:

> What sort of learning does discomfort create? What if the students first and foremost are angered or frightened? What if they think the teacher is an idiot and shut down explorations of new perspectives, rather than opening up? […] Could the result be that the already resourceful and privileged students can learn to "master" [such situations] while other groups of students consolidate an experience of not succeeding, and not mastering school? (Røthing, 2019, p. 53 [my translation])

These are important reservations. However, if the goal is critical awareness of social injustice, then the process cannot possibly be purely comfortable. Thus, the question

[5] There are significant theoretical contributions which have dealt with emotions in relation to privileging and marginalising mechanisms in education, connected to overall theoretical perspectives often referred to as "the affective turn", based in post-structuralist and post-humanist understandings (see e.g. Dernikos et al., 2020). Even though there are almost certainly contributions drawing on such lines of thought which could have shed light on the questions of discomfort discussed in this section, the epistemological strain it would put on the thesis as a whole has led me to refrain from pursuing these perspectives.

is not whether or not to face discomfort, but how to approach it. Further, in a situation where privileging and marginalising mechanisms are already present, evasion is likely to create (or sustain) discomfort for some students, and thus it is not something the teacher can simply opt out of. Aided by the concepts of strategic empathy and visiting, I contend that a pedagogy of discomfort may provide a starting point for challenging a culturalised notion of citizenship and the imaginaries of sameness which sustain it and are sustained by it. This constitutes a possible starting point for what could be termed a didactics of discomfort in citizenship education.

Another aspect of an implicitly culturalised and sameness-oriented notion of citizenship, with its focus on cultural agreement and harmony, is that it may tend toward consensus-seeking (as pointed out also in Section 6.2). A tendency to aim for agreement might not do us any favours when it comes to dealing with the discomfort of disruption, ambivalence and doubt. Ultimately, the question is what needs to be shared to avoid that the concept of a functioning citizenry collapses. It comes down to how differences are seen in relation to democracy – as something to overcome, or to learn how to live with, or as a central feature of democracy itself.

In a central critique of deliberative democracy theory, Chantal Mouffe (1999) has argued that deliberative theories are too rationalistic and do not account for the workings of power, and therefore are utopian. In realisation that there can never be such a thing as deliberation freed from power and constraint, she argues for what she terms agonistic pluralism, where "collective identities form […] around clearly differentiated positions" (Mouffe, 1999, p. 756). The strength of agonism in the face of my findings, is that it offers a theoretical approach to education for democracy in which there is space to deal with discomfort in the face of disruption, rather than dismissing it as irrational or morally flawed.

Agonistic theories have, however, faced some criticism. Among them is the point that the very idea of "agreeing to disagree" presupposes a minimum of common understanding (Erman, 2009), and thus we cannot entirely dismiss the possibility of

some level of shared world view. Erman (2009) contends that if irreconcilable conflict is indeed the name of the game, as Mouffe (1999) suggests, then it is hard to see how "enemies" would transform into "adversaries" without any form of deliberation based at least on a conception of being on the same playing field – the very notion contested by Mouffe (1999). Norwegian sociologist Lars Laird Iversen (2014) has suggested the notion of a "community of disagreement" where procedure, rather than substance, may be what is "shared" among the citizenry in a pluralistic democracy. While he goes far in opposing a notion of citizenship based on a common set of values, he envisions rather a shared goal of problem solving to create a sense of group solidarity, and thus, disagreement is not a threat and agreement is not necessarily a goal.

Laird Iversen (2014) focuses on concrete options for classroom action as he describes guidelines for classroom arguments, underlines the importance of creating a hospitable environment where it feels safe to change one's mind, and points to playfulness and creativity as important traits which will aid this endeavour, thus entertaining performative perspectives on democratic participation. Such a procedural approach to democratic interaction connects to the concept of democratic *subjectification* (Biesta, 2011). Subjectification in Biesta's (2011) work refers to a conception of civic learning as

> an inherent dimension of the ongoing experiment of democratic politics. […] Learning here is not about the acquisition of knowledge, skills, competencies or dispositions but has to do with an 'exposure' to and engagement with the experiment of democracy. It is this very engagement that is subjectifying. (Biesta, 2011, p. 152)

The concept of subjectification, thus, does not have a pre-defined outcome (such as agreement) as its aim, but refers to the very process of developing a democratic subjectivity, seen as a performative and relational endeavour (Biesta, 2006). This allows for a view of citizenship education as a process of "both being and becoming" (Peterson et al., 2016, p. xii). Peterson et al. (2016) elaborate such a view as an

understanding of education for citizenship possessing "both a socializing and a transformative capacity, with young people learning about their roles within their various communities, as well as ways of actively responding to and challenging injustice through various democratic means" (Peterson et al., 2016, p. xii). In this sense, the community of disagreement can be seen as an extension of a call to apply "thick" approaches to citizenship education (Gandin & Apple, 2002), focusing on participation and social experience (Biesta & Lawy, 2006), rather than mere knowledge acquisition and mastery of aggregatory decision-making processes.

Moreover, and harking back to the dissertation's ultimate aim of promoting justice, concepts of community of disagreement and subjectification relate to a view of citizenship education as intrinsically linked to social justice (Martell, 2017), rather than merely to a system of government, and to perspectives from oppressive education (Kumashiro, 2002), underlining the performativity of transformative education.

To sum up the chapter so far: the prevalence of culturalised notions of citizenship entails a risk that citizenship education feeds into exclusionary mechanisms and narrow conceptions of who are considered to have a capacity for democratic citizenship, and the perpetuation of "thin" notions of democratic competence. I contend here that a pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas, 2010), aided by the concepts of strategic empathy (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017) and visiting (Andreotti et al., 2015), as well as applying a concept of community of disagreement (Iversen, 2014), may provide didactical tools for challenging such mechanisms.

6.4 Final remarks

The overall research question for this dissertation was this:

How is cultural difference conceptualised in education policy and social studies education, and how can social studies teachers contribute to challenging cultural, racial and ethnic privileging and marginalisation?

I have explored conceptualisations of cultural difference at the policy level and among social studies teachers, finding representations of cultural Others which sustained distinct conceptions of Norwegianness characterised by cultural sameness (Gullestad, 2002). Further, I have found a political discourse of "cultural diversity" which featured a de-politicised conceptualisation of cultural, ethnic and racial difference, perpetuating notions of cultural Otherness which obscured connections to structural mechanisms of privilege and marginalisation. Through exploring teacher views on cultural and ethnic differences among their students, I found tendencies of a colour-blind approach, and discomfort in the face of disruptive cultural differences; as well as teachers actively challenging narrow conceptions of Norwegianness.

In pursuing the last part of the research question, of how to challenge cultural, racial and ethnic privileging and marginalisation, I have focused on education for democratic citizenship, based in an understanding of justice as the overall aim of such education. I have contended that a de-politicised discourse and colour-blind approaches to cultural difference found in the first two studies, serve to create and sustain a culturalised notion of Norwegian citizenship, based on kinship, imagined sameness, and agreement.

