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The Last Step Towards Whiteness

The Racialization of Eastern Europeans in Denmark

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Abstrakt

I løbet af det seneste årti er studier af hvidhed og hvid identitet blevet udvidet til en nordisk kontekst. Specialet sigter mod at nuancere den igangværende debat om hvidhed ved at undersøge oplevelser blandt østeuropæere i en nordisk sammenhæng. Med inspiration fra Richard Dyer og Sarah Ahmed viser vi, hvordan Kritiske Hvidhedsstudier kan give os værdifuld indsigt, når de anvendes i studier af daglig praksis. Gennem kvalitativ forskning undersøger vi både faglige og personlige oplevelser hos højtuddannede østeuropæiske migranter i Danmark for at afdække, hvordan racialiserede diskurser (gen)produceres. Vi demonstrerer, hvordan østeuropæere er placeret inden for de laveste niveauer af hierarkierne af hvidhed og europæiskhed, hvilket således støtter tidligere studier fra andre vesteuropæiske lande, som finder, at østeuropæere anses for ”not-quite-white”. Desuden opdagede vi, at sprogkompetencer og accent fungerer som vigtige markører for forskelle, hvilket derefter fører til 'othering' og racialisering. Dette speciale bidrager til forskningen i hvidhed samt til den igangværende debat om racialisering af østeuropæere i en nordisk sammenhæng.

Abstract

In the recent decade, the studies of whiteness and white identities have expanded to the Nordic context. This thesis aims to nuance the ongoing debate on whiteness by looking into the experiences of Eastern Europeans in the Nordic setting. With inspiration from Richard Dyer and Sarah Ahmed, we show how Critical Whiteness Studies can provide us with valuable insights when applied to daily practices. Through qualitative research, we look into both professional and personal experiences of highly skilled Eastern European migrants in Denmark with a view to uncovering how racialized discourses are (re)produced. We demonstrate how Eastern Europeans are positioned within the lowest levels of the hierarchies of whiteness and Europeanness, thus, supporting previous studies on Eastern Europeans being rendered as "not-quite-white" in other Western European countries. Moreover, we discovered that language competences and accent function as important markers of difference, which, thereafter, lead to ‘othering’ and racialization. This thesis contributes to the research of Whiteness and White Identities, as well as to the ongoing debate about the racialization of Eastern Europeans in the Nordic context.

Keywords: racialization, whiteness, Eastern Europeanness, intersectionality, otherness, Danishness

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Introduction

Following the process of globalization, the society in Denmark is becoming increasingly racially and ethnically diverse, due to the steady influx of migrants from various parts of the world. Historically, in Denmark, this process took off during the late 1960s and 1970s with the arrival of guest workers from Turkey, Pakistan, and Yugoslavia. This made a significant impact on the ethnic composition of the Danish population since instead of returning to their native countries, many workers brought their families to Denmark. However, it was not until two decades later, in the 1990s, when refugees and asylum seekers from all over the world began migrating to Denmark, mainly from the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and former Yugoslavia (Fair, 2010), Denmark's population that was 0.4 percent foreign in 1960 (Soysal in Fair, 2010) went to one where immigrants and their descendants comprised 9.1 percent of the population by 2008 (Statistics Denmark 2008) and 13 percent by 2018, 10 percent of which come from the so-called "non-Western" countries (Statistics Denmark 2018). In the case of migration from Eastern European countries, the number of migrants with Eastern European backgrounds, employed in Denmark, increased by 166% since 2010.

Motivated by our own journeys as migrants of Eastern European background in Denmark. Within this thesis we set out to explore the experiences of highly skilled migrants from Eastern Europe and how their lived experiences signify the processes of racialization and hierarchies of whiteness.

Problem formulation

This paper applies the combination of Orientalism and Critical Whiteness Studies in order to analyze the racialized experiences of Eastern European migrants.

In the context of our research we found that examining the findings of Said, followed by the elaborations by Todorova and Buchowski on the theory of Orientalism would be a fitting theoretical approach. By examining the role orientalism plays in categorizing Eastern Europe and Eastern Europeans we also set out to explore the 'othering' of Eastern Europeans in the Nordic

context. By using the presented discourse of "The West and the Rest" by Stuart Hall we will examine certain ideological borders separating the East from the West.

The Western discourse describes Eastern Europe as being located on the borders of the civilized world. It isn't the geographical belonging that is used to decide whether a society belongs to the West, rather it is certain characteristics which place the societies accordingly (Hall, 1992, p.187). The former presence of the Ottoman Empire in Eastern European, especially Balkan territory has led to the territory in question being categorized as oriental, "not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilized" (Buchowski, 2006, p.464). However, it is an important question to ask whether Eastern Europe can be considered to be within the spheres of orientalism. Research shows how, even three decades after the end of the Cold War, Europe continues to be divided along the lines of East and West. "The Iron Curtain set a clear- cut division into "us" and "them" (Buchowski, 2006, p.464) which was reduced, in fact, to geography. "The two systems' border was inscribed in the mental map in which continuous space was transformed into discontinuous places inhabited by two distinctive tribes: the civilized "us" and the exotic, often "uncivilized" others" (Buchowski, 2006, p.465). The fact that Eastern Europe is seen as "backwards(ness) on a relative scale of development" (Borocz, 2006; Wolff, 1994) leads to an ongoing racialization of Eastern Europeans.

This paper also adresses the everyday racialization of Eastern European migrants in Denmark and the translation of racialization into stigmatization. Goffman defines a person facing stigma as being condensed "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman, 1963, p.3). The process of stigmatization occurs when the person in question has certain characteristics which lead to stigmatization, these characteristics may be both visible or invisible (Major & O'Brien, 2005, p. 395). "Stigma exists when labelling, negative stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, and low status co-occur in a power situation that allows these processes to unfold" (Link & Phelan, Major & O'Brien, 2005, p.394). Both Eastern Europe as a region and Eastern Europeans as people have been subjected to racialization, which is usually acknowledged as stigmatization instead. In reference to this paper, we believe it is important to delve into stigmatization as a concept since we are researching a white minority that tends to be often stigmatized and stereotyped.

Inspired by works of Richard Dyer and Sarah Ahmed, this thesis also takes a theoretical point of departure in Critical Whiteness Studies in order to discuss the construction of whiteness in Denmark, and its impact in racialization of Eastern European migrants. Both Dyer and Ahmed offer a nuanced understanding of whiteness in terms of different shades or “gradations” of whiteness, departing from the understanding of whiteness as a homogeneous category. In our thesis we set out to explore the position of Eastern Europeans within different hierarchies of whiteness, following Dyer’s logic of whiteness as complex, diverse and always changing.

Until a decade ago, the categories of 'whiteness' and 'white privilege' were primarily discussed in the context of anglophone countries (mainly, the USA), but recently the applicability of a notion of Whiteness has also been discussed by Nordic scholars (see Andreassen and Ahmed-Andresen, 2014; Andreassen and Vitus, 2015; Garner, 2014; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Lundstrom and Teitelbaum, 2018). The aforementioned studies discuss the Nordic perception of whiteness and attitude towards race/racism, which is characterized by the rejection of affiliation to racialized ideas and narratives of Nordic exceptionalism. These narratives, in turn, are contributing to white Nordic entitlement and hegemony of whiteness.

The discussion about whiteness in Denmark connects to the concept of Danishness *(Danskhed)*, that has been recently developed by a number of Nordic scholars within the fields of cultural, post-colonial and migration studies (Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen, 2014, Fair, 2010; Jensen, 2017; Hervik, 2019; Koefoed & Simonsen, 2007; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Rytter, 2010; Rytter, 2019, Simonsen, 2016). Through our analysis, we will discuss how Whiteness, although not widely acknowledged, is implicit in the concept of Danishness and how that relates to the processes of exclusion of non-Western (Eastern European) migrants. Also, how the increasing presence of non-white migrants continues to inform and shape the development of Danish whiteness. We will discuss how Eastern Europeans are frequently rendered as “not-quiet-white” due to their position as Europe’s internal ‘others’ (Kalnačs, 2016; Buchowski, 2006), or as “undeveloped” European subjects (Dzenovska, 2010).

In our research we are particularly interested in the role of language in the broader processes of inclusion/exclusion of migrants in a workplace and in their daily lives. We will discuss an interplay between language and power, linguistic competences and the process asserting dominance.

Research questions

It is with the above in mind that, we will examine the lived experiences of highly skilled Eastern European migrants, who are frequently rendered as Others and whose behavior, consequently, is often simplified and misinterpreted. In particular we will explore the hierarchies of whiteness and processes of racialization and how these notions contribute to the processes of social inclusion/exclusion of migrants of non-Western backgrounds.

In the present research project, we aim to answer the following research questions:

- **What are the markers of difference that influence the process of racialization and shape Eastern European migrants' sense of belonging in Denmark?**

- **How do Eastern European migrants experience being positioned with regards to hierarchies of whiteness and Europeanness?**

Despite an increasing number of literature on race and whiteness, the research on racialization of Eastern Europeans is scarce, with the exception of some recent studies (Lapiņa and Vertelytė, forthcoming; Loftsdóttir 2017; van Riemsdijk, 2010). We aim to address this gap in the existing research by examining the process of racialization of highly skilled migrants of Eastern European backgrounds in Denmark.

The sample for this research consists of highly skilled migrants of Eastern European backgrounds, encompassing such countries as North Macedonia, Russia, Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Additional motivation for this study was our Eastern European backgrounds and a possibility of conducting insider research (Acker, 2000; Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). We are

acutely aware of the similarities between ourselves as researchers and our participants, which we believe is of critical importance for this study. Our positionality will be examined reflexively in both the methodological section and in the limitations. In our project, we use data that has been collected through focus group interviews combined with qualitative interviews with key participants, all of which were carefully transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The main themes from the interviews will be presented in the analysis and thereafter discussed using valid theoretical concepts.

Taking into consideration all of the above, this thesis aims to contribute to the study of whiteness and white identities in the Nordic context, as well as to the ongoing debate about racialization of Eastern Europeans in Europe.

Theoretical Approach

Orientalism and Eastern European Others

In order to be able to understand the position of Eastern Europeans in Western Europe we will first address the dichotomy between the West and the East. In the modern world to be Western is considered to be an aspiration, something to look up to. However, it is important to note that the West isn't only a geographical term, it with itself carries many societal and developmental connotations (Hall & Gieben, 1999, p. 185). "Europeans have long been unsure about where Europe 'ends' in the east. In the west and to the south, the sea provides a splendid marker ... but to the east the plains roll on and on and the horizon is awfully remote" (Roberts in Hall & Gieben, 1999, p.185). "Eastern Europe doesn't (doesn't yet? never did?) belong properly to "the West"; whereas the United States, which is not in Europe, definitely does" (Roberts in Hall & Gieben, 1999, p.185). When we think of a western society, we think of a society that is advanced, established and reputable. "Nowadays, any society which shares these characteristics, wherever it exists on a geographical map, can be said to belong to "the West" (Hall & Gieben, 1999, p. 186). The West therefore is a notion, thus meaning that being Western or non-Western are also notions on their own. Following these notions, we are able to classify which countries belong to the West, which ones belong to the East and which ones are "catching up with" the West (Hall & Gieben, 1999, p.187).

Western discourses around Eastern Europe as placed in the margins of the "civilized world" have been a matter of inquiry for many decades. The path for the West was paved during the Enlightenment Era. "The Enlightenment was a very European affair. European society, it assumed, was the most advanced type of society on earth" (Hall & Gieben, 1999, p.187). Once the West became the measuring standard model for "modern society" it was easy to compare the differences of the Eastern cultures and societies to the "modern" Western society. "The difference of these other societies and cultures from the West was the standard against which the West's achievement was measured" (Hall & Gieben, 1999, p.187). The comparison of the West and the East has been a continuous affair since the Enlightenment and can be clearly seen today. Even though the West

appears to be a homogenous entity, as mentioned earlier the West isn't a geographical term, rather it is a shared worldview. Even though Eastern Europe is geographically in Europe, ideologically it is considered to be Eastern.

The prior presence of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkan peninsula has led to Eastern Europe being classified as "semi-oriental" (Buchowski, 2006, p.464). Edward Said's pioneering research on 'Orientalism' is a study which compares the East to the West and the perspective the West has of the East. Said tackles the meaning of the Orient not by observing it as an area with set restrictions and constraints, but, instead, as a fluid composition. "Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture" (Said in Choudhury, 2016, p.75). Said argues that for Orientalism to exist it first needed to be approved by the West and Western academic institutions and therefore "authorized". "Orientalism, therefore, is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many rations, there has been a considerable material investment" (Said, 1978, p.14). If the West didn't exist as an ideology neither would the Orient. The West 'created' the notion of the Orient which had a mystic, exotic, erotic and barbaric air to it, compared to the West. He argues that to speak of Orientalism is:

"[...] to speak mainly, although not exclusively, of a British and French cultural enterprise a project whose dimensions take in such disparate realms as the imagination itself, the whole of India and the Levant, the Biblical texts and the Biblical lands, the spice trade, colonial armies and a long tradition of colonial administrators, a formidable scholarly corpus, innumerable Oriental "experts" and "hands," an Oriental professorate, a complex array of "Oriental" ideas (Oriental despotism, Oriental splendor, cruelt, sensuality), many Eastern sects, philosophies, and wisdoms domesticated for local European use-the list can be extended more or less indefinitely."