In extension of that, I have discussed how discomfort may create both challenges and pedagogical and didactical opportunities in citizenship education with regard to how teachers approach issues of cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations. In dealing with emotional and didactical challenges, I have discussed the degree to which we should credit peoples' intentions and pay heed to their limitations (we all have them), in considering whether their views, or actions, or discursive practices, serve to reproduce (or not sufficiently challenge) oppressive mechanisms. I have noted how a pedagogy of discomfort may offer fruitful tools both for teachers and researchers encountering "difficult" views and perspectives, as well as how seeing education for democratic citizenship through a lens of a community of disagreement may provide a tool for challenging narrow, value- and culture-based and consensus-seeking notions of Norwegian citizenship. This connects with the concepts of democratic socialisation and

democratic subjectification (Biesta, 2011) and, ultimately, the goal of transformative education for social justice (Kumashiro, 2000; Kumashiro, 2002).

The social studies didactical catchphrase prescribing education "about, for and through democracy" implies a wide conception education for democratic citizenship (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006, p. 294). On the one hand, the new curriculum applies a wider notion of competence, and features a heavy focus on democracy and citizenship. On the other, in Article 1, I phrased a criticism of the political frames for development of the curriculum (Åberg, 2020), and others have done so as well (Børhaug, 2017). This indicates that the aims and scope of education for democratic citizenship in LK20 may, upon closer scrutiny, not live up to its promises.

If the new curriculum does turn out, when meeting everyday school life, to feature and support a broadened scope and focus on democratic citizenship in terms of its discursive connection to a narrow conception of Norwegian sameness, this may represent an opportunity for teachers to further critically scrutinise and challenge not only how cultural, racial and ethnic categories are at work in education, but also how such categorisations feature in notions of citizenship education, shaping the conditions for participation and the development of democratic subjectivities. In this dissertation, it is argued that this task is not one of mere knowledge or critical reflection, but also an emotional and performative task.

The goal of applying the concepts and perspectives discussed in this dissertation, must be to challenge and transform injustice, and labouring toward a situation where all students have equal opportunities for recognition and democratic participation. If the explorations and discussions undertaken here can contribute toward such an end, then the dissertation has reached its overall aim of contributing empirically and theoretically to challenging injustice in and through social studies education.

7 References

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Article II

Imagined sameness or imagined difference? Norwegian social studies teachers' views on students' cultural and ethnical backgrounds

Imagined sameness or imagined difference? Norwegian social studies teachers' views on students' cultural and ethnical backgrounds

Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates how Norwegian social studies teachers' express their views on cultural difference among students.

Design: Qualitative, semi-structured interviews transcribed and analysed abductively using concepts of imagined sameness, color-blindness, and a pedagogy of discomfort..

Findings: The analysis shows on the one hand, prevalence of an imagined Norwegian cultural "sameness", where cultural and ethnic differences were seen as disruptive. On the other, there were attempts at relativizing "Norwegianness" and highlighting cultural difference as an advantage. The article discusses how teachers' challenging of their own views on culture can be both discomforting and necessary if social studies is to challenge injustice and encourage social transformation.

Research limitations: This study does not support statistical generalisation. Further research is needed to determine whether similar mechanisms are prevalent in a wider selection.

Keywords: Social studies; Students' cultural backgrounds; Imagined sameness; Pedagogy of discomfort; Teacher views

1 Introduction

One of the goals of education is to prepare students to become active and responsible citizens and advocates for justice. With this aim, one of the tasks for teachers is to help prepare students reflect critically about how cultural, ethnic, racial and religious differences are conceptualized and dealt with in society. In a context of polarized public conversations regarding cultural categorizations both globally (McWorther, 2018), and in Norway (Taraku, 2020), this task is as urgent as ever. This study takes a view of cultural identity not as essentialized and stable, but offering multiple possible subject positions, contextually produced. (Hall, 2011, pp. 3-4).

Teachers' views of cultural difference affect how they approach this task, and in social studies, doubly so: First, taking student's ethnic and cultural backgrounds into account is central when attempting to teach in ways which relate to their varying experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In this sense it is a question of professional practice. Second, social studies topics such as politics, human rights, indigenous peoples, migration, and racism are framed by normative assumptions about cultural normality and difference, and thus, teachers' views on culture and ethnicity may raise didactical questions.

Empirically situated in Norway, the study contributes to a field of knowledge about how particular teacher notions of cultural difference might play out in social studies education. Specifically, notions of historical cultural homogeneity (Hylland Eriksen, 1993) combined with egalitarian education ideals (Nilsen, 2010) frame the sociocultural context, as I will elaborate below.

While there is research on social studies teachers' cultural responsiveness (Martell, 2017, 2018; Martell & Stevens, 2016; 2017; Pelkowski, 2015), attitudes (Callahan & Obenchain, 2016; Scott & Gani, 2018) and discourses (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Masta & Rosa, 2019), there seems to be less research in a Nordic context, possibly due to a historical focus on equality in Norwegian education. This study sheds light on this field by asking: How do social studies teachers in Norwegian lower secondary school view students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and how do their views on culture play out

in social studies? This will be explored through qualitative analyses of interviews with five Norwegian social studies teachers. The aim is to explore and discuss some pedagogical and didactical aspects of social studies teachers' perceptions of ethnic and cultural difference among students, and thus further a conversation about how to provide equal and just social studies education to all.

I will now provide briefly outline the ideal of Norwegian egalitarianism in education, followed by an overview of previous research. Then I outline the analytical perspectives and method of study, before moving on to analysis and discussion.

2 Norwegian egalitarianism in education

The development of a unified school system in Norway after the second world war was characterized by social democratic ideals (Fasting, 2013), which also carried an element of monoculturalism (Engen et al., 2018). While social equalisation was thought to promote social justice (Lundahl, 2016), it has been pointed out that "learning Norwegianness" has been a central goal and outcome of unified education (Chinga-Ramirez, 2015). Although "adapted education", which denotes a principle of equity through differentiation, was introduced in 1975, it is only recently that education policy has recognized "diversity" as a resource (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2017; NOU 2015:8, 2015). Tension between equality understood as sameness on the one hand (Gullestad, 2002), and multicultural adaptation on the other is immanent (Brochmann, 2015), although not discussed in recent education policy documents (Åberg, 2020). This leaves questions regarding the space for accommodating to cultural difference in Norwegian education.

3 Previous research

While there is a considerable amount of research internationally on teacher views on students' cultural backgrounds (e.g. Coronel & Gómez-Hurtado, 2015; van Middelkoop, Ballafkih, & Meerman, 2017), and how to deal with it (Aragona-Young & Sawyer, 2018; Forrest, Lean, & Dunn, 2016; Karacabey, Ozdere, & Bozkus, 2019), here I will limit the

focus to a Nordic context, since I hold the historical and cultural contexts to be somewhat comparable (Imsen, Blossing, & Moos, 2017).

Within education in general, teacher views on "cultural diversity" have been researched using various frameworks and terminology. There is research on teacher beliefs (Acquah & Commins, 2013), reflections (Niemi & Hahl, 2018) or degree of awareness (Acquah & Commins, 2013; Krulatz, Steen-Olsen, & Torgersen, 2018) concerning student ethnic or cultural backgrounds, as well as research highlighting teachers' stories (Mathisen, 2020) or voices (Gunnþórsdóttir, Barillé, & Meckl, 2019) concerning classroom diversity.