(Said, 1978, p. 12)

Since "orientalism is bound to the East that can be "far," "middle," "near," and last but not least, "European" (Appadurai in Buchowski, 2006, p. 465). This is especially important for the Balkan peninsula due to the traces left by the Ottoman Empire, and its direct involvement in Islam, Imperialism and Orientalism have led to the Balkan peoples being seen as "not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilized" (Buchowski, 2006, p.464). However, since territorially the

Balkans belong to Europe there have been attempts to Europeanize the Balkans. When we say Europeanizing, we mean the process of civilizing, westernizing and democratizing. With the European Orient already being in the Balkans and in the former Soviet republics the West intended to keep it there, by doing so the West put up both ideological and physical borders between the European Orient and the modern West.

Western discourses around Eastern Europe as placed in the margins of the "civilized world" have been a matter of inquiry for many decades. The divide of Europe into East and West, as put by Todorova, is described as: "East came to be identified more often, and often exclusively, with industrial backwardness, lack of advanced social relations and institutions typical for the developed capitalist West, irrational and superstitious cultures unmarked by Western Enlightenment" (Todorova, 2009, p.12). The discourse of the difference between the "civilized world" and the "backwardness" in the Balkans was first introduced to the Balkans during the Balkan Wars which took place from 1912-1913 (Todorova, 2009). The "civilized" West at the time unbeknownst of the upcoming World Wars to be fought on their territories, considered war to be "[..]so obscene, so degrading, so devoid of one redeeming spark, that it is quite impossible there can ever be a war in West Europe." (Todorova, 2009, p.6) However, the very barbaric behavior portrayed by the West during the aforementioned World Wars did not keep them from belittling the Balkan countries for "killing people... because of something that may have happened in 1495 is unthinkable in the Western world. Not in the Balkans." (Todorova, 2009, p.6). Even though killing each other over instances that may have happened 500 years ago was rendered as "unthinkable" for the Western world, the West "with a longer span of civilized memory, they were killing over something that happened 2,000 years ago" (Todorova, 2009, p.6). The way in which the Balkan peninsula has been examined by researchers has followed the discourse of Orientalism. The significance of "historical time" (Said, p.33) are put aside and the examination is purely based on Western perception of "geographic/cultural entity" (Todorova, 2009, p.7). The rule of the Ottoman Empire on south-eastern Europe lasted for over five centuries and gave it the name with which we now know the peninsula: as Balkan. (Todorova, 2009, p. 12). The long presence of the Ottoman Empire on the land fed into the West's perception of the Balkans being Oriental and led to their othering from the rest of Europe. Buchowski, inspired by Todorova's work and her take on Said's orientalism and her perception of Orientalism in the Balkans, describes the Balkans as

"semi-oriental, not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilized." (p.464) and supports his perspective by quoting Todorova that "unlike orientalism, which is a discourse about imputed opposition, Balkanism is a discourse about an imputed ambiguity" (Todorova, 1997, in Buchowski, 2006, p.464). These findings by both Said and Todorova lead to Buchowski's description of 'othering'. Buchowski also introduces "domestic orientalism"; in this case "the Other can now live side by side with "us," occupy the same place, speak the same language and believe in the same god." (p.467) such is the case of immigrants, immigrating to the West from countries which are considered to be oriental or semi-oriental.

While the West after WWII has been seen as a homogeneous unity, the East has been considered to consist of small primitive states, whose "peoples of Eastern Europe [are] between Europe and Asia, between civilization and barbarism" (Borocz, 2006; Wolff, 1994). The Iron Curtain followed by the construction of the Berlin Wall, a physical division between East and West led to a clear understanding of ""us" and "them" […] the civilized "us" and the exotic, often "uncivilized" Others" (Buchowski, 2006, p.465). Even though with the fall of the Berlin wall the clearly drawn line between the East and West was erased, the ideological division was still there. With this ideological division what is known as the process of "othering" is created. In the process of "othering" superior groups have power over the group which is 'othered'. In this case, as mentioned earlier Western Europe is seen as modern, democratic and powerful in comparison to Eastern Europe. However, for there to be a West there has to be an East, for there to be an 'us' there has to be a 'them', for there to be an 'other' there needs to be a group from which they are 'othered' from. Without the 'other' there would never be 'us', the difference between the 'us' and the 'others' is important in the game of power. 'Othering' plays a big role in accentuating insider/outsider power relations.

Stigma and Racialization

In this paper, the concepts of accent and language were studied within the framework of stigma and stereotyping, rather than race which is usually the focal point of stigma and stereotype research. We want to examine these theories since we would like to expand on the studies which

inspect the role of accent in disclination and stereotyping. Goffman (1963, p.3) describes a stigmatized person as being reduced “from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one.” The concept of stigma encompasses not only the social stigma, but stigmatization due to one’s culture, ethnicity, race, gender etc. Persons who are stigmatized are usually subjected to discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping. These individuals receive a substantial amount of intimidation and threats from non-stigmatized individuals and usually are the targets of social elimination.

Stigmatization of a person occurs when the person in question carries certain characteristics, which lead to that person being stigmatized. Major and O’Brien (2005) refer to these characteristics as “marks”. They claim that these marks lead the stigmatized person to be devalued in the eyes of the people doing the stigmatization.

“Stigmatizing marks may be visible or invisible, controllable or uncontrollable, and linked to appearance (e.g., a physical deformity), behavior (e.g., child abuser), or group membership (e.g., African American). Importantly, stigma is relationship- and context-specific; it does not reside in the person but in a social context.”

(Major & O’Brien, 2005, p. 395)

The stigmatization marks lead to the stigmatized being perceived negatively and being stereotyped. However, it is also important to make a clear difference between being stigmatized and being racialized. As stated in the quote above by Major & O’Brien, African American’s are referred to as having a “group membership” which leads to a false belief that being an African American is a group to which you can enter and leave as you please. Thus, the use of the word stigma instead of racism belittles the hardships of the everyday experiences of racialized people. The stereotypes used are generally widely known by the public and are used to exclude the stereotyped person from society. It is also very important to note that the socioeconomic background of the stereotyped plays a large role in how they perceive being stereotyped. According to Link & Phelan, power relations play a big role when the notion of stigma is in question, “stigma exists when labeling, negative stereotyping, exclusion, discrimination, and low status co-occur in a power situation that allows these processes to unfold” (Link & Phelan in Major & O’Brien, 2005, p. 395). Once a person

is stigmatized their life is directly affected by the stigmatization, their mental state, their emotional state and the way in which they think and act and react to being stigmatized.

The extent in which the stigmatized peoples have been exposed to the dominant culture shapes their interactions with other stigmatized peoples. This link between stigmatized people, therefore, creates a bond and a "shared understanding" of the dominant culture, and where they "belong" within that culture. "Virtually all members of a culture, including members of stigmatized groups, are aware of cultural stereotypes, even if they do not personally endorse them" (Steele in Major & O'Brien 2005, p. 399). According to Pinel, individuals, who are in anticipation of being stigmatized due to their "group membership", are more alert when being stigmatized. If an individual regards stigmatization as a part of their self-identity are more likely to feel stigmatized and discriminated against (Pinel in Major & O'Brien, 2005, p. 401).

One important 'mark' is the accent, with which the stigmatized person speaks. "Non-standard accents are one of the most salient characteristics of individuals from other countries who come to live, work, or study in a host country. An accent identifies and potentially stigmatizes people as not being native born" or not being native speakers (Souza et al., 2016, p.1). Due to their accents people can be targeted, stereotyped and be marginalized. Accents lead to people being categorized into specific groups. Souza, L et at. believe that a person is discriminated for their accent only if the person they are speaking to has an already existent prejudiced attitude. "[..], the way a person speaks can be used as a basis for making arbitrary evaluations and, unlike many other forms of discrimination, is commonly accepted and perceived as legitimate by society" (Gluszek & Dovidio, in Souza et al., 2016, p.2). They also state that according to the European Comission "In a survey of 26 out of 27 European Union countries, 34% of a representative sample of respondents believed that a job applicant's way of speaking (principally accent) would put him or her at a disadvantage compared with an equally qualified, non-accented candidate. Among managers in a position to hire, this figure rose to 45%" (ibid.). These numbers alone are a determination that even in EU countries accents play a big role in the job market and are subjected to stigmatization based on their accents.

We are interested in investigating the concept of stigmatization because we believe it is a tool used to avoid talking about race and racial discrimination. This is important regarding this thesis, since we are interested in exploring the ways in which Eastern European migrants are being

racialized in the Nordic context. The stereotypes they are faced with, the “marks” they carry and the boxes they tick as white, Eastern European immigrants.

Critical Whiteness Studies

This thesis takes a theoretical point of departure in Critical Whiteness Studies. Critical Whiteness Studies is a field of interdisciplinary research, employed in order to uncover the historical development of the construction of whiteness and white identities. Taking off at the beginning of the nineties, this growing field of scholarship attempts to show how white identities are being developed and transformed in different societies around the world. Whiteness studies come from the American field of critical race studies, developed through studies of race issues in the United States in the early 20th century, and spread elsewhere in the world in the 1960s (Back & Solomos, 2009, p. 5). Critical race studies continue to be a field under development, and it now contains a wide range of subfields and approaches both theoretical (e.g. neo-Marxist, constructivist, feminist) and methodological (Back & Solomos, 2009, pp. 6-26). Whiteness studies can be seen as one of these subfields, and it is defined by Back and Solomos as "[...] a research agenda that looks at the way white subjectivities are racialized, and how whiteness is manifested in discourse, communication and culture" (Back & Solomos, 2009, p. 22). In our research, we use this theoretical perspective to contextualize our discussion of whiteness in Denmark, as well as to discuss the place of "whiteness" in the construction of social relations. We will discuss the dichotomy between "white" members of society vs. "otherness," "visibility" vs. "invisibility" and the construction of difference.

One of the central studies of Whiteness is Ruth Frankenberg's "White Women, Race Matters" (1993), which examines white women's place in racial structures in the US and social constructions of whiteness. This work is a major contribution to Critical Whiteness studies, which aims to include the majority - white people - in the debate about racial hierarchies in the society, the debate traditionally focused on the lived experiences of minorities. "To speak of whiteness is, I think, to assign *everyone* a place in the relations of racism", argues Frankenberg (Frankenberg, 1993, p.6, original emphasis). The author explores the applicability of race in relation to white people, who, in her opinion, have been long excluded from the conversation with "white Western

self as a racial being (...), for the most part, remained unexamined and unnamed" (ibid.). Frankenberg investigates how lives and identities of white people are influenced by race despite their self-perception as racially neutral. By doing so, whiteness could be explained as a complex socially constructed category, materialistically and historically placed, rather than abstract. Whiteness refers to: “a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced and are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination” (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 6). Indeed, whiteness emerges as a set of linked dimensions, a structural advantage, also connected to other categories of difference and inequality, such as class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality. At the same time, whiteness is also a dominant worldview, from which white people generally see themselves and the society around them.

Frankenberg also shows how whiteness became normative and, more importantly, *invisible* in Western societies. “Whiteness, “unmarked” and “unnamed," came to represent the 'norm' and defining what is 'normal' in society, with "white" becoming a synonym to "human." (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 1-22). This structured invisibility of white people, and, on the other hand, "hypervisibility" of minorities are the effects of racial privilege and the dominance of whiteness. The production of autonomous, white/Western self, in contrast to marked “Other”, is an effect of European colonial history, Frankenberg argues, and connected to the legacy of colonialism and imperialism (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 16-18).