Moreover, there is research focusing on discourses of cultural difference in policy (Fylkesnes, 2019; Hummelstedt-Djedou, Zilliacus, & Holm, 2018; Åberg, 2020) and teacher education (Fylkesnes, 2018; Fylkesnes, Mausethagen, & Nilsen, 2018) and reproduction of social and cultural categories (Chinga-Ramirez, 2017; Mathisen, 2020) at school.

Regarding social studies in particular, there are some studies on approaches to culture, race or ethnicity in curricula (Mikander, 2016) and teaching material (Eriksen, 2018; Mikander, 2017; Røthing, 2015). However, there seems to be less research in a Nordic context on social studies teachers' views on students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. This study shows how views on cultural difference may play out in a sociocultural context historically characterized by egalitarian education ideals. It therefore adds empirically to the field of research in a way which is relevant also to a wider Nordic conversation about social studies education.

3.1 Imagined sameness and the discomfort of disruption

This study analyses the empirical material in light of the concepts *imagined sameness* (Gullestad, 2002) *color-blindness* (Gillborn, 2019) and a *pedagogy of discomfort* (Zembylas, 2010, 2015; Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017).

The notion of "imagined sameness" has been described as a central concept of Norwegian self-understanding (Gullestad, 2002), and can be understood as a conceptualization of national identity focusing on equality/sameness (*likhet*) as central to being considered equal in value (Gullestad, 2002). Through accentuating agreement and harmony, and applying symbolic tools linked to kinship and ethnicity, sameness is given ethnic/racial and ancestral connotations. Such mechanisms have been described in Norwegian education (Chinga-Ramirez, 2017; Mathisen, 2020). In this study, as will be shown below, some teachers expressed discomfort during talk of cultural difference, and I interpret this as linked to a notion of an imagined Norwegian sameness disrupted. Further, it is linked to "color-blindness" (Gillborn, 2019), a concept developed within critical race theory which denotes an unwillingness to consider race, skin color, or culture a social category which may affect peoples' social experience.

Based on a belief that it is a central task of education to raise awareness and transform patterns of privilege and marginalization (Kumashiro, 2002), a *pedagogy of discomfort* argues that "discomforting feelings are important in challenging dominant beliefs, social habits and normative practices that sustain social inequities" (Zembylas, 2015, p. 163), and that discomfort can be used constructively to promote individual and social change. For discomfort to reach its transformative potential for students, teachers must have reflected upon any discomfort they themselves might experience in the face of disruptive or challenging notions of difference. This article pays attention to discomfort in two different ways – teacher expressions of discomfort (and here, this study answers a call to bring attention to teachers' discomfort in multicultural classrooms (Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017)), and their thoughts about how to avoid student discomfort.

4 Research methods

The study is based on qualitative interviews with five social studies teachers in Norwegian lower secondary school (students aged 13-16). Participants have provided their informed consent, in accordance with the guidelines of the Norwegian Centre for Research Data. The interviews were transcribed, grouped by topic, and analyzed through abduction (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 55), utilizing the concepts of imagined sameness (Gullestad, 2002), and a pedagogy of discomfort (Zembylas, 2015).

4.1 Selection

Choosing interviewees, I aimed for a breadth of different student populations. Neither representation nor generalization was a goal - rather, the aim was to mirror some of the variation of student demography in Norwegian schools.

The interviewees were[i]:

- Linn, working at a large suburban school, with a student population which could be described as multicultural.
- Svein, teaching at a small, rural school where nearly half of the students had parents from one other country, the other half with a majority Norwegian background.
- Bernt, at a large, urban school with a dominantly majority Norwegian population, and a small minority of immigrant students from various parts of the world.
- Ingrid, from the same school as Bernt.
- Anita, at a small, rural school in a Sami administrative area[ii]. Her group of students was mixed, with majority Norwegian students, as well as Sami students, refugee children and children of labor immigrants.

4.2 Data generation

Interviews were semi-structured and were conducted at each teacher's workplace. Each interview lasted 60-90 minutes. A broad topic – differentiation and difference – was presented beforehand.

Cultural background is one of many ways in which students are different, and one possible critique is that this investigation risks culturalizing non-Norwegian students. However, if I want to investigate the extent to which teachers find cultural background of particular relevance to their teaching, I need to include it in the study. I have sought to minimize the risk by asking open-ended questions, and, as I will move on to show, by analyzing abductively.

The questions concerned differentiation, choices and dilemmas in social studies, pertaining to students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds. I also asked whether they found cultural background to be of particular importance to their teaching.

Transcribed sound files (about 8-12 pages of text for each interview) were grouped according to topic (for instance whether they thought of students' background as relevant for how they presented a subject topic; or whether they thought of students' ethnic or cultural identity during the planning of lessons). The advantage of this organization is that they put side by side interviewees' perspectives on the same issue. I do not purport to describe the teachers as "types" or examples of any generalizable trait. Rather, this organization highlights and opens up for a range of views.

4.3 The abductive process

The analytical work started out without pre-set analytical concepts. I applied an abductive/hermeneutical approach, which entails an empirical starting point, remaining open to analytical ideas as they emerge when working on grouping the material (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008, p. 55), and then reading and re-reading the material in light of the chosen analytical idea. One analytical idea, which "stuck" to much of the material, was the recurrence of expressions of discomfort when discussing students' cultural difference. Through pursuing this idea, the analysis focuses on some repeatedly expressed views, and discusses them through the concepts of imagined sameness and a pedagogy of discomfort. I will provide ample extracts from the interviews, illustrating different points throughout the analysis.

5 Social studies teachers' views on ethnic and cultural difference among students

As mentioned above, I focus on two ways in which teachers' views about students' cultural differences come into play in social studies – through considerations about how to approach students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds; and pertaining to social studies subject content. I have structured the analysis around these two headlines. While they are certainly connected and will be treated as such, one of the aims of this article is to highlight particular ways in which views on culture might play out in social studies, due to the nature of much of its subject content. Thus, the analysis and discussion pertain to two different, but related, issues: professional practice, and social studies didactics.

5.1 Students' cultural backgrounds

When asked about whether they considered the students' cultural background to be of particular importance, two main and rather opposing, views emerged: Some expressed hesitancy to focus on cultural background, either because they saw it as irrelevant, or for fear of discomfort; others expressed a wish to pay attention to cultural as well as other forms of difference.

An example of the first can be seen in a quote by Bernt, who was clear that, as long as there were no obvious language problems, he did not consider students' cultural background to be particularly relevant:

> No. I look at it like this: They are here to follow the same curriculum as everyone else. As long as there are no great language difficulties and they are socially integrated in class, it is all good. If they need terms explained, and help understanding questions, then you have to step up.

Dismissal of taking cultural background into account, could be read as an egalitarian viewpoint (Barry, 2002), or in terms of a liberalist argument which favors individualism

over group categorization. However, it risks ignoring minority students' experiences, under the guise of 'equal treatment'. A similar mechanism is seen also in the next quote, where hesitancy to focus on immigrant students' backgrounds took a more ambivalent form. Here, Svein considers whether a student wishes to be identified as 'foreigner':

> I have one girl who is [Turkish] and I am not sure whether she is proud of her own background, so whenever I make a point of it, I am not sure how she feels. She sort of becomes "the [Turk] in class", when really she is not. At that age, for the most part, one wants to be as much a part of the group as possible, needs to feel belonging, and perhaps doesn't want to stand out too much. So, I try to be aware of that.

The dilemma is difficult: whether, and how, to bring attention to the cultural backgrounds of immigrant students in ways which avoid, on the one hand, alienating the student in relation to their fellows, and, on the other, making their background and experiences invisible (Røthing, 2017). In a small community with a fairly recent influx of immigrants, being considered "the Turk in class" was equal to being "the Other", and even though the immigrant students were not a minority at school, being identified as Turk was considered "standing out". While Svein might have been right in his suspicions that she was uncomfortable with being put in the spotlight, an underlying assumption here is that "belonging" necessarily entailed attachment to the "culturally normal" group, implying a significant distinction between Norwegian and Other. In a rural context, an enclave of immigrants from the same country, albeit substantial in numbers, was categorized as standing apart from the rest of the community. This category ascription of belonging and standing out, implies a notion of imagined sameness (Gullestad, 2002), attached to Norwegianness – creating the "Other" in opposition to it (Said, 2003).

This was evident also in Svein's expressed wish to focus on what was shared between the two cultures, rather than what was different:

> Actually, we have focused on it a bit, we had "[Turkish] days" last year. And now we picked it up again, and we keep returning to it, that we should not only focus on difference, but also what unites us.

According to Gullestad (2002, p. 47), a logic of sameness as a prerequisite for Norwegianness, leads to an emphasis on commonalities, and downplaying of differences. She writes:

> Often [the egalitarian logic] implies that there is a problem when others are perceived to be "too different". […] [D]ifferences are concealed by avoiding those people who, for one reason or another, are perceived as "too different", and by playing them down in social interaction with those who are regarded as compatible. […] [D]ifferences between "Norwegians" and "immigrants" […] become discursively salient.

The tendency to avoid disruptive differences may be interpreted as an expression of color-/cultural blindness (Gillborn, 2019). This is seen also in the next quote, which illustrates a sense of conflictedness. Here, Svein reflected on the role of the school in the presence of prejudice in the local community:

> There is no doubt there are different attitudes. So, we have to avoid talking about these issues. There is talk in the local community, and you have to be above that. Even though it is perhaps not merely prejudice, you don't want to plant that kind of seed in the younger generation, that "those people are like that" kind of thinking. We have to be above that, in school at least.

On the one hand, this quote expresses commitment to an ethos of tolerance, and rejection of stereotypical representations. However, this extract leaves little room for including Turkish content, experiences and perspectives without disrupting a sense of cohesion, or harmony (Gullestad, 2002). The intention of avoiding talk about differences and "being above" it, signifies a color-blind approach (Gillborn, 2019) resting on an assumption that by avoiding talk of "the other" culture, they are treated equally. However, the extract also addresses talk in the local community, a broader

discourse where cultural differences present in the community are represented as troubling. The teacher is left in an in-between position: on the one hand, an underlying notion of two distinct cultures, where one is harmonious, and the other somewhat disruptive. On the other hand, the ethos of the school of countering stereotypes and advocating tolerance. The resolution to this discomforting dilemma is sought through focusing on commonality, and downplaying differences.

Teachers expressing discomfort regarding students culturally unfamiliar to them have been described before (Zembylas, 2010; Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017), and Zembylas (2010) suggests that:

> …teachers' and school leaders' emotions and affects can be used constructively, [in order] to problematize (in)equity in schools and transform pedagogical practices'(Zembylas, 2010, p. 706).

Ambivalence and hesitancy such as that expressed in the three quotes by Svein, entail a potential to engage in critical scrutiny of one's own underlying assumptions and perception of others (Boler, 1999, p. 177). However, through contending that one has to avoid such things "in school, at least", a *goal of neutrality* is implied as possible and desirable in school (Rugkåsa, 2008). Such a goal characterized the discourse of imagined sameness, and it creates a hindrance toward scrutinizing one's own situatedness.

On the other hand, Anita also pointed to othering mechanisms in her local community:

> It takes so little in a small village like this, for a family to be seen as different. It is like that in these small, rural environments, that if you don't do things exactly the same way, then you're different. That difference becomes so visible in a rural environment, I find. And the adults around the place maybe talk about "us" and "them", right.

Rather than aiming for neutrality, however, this extract shows a relativising view of Norwegianness, by pointing to one's own implicit assumptions:

> We do a lot of strange things, we Norwegians as well [laughter]. And then we're dragging them along on skiing days! They have no choice – if it says skiing day on the lesson plan, then everyone goes. […] Information is one thing, but we can inform till we drop, but from that point, to someone actually going over, ringing the doorbell and saying: "Hey, do you want to borrow our sleeping bag for the trip this weekend?" Instead of the parents saying: "Our child has to stay at home because we don't have a sleeping bag". Managing to be generous like that – or rather, remembering to be generous like that, because that's what it's about, really – there is room for improvement there.

These extracts feature reflection about how an imaginary of normality and difference can be implicit. One effect of such implicitness, is that one is cut off from the possibility of challenging the ethnocentrism at the core of this imaginary, because it is expressed just as much through what is *not* being said or done, as what is. Putting instances of not being aware, of taking for granted, or forgetting, into words is a way to challenge this implicitness, *relativising* conceptions of normality.

Others explicitly challenged a notion of harmonious sameness. Exemplified by Linn:

> A few years back we had one of those international days here, where everyone who had a traditional costume could wear it this one day. We talk a lot about not being afraid of differences, but rather to recognize them and learn from each other, and that is not just about cultural background, it is about everything we bring into it, everything we are as people. So, in my experience, that distance becomes smaller if they get to talk about where they come from or what they carry with them.

Commenting on how whether to focus on the cultural backgrounds of the students, she answered like this:

> Yes, I find that it does [matter]. That goes for all of us – it's what we carry with us. We do not consider background as such, but we do see the student, and we consider them, not really who their parents are or where they live. But, of course, what they carry with them is part of them, so in that sense we consider it.

While this quote too, expresses resistance toward granting priority to cultural background, it is referred to as equally important as other aspects of what "the students carry with them". However, in contrast to underplaying cultural and ethnic differences, this quote explicitly values seeing and acknowledging students' identities, while simultaneously resisting the idea of reductionist ascriptions of cultural identity. This accompanied expressions of seeing diverse student backgrounds as a resource:

> The students have many different experiences, and we see that as an advantage, really, both in learning situations, and in the breaks and in-between classes.

> The students carry different strengths and challenges with them, and we talk a lot about seeing. We should always catch'em being good. […]

Difference, here, was the underlying assumption, rather than disruptive of an imagined sameness.

Challenging a notion of harmonious sameness does not necessarily imply that dealing with difference is effortless or something which comes naturally. Linn referred to the systematic work with team building which she and her colleagues undertook:

> Everything is connected, and the foundation that we build through class building and all that, it sounds like we are just playing around and building spaghetti towers, but it comes down to that we want the students to develop understanding and respect for one another, because it is good for everyone in the group that we are different, but the students need to experience that – that we need each one.