Another scholar, exploring the imagery of whiteness, is Richard Dyer in his book "White" (1997). Discussing the invisibility of whiteness as racial position, Dyer, like Frankenberg, argues that whiteness functions as a "human norm," that white people are not viewed or perceived to be of a particular race, but of a "human race" (Dyer, 1997, p.1-2). He argues that "Western representation of whites are overwhelmingly and disproportionately predominant, have the central and elaborated roles, and above all are placed *as the norm, the ordinary, the standard."* (Dyer, 1997, p.3, our own emphasis*).* Whiteness is described as a category not determined by a group of people's geographical or ethnic affiliation but by their power and privileges: "Being visible as white is a passport to privilege" (Dyer, 1997, p. 44). Dyer points to the position of power and systematic 'unearned advantage and conferred dominance' (McIntosh in Dyer, 1997, p.9) that white people possess in Western societies. Peggy McIntosh describes it as: "an invisible weightless

knapsack of special provisions, assurances, tools, maps, guides, codebooks, passports, visas, clothes, compass, emergency gear, and blank cheques" (ibid.). This invisibility, Dyer argues, contributes to the overwhelming sense that whiteness is, in fact, a "non-category", "nothing in particular" (Dyer, 1997, p.9) This is also evident from Frankenberg studies of white women's identity, which was characterized by not perceiving themselves as "colored" or having any distinctive identity at all. (Frankenberg in Dyer, 1997, p.9). Speaking about representation, Dyer argues:

"Whites are everywhere in representation. Yet precisely because of this and their placing as norm they do not seem to be represented to themselves as whites but as people who are variously gendered, classed, sexualized and abled. At the level of racial representation, in other words, whites are not of a certain race, just the human race"

(Dyer, 1997, p. 3).

Unlike Frankenberg, who explores whiteness from a majority perspective, Dyer points to a more nuanced understanding of whiteness in terms of different shades or "gradations" of whiteness. He draws attention to "individuated, multifarious and graded" character of whiteness. Our research also adopts this understanding of whiteness in order to challenge the notion of whiteness as a homogeneous category. As varied and changing as it is, whiteness has different shades, and, Dyer argues, that "some people are *whiter* than others", and the power and privilege that come with whiteness are not evenly distributed among phenotypically white people, for instance:

"Latins, the Irish and Jews, for instance, are rather less securely white than Anglos, Teutons and Nordics; indeed, if Jews are white at all, it is only Ashkenazi Jews, since the Holocaust, in a few places" (Dyer, 1997, p.12).

"Being white" is, therefore, much more than about color and race. For Dyer, to speak of whiteness is not necessarily to speak of skin color, since it is more complicated than that, as "white people are neither literally nor symbolically white." (Dyer, 1997, p. 42). We argue for understanding of whiteness as a social category, the hierarchies of which could be negotiated in a particular time and a particular place. Both in the case of the Irish and Jews (in Dyer's example

stated earlier), and in the case of Eastern Europeans, 'whiteness' appears to be a process, rather than a fixed category. We will explore the position of Eastern Europeans as not-quite-white, following Dyer's logic of whiteness as complex, diverse and always changing.

Another central work in the exploration of whiteness and a valid perspective for our research is Sarah Ahmed's "A Phenomenology of Whiteness" (2007), which approaches whiteness within the framework of phenomenology. As Frankenberg and Dyer before her, Ahmed also describes, how whiteness came to be "invisible and unmarked, (...) the absent center against which others appear only as deviants, or points of deviation" (Ahmed, 2007, p.157). The paper draws on the author's lived experience of inhabiting in a white world in a non-white body. For Ahmed, whiteness is material and lived, and constitutes an "ongoing and unfinished history", which drives people in specific directions, influencing the way their bodies "take up" space. (ibid. p.150). Whiteness becomes more pronounced - "worldly", as Ahmed puts it - upon arrival of non-white bodies, and very space around bodies takes shape around white bodies, rejecting other, out-of-place, foreign ones (p.157).

At the same time, Ahmed describes how even white bodies - those who pass as white - could still be "out of line", not fully accepted into spaces they inhabit. "Given that relationships of power 'intersect', how we inhabit a given category depends on how we inhabit others", argues Ahmed (p.159), pointing towards the importance of other social categorizations in the process of construction of whiteness. If a person's whiteness is disputed due to intersections with other categories such as gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, the things a body "*can do*" (in terms of whiteness) are limited; a body comes under "*stress*" of not passing as white (Ahmed, 2007, pp. 159-160). That leads to what Ahmed describes as *the body losing its chair* - a process when a body no longer extends space and vice versa, which leads to the feelings of being "*out-of-place*" or feeling discomfort and negation. In our research we want to explore how belonging to a category of "Eastern European" brings one's whiteness into question and affects what bodies can or cannot do. We will also explore the intersection of different markers and the relationship between these markers and the hierarchies of whiteness.

In her work, Sarah Ahmed draws attention to the importance of other social categories while talking about whiteness and white privilege. In 1989, Kimberlee Crenshaw introduced a concept of Intersectionality in "Demarginalizing The Intersection Of Race And Sex: A Black Feminist Critique Of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, And Antiracist Politics" (Crenshaw, 1989). According to her, discrimination categories can overlap; people do not have to be discriminated based on one certain attribute, rather one person can carry more than one marker, which can make them a target of discrimination. Once a person, a social problem, or a group of people are discriminated, disadvantaged, or faced with more than one source of prejudice, they are intersectionalized. In other words, the theory of intersectionality proclaims that a person or people are usually discriminated against on more grounds than one, such as their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, and other markers. The term was inspired; however, by the black feminist movement when black feminists did not feel that they were having equal experiences as white women did. White women had certain advantages that black feminists didn't, which thus meant that they were facing racism in the feminist movement, making it an intersectional experience.

A lot of scholars have argued that intersectionality is the best means we have for exploring the multidimensional and complex articulation of forms of social division and identity (Brah and Phoenix, 2004, in Anthias, 2012, p.5) Intersectionality plays a large role in this thesis on the basis of our interviewees' markers where their social class, language, ethnicity and race 'intersect' and make up their characters and personal experiences as Eastern European migrants in Denmark.

Literature review

Whiteness in the Nordic context: Exceptionalism and Post-Racist society

For the purpose of this study, we will now elaborate on the construction and meaning of whiteness in the Nordic context. Until a decade ago, the categories of 'whiteness' and 'white privilege' were primarily discussed in the context of anglophone countries (mainly, the USA), but recently the applicability of a notion of whiteness has also been discussed by Nordic scholars. The research into Nordic Whiteness and race/racialization produced studies across Scandinavia, including recent books "Whiteness and Postcolonialism in the Nordic Region: Exceptionalism, Migrant Others, and National Identities," edited by Loftsdóttir and Jensen (2012), followed by a special issue on "Whiteness and nation in the Nordic countries" in Social Identities, edited by Steve Garner (2014) and, building on two previous studies, "Nordic Whiteness" by Lundstrom and Teitelbaum (2018). These studies explore the meanings and implications of whiteness in societies across Scandinavia and link a notion of whiteness to other markers such as gender, class, and ethnicity.

To expand on some of these studies, Loftsdóttir and Jensen (2012) focus on the ways that whiteness and "Nordic Exceptionalism" has shaped contemporary postcolonial reality in Scandinavia. The normativity of whiteness, according to Loftsdóttir and Jensen and other contributors of the book, is not questioned or recognized by those perceived as white. This puts non-Western migrants in the inferior position, excluding them from the national narratives as well as making it challenging to confront racism and racialization. The exceptionalism refers to Nordic countries' claims of "national innocence" and peripheral status in relation to the broader European colonialism and other contemporary processes, such as globalization. It is also entangled with Nordic self-perception as being radically different from the rest of Europe, the belief of not having any connection to racism, both in the past and in the present (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012, p. 2). Discussing the undisputed normativity of whiteness, several authors argue that whiteness is in crisis - "whiteness structured by feelings of bewilderment and loss" (Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012, p. 53) which is caused by the presence of "non-white" people in predominantly "white" places that most of the Scandinavian societies are. Both exceptionalism and unacknowledged normativity of

whiteness, authors argue, continue to influence modern Nordic societies, reproducing racialized discourses about, e.g., migrants and refugees.

"Nordic Whiteness" by Lundstrom and Teitelbaum (2018) explores Nordic whiteness, revealing it to be a "fluid and contested but also an enduring and powerful phenomenon, one that continues to shape global politics, culture, and social relations" (Lundstrom and Teitelbaum, 2018, p. 151). Historically, whiteness as a category has long been rejected in the Nordics; however, with the recent influx of migrants from non-Western countries, the white/non-white boundary became more pronounced in contemporary Nordic societies. With the increasing political focus on integration, non-white minorities found themselves as "perpetual outsiders—as eternal "immigrants"—regardless of their place of birth or degree of integration" (ibid.) The interconnection between Nordicness and whiteness becomes apparent through studies into the racialization of non-white migrants, for whom whiteness becomes a central part of their experience of being part of the minorities in the Nordic countries.

Another recent study into whiteness in the Nordic countries is Steve Garner's "Whiteness and nation in the Nordic countries." Historically, the Nordics always occupied a privileged position in the racial hierarchies despite being rather different. The author draws attention to "color-blind racism" (Carr in Garner, 2014, p. 409) that prevails in Scandinavian countries, where racism is considered to be a thing of the past, and the very conversation about "race" is frowned upon. Indeed, other studies into race/racialisation in Scandinavia describe colour-blindness as a norm, where race was made irrelevant and obsolete (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009, Svendsen et al., 2014). And while "race" is not being openly discussed, at the same time, the rise of nationalist, right-wing parties and anti-immigration activists legitimize conversations about "insiders" and "outsiders," making anti-racist and racist discourses cohabit in what Garner calls "neoliberal post-racist society" in the Nordics (Garner, 2014, p.413).

However, whiteness in the Nordics can not be reduced to a white body, as Garner argues, it is also possible that:

"Whiteness is not only about the body but about engagement in ways of thinking and doing. Thus, in practice, people not racialized as white can embrace essential aspects of whiteness, while people racialized as white can enter a process of disengagement from it."

(Garner, 2014, p. 409)

This nuanced understanding of how whiteness is constructed and how it can change is an important idea in terms of understanding why not everyone can be included into white privilege, or included partially. In our research it is important to draw attention to 'white' minority experiences, and therefore examine 'whiteness' as a category representing a wide range of different (racialized) positions. Garner argues that this approach "would lead to the deconstruction of 'whiteness' (...) in which colour is not taken as the only marker of exclusion / inclusion, and thus enable us to encompass a wider variety of experiences of oppression and name them' (Garner, 2006, p. 269).

To sum up, these aforementioned studies allow us to understand the Nordic attitude towards and perception of race/racism, which is characterised by suppression of histories of colonialism and affiliation to racialised ideas. These "repressed histories" (Garner, 2014) and narratives of Nordic exceptionalism, we would argue, play into white Nordic entitlement, as well as hegemony of whiteness.

Eastern Europeans in Western Europe - "not-quite-white"?

As has already been mentioned, Eastern Europeans are frequently rendered as "not-quiet-white" due to their position as Europe's internal 'others' (Kalnačs 2016; Buchowski 2006), or as "undeveloped" European subjects (Dzenovska 2010). The topic of the racialization of Eastern Europeans in Western Europe in general and the Nordic region, in particular, is relatively undeveloped, although some recent studies (Böröcz & Sarkar, 2017, Lapiņa and Vertelytė, forthcoming; Loftsdóttir 2017; van Riemsdijk, 2010; Wara & Munkejord, 2018) shed light on this ongoing debate. This thesis will, therefore, contribute to the ongoing discussion on the racialization of Eastern Europeans in Western Europe.

Kristin Loftsdottir (2017) focuses on racism in Europe and the construction of the "Other" subject position through the examination of experiences of migrants from Lithuania in Iceland. The racialization of Eastern Europeans in Iceland, according to Loftsdóttir, has deep historical roots due to the positioning of Eastern Europe as not entirely "European" (Buchowski in Loftsdóttir, 2017, p. 70). Lithuanian and Polish migrants became a symbol of unskilled workers in the Icelandic national imagery, which consequently led to their positioning at the lowest level within the hierarchy of Whiteness. This portrayal could partly be explained by persistent Icelandic attempts to establish themselves within European hierarchies as entirely European. This juxtaposition also allows Iceland to distance itself from its colonial past, claiming "innocence" which has also been a part of the overall narrative not only in Iceland but also in the whole of Scandinavia (Keskinen et al. 2009; Loftsdóttir and Jensen, 2012). "Innocence" means the separation of racism from specific historical processes by creating and maintaining an image of non-colonial, therefore, non-racist past (Loftsdóttir, 2017). These post-racism claims, also discussed by other Scandinavian authors (Garner, 2014; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012), have been a constitutive element of Nordic self-perception in relation to colonialism for quite some time, which makes it a challenge to acknowledge racism against, for instance, migrants from Eastern Europe.

Another study that explores different gradations of Whiteness in Northern Europe is van Riemsdijk's (2010) account of Polish nurses' racialized experiences in Norway. Using the concept of variegated Whiteness, van Riemsdijk examines a partial inclusion of Eastern European migrants into the nation, as well as the construction of Europeanness in relation to Whiteness. Inclusion into Whiteness is also discussed as a "place- and time-specific" (p. 122), continually shifting and complex in its construction. Similar to Loftsdottir's findings, van Riemsdijk concludes that there are certain hierarchies of Whiteness that could be observed in Norway. Just as Lithuanian workers in Iceland, Polish nurses in Norway are also confronted with stereotypical assumptions about their status and skills, as well as with the implicit assumption that they are "not-quite-white." The matter of "not-quite-white" Polish migrants serves as an example of how white privilege becomes out of reach for particular ethnic groups due to complex economic and historical conditions.