Thus far, the analysis has outlined two different main views: One revolved around a notion of imagined sameness, reproducing difference as disruptive and potentially uncomfortable. The other challenged the notion of harmonious sameness, and to some degree relativised conceptions of 'the Norwegian'. Importantly, however, the analysis does not imply that teachers can be seen as expressing "pure" versions of these main views. Rather, these are traits which can be seen in unequal amounts in the different

interviews. Moving on, I will explore how these two main views came into play in relation to subject content.

5.2 Social studies subject content

Considering whether the cultural or experiential backgrounds of the students affected their teaching of social studies subject content, we see contours of the two different views outlined above – one featuring and the other challenging the notion of imagined sameness and discomforting difference. In an example of the first, Svein expressed caution of perpetuating prejudices he felt already existed in the local community. Such caution put strains on approaches to subject content:

> When it comes to cultural differences, mentioning [Turkey] comes naturally. And then one has to tread carefully so that one doesn't enhance the stereotypes and this, what we find challenging about the [Turkish] ways. […] There are some differences in attitude, so we have to try and steer clear of those issues, and rather look at what we have in common […] or emphasize the neutral differences – food and history and such things. […] In social studies it could be focusing on industries, what they do in [Turkey], geography, landscape, climate. There are many things to compare which are neutral things and not a minefield.

The conception of some topics as minefields, indicates discomfort considering the perceived cultural differences. Moreover, differentiating between "we" who find Turkish ways challenging, and the Turks, perpetuates othering mechanisms already described. Again, an underlying notion is that by leaving the cultural identities of the Turkish children untouched, one remains "neutral" – a constitutive aspect of a color-blind approach – and this comprises a hindrance for scrutinizing one's own position as part of a cultural majority which to a large degree possesses the power of definition, and the power to construe the majority position as neutral (Rugkåsa, 2008).

Bernt expressed even stronger concern:

> You have to be very much on guard […] You can never predict what the students are going to say – you don't have a clue what is being said at home in front of the TV. But

then, we have to teach about [Islam], so we just have to be on guard and pay attention to postures, facial gestures, stares, things going on.

This extract illustrates a sense of watchfulness, in case talking about differences might lead to discomfort for someone. There is concern for the students, particularly of putting students from cultural minorities in uncomfortable positions:

I have religion as well here, and we're learning about the world religions. When we talk about Islam, in the ninth grade, there are some students who are a little quick about the connection between Islam and extremism. So, when you go in there to talk about the religion and everyday life of a Muslim, then maybe things are said which are not OK for some. That has happened. […]

On the question of how to deal with uncomfortable scenarios spurred by subject content, avoidance was repeatedly referred to as a good solution. In this case the context was education about democracy, where Bernt worried it might put students from other countries in a bad light:

I think the best thing is to look at the Norwegian democracy in isolation […] You have to present it so that students are not put in a bad situation.
I think it is better if they answer questions from the book about it. Not all the students are ready for big discussions about this, and if someone feels poorly treated or has comments thrown at them, you want to avoid it.

A different view, also repeatedly expressed throughout the interviews, was that having students share their experiences, could be valuable as subject content. In general, the teachers who showed signs of discomfort at talk of cultural difference, were the most hesitant to include students' stories as subject content. Anita, however, showed a cautious desire to include immigrant students' knowledge and histories in her teaching:

You know, I would very much like to involve these students who have first-hand information about a topic. […] But about the Syrian student I have, I don't really know her background well enough. [….] I don't know which side of the conflict her parents

> would have been on. […] In order not to step on anyone's toes, you have to tread a little carefully.

Including the histories and perspectives of minority students as subject content in order to make it relatable, is argued for by several scholars of multicultural education, prominently Banks (2009). The concern expressed above, however, that one might hurt the student or their family, is probably salient in any classroom where students have fled from war or intolerable conditions. While the need for teachers and other public servants to acquire knowledge about trauma, and conflicts in students' countries of origin, is an important concern, it will not be further discussed here.

Recognizing student's cultural and experiential backgrounds is, however, not just an issue of 'having students tell the class about their home country', an approach which risks conflating a resource-based approach to difference (Hauge, 2014) with 'using students as resources'. There is, moreover, another risk of using students as providers of area-specific knowledge: that of turning them unduly into representatives of "their culture". Such representations may be inaccurate or unrecognizable for the students, risking reinforcement of exoticising and essentializing notions of the cultural Other (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 42).

Another point related to including students' own experiences as subject content was raised by Linn:

> It may foster a new type of understanding, if someone comes up and says "I experienced something like that" or want to share something about a difficult issue.

Here, students' own experiences are presented as an entrance to discussing subject content, potentially opening the door to the sort of experiences which could eventually lead to transformation (Kumashiro, 2002). Further, in the two extracts below, Linn's view expressed a clear contrast to the tendencies of avoidance seen above:

> As teachers we have a special responsibility, I find, in facing the kind of issues which may be sensitive or difficult. […]
>
> We do not avoid any of the topics in social studies because someone might find it [intimidating/personal], but we do have a close dialogue with the students if something is difficult. And then, it always comes down to having a good relation to them, knowing your students and being sensitive to them – catching signals, having the time to listen.

Here, the focus is on building trust, in order to make venturing into troubling terrain less intimidating. While it could be argued that a basis of safety makes it more likely for a pedagogy of discomfort to reach its transformative potential, there is some debate concerning the role of safety within a pedagogy of discomfort (Røthing, 2019). I will return to this in the discussion.

Interestingly, with regards to discomfort Bernt reported that he did like to challenge majority students' conceptions of Norwegianness, what he saw as a Norwegian "smugness" or "world champion attitude". This included confronting students who opposed the exhibition of other flags than Norwegian ones during the celebration of constitution day on May 17th.

> Those discussions are OK, because then their attitudes are challenged, the Norwegian majority's, I mean, and I find that cool, to stir that up a bit. […] I don't embrace this "we Norwegians as a group" thing, so I like to challenge it a bit. I usually do that in May, but that's not really a big thing. […] And about 1814 – "Jews have no admittance to this kingdom[iii]". I can use that, which has perhaps been downplayed a bit.

This illustrates a conscious challenge of (expected) attitudes of majority students which seems to run contrary to the previously expressed urge to evade discomforting differences. This may represent a differentiation between the students who need protection, and those who need (and can bear) to be challenged and highlights a difficulty which relates to the pedagogy of discomfort, which is the identity ascriptions

at work when determining whose cherished beliefs to challenge, on which occasions and in what ways – and whom to protect. I will return to this.

6 Discussion

The research question bears repeating: How do social studies teachers in Norwegian lower secondary school view students' cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and how may teacher views on culture play out in social studies?

I wish to discuss two points: First, displays of discomfort during talk of students' cultural and ethnic differences are seen as a notion of imagined sameness disrupted. This is discussed in connection to the prevalence of a color-blind conception of school as neutral. Second, some didactical implications are discussed.

The analysis pointed to notions of imagined sameness in some teacher views – where an attempt at creating harmony based on sameness served to reinforce othering (Gullestad, 2002). Differences perceived as disruptive were concealed, avoided, or seen as outright problematic. Avoidance was explicitly linked to a notion of school as a neutral place, or to contentions that the students deserved equal treatment, and I interpret this as color-blindness.

However, I also pointed out another prominent feature: By taking cultural as well as other forms of identity into account, while insisting on a commitment to seeing each student, a space was opened up for "deconstructing the norm/Other binary" (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 64). By situating "the cultural majority" as fundamentally characterized by diversity, and relativizing "the Norwegian", the prevalence of imagined sameness constituted by an imagined Other, was weakened.

Teacher displays of discomfort regarding cultural difference took different forms – as doubt, caution, insecurity, ambivalence, and concern. There was a prevalent tendency to deal with discomfort through evasion. Considerations of avoiding minefields, not stepping on toes, or preventing hurtful comments were cited. There are at least two

possible ways to understand this. First, it can be read as a focus on creating a safe environment for students. While this may seem uncontroversial, if it manifests as attempts to stay "neutral", then it creates a hindrance toward challenging conditions which may already be uncomfortable for some students. By invoking color-blindness, in effect, only some are blind-sided. This speaks to a paradox described before (Chinga-Ramirez, 2017) where discussions of cultural, ethnic or racial differences become almost impossible against a backdrop of Norwegian self-understandings as kind, tolerant and peaceful. Moreover, it may be impossible to create equally safe spaces for everyone, especially if attitudes and beliefs of some students are discomforting to other students (Røthing, 2019). While it is important to distinguish between *safety* and *comfort* – the latter not necessarily a prerequisite for the former (Zembylas, 2015) – the question remains: How can teachers decide whose comfort to prioritize? There is a risk inherent in applying pre-set categories of privilege and marginalization to decide this: the risk of perpetuating static and reductionist notions of the very categories one set out to challenge. Students' social identities are complex, and no-one's relation to the other is one of pure dominance or subjugation. Therefore, I support a call to apply a nuanced and contextualized understanding of social relations and cultural identity when working within a framework of a pedagogy of discomfort (Røthing, 2019).

The second reading relates to the teachers' own discomfort. While the analysis pointed to expressions which seemed founded on a notion of imagined sameness, and to a potential for critical and reflexive scrutiny of one's underlying assumptions, I nevertheless find it important to take teachers' discomfort in the face of cultural difference, seriously. Discomfort is, of course, genuinely uncomfortable, and the sense of relief in its absence, accordingly relieving (Røthing, 2019). As Kumashiro (2002, p. 48) points out, critical awareness of privilege and othering does not necessarily lead to transformation – it may lead to distress, and resistance toward approaching the topics and perspectives which cause discomfort. Dealing constructively with discomfort (Zembylas, 2015; Zembylas & Papamichael, 2017) entails questioning beliefs which are emotionally charged (Chubbuck & Zembylas, 2008, p. 285).

Challenging implicit notions and taken-for-granted beliefs of cultural normality and difference has a didactical side to it as well: If teacher views of the cultural or ethnic backgrounds of their students perpetuate sameness and downplay difference, how can that be mitigated in social studies? First, it is necessary to look beyond the question of whether, and how, to include minority students' cultural backgrounds as subject content. By looking past a dilemma of either placing too much or too little emphasis on students' cultural or ethnic background, it becomes clear that this dilemma is contingent on the notion of imagined sameness, because the underlying assumption is that the experiences of majority Norwegian students are less unique – more "normal".

Further, regarding (but not limited to) topics where notions of culture and cultural difference come into play, central didactical tools are: explicitly and critically pointing out harmful stereotypes (Kumashiro, 2002, p. 64), acknowledging the oppressive history of the social sciences, and the partiality of the stories told; including alternative voices and histories; and letting go of notions of neutrality. This is not easy, and it may be discomforting – for teachers, as well as students.

7 Conclusion

The analysis and discussion point to two prevalent views: one where an imagined Norwegian sameness was sustained, leading to color-blindness in the face of discomforting differences; and another where imagined sameness was challenged, and 'the Norwegian' relativised, leaving more space to deal constructively with discomfort.

The result of a conception of imagined sameness and evasion of "minefields" may be that, in the name of avoiding discomfort, minority students' varying cultural backgrounds are silenced. While a goal of neutrality, comfort and sameness expressed by some teachers may be well intentioned, preparing students to become active and responsible citizens and advocates for justice, may not be achievable without facing uncomfortable topics or difficult conversations.

The discussion explores how a pedagogy of discomfort might serve as a tool for pursuing a goal of transformative education in social studies in ways which enable both teachers and students to challenge emotionally charged beliefs pertaining to cultural and ethnic identities, while underlining the necessity of adopting a nuanced conception of social categories.

If social studies is to reach its transformative potential in pursuit of social justice, then social studies teachers must venture a scrutiny of their own views concerning cultural and ethnic sameness as a prerequisite for Norwegianness. I propose to see this not only as a pedagogical task, and a self-reflexive move, but also as a potential didactical tool.

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[i] The names are fictional, and characteristics which could serve to identify their workplace, have been changed.

[ii] Being in a Sami administrative area entails (among other things) that both Sami and Norwegian are official languages, and that certain sections of the Educational Act granting Sami students the right to receive education in Sami, come into play.

[iii] This is a reference to the original constitution of 1814, where Jews were prohibited from entering Norway.

Appendix I

Information letter and statement of consent

Informasjon til lærere
Redigert 24.04.2019

Informasjon om deltakelse i forskningsprosjekt

Bakgrunn og formål
Jeg gjennomfører et doktorgradsstudium knyttet til lærerutdanninga ved Nord universitet, og i den forbindelse ønsker jeg å lære mer om samfunnsfaglæreres tanker omkring tilpassing til mangfold og forskjellighet. Jeg er interessert i å høre hva du som samfunnsfaglærer tenker om valgsituasjoner du står i gjennom arbeidet, når det kommer til pedagogisk og didaktisk tilpassing, og hva du tenker omkring disse valgene.

Hva innebærer deltakelse i studien?
Deltagelse tar form av en intervjusamtale, der det blir anledning til å reflektere omkring problemstillinger knyttet til tilpassing til forskjellighet og mangfold. Her har jeg noen spørsmål, samtidig som jeg oppfordrer deg å ta opp det du mener er viktig. Vanligvis tar slike intervjuer en times tid, og samtalen vil bli tatt opp.

Hva skjer med informasjonen om deg?
Alle personopplysninger vil bli behandlet konfidensielt, og i tråd med den nye personopplysningsloven[1]. Det er kun jeg og mine veiledere som vil ha tilgang til opplysninger som gjør det mulig å identifisere deg. Personopplysninger vil bli lagret separat fra materialet, og en koblingsnøkkel som kun jeg har tilgang til, knytter opplysningene om deg til materialet og mine notater. Mine to veiledere på doktorgradsprosjektet vil kunne ha tilgang til lydopptakene. I en eventuell publikasjon, vil du være anonymisert. Det innebærer at all informasjon som kommer fram i en publikasjon, sammenstilt, ikke vil kunne bidra til å identifisere deg.

Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes i løpet av 2021. Personopplysninger om deg vil kunne lagres også etter dette tidspunktet, men det vil fortsatt kun være jeg som har tilgang til koblingsnøkkelen. Formålet med dette, er å kunne bruke materialet i videre studier. Dersom dette skulle bli aktuelt, vil du bli kontaktet, og du kan selvsagt velge å avslå slik bruk av materialet. Du kan også når som helst etter at studien er avsluttet, kreve at opplysningene om deg blir slettet.