Another study, exploring the ambiguous position of Eastern Europeans in Western Europe, is Böröcz & Sarkar's (2017) discussion of an imagined figure of "Polish plumber" in Britain.

Following the Brexit vote in 2016, the political discourse was to a large degree dominated by anti-East European immigrant rhetoric, with Polish "Gastarbeiter" becoming an "increasingly demonized figure" (Böröcz & Sarkar, 2017, p. 311), which, in some extreme cases, led to physical violence against them (ibid.). According to authors, at the heart of this debate lies the matter of Whiteness in Western Europe, and who could be placed in the center and the margins of Whiteness, and at what cost. Indeed, the process of "becoming white" has been explored by numerous authors, although mainly in the context of the United States (see Brodkin, 1998; Barrett & David Roediger, in Rothenberg, ed., 2002; Ignatiev, 2009; Guglielmo & Salvatore Salerno, 2003 cited in Böröcz & Sarkar, 2017, p.312). The main difference in the construction of Whiteness in Western Europe, according to Böröcz & Sarkar, is in the nature of migration within the borders of the EU, since "both the "destination" *and* the migrant-emitting societies share membership in the same public authority" (p.312, author's emphasis). This study helps us understand that the status of an Eastern European in the West is constantly questioned and kept ambiguous, and a place Eastern Europeans occupy in the hierarchies of Whiteness.

The east-west migration and racialized experiences of Eastern Europeans (Eastern European women, in particular) have been addressed through a feminist phenomenologist approach by Wara & Munkejord (2018). The study explores Russian female migrants' experiences in Northern Norway, who still face judgment and objectification of their bodies despite being well-integrated and having a good education. Their visibility as Eastern European "others" is manifested through the different ways in which they dress, which makes them acutely aware of their foreign, migrant status. This feeling "out-of-place," as authors conclude, forces Eastern European women to "dress down" - to change the ways of appearing to make themselves less visible in the Norwegian context. The desire to fit in, as well as the attempts to pass as Norwegian, is conceptualized as a direct effect of local, gendered racialized practices. Wara & Munkejord also draw attention to the long history of stereotypical portrayal of Russian women in the Norwegian media discourse, as well as to "symbolic boundaries" that have been created between the West (Norway) and the East (Russia), often reinforced by the idea of unbridgeable cultural differences between Russians and Norwegians. (Wara & Munkejord, 2018, p.30). This study is of relevance to our thesis since it elaborates on how different markers of difference (gender, social class, looks) create "overlapping systems of simultaneous oppressions" and "different social divisions

interrelate in terms of the production of social relations and in terms of people's lives" (Anthias in Wara & Munkejord, 2018, p.32).

Another important contribution to the study of the racialization of Eastern Europeans in the Nordics is by Krivonos (2017), which explores young unemployed Russian- speakers' struggles in Finland. This study reveals the experiences of well-educated Russian-speaking migrants who find themselves at the bottom of the social ladder following their migration to Finland. The ways in which young migrants narrate their racialized position show that some of them reclaim their whiteness by rejecting the position of "welfare abusers," often at the cost of other ("lazy" and "undeserving") migrants, commonly referred to as "asylum seekers." (Krivonos, 2017, p. 1154). Krivonos explains, that "racialization of migrant Others then works as a form of distinction, through which his space for whiteness as a respectable worker-identity is claimed." (ibid.) A similar study (Fox, 2013) showed how Hungarian and Romanian workers in the UK reaffirm their position in the hierarchies of whiteness by racializing other ethnic minorities (e.g., Roma). Fox concludes that this strategy is used to negotiate and redefine their marginalization by "using racism" and their "putative whiteness." (Fox, 2013, p. 1874) By doing so, Hungarians and Romanians can become "white" as opposed to "less white" ethnic minorities.

These studies (Krivonos, 2017; Fox, 2103) bring out an important argument that Eastern Europeans are being racialized and simultaneously are in the process of racializing others to reclaim higher status within the hierarchies of whiteness.

The latest contribution to the debate about the racialization of Eastern Europeans in Western European settings is Lapiņa and Vertelytė, forthcoming, 2020. The study explores Eastern European's position as "not-quite-white," shaped by different markers of difference, e.g phenotype, gender and audio-hearable difference. In the case of Eastern Europeans, whiteness is not only intersectional (relational to other social positions), but also differentiated - comprised of different modulations, both "changing and changeable" (Lapiņa and Vertelytė, forthcoming, 2020, p. 5). This research provides a nuanced understanding of "Eastern Europeanness" in the modern Western European context as always "fluctuating between racially marked and remarked," as well as confirming whiteness to be relational and context-specific.

The aforementioned studies give us a nuanced understanding of construction of whiteness, as well as Eastern Europeans positioning within different hierarchies of whiteness and their struggles with being seen as “not-quite-white”, “out-of-place” racialized Others.

Race in Denmark: Danishness and Whiteness, interconnected

An overlap between whiteness and Danishness has been recently studied by a number of Nordic scholars within cultural, post-colonial and migration studies (Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen, 2014, Fair, 2010; Jensen, 2017; Hervik, 2019; Koefoed & Simonsen, 2007; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012; Rytter, 2010; Rytter, 2019, Simonsen, 2016). These works geographically expand Critical Whiteness studies to the Nordic region (Denmark, in particular) and explore the intersection between whiteness and Danishness. In the following chapter, we will discuss how whiteness, although not widely acknowledged, is implicit in the concept of Danishness and how that relates to the processes of exclusion of non-Western (Eastern European) migrants.

The discussions of whiteness and Danishness begin with the question of race, the topic that has long been denied and marginalized in Denmark (Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen, 2014, Andreassen & Vitus, 2015; Jensen, 2017; Hviding, Bendixsen & Hervik, 2018). The Danish public debate seldom includes such concepts as “nationalism,” “racism,” or “whiteness,” most of the participants of this debate, as Hervik (2019) explains it, focusing on:

“…‘Foreigner Policy’ (lit. udlændingepolitik), ‘Alien’s Act,’ (Integrationslovgivningen), ‘Political Symbolism’ (symbolpolitik), a ‘Restrictive Foreigner Policy’ (stram udlændingepolitik), which is a dominant claim repeated almost endlessly and rests upon a nationalist foundation”(p. 532).

Generally, racism and discrimination in Denmark are considered (by Danes) to be a matter of individual ignorance, rather than embedded in the Danish society at large (Jensen et al., 2017). These “strategies of denial” are also consistent with the attitude towards race in the whole of Scandinavia, discussed in one of the previous chapters. One of the possible reasons that Danish perception of racism is non-existent is due to Denmark’s position as a minor player in the process

of colonization and overwhelming neglect towards colonial history (Olwig in Jensen et al., 2017, p.54.) Denmark, similarly to Sweden, Norway, and Finland, tends to assume the historical position of an outsider of the colonial-project, reproducing a self-image that reflects such values as humanity, gender equality, freedom (Hervik, 2019). As Olwig puts it: “Danes as freedom-loving, egalitarian and tolerant people who place equality and fairness before grandeur, power, and honor.” (Olwig in Jensen et al., 2017, p. 52).

This idea of who Danes are, their true values is connected to a concept of Danishness - what does it mean to be Danish? It is ‘Danishness’ *(Danskhed)*, rather than whiteness, that is at the forefront of public discourse and everyday conversations. Some studies have shown how the construction of whiteness is articulated through discourses of Danishness, and how Danishness overlaps with whiteness (Fair, 2010; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012 Rytter, 2019). Whiteness in Denmark is grounded in specific historical and cultural geographies, with the welfare state being one of the significant features in the construction of whiteness. (Fair, 2010). The Danish welfare state has been ‘a concept full of positive connotations’ and perceived as something “unique and valuable” (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2007, p.319).

“There are neither among politicians nor in the general population, many who can imagine a society without a welfare state. Danes have become fond of their welfare state. There is widespread support for the welfare state, according to all measurements. The welfare state has become a part of our everyday lives and identit. “(Ploug in Fair, 2010, p. 141, translated from Danish).

Amidst this widespread support for the welfare state, the figure of internal “Other” - non-West, non-Danish, not-White - functions as a permanent threat and a symbol of the exploitation of resources and a threat to Danish welfare model (ibid.,p.327). It has been argued that whiteness is constructed and measured as the juxtaposition to an imagined “Other” (Dwyer and Jones 2000; Hubbard 2005; Reitman 2006, as cited in Fair, 2010) and the figure of “Other” is seen as posing a threat to White cultural practices and White identity (Hubbard 2005 in Fair, 2010).

In Denmark, especially for the last decades, the public debate around immigrants and refugees also tend to represent them as “burdens” to the welfare state and “culturally incompatible” with Danish values, “Danishness” and Danish identity (Jensen et al., ,2017, p.55). The attitude towards the newcomers to Denmark is aptly described by Hervik (2019) in his recent article on Danish racialized practices:

“This Other is variously characterized as ‘non-Westerners’, ‘Muslims’, ‘parallel society’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘terrorists’, and ‘radicalized’. (...) the nationalist division is sharp and undeniable in its identity politics that intends to defend and strengthen the ‘real’, ‘authentic’, ‘true’, ‘authoritarian’, ‘Danish’ values from unwanted foreign racialized others (...)” (Hervik, 2019, p. 530).

Consequently, this attitude leads to the formation of Us vs. Them mentality and makes it hard - if not to say impossible - for foreigners to be accepted into Danish society and Danishness. Koefoed and Simonsen also point towards another manifestation of the Other in Denmark where:‘*the contradiction between “us” and “them” . . . is formulated in terms of modernity versus tradition”. This is done in relation to issues such as human rights, enlightenment, religion and not least gender relations’* (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2007, p. 315).

The dichotomy between "us," the ethnic Danes, and "them," non-Western Others, also exists as an integral part of integration discourses, indicating seemingly irreconcilable differences between these two imagined groups (Hervik, 2011; Hervik, 2019). This discourse is rooted in the perception of immigrants having origins in the countries that are radically different from Denmark with respect to understandings of democracy, the labour market and family practices (Olwig & Paerregaard, 2011). These cultural differences hinder migrants from properly integrating into Danish society (ibid.). As Hervik puts it: "Division between a national positively-represented, predominantly white in-group and an external, non-white out-group that is negatively depicted along with its domestic collaborators." (Hervik, 2019). Such boundaries are drawn by means of policies on immigration and integration, reflecting therefore unequal power relations between ethnic minorities and majorities.

The way in which Eastern European migrants are ‘othered’ is comparably different from the othering of non-European migrants; this mainly is due to the fact that Eastern Europeans are white, and some can even ‘pass’ as white to some degree. Denmark’s status of being a welfare state is one of the tools used to ‘other’ immigrants from themselves, by many Danes believing that the immigrants have not contributed enough (with taxes) to the welfare state to be able get the same treatment as Danish citizens who have been paying taxes for decades. The ‘othering’ of the non-western migrants is shaped by the comparison with the created Danish identity in the eyes of the Danes. The Danish nationalistic discourse and the perception of Danish identity Danes have of themselves as a nation is closely linked to national belonging and the ‘othering’ of everyone who does not belong within that discourse. Hence, the exclusion, othering and belonging processes are all linked to the self-perception of the host country (Jenkins, 2011, p. 65). We will discuss these processes in the context of Eastern European migrants’ experiences in Denmark, exploring their lived experiences in terms of inclusion/exclusion. Keeping in mind the interrelations between whiteness and Danishness, we will examine the process of passing into Danishness - and whiteness - and struggles that our participants face, being white Eastern European migrants in Denmark.

Methodology

Epistemologically, in this research, we subscribe to an understanding that knowledge is produced through social interactions. As researchers, we do not attempt to access the "real" knowledge about individuals' lived experiences. Instead, we attempt to observe how the construction of individual interpretations and understandings is socially situated, adopting a social constructivist perspective (Goffman, 1959; Potter, 1996 in Halkier, 2006, p. 16).

We have chosen a qualitative approach in our study, combining focus-group interviews with semi-structured individual interviews. As will be discussed in the Limitations section of this thesis, the collection of empirical data was heavily influenced by the external factors (Covid-19 pandemic). Therefore, the combination of different qualitative methods for this research was a necessary alteration to the process of data collection. However, according to Halkier, it could also be a fruitful strategy to combine different methods while conducting research or thesis projects (Halkier, 2006, p.18). We would argue that it can also be methodologically justified in our research since individual interviews can be used as follow-up method in order to get an opportunity to "delve into an individual's experiences and understandings" (Halkier, 2006, p.21, own translation), while focus-group interview allows participants to create group interpretations, arguments, agreements, or disagreements together, while social interactions unfold.