Frivillig deltakelse og samtykke
Det er frivillig å delta i studien, og du kan når som helst trekke ditt samtykke uten å oppgi noen grunn. Dersom du trekker deg, vil alle opplysninger om deg bli anonymisert.

Dersom du har spørsmål til studien, ta kontakt med meg på ingvill.b.aberg@nord.no. Du kan også kontakte en av mine veiledere dersom du har spørsmål:
Erik Christensen ved Fakultet for Samfunnsvitenskap, Nord universitet: erik.christensen@nord.no
Trond Solhaug ved Program for Lærerutdanning, NTNU: trond.solhaug@ntnu.no

Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, NSD - Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS.

[1] https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2018-06-15-38

Samtykkeskjema på side 2

Samtykke til deltakelse i studien

Jeg har mottatt informasjon om studien, og er villig til å delta

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(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

Appendix II

Interview guide

Intervjuguide

Kommentarar til intervjuguiden

Tanken er at eg skal spørje meg inn mot tilpassingar dei gjer spesielt i samfunnsfag, og tilpassingar dei gjer spesielt fordi dei har elevar med ulike kulturbakgrunnar i klassen (viss dei har det) – både «mangfald som tema» (didaktisk relevant) og «mangfald i klassen» (pedagogisk relevant).

Arbeidsproblemstilling førebels (i flyt!) ligg i området «*Mangfald som tema med mangfald i klassen»*

- Samfunnsfaglærarar sine (pedagogiske og) samfunnsfagdidaktiske refleksjonar knytt til kulturell ulikskap
- Samfunnsfaglærarar sine refleksjonar omkring dilemma knytt til «kulturelt mangfald»

Spørsmål i feit skrift er hovudspørsmål, medan kursiv tekst er presiseringar eller kontekst som eg kan gi dersom det trengs ei inneliing til spørsmålet, eller dersom respondentane lurer på kva eg meiner. Kulepunkta er moglege oppfølgingsspørsmål. Eg vil i hovudsak forsøke å spørje vidare inn til det som faktisk blir sagt, men har kulepunkta som støtte dersom det blir nødvendig. Dersom eg ser at nokre av hovudspørsmåla treff dårleg, vil eg også vurder undervegs om eg skal droppe dei.

Oppvarmingsspørsmål, «småprat»

- Kor lenge har du jobba her?
- Kor lenge har du jobba som lærar?
- Korleis vart du lærar?
- Kva andre fag har du?
- Litt om skulen, kor mange elevar,
- Kor mange klassar har du i samfunnsfag?
- Kva trinn?
- Korleis vil du karakterisere dei klassane du har?
- Er det nokon med andre kulturelle bakgrunnar enn norsk i klassen?

Innleiingsspørsmål - val

1. **Kan du fortelle litt om valsituasjonar du står i i arbeidet ditt?**

Kontekstualisering, dersom nødvendig: Mitt inntrykk er at du som lærar står i ei rekke valsituasjonar kvar dag, både i og utanfor undervisninga. Det er mykje snakk om dette med tilpassa opplæring, og det tenker eg kan gi opphav til situasjonar der ulike omsyn kanskje gjer seg gjeldande samtidig.

- Står du ofte i valsituasjonar?
- Kor sentralt er val i arbeidskvardagen din?
- Må du ofte veie ulike omsyn mot kvarandre?
- Døme, utdjup

2. **Kan du seie litt om kva betydning dei kulturelle bakgrunnane til elevane har for deg som lærar?**

Kontekstualisering, dersom nødvendig: Elevar er forskjellige på mange vis, og noko som har vore mykje tematisert dei siste åra, er ulike kulturelle bakgrunnar blant elevane. Så er det litt ulike meiningar om kor stor betydning kulturell bakgrunn har, eller bør ha, i skulen.

- Er kulturell bakgrunn blant elevane ei viktig skiljelinje, tenker du? Kvifor/kvifor ikkje?
- Er det sentralt i arbeidskvardagen din?
- Evt på kva måtar?
- Står du ofte i valsituasjonar som handlar om den kulturelle bakgrunnen til elevane i klassen din?
- Døme, utdjup

Tilpassing

3. **Korleis tenker du at du tilpassar undervisninga di i samfunnsfag (generelt)?**
    - Gjer du spesielle faglege tilpassingar til ulike elevar?
    - Er det nokon elevar du har spesielt i tankane, som du tenker at du tilpassar spesielt for?
    - Kva for omsyn blir spesielt sentrale?
    - Er det nokre tema der du tenker spesielt på kva elevar du har i klassen?
4. **Er det noko du må tenke ekstra på når du har elevar med ulike kulturelle bakgrunnar?**
    - Er det nokre tema der du tenker spesielt på den kulturelle bakgrunnen til elevane i klassen?
    - Er det situasjonar der du tenker spesielt på den kulturelle bakgrunnen til elevane i klassen?

Dilemma

5. **Når du tenker på tilpassing av undervisninga, opplever du nokre dilemma?**
    - Kan det vere ulike omsyn som gjer seg gjeldande samtidig, eller kolliderer med kvarandre?
    - Er det situasjonar der nokre omsyn går på bekostning av andre?
    - Der-og-då-situasjonar i klasserommet
    - Meir generelle vurderingar, ikkje der-og-då, td planlegging, vurdering, praktiske tilhøve
6. **Har du opplevd dilemma som er knytt til at du har elevar med ulike kulturelle bakgrunnar?**
    - Døme, utdjup
7. **Har du hatt dilemma som du synst du har løyst på ein god måte?**
    - Konkrete døme – kva skjedde – kva gjorde du – korleis tenkte du

Fellesskap versus tilpassing

Det er mange ulike synspunkt på korleis skulen skal tilpasse seg elevar med ulike kulturbakgrunnar. Nokon meiner at det er viktig at skulen tilpassar seg og er open, medan andre er meir opptatt av at skulen skal ivareta eit fellesskap.

8. **Kva tenker du om dette?**
    - Kva tenker du er skulen si rolle i dette spørsmålet?
    - Kva er skulen si oppgåve?
    - Tenker du at dette har betydning i din arbeidskvardag?

Undervisningstema

9. **Hvis du skal undervise om samfunnsfaglige tema som berører kultur, forskjeller og ulikhet, tar du da spesielle omsyn?**
    - Likestilling
    - Innvandring
    - Demokrati og medborgarskap
    - Politikk
    - Delar av historieundervisninga
    - Minoritetsperspektiv, samisk

10. **Tenker du at dine eigne synspunkt har betydning for undervisning i desse temaa?**
    - At synspunkta kjem til syne
    - At synspunkta dine fargar dei vala du tar
    - NB dette treng ikkje vere negativt!
11. **Er det nokre spesielle tema innanfor samfunnsfag der du tenker spesielt på at du har elevar med ulike kulturbakgrunnar?**
    - Døme, utdjup
12. **Er det noko du synst er viktig å seie som vi ikkje har tatt opp no?**

Mangfaldsomgrepet

I læreplanar og andre utdanningspolitiske dokument, er ordet «mangfald» ganske mykje brukt, Ordet i seg sjølv kan jo bety mykje forskjellig.