One of the focus group's strengths lies in the production of data since this method is considered fruitful for producing data about social groups' understandings, interactions, and norms (Halkier, 2016, p. 13). As Halkier expands on the production of data during the focus group interviews: "Participants exchange accounts about actions and understandings as a part of the interaction in a social, everyday-like and familiar context in the presence of a researcher" (ibid., p.12, own translation). The interaction of the participants, therefore, leads to important discussion points, providing us with relevant data.

There are, however, certain weaknesses associated with the use of a focus group interview as a method. As Bloor explains, the atypical individual practices or understandings tend to be underreported during focus group interviews (ibid., p.8). One of the possible explanations could

be that social control in the process of the focus group interview hinders participants from sharing some of their experiences and perspectives.

Although researchers can use focus group interviews as a means to generate group understandings and views, some scholars (Bloor, 2001) warn against the consumerist approach to focus groups, when researchers treat their participants as "passive" subjects, whose only task is to contribute to the study with their views. Neither should focus group interviews be considered as "an alternative and authentic depiction of social reality which contests and confounds the previous conventional wisdom." (Bloor, 2001, p. 93) Although the focus group interviews undeniably function as a platform where "silent voices" can be heard, researchers should not consider the focus group data as means of accessing "true" feelings of the participants and the "real" nature of a matter at hand. Instead, focus groups are meant to yield data on meanings that lie behind those group assessments and "the uncertainties, ambiguities, and group processes that lead to and underlie group assessments" (Bloor, 2001 pp.4-5). Bloor points out that meaning creation is always situational and dependent on participants' social contexts and derives from their discursive repertoire. In our research, we also subscribe to this argument and view our participant’s accounts as socially constructed and situation dependent.

Participants

There are important considerations and choices a researcher should make when it comes to the formation of a focus group. These considerations encompass, for instance, participants' gender, socio-economic background, and age (ibid., p.32). The sample for this research consists of highly-skilled workers with Eastern European backgrounds. As has been mentioned previously, this particular target group was chosen due to the growing number of skilled immigrants migrating to Denmark. In our study, the main factors that played a role in the selection of our participants were their ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds, since we were originally interested in the experiences of high-skilled migrants of Eastern European origins. In the recruitment process, we have tried to find participants that would form a dynamic and productive group(s), following Halkier's idea that the focus groups can be neither too homogeneous, nor too heterogeneous (Halkier, 2006, p.31).

We have contacted our potential informants mainly through our networks, following the initial orientation on the project. Our participants come from diverse professional backgrounds, including an IT-specialist, a digital marketing professional, a Ph.D. student, a sales professional, and a start-up intern. In terms of home countries, the sample comprised two participants from Russia who participated in individual interviews, and participants from North Macedonia, Czech Republic, and Slovakia, who took part in a focus group interview. For the sake of the anonymity of our participants, the names which are used throughout our analysis are pseudonyms, while also certain details which they have provided have been altered accordingly to ensure the anonymity of the participants in question.

Data collection, transcribing and analysis

In our project, we use data that has been collected through focus group interviews combined with qualitative interviews with key participants, all of which were carefully transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The interview questions focused on participants' lived experiences as migrants of Eastern European descent in Denmark, their struggles in learning the language, and their general thoughts/understandings on working and living in Denmark.

Both focus group interviews and individual interviews, ranging from 30 to 40 minutes, were conducted in English and carefully transcribed. In our transcriptions, we have tried to reflect the oral speech as closely as possible, without diving into minor details (Bloor et al., 2001). Since the oral speech is very different from the written speech, certain expressions have been omitted (such as “oh”, “like”, “yeah”) (Bloor, 2001, pp. 59-62). At the same time, the important non-verbal elements like laughter, sighs, affirmative sounds have been marked in the transcript. The general guidelines for the transcription, although slightly modified, were borrowed from Bloor (Bloor in Halkier, 2006, p.78).

Researcher positionality

In the present study, our position as researchers is of critical importance. Our own Eastern European background allowed us to conduct insider research (Acker, 2000; Corbin Dwyer &

Buckle, 2009). The strengths and weaknesses of insider research have been widely discussed in sociological studies concerned with qualitative research methodology and epistemology. In particular, feminist researchers were engaged in discussing the significance of the position of the researcher and the researched (Acker, 2000, Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The main discussions about the researcher's role in qualitative studies revolve around the areas of field research, observation of participants, and ethnography.

The "insider" epistemology was studied by scholars who are insiders to a group of study and those who are positioned as outsiders. Some argued in favor of gathering data "eyes open" - when insider researchers should assume, he/she knows nothing about the phenomenon under study (Asselin in Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55). Others have argued: "There is no neutrality. There is only greater or less awareness of one's biases. And if you do not appreciate the force of what you're leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you're doing" (Rose in Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55). Critical understanding of a researcher's membership has developed "in response to a greater consciousness of situational identities and the perception of relative power" (Angrosino in Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.55). Following a postmodern critical approach, scholars argue for the importance of understanding the researcher's context, such as gender, class, ethnicity, etc. (ibid.). In line with this argument, the similarities between ourselves as researchers and the research participants we have chosen came into focus and prompted us to examine them reflexively. Our position in this study is that of insiders - both of us are of Eastern European origin; we speak English fluently, and Danish with a specific accent. We also struggled with being placed in the categories of "Eastern European migrant," "not-quite-white" at some point in our lives, struggled with the acquisition of foreign languages, realizing how language competences shape social and power relations. Our position as insiders has created an intimate connection between our participants and us, enabling them to feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Therefore, we would argue that the significance of a researcher's position cannot be underestimated since his/her membership plays a direct and intimate role in both the process of data collection and subsequent analysis. Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue:

Whether the researcher is an insider, sharing the characteristic, role, or experience under study with the participants, or an outsider to the commonality shared by participants, the

personhood of the researcher, including her or his membership status in relation to those participating in the research, is an essential and ever-present aspect of the investigation. (p.55)

In the process of conducting qualitative research, it is also important to examine different researcher positionalities from an ethical point of view. This is the point that has been voiced by many feminist scholars and cultural geographers. As Hopkins (2007) explains:

The multiple, interweaving, and intersecting ways in which our various positionalities and identities are revealed, negotiated, and managed in research encounters are crucial to the conduct of ethical research. (p.388)

According to Hopkins, researchers are always in the process of being "read and interpreted by research participants" (Hopkins, 2007, p. 387), where the personality, life experience, and various identities of the researcher can not be downplayed. Therefore, it is crucial to bear in mind that personalities are negotiated in practice, and these negotiations map the ethical research practice.

While reflecting on the possible challenges in conducting ethical research in practice, we became aware of the fact that researchers positionality is never a static one, but rather is constituted in relation to different contexts, demands, and audiences, emerging in the process of research (Rose in Darling, 2014, p.206). Conducting qualitative research is a social practice, and a process of engaging in the "ethics of encounters" with other people (Thrift in Darling, 2014, p. 202). As Thrift puts it, conducting research can be described as 'a constant stew of emotions, ranging from doubt (...) to laughter and a kind of comradeship' (ibid.). Therefore, the research process is enacting a series of social interactions, where all the participants form a connection and invest time and effort into the process. During our interviews, we experienced that due to our shared background, we developed a particular connection with our participants that manifested itself while interaction unfolded. Since some of our personal experiences were similar to those of our participants, we shared moments of the mutual understanding of the topic at hand, that researchers with different backgrounds would not have had. Our position enabled a particular alliance formation, which made the interviewing process go very smoothly, with moments of laughter and common sympathy. At

the same time, our belonging to the same group as our participants and our own biases and preconceptions could have influenced the way in which we perceived and understood our participants. The next part will address these issues in the context of limitations.

Limitations

Our positionality as researchers plays a big role in how our participants perceive us. As stated above, both of us have Eastern European backgrounds and have gone through similar experiences as our participants have. Thus, when researchers interview participants of the same background as themselves there could be certain limitations with which they could be faced with. One of the limitations could be that we cannot be fully objective due to our own Eastern European backgrounds, and our personal relationships with the participants. The participants are chosen from our personal network, meaning that we personally knew the participants before the interview process. What should be considered when talking about the focus group interview is that when asked certain questions people reveal certain things about themselves. However, these answers are always influenced by external factors such as who is asking the questions and who is around when these questions are asked. Our previous acquaintance may have made them feel as if they cannot share everything with us due to the fear of being judged by us or the other participants. Halkier (2006) argues, that participants of focus groups have the tendency for conformity or negation which thereafter can lead to different manifestations of their experiences and understandings (p.17). In our research the participants seemed to agree on most points, the agreement between two participants may have led to the confirmation of the third participant in order to not be left out or seem different in comparison. Another limitation could be that due to the previously acquired acquaintance and Eastern European background, the participants may not feel as if they have the need to dive deeper and give more detailed answers to the questions which were asked due to their shared experiences and mutual understanding of certain situations. What should also be considered when talking about the focus group interview is that when asked certain questions people reveal certain things about themselves and not their complete truth, this again could be connected to the fear of judgement or misunderstanding.

Another methodological limitation of this thesis is connected to external factors, namely an unexpected health crisis the humanity faced in spring of 2020. The virus now known as the Coronavirus went from being an epidemic to a global pandemic. What had started in Wuhan (China), was now affecting people all over the world. The everyday lives and all future plans most people had made were put to a halt. The lockdown, introduced by the Danish government on the 11th of March 2020 ("Regeringen tager historisk skridt: Danmark lukker ned", 2020) led to the closing of all public institutions, and a ban on gathering of more than ten people was implemented. The present study was initially planned as a focus-group based one, however, the lockdown happened the day on which our second focus-group was supposed to be held. These circumstances had a great impact on the course of our study especially in regards to the collection of empirical material. The lockdown made it impossible for us to proceed as we had planned previously. Due to the unexpected circumstances we changed our approach and decided to proceed with individual Skype interviews instead of having a focus group meeting on Skype. The decision to do individual interviews instead of a focus-group was made since having several people interviewed online at once would have led to certain complications; the process of recording and transcribing the interviews would have been extremely difficult since we would not have had full control over the 'virtual room' as we did when the focus group was held in person. These complications as well as sudden changes we had to make, had a great impact on the process of data collection, nevertheless, we consider them methodologically justified, as has been explained earlier.

Analysis

In this chapter we analyze the empirical data collected through a focus group interview combined with individual interviews. The results, grouped with the help of thematic analysis, reveal a number of sub-themes, related to the main themes of language, racialization and whiteness. Main sub-themes include the reflections on the struggles to become a model migrant in Denmark, and the significance and power of language, both local (Danish) and English as a universal lingua franca. The analysis also tackles the relationship between language competences and/or accent and processes of exclusion from a dominant culture. Lastly, we analyze the position of Eastern European migrants as a racialized one and relate this to a broader discussion of Europeanness and whiteness in Denmark.

It is important to note that our participants were in agreement with each other on many topics throughout the discussion in the focus group interview. Participants of the individual interviews also expressed ideas, similar to those of the focus group. What follows is the analysis of the main themes as related to the extracted quotes from the interviews.

"I kind of feel that I OWE it to the country" **- A struggle to be a "good" migrant**

One of the recurring themes during our interviews with the participants was related to the perceptions of "integration" into Danish society and being a "good" migrant. This topic was primarily discussed in the context of arrival to Denmark, belonging, and language acquisition. It became clear that participants have both during the interview process and earlier reflected on what it means to be a migrant in Denmark and what are the expectations of the society in general towards newcomers. The participants touched upon the topics of a "model" migrant behavior and discussed what it takes to "integrate" into Danish society.

The topic of coming to Denmark as a migrant was something that was touched upon by one of the participants. Tamara mentioned the process of moving to Denmark as a complicated

one, associated with the confusion in terms of new rules and surroundings. She describes it as follows:

“You know nothing about the country, you know nothing about the culture, you know nothing about people, you don't know anybody, if you know somebody probably they are either your family, who are your new family or your friends from a country you come from” (A2, Tamara, 283-286).

Tamara also addressed this topic and the typical experience of migrating to Denmark, who face challenging start in their new life:

“People who are moving to Denmark and are scared to hell, the first several months that they are working or living here, that they can not do anything without the Danish language. I have seen people with very good experience, a very good education, very good, basically, (...) competences, and generally, people with very good communication skills, and soft skills, these people being in a way (..) pushed down from the start. So they are moving to the country, and everybody around is saying: "It is impossible. You can not get a job! You can not work! You can not do anything"

(A2, Tamara, 273-283).

This description clearly shows how one experiences migration from the position of an outsider, the feeling of not being accepted into Danish society right away, and even the sense of rejection based solely on the fact that one doesn't speak the language. This has been described in the literature about relations between ethnic majorities and minorities, and the discourse of "insider" vs. "outsider" (see Garner, 2014; Lundstrom and Teitelbaum, 2018). Tamara's accounts of what a migrant might hear upon arrival (*"It is impossible. You can not get a job! You can not work! You can not do anything!"*) feeds into everyday racist discourses in Denmark, existing in what Garner calls "neoliberal post-racist society" in the Nordics (Garner, 2014, p.413).

During the focus group interview, it appeared as if all the participants shared a common understanding of the significance of language and culture education in order to facilitate their integration into Danish society. All of the participants had completed or were in the process of taking their Danish classes, having either chosen to take them voluntarily (Jana, Maja, Nora,

David) or as a part of their integration program (Tamara). Jana was the first one to mention the link between integration and language acquisition. She described it as a sense of duty to the country that through welfare system provided her with a lot of opportunities and was critical of other migrants, who showed the lack of effort in learning the language:

*"**I kind of feel that I OWE it to the country** because I'm living in a country, where they have a great system, and they provide me with so many opportunities and resources and everything, and I would find it arrogant if someone is not trying at all."*

(A1, Jana, 368-370)

Jana clearly indicated a moral obligation towards the host country and explains how learning the language is a path that one could take in order not to become an "arrogant" and "undeserving" migrant, but rather a "good" and "worthy" one. Jana also praises the Danish welfare state (*"a great system and they provide me with so many opportunities and resources"*), a system which is also perceived as something "unique and valuable" by the majority of the Danish population (Koefoed and Simonsen, 2007).

At the same time, she also positions herself in opposition to those who, in her opinion, abuse the "system" - the welfare state, in fear of becoming an "exploitative" migrant, and posing a threat to White cultural practices and White identity (Hubbard 2005 in Fair, 2010). It is also important to note that Jana's statement is mirroring the Danish integration discourse, which has a tendency to describe migrants and refugees as "burdens" to the welfare state and "culturally incompatible" with Danish values, "Danishness" and Danish identity (Fair, 2010, Jensen et al., 2017; Hervik (2019).

Another participant, Maja, was in agreement with Jana's argument. She added, "I feel like integration can never be the same if you don't speak the language" (A1, Jana, 378-379) She also condemned other migrants from Eastern Europe that she apparently came in contact with:

*"So for integration purposes (it is important to learn the language) and also **it would be arrogant** for us not to show ANY signs or initiatives whatsoever, which I have seen in people that have been living here (in Denmark) for many years."*

(A1, Jana, 384-386)

Jana's criticism of other migrants' points towards an invisible hierarchy or shades of whiteness (Dyer, 1997) among the migrants from Eastern Europe. She describes "undeserving migrants" as those who are not willing to put in the effort into learning the language and, by extension, integrating into society and becoming a "model" migrant. The "undeserving" migrants have been an integral part of anti-immigration discourse, the discourse that could also be adopted by some migrants in order to affirm their position as "good migrants" at the cost of others. Krivonos (2017) and Fox (2013) have demonstrated how certain minorities racialize a different group of minorities in order to negotiate and redefine their own position in the hierarchies of whiteness.

Jana later added that there are certain expectations of foreigners coming to Denmark in regards to a minimum language level, since "*it is nice to make and show an effort because you're in their country*" (A1, Jana, 373). Jana, therefore, connects the sense of gratitude towards the host country to becoming a "good" migrant, and a possibility to pass as Danish. She also emphasizes the "host" vs. "guest" power relations (*"you're in their country"*).

However, she later compared expectations a migrant would face in her home country, Slovakia, where the situation would have probably been the same.

"It would also be the same situation, I imagine, if someone comes to my country -to Slovakia - and they don't even try, and they're like: "No, it's too difficult." At least (learning the local language) shows interest, ***it shows respect****."*

(A1, Jana, 374-376)

Jana explains how being respectful and a good "guest" in Denmark makes one a good and deserving migrant. Another participant, Tamara, expressed the idea that it is necessary to speak the language in order to be a part of the Danish society and having social relations:

"I had a very strong feeling that I NEED the language, especially in the beginning when I just moved because there was lots of talk about it, e.g., that without language you can not find a job, without language you are out of society and social life."

(A2, Tamara, 183-185)

Nora described her distress about her language skills, being constantly questioned and evaluated. She spoke about native Danes' high expectations in regards to her level of Danish, and about her feeling of frustration and disappointment being unable to meet these expectations - "***It kind of feels like it's a failure***" (A1, Nora, 402). The insufficient language skills, therefore, make her feel undeserving, as a failed migrant. When asked if she was feeling judged, she instantly replied:

"Yes, over the time that I've been living here. So that ***doesn't feel very nice for me****, and* ***it's very personal****. Getting here, starting school and having jobs and everything, and then also the Danish language was pushed to the side (...) at the beginning at least. So, yeah, it is not a nice feeling to get from someone that you meet."*

(A1, Nora, 411- 414)

At the same time, some participants mentioned how they encountered positive reinforcement from the local native Danish, who, in Jana's words, "appreciate it (foreigners speaking Danish), because it's a very rare occasion." (A1, Jana, 130-131)

From our interviews, it became clear that most of the participants shared the opinion on the importance of learning the language and embracing Danish values to not be left out from the communities they live in and society in general. Integration, although not defined by any of our participants, was surely something they have reflected on and had a specific understanding about. For our participants, "integration" is a category of practice, a concept which they used to make sense of their everyday practices and compare them to that of a majority population. Most of the participants agreed on how engaging in certain practices (like learning Danish) shows an effort to become a proper "good" migrant as opposed to "arrogant," "disrespectful," (in our participants' words) un-Danish Other (cf. Rytter 2010). Through our analysis, we showed how the discourses of "host" vs. "guest," "insider," vs. "outsider" manifest themselves in the lives of our participants.

***"We can do this quickly in English"*- Language and power**

During our qualitative research, participants also engaged in conversations about the power of language in the interpersonal communication context. The reflections were along the lines of the collective power of the communities that speak the local language (in our case, Danish) and the power of English as lingua franca in the world and Denmark in particular.

In the case of English in Denmark, all of our participants expressed that English is a global language that shapes the communication between native Danes and foreigners in Denmark. All of our participants also showed a common understanding of the significant role that English plays in global communication in international companies, academia, and interpersonal relations between non-native English speakers and native Danes.

One of the main observations made by some participants was that Danes, in general, are very proficient in English. For instance, Nora stated that "*I feel like everyone in Denmark speaks English really well*," unlike her native Czech Republic, where the level of English can not be compared to the level in Denmark (A1, Nora, 168-169). Another participant, Maja, also described the level of proficiency as high, in Copenhagen in particular (A1, Maja, 191-192). Nora even speculated that some of the immigrants and newcomers to Denmark are not motivated enough to learn Danish due to the high level of English among Danes "*Also, everybody can speak English, so it's so easy for us (migrants) to get lazy and not to learn it (Danish), because everybody speaks English*" (A1, Nora, 331-332).

Participants later engaged in a discussion on why native Danes are not willing to speak Danish to migrants, even if the conversation is initiated in Danish. For Maja, it was obviously connected to the high English language proficiency:

"it just does not make sense in anyone's head (to speak Danish) because they're like "ok we can do this quickly in English, we understand you understand, everyone understands. ***Why would you suffer****? I think I have seen that why-would- you-suffer moment."*

(A1, Maja, 258-261)

In this situation, a Danish speaker has an obvious upper hand and makes it clear that it's not up to Maja to decide on how this conversation will go. Although the switching could be seen as a caring response for mutual convenience, it could also be interpreted as an excluding practice and a manifestation of unequal "host" vs. "migrant" power relations.

When it comes to the discussion of power that resides in language, our participants discussed the significance of the local (Danish) language. In our interviews, this topic has been explored in the context of power relations that language creates at work. It appeared that our participants had conflicted opinions about the extent to which the local language creates influence. Some, like Maja, was convinced that due to the position of English as a universal lingua franca, there is no need to speak the local language in order to advance professionally. She explained how the use of English is becoming more and more widespread in workplaces around the world (e.g., in academia). Maja was also convinced that English becoming the primary language of communication in Denmark is something that is bound to happen - "I believe that it's going to happen in most of the Danish workplaces, I have seen it" (A1, Maja, 430). Jana agreed and discussed how local Danish employers view foreigners, who speak Danish:

"I think that they at least appreciate it when they see that you try, but I don't know if it actually (..) if it helps you rank higher (...) compared to other people, who don't speak (Danish) at all."

(A1, Jana, 343-345)

Others, like Tamara, were skeptical about the actual role of Danish in an international workplace environment at the beginning of the interview. In her view, it might be considered an asset, but not a necessity:

"if I want to move on with my career, somewhere higher, e.g., to C-level (to become a high-ranking executive), at some point of time or to move to a bigger company, for example, I have a feeling that it will be beneficial for me to speak Danish, but it won't be necessary."

(A2, Tamara, 212-216)

However, as the interview progressed, Tamara's viewpoint shifted, and she acknowledged that even processing superior English skills in an international, English-speaking workplace might not be enough to be considered as equal. She concluded: "*Even if (the company) has English as an official language, if (the management) is Danes, there would be a benefit for people who speak Danish*" (A2, Tamara, 238-240).

The conflicting opinions about the role of Danish could, in our view, be explained by our participants' positioning as high-skilled migrants within the Danish labor market. Possessing high socioeconomic status and a proficient level of English places them into the "high-skilled migrant" and "expat" position, making it easier for them to pass as Western. This position enables them to consider learning Danish as merely an option, not a necessity, as opposed to the position of low-skilled migrants, who do not have the education or the language skills to access the international labor market. However, at the same time, most of the participants acknowledged that their status and linguistic capital is not necessarily translated into passing as Danish or fully white. In their eyes, Danish language proficiency could be a key and the last step towards being fully accepted into Danishness, and, therefore, transitioning from not-quite to fully white.

Through these experiences of our participants, we can see how language reveals and reflects power relations in everyday interactions and puts migrants into positions where they have to navigate between the local language and English as a predominant language of international communication.

***"I'm trying to FIT IN"* - Exclusion and inclusion in a "host" society**

Exclusion and inclusion into the host society were also discussed during our inquiry into participants' experiences as Eastern European migrants in Denmark. The situations that participants described encompassed different contexts - both professional and personal.

Several participants engaged in the reflection about the inclusion into Danish society based on language competences. Most of the participants indicated a link between speaking the local language and being included in society. Insufficient language, on the other hand, can hinder the inclusion and acceptance by the mainstream. One of the participants, Nora, whose partner is Danish, spoke about her experience of establishing relations with her parents-in-law.

"With me and my boyfriend's family /he has a huge family and/ everyone is Danish, of course, so I want to be able to speak to them, and I want them to see that I'm trying to FIT IN and get into the community."

(A1, Nora, 388-390)

Nora later described challenges that she is facing in daily communication with her Danish relatives. Although Nora, at least in her words, speaks decent Danish, she is continually experiencing that her partner's family switches into English while talking to her. In the following dialogue, she describes an episode with her father-in-law, when he once again switched to English, making her feel left out:

"N: But, actually, the father he just speaks Danish, and then he looks at me, and I'm nodding that I UNDERSTAND and he looks at me (...) and he switches to English.

I: And how does that make you feel?

N: Bad (laughter) ***like a burden****."*

(A1, Nora, 301-307)

In this instant, Nora becomes an obstacle to an otherwise smooth conversation, the reason for everyone to switch into English. She becomes *hypervisible* (in Frankenberg terms), with her body simultaneously *losing its chair*, as Sara Ahmed would have put it (Ahmed, 2007). The moment of switching can, therefore, be described as a moment when Nora's body no longer extends into space, which leads to the feeling of "*out-of-place*," discomfort and negation - or as she puts it, feeling of

"*being a burden*." According to Nora, she also experienced a similar pattern in a professional setting. She describes her confusion at work when she suddenly excluded from a social situation which makes her feel invisible:

*"For example, in our company now /where we work/ for example, we are sitting at lunch, and we're talking in English, and suddenly they just reply to someone in Danish and it suddenly just becomes a Danish conversation, and you're just sitting there, and y**ou don't understand what happened**. (laughter)"*

(A1, Nora, 169-172)

In our interviews, we found out that all of our participants encountered the tendency of local Danish-speaking people to switch from Danish into English in the presence of foreigners. David (A3) also recalled episodes when he felt uncomfortably excluded when native Danes switched to English "*the moment they understand you are not native*" (A3, David, 74-75). He even joked that Danes might have a "*hidden setting*" (ibid.) when it comes to communicating with foreigners - they would be bound to switch and continue the conversation on their terms. David described his attitude towards this practice:" *I feel bad when I have to switch to English when I can't understand it. I feel somewhat disappointed when they switch to English…*(A3, David, 88-89). David expresses the feeling of disappointment with himself for not being "good enough" when it comes to communication with native speakers. The evaluation of his language skills and the switching that followed led to the experience of being "hypervisible" and exclusion from Danishness and transformed him into "not-quite-White," not-quite-Danish migrant.