13. **Kva tenker du på når du høyrer ordet «mangfald»?**
    - Kva assosiasjonar får du?
    - Kan bety mangfald blant elevane og mangfald som tema.

Påminning til sjølv

Vis interesse

Be dei om å utdjupe, forklare

Opne spørsmål først, deretter konkretisering

Ikkje lukke refleksjonsprosessen

Appendix III

Formal approval from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data

Ingvill Bjørnstad Åberg

7600 LEVANGER

Vår dato: 05.01.2018 Vår ref: 57267 / 3 / LAR Deres dato: Deres ref:

Tilrådning fra NSD Personvernombudet for forskning § 7-27

Personvernombudet for forskning viser til meldeskjema mottatt 17.11.2017 for prosjektet:

57267	*Mangfald er dei andre? Kritiske undersøkingar av forståingar av 'mangfald' i skulen eller på engelsk - har ikkje bestemt det enno* *Diversity is other people? Critical investigations of conceptions of 'diversity' in education*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*Nord universitet, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Ingvill Bjørnstad Åberg*

Vurdering

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

Vilkår for vår anbefaling

Vår anbefaling forutsetter at du gjennomfører prosjektet i tråd med:

- opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet og øvrig dokumentasjon
- vår prosjektvurdering, se side 2
- eventuell korrespondanse med oss

Meld fra hvis du gjør vesentlige endringer i prosjektet

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

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

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

Vi tar kontakt om status for behandling av personopplysninger ved prosjektslutt

Ved prosjektslutt 01.11.2020 vil vi ta kontakt for å avklare status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

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

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

Vennlig hilsen

Marianne Høgetveit Myhren

Lasse André Raa

Kontaktperson: Lasse André Raa tlf: 55 58 20 59 / Lasse.Raa@nsd.no
Vedlegg: Prosjektvurdering

Personvernombudet for forskning

Prosjektvurdering - Kommentar

Prosjektnr: 57267

FORMÅL
Problemstilling:
Korleis blir «vi» og «dei» konstituert gjennom mangfaldsomgrepet i utdanningsfeltet?

Forskingsspørsmål:
1. Korleis forstår eit utval samfunnsfaglærarar på 10. trinn omgrepet «mangfold»?
2. Kva for forståingar kan ein tolke ut frå undervisningspraksis?
3. Korleis forstår lærarane forholdet mellom det dei seier om mangfald og det dei gjer?

Overordna målsetting:
Å bidra til en bedre forståelse av hvordan språket vi bruker for å sette ord på forskjeller, kan ha betydning for skolen sitt arbeid med sosial inkludering.

INFORMASJON OG SAMTYKKE
Du/dere har opplyst i meldeskjema at utvalget vil motta skriftlig og muntlig informasjon om prosjektet, og samtykke skriftlig til å delta. Vår vurdering er at informasjonsskrivet til utvalget er godt utformet. Det må imidlertid utdypes om hvilke konsekvenser deltakelse og ikke-deltakelse får for elevene.

Ettersom det gjøres videoopptak av undervisning, må det innhentes samtykke fra samtlige elever som er til stede. Dersom elevene er under 16 år, må det også innhentes samtykke fra foreldre. For å sikre at deltakelse oppleves som reelt frivillig, anbefaler vi at det legges opp til et alternativt opplegg for elever som ikke ønsker å delta, eksempelvis ved at disse kan følge undervisningen i en parallellklasse.

LÆRERS TAUSHETSPLIKT
Personvernombudet minner om at taushetsplikten vil være til hinder for at læreren kan uttale seg om identifiserbare enkeltelever. Vi legger til grunn at det ikke fremkommer taushetsbelagte opplysninger i samtaler med lærer, og at det således ikke er nødvendig at lærer fritas fra taushetsplikt. Læreren bør i forkant av samtalen minnes om sin taushetsplikt samt hvordan relativt få bakgrunnsopplysninger kan være identifiserende i et lite utvalg.

SENSITIVE OPPLYSNINGER
Det fremgår av meldeskjema at du/dere vil behandle sensitive opplysninger om etnisk bakgrunn og/eller politisk/filosofisk/religiøs oppfatning. Det bør utøves særlig forsiktighet ved behandling av sensitive personopplysninger, både når det gjelder etiske problemstillinger, innhenting av data og informasjonssikkerhet underveis.

TREDJEPERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Det fremgår av meldeskjema at det vil kunne fremkomme enkelte opplysninger om tredjepersoner, slik som familiemedlemmer. Det skal kun registreres opplysninger som er nødvendig for formålet med prosjektet. Opplysningene skal være av mindre omfang og ikke sensitive, og skal anonymiseres i publikasjon. Så fremt personvernulempen for tredjeperson reduseres på denne måten, kan prosjektleder unntas fra informasjonsplikten overfor tredjeperson, fordi det anses uforholdsmessig vanskelig å informere.

DATASIKKERHET
Personvernombudet forutsetter at du/dere behandler alle data i tråd med Nord universitet sine retningslinjer for datahåndtering og informasjonssikkerhet.

PROSJEKTSLUTT
Prosjektslutt er oppgitt til 01.11.2020. Det fremgår av meldeskjema/informasjonsskriv at du/dere vil anonymisere datamaterialet ved prosjektslutt. Anonymisering innebærer vanligvis å:
- slette direkte identifiserbare opplysninger som navn, fødselsnummer, koblingsnøkkel
- slette eller omskrive/gruppere indirekte identifiserbare opplysninger som bosted/arbeidssted, alder, kjønn
- slette lydopptak
- slette eller sladde bilde- og videoopptak

For en utdypende beskrivelse av anonymisering av personopplysninger, se Datatilsynets veileder:
https://www.datatilsynet.no/globalassets/global/regelverk-skjema/veiledere/anonymisering-veileder-041115.pdf

In a tense global conversation about cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations, and in light of increasing awareness in Norwegian education of the plurality in Norwegian society, questions about how culture is conceptualised and dealt with in education, are urgent. Using a critical and postcolonial theoretical framework, this dissertation explores how culture, ethnicity and race are at work in education policy and social studies education and discusses implications for education for democratic citizenship.

Through three articles, cultural, ethnic and racial categorisations in education are explored from different angles: Article I analyses an education political discourse of "cultural diversity"; Article II explores teacher perspectives on the cultural backgrounds of their students; and Article III discusses two approaches to tackling oppressive discursive mechanisms in education.

Among the findings are a salient discourse sustaining a notion of immigrant students as *creating* diversity; othering imaginaries of Norwegian cultural sameness; and tendencies of colour-blindness in social studies. However, there are attempts, both among teachers and in political discourse, to challenge narrow conceptions of Norwegianness. The findings provide needed nuance to a discussion about how social studies teachers can challenge injustice on the basis of culture, ethnicity or race.

In the final chapter, the author moves on to view these findings in light of different perspectives on education for democracy. She shows how citizenship is conceptualised as contingent on cultural sameness, rendering cultural Otherness a democratic challenge. In order to challenge such culturalised notions of Norwegian citizenship and strive for equal opportunities for democratic participation for all students, it is argued that we need a theoretical and social studies didactical framework suited to deal with the discomfort of an imagined sameness disrupted.

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