Most of the participants described, however, how this type of behavior motivated them to learn the language in order not to feel excluded. The desire to be included in social situations was something that prompted the decision to learn the Danish language in Jana's case:

"(Learning Danish) it is more for your own sake, for the CULTURAL experience and feeling more included rather than your job hanging on that (depending on the level of Danish), I don't think so."

(A1, Jana, 353-354)

Some participants also spoke about the importance of immersing oneself into the local culture in order to be a part of a community in the host country. For instance, Maja rejected the idea that language is the only factor that plays a role in the process of migrants' inclusion into social life; however, one should also focus on understanding cultural values. She gave some examples of what can actually constitute this kind of knowledge:

"(Things like) knowing who is (Karen) Blixen, knowing who the main authors are, the main TV shows and you need to read a bit about it and you can also read (about it) in a newspaper, so if ***you want to be INVOLVED in a community****, you need to speak a language or at least understand it."*

(A1, Maja, 380-383)

Another participant, Tamara, also spoke of the importance of understanding and accepting of Danish values in the professional context. Just as Maja, she argued that knowing cultural codes - such as understanding of working culture in Denmark - is as essential as mastering the language. She explains how one can advance in a Danish company:

"But I have a feeling that C-level in the Danish company - if my team will be Danes - I need the language, but together with the language I need CULTURAL (...) cultural education. Because the way you manage the Danish team is different from the way you manage an international team - they are two different things. So this is the difference. And this is the motivation (to learn Danish)."

(A2, Tamara, 220-224)

Maja also discussed her experience of being a migrant in Denmark and having to speak English most of the time at work:"/*I feel like/ I FEEL very excluded from Denmark since I feel like I'm missing more connection to the Danish culture*" (A1, Maja, 469-470).

Our research shows how our participant's language competencies and accent are constantly being evaluated and function as markers of exclusion. Consequently, according to some participants, this tendency makes social inclusion into the Danish society challenging and

constitutes the overriding hindrance to their claims to belonging and, by extension, to whiteness. Since all of our participants are visibly white, their whiteness enables them to believe that mastering the local language is the only thing that gets in the way of becoming fully white, being included in Danish society on equal terms. For them, language becomes an important marker of difference, that is setting them apart from local Danes. Through our interviews, we demonstrated that despite being visibly white, our participants still encounter racialization and exclusion on the grounds of their language competences. By analyzing our participants' experiences, we attempt to deconstruct the notion of whiteness as in which color is taken as the only marker of exclusion/inclusion, but rather a category, "encompassing a wider variety of experiences of oppression" (Garner, 2006, p. 269).

***"They would just tease you"* - Othering of Eastern Europeans**

In this chapter we investigate the "othering" of Eastern Europeans, the way in which Eastern Europeans are perceived in their workplaces and personal relationships in Denmark. The othering our interviewees faced led them to feeling excluded in both their personal and professional relationships. All our participants could recall instances related to their own lives where they have felt 'othered' by a local due to their background. The 'othering' occurred in instances where our participants spoke Danish with an accent, or when joking with co-workers.

When asked who at their workplace speaks Danish and on which occasions Jana explained that due to her level in the Danish language, she understood a Danish conversation between her boss and the CEO of the company. She, therefore, felt comfortable joining the discussion they were having, by using simple terms. Once she made her presence known and they realized that she not only understands but also speaks the language they continued speaking in Danish. However, she stated that:

"[..] it's hard sometimes when they joke around in Danish and then you'll understand but you don't want to (joke in Danish) like "Am I going to be as funny in Danish as I am in English or like… it's a bit yeah…"

(A1, Jana, 131-135)

Here Jana's stance clearly shows that she felt uncomfortable expressing herself in social situations with the fear of being judged, disliked or mocked. Considering she is in a foreign country and speaking a foreign language she possibly feels insecure expressing herself while she also questions her social skills due to the level of her language. Nora, the second of three participants who also works in the same company as Jana continues from Jana's point saying that she too, feels uncomfortable joining the conversation even though she understands the topic fully.

"[..]so if you have like four or five Danes that are /kind of/ joking around and you think that you are /like/ understanding the whole thing, but you're kind of not sure hundred percent, so you don't want to make a fool of yourself by trying to swoop in in Danish, but sometimes I would do it, but I will just say it in English, even though they're talking in Danish I will just (laugh) and say something in English."

(A1, Nora, 137,141)

As did Jana, Nora felt that if she was to 'swoop in' and make a joke she would "make a fool of herself" (A1, Nora, 139). These are feelings associated with shame. Stigmatized persons tend to feel ashamed and cornered by the dominant people/culture. As seen in the two quotes above both of our participants preferred to speak English over Danish even though they both could hold a conversation in Danish, this is due to the fear of being misunderstood or being publicly humiliated.

What adds to being "othered" is the 'accent' with which our participants speak Danish. Accents are an important marker "An accent identifies and potentially stigmatizes people as not being native born" (Souza et al., 2016, p.1). During the individual interviews when Tamara was asked how much Danish she speaks with her co-workers she stated "Not much. It used to be more but now not much. Because everybody **switches** into English automatically. If they hear an **accent**, they just switch to English. It is easier for everybody" (A2, Tamara, 81-82). David, during his individual interview when asked whether he has experienced a native speaker switch from Danish to English he eagerly replied saying:

"Oh, yes, all the time! In my opinion, they (Danes) have a hidden setting, the moment they understand you are not native [..] would switch to English even if I reply in Danish. So I think it doesn't depend on how YOU behave, it's just their setting."

(A3, David, 74-75, 76-78)

Both David and Tamara's similar experiences regarding **switching** from Danish to English due to their **accent** further supports the claim that accents are used in the process of othering of immigrants.

When our focus group participants were asked about the level of comfort they feel when speaking in Danish they all laughed at once, showing a mutual understanding of a situation that they have been through separately, yet together through similar experiences. Jana started by saying that the Danish language is very different from 'their' mother tongues. All our participants both in the focus group and in the individual interviews have Slavic languages as their mother tongues which are from a different language family than the Danish language.

"I think because the pronunciation is so hard, so different from our languages I would say, I'm very hesitant to say something when I'm not comfortable, /I am like/ "Is this how you say it?" and I always make a break, so I always say a sentence (meaning) "Do they understand what I'm saying.?"

(A1, Jana, 201-204)

When Tamara was asked about her experience regarding work related social events, she went on to say "It is fine, you drink and everybody speaks the same language" (A2, Tamara, 153). However, she added that she thinks "the worst is the "kitchen time". Because in the kitchen time, if you don't speak very good language (Danish) then it is a problem, because you can not have a cross-talk in between maybe eight or ten people. So while you are trying to translate or adapt to the conversation, people have already switched to another topic." (A2, Tamara,153-157) which is similar to the experiences to the participants from the focus group. Nora stated that her comfort with speaking Danish depends on who she is speaking with. She added that in her old company she felt more comfortable speaking Danish because she felt more encouraged and less judged by her co-workers who "were the age of my parents". However, at her current workplace she stated that even though she loves her team, and the team is made up of young people "I feel that they

would make fun of it and even though they would be happy for me trying to speak Danish, they would still make fun of it **(accent)** (...) not in a bad sense" (A1, Nora, 226-228), "[..] they would just tease you (..) in a good way, in a friendly way...It takes so much courage for me to actually do it (speak Danish with native speakers), so I will take it the wrong way" (A1, Nora, 236-238), these are clear examples of feeling 'othered' by locals for sounding and being different. An accent as stated earlier is a marker of difference, and that marker sets immigrants apart from native speakers. Nora also added that her comfort with speaking Danish depends on who she is speaking with. However, if the person she speaks to, for instance in this case her boyfriend doesn't understand her due to her **accent** she feels her "confidence just drop" (A1, Nora, 210).

"So, whenever it happens that I say something that, for example, my boyfriend doesn't understand and he (says) "What?", then the confidence is just dropping. And that is what takes me back everytime when I try to push myself (to speak Danish), they don't understand. So, yes, it's definitely the pronunciation, it's very difficult."

(A1, Nora, 206-212)

Maja, states that she has a B2 level in Danish language. The fairly high level of Danish which she appears to know can be connected to the "domestic orientalism" theory introduced by Buchowski where he argues that "the Other can now live side by side with "us," occupy the same place, speak the same language and believe in the same god" (p.467). However, regardless of her level, the reactions she gets from natives makes it clear that knowing, understanding or even speaking the language is not enough to convince some native speakers; and immigrants can be met with snotty or sarcastic comments such as the one stated below. Thus, pointing to the fact that she does not even recognize the underlying discriminatory context under the sarcastic comments. By discrediting the efforts made by Maja to learn the language, she is one way, or another forced to always be the 'foreigner'.

"[..] even though I have passed B2 and then you get where you understand everything and it is so hard to explain to people that you can understand everything maybe you're dating someone and you're like I understand and he's like "yeah yeah sure" " yeah yeah you do you do"

(A1, Maja, 241-243)

Another way in which the knowledge of language or the lack thereof is used, is when the native speaker does not want the second language speaker to be included in the ongoing conversation. One of our interviewees Tamara, had an experience where an executive would on purpose 'exclude' her from the conversation by switching to Danish due to a difference in opinions.

"There are some people (...) if they want to (...) ***REMOVE me from conversation****, so to say, or* ***somehow to exclude me****. So I, for example, have a difference of opinions and one person /is not/ does not want my opinion to be heard, which is fine, people have different projects to move forward with, sometimes my opinion can destroy smoothness of how (...) they move (forward) with their idea, so they switch to Danish. And that is unpleasant because then you understand the reason, they switched to Danish (...) So you are speaking in English (for a long time), and your opinion was different and suddenly they switch to Danish and continue talking (in Danish). Usually it happens, when you are in the company with the person who is superior to you /in position/, you see it with a CEO, CFO, CMO, you know, c-level, and then if you raise your opinion the person in front of you switches to Danish and start speaking to the person who is the decision-maker and that is the problem, because you understand it /why that happened/, but you can not really say "Excuse me!""*

(A2, Tamara, 110-120)

This is a case where a person is chosen as a target and excluded from a social situation on purpose due to differences in opinion. This situation would not have happened if the executive in question had a misunderstanding or a different point of view to a native speaker. However, since the person who he did not agree with was a foreigner and not a native speaker he had the luxury of excluding that person from that conversation and silencing them. Knowing very well that due to the power relations between him and his employee he had the upper hand, and therefore the employee would not speak up for themselves. Another instance where Tamara expressed feeling excluded due to her accent or lack of Danish was when she got calls from certain Danish companies or institutions:

"[..]for example on the phone - some people call in Danish and they can just without (saying) "I am sorry, I don't speak English" they can just stop talking and hang up on you. It happens in many cases, especially in the "cold calls". But if people speak somewhat (good) Danish,

they will apologise and say, "I am sorry my English is not that good, but I will try". So it depends, I guess, also on how people are raised."

(A2, Tamara, 93-97)

Our participants' experiences show how the process of othering places the 'othered' in a state of exclusion, shame, and social isolation. While also creating a binary opposition between those who speak Danish perfectly and those who speak it with an accent. By using the knowledge of Danish or the lack thereof, the native speaker creates a power relation disbalance, which thereafter creates different circumstances and various different problems for the immigrant. Such as being excluded from decision making processes at their workplace, to feeling uncomfortable in social situations both in their private and professional lives in addition to their comfort or the lack thereof regarding their newfound homes.

"Everybody thinks I am from some exotic place" **- Racialization of Eastern Europeans**

In this chapter we will delve into the racialization of Eastern Europeans, by giving examples of the way in which our participants felt racialized in certain instances they had faced. Eastern Europe is not considered to be entirely European, which positions the people of Eastern Europe within the lowest levels of the hierarchy of Whiteness, which is in line with the argument made by Garner that the color of a persons' skin should not be considered to be the only marker that is used to include/exclude them (Garner, 2014, p. 409). Therefore, even though Eastern Europeans are white they are still racialized and not considered to be 'white enough'. As put very well by Borocz when speaking of Eastern Europe and Eastern Europeans "peoples of Eastern Europe [are] between Europe and Asia, between civilization and barbarism" (Borocz, 2006; Wolff, 1994). Even though this was put on paper in 1994 the dark cloud of racialization over Eastern Europe is yet to be cleared. When our participants were asked if the way they are perceived by Danes changes when they say where they are from, and their nationality, Jana and Nora both voiced their disapproval of Danes thinking that Slovakia and The Czech Republic are Eastern European countries.

“Sometimes I get a little mad, when people tell me that I'm from Eastern Europe (laughter) because it's central Europe (laughter) because it's based on history and not based on geography so I think that is how they perceive it.”, “I know that when I say that I'm from Slovakia they automatically think Eastern Europe.” , “Because maybe I think that there is a STIGMA, but I think they think about ***Eastern Europe as like “ those countries”***

(A1, Jana, 492-494, 499, 503-504).

“*It's the same for me*” (A1, 501) added Nora, showing a certain dislike to being associated with Eastern Europe. Maja however, stated that since North Macedonia is a very small country, she hasn’t necessarily endured stigmatization, rather she was faced with ignorance where Danes didn’t even know where North Macedonia is positioned.

“[..] I think that, yes, /there's definitely/ /with some countries/ a stigma. Macedonia - no one knows about it, [..] nobody is associating anything with Macedonia, it is such a small country, but they know Bulgaria, for instance, and they (Danes) know, of course, Serbia, Romania and THEN there's associations with those countries. With Serbia and Bulgaria it’s maybe a little bit different (...) that there is a mafia or something going on. Macedonia is so small, I tell them that it's in the Balkans.”

(A1, Maja, 508-515)

Due to the lack of geographic knowledge about the whereabouts of North Macedonia on the world map, Maja states that her looks have never been associated with her actual ethnic background “[..] n*o one knows about it, everybody thinks I am from some exotic place. I've heard Barcelona, Spain, I don't know, Middle East, probably nobody is associating anything with Macedonia* [..]” (A1, Maja, 509-511). Maja’s physical appearance in connection to the Danish geographic ignorance leads to her being mistaken for many different ethnicities, but her own. While Tamara who is ethnically Russian has had a different experience regarding the way her looks have been perceived by Danes. When asked whether she has felt if people automatically speak to her in English due to her appearance she replied: “*Appearance no, because I look pretty Danish*” (A2, Tamara, 88). Hence, these two very different experiences by two Eastern European women prove that your appearance is one of many tools which positions you higher or lower within

whiteness hierarchies, "...whiteness operates as a symbolic field of accumulation where many attributes such as looks, accent, "cosmopolitanism" or "Christianity" can be accumulated and converted into Whiteness" (Hage, 2003, p. 232).

Nora stated that she was surprised that the Czech Republic was not considered to be an Eastern European country, since the Czech Republic is a Central European country; as well as being a very popular tourist destination for Danish tourists.

"I didn't think that I'm from Eastern Europe, but once I moved to Denmark I found out that I am. (laughter) And I have not experienced, for example, from Czech that we would be talking badly about our neighboring countries or countries (in general), but I have met SO many Danes (in Denmark) that are like: "Oh, Eastern Europe!", it is not a ***good vibe country*** *(s). I mean, Danes love Prague, every Dane goes to Prague or went to Prague at least once. And then they're like:" Yeah, but it's Eastern Europe."*

(A1, Nora, 518,523)

Nevertheless, the racism and the stigmatization did not end with these instances. Nora speaks of a time where she was teased for having brought back pills from the Czech Republic, which takes us back to the point of Eastern Europe being seen as barbaric, backwards and not civilized enough. "*I can get teased by having a pill from the Czech (Republic), and they're like "Oh my god WHAT is in it, you are thousand years behind (in Czech Republic)*". The statement about the Czech Republic being "thousand years behind" can be connected to Buchowski and Todorova's theories of Eastern Europeans being seen as "not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilized" compared to Westerners. (Buchowski, 2006, p.464) "It's just jokes, but when you get too much of it it's /like/ ENOUGH." (A1, Nora, 534-536)

Instances such as this one where the racialized persons are made to feel 'less than', 'uncultured' etc. would be reasons why a racialized person would be inclined to hide parts of themselves which are the markers used in order to target them. Our interviewee David spoke of an occurrence where he lied about his ethnicity due to the political stigma that came with being Russian "in recent years it's become a little bad, because of the political reasons, but not because

of language or anything. Recently, it’s safer to say you're from Belurussia.” (A3, David, 165-166) he also added that he also “I pretended to be from Ukraine once.” (A3, David, 172)

Racialization constructs boundaries regarding the state of belonging of the racialized people. As seen through our participants experiences being racialized for being Eastern European is an ongoing issue which feeds into the idea of Eastern Europeans being barbaric, backwards and uncivilized by Westerners. These instances of racialization faced by our participants have led to lying , being ashamed and frustrated with who they are and where they come from.

Discussion

Through our analysis of the racialization process of Eastern Europeans in Denmark we were able to uncover various markers of difference that play a role in the exclusion and positioning of Eastern European migrants within the hierarchies of whiteness.

During our interviews, it became apparent how our participants, who are phenotypically white and enjoy the high socioeconomic status, are still being excluded from Danishness/whiteness on the grounds of the insufficient language or their specific Eastern European accent. The position of the participants is that of highly-skilled migrants, who possess a good level of English; which is universally recognized as an asset, and gives them the confidence to use it both in a professional setting and in their daily lives. This position is however, challenged by their lack of Danish language competences. Therefore, speaking fluent Danish becomes a "promise" to becoming fully Danish and the last step towards passing as unmarked, and not being excluded from whiteness. They presume that acquiring language and cultural knowledge can help them become just like 'real' Danes (cf. Rytter 2010, Hervik, 2019) and be entirely accepted into Danishness. Consequently, acquiring language and cultural norms become a righteous path towards becoming fully white, "civilized," as opposed to a "not-quite-white" Eastern European figure. The level of Danish also functions as a measure of the effort migrants are willing to put into integration and becoming "model migrants." The analysis revealed different hierarchies of whiteness, and how '...whiteness operates as a symbolic field of accumulation where many attributes such as looks, accent, "cosmopolitanism" or "Christianity" can be accumulated and converted into Whiteness' (Hage, 2003, p. 232). For our participants, talking about the process of language acquisition and struggles associated with it, in our opinion, was a way of talking about exclusion and racialized experiences.

The discussion of language as a marker of difference connects, in our opinion, to a broader discussion of the power that lies behind language. The experiences of our participants clearly demonstrate how language reveals and reflects power, contributing to the maintenance of existing

dominance - both linguistic and cultural. The discussions of the collective power of the communities that speak the local language and the power of English as lingua franca revealed how unequal power relations are constructed between migrants and "hosts", between "insiders" and "outsiders". Language, therefore, is clearly a source of influence and has the power to unite and divide communities. The power of language can also be used in the process of 'othering'. Hence, having an accent when speaking the language of the host country draws a clear line between the host and the immigrant. Throughout our analysis our participants confirmed this process by presenting us with certain instances from both their personal and professional lives.

Through our analysis, we intended to uncover the way intersecting markers have shaped the everyday experiences in the lives of our participants and their sense of belonging in Denmark. As presented theoretically, people can be discriminated against based on more than one marker, such as their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, etc.. While having a certain marker (being white) could open certain doors, a different marker (religion, ethnicity, social class) can close other doors. In the case of our participants, the whiteness they inhabit could be challenged by other intersections such as their ethnicity, language competency, class, gender, and sexuality (Ahmed, 2007; Crenshaw, 1989). The problem from the East European migrant perspective is that the higher status they would like to enjoy as white Europeans are offset by their lack of language competences and accent. Our participants are white, highly accomplished migrants, who enjoy high socioeconomic status. However, the space that they occupy in Denmark is questioned once their whiteness is challenged by their accent when speaking Danish. Their high English level, white skin, and their socioeconomic status position them to be perceived as accomplished Westerners in the eyes of the locals. However, once they start speaking in Danish of which their level is not equivalent to their English, and they speak it with a Slavic accent, they are recognized as Eastern European migrants. Their white privilege is reduced to "not quite white," and highly skilled migrant (expat) status turns into an Eastern European migrant, dismissing their accomplishments. The intersectionality of their language competencies and ethnic background leads to their racialization.

Our analysis aimed to uncover Eastern European's positions regarding the hierarchies of whiteness and Europeanness. We have shown how references to language and cultural norms inform discursive constructions that position Eastern Europeans at the margins of the symbolic

boundary of whiteness. Our participants' accounts of their personal and professional experiences were consistent with the experiences of Eastern Europeans in the Nordic setting, explored by other scholars (Böröcz & Sarkar, 2017; Fox, 2013; Lapiņa and Vertelytė, forthcoming; Loftsdóttir 2017; van Riemsdijk, 2010; Wara & Munkejord, 2018). Similar to the experiences of Eastern Europeans in Norway (van Riemsdijk 2010), our participants were confronted with stereotypical assumptions about their background, status, and skills, as well as with the implicit assumption that they are "not-quite-white." They were, consequently, placed within the lowest levels of the hierarchy of whiteness, reaffirming Dyer's argument that whiteness is not evenly distributed among phenotypically white people (Dyer, 1997). Through our analysis, we have demonstrated how whiteness in Denmark is constructed in hierarchies and how they, in turn, shape exclusion processes. However, in the process of our analysis we were able to observe that even though the personal racialization Eastern Europeans face, they can become a part of the racialization of other minorities in order to reaffirm their position in the hierarchies of whiteness. This manifested in the discourse of "less deserving", "welfare abusers" versus "good migrants". These findings also align with the previous research by Krivonos (2017) and Fox (2013) where this strategy is considered to be a strategy to negotiate and redefine their marginalization by "using racism" and their "putative whiteness." (Fox, 2013, p. 1874)

While discussing the construction of whiteness, we have to keep in mind that our informants are phenotypically white, and could, theoretically, pass as fully white. They are not racially visible, which has an impact on the ways they are racialized. As opposed to racial visibility, e.g., racial minority visibility, different shades of whiteness play a different role in (in)visibility. The position of racial/ethnic minorities cannot be escaped from, whereas white Eastern Europeans can inhabit the "normal" category (cf. Frankenberg, 1992; Ahmed, 2007) much easier than minorities can. However, as Andreassen and Ahmed-Andresen have argued, "some categories and minority positions are visible, whereas others can remain invisible until specifically verbalized or acted upon by the person inhabiting them" (Andreassen & Ahmed-Andresen, 2014, p.32.). Our participants' position as fully white is not called into question until a specific instant when their accent/insufficient language becomes a marker of difference. They can, therefore, inhabit the "normal" category and pass easily into Danishness, until they "fall out" of whiteness when the difference becomes verbalized.

Our research demonstrated and reaffirmed that whiteness means so much more than just skin color. It cannot be considered a fixed category, but, instead, a fluid, complex, and always changing one. Our participant's experience showed how whiteness could be negotiated in a particular place and time, revealing it to be an ongoing process rather than a fixed term. We also demonstrated how our participants, being visible as white, are constantly shifting between different shades of whiteness and navigating its boundaries.

The position of Eastern Europeans in the West is still constantly questioned and kept ambiguous due to their different positions both in the hierarchies of whiteness and Europeanness. Through our analysis, we aspired to uncover what it means to be Eastern European and how Eastern Europeans are racialized and 'othered' due to their ethnic background. It is important to note that our informants are either of Eastern European descent (Russian, N. Macedonian) or are considered to be Eastern European due to their countries' history (Slovakia, Czech Republic). The level of development in the West, both economic and societal, has led to the West being perceived as an aspiration, a source of admiration. "Nowadays, any society which shares these characteristics, wherever it exists on a geographical map, can be said to belong to "the West." (Hall, p186). Therefore, even though geographically the Czech Republic and Slovakia are Central European countries, their historical, economic, and social positionality places them in the East.

Our participants' experiences reaffirmed the vision of the divide between the East and the West, they were not only 'othered' and racialized based on their culture and use of language but also their countries' geographic position. As mentioned above, the West is considered to be advanced in comparison to the East; thus, at the same time, Eastern Europe is seen as "not fully European, semi-developed, and semi-civilized." (Buchowski, p.464) The narratives which our participants constructed following their own experiences as Eastern Europeans in Denmark support the everyday racialization they are faced with.

Conclusion

The stories that our participants so generously shared with us made us consider and reevaluate our own lived experiences and migration journey, which thereafter made the writing process a very personal one. By analyzing our participants' lived experiences as Eastern European migrants in Denmark, this thesis has shed light on existing hierarchies of whiteness and the process of racialization of non-Westerners in the Nordics. We have demonstrated how Eastern Europeans navigate between different shades of whiteness, their position shifting from white to “not-quite-white”. Besides, we have uncovered how the intersecting markers of difference (socioeconomic class and language markers) matter in the social construction of whiteness. Through our analysis we have been able to observe how an accent emerges as an important marker of difference, which thereafter leads to the ‘othering’ and racialization of Eastern Europeans.

Our findings show the importance of nuancing the ongoing debate on whiteness. We see this thesis as a valuable contribution to an emerging field of research into race and racialization of Eastern Europeans in the Nordics. While the sample for this research limits the generalizability of the experiences of Eastern Europeans, this approach provides new insights into construction of whiteness and white privilege, as well as Easten Europeaneess. It also reveals the importance of intersectional approach, which enables researchers to study multifaceted racialized experiences.

To better understand the implications of these results, future studies could address lived experiences and the process of racialization of migrants from Eastern Europe, who are positioned differently carrying a set of different intersecting markers (e.g., low skilled migrants, insufficient language skills). Further research is needed to determine the relationship between these markers and their racialized experiences.

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