

Faculty of Social Sciences  
University of Helsinki

# **DIFFERENT ANTIRACISMS**

CRITICAL RACE AND WHITENESS STUDIES  
PERSPECTIVES ON ACTIVIST AND NGO DISCUSSIONS  
IN FINLAND

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis explores antiracism by activists and professionalized civil society in mid-2010s Finland. It develops and diversifies an established but less elaborated notion that antiracism is not merely opposition to racism. As such, the thesis provides analytical interpretations of antiracism's variations and the scope and limits of different antiracist approaches and the related definitions of racism. The analysis is situated in a period when several discussions on antiracism were evolving.

The study builds on interviews with activists engaged in grassroots antiracist initiatives; texts produced by antiracist bloggers; non-governmental organizations' antiracist campaigns; and a complementary set of participatory observation in antiracist events. The different antiracist initiatives observed in the study could be described in generalizing terms as association-driven antiracism; antiracist self-representation by people of colour; antiracism against the far and extreme right; and antiracist activism for migrants' rights. The analysis of the data is based on an understanding that the observed antiracisms both reproduce and, at least locally, reshape the existing discussions on race and racialization.

The dissertation is situated in the field of critical race and whiteness studies. The key concepts derive from critical analyses of race, racism and antiracism. More specifically, the thesis draws on a set of concepts that have been used to explicate the ways in which race and racism or normative whiteness are systematically dismissed as a part of social reality. At the same time, the thesis strives to show the ways in which the hegemonic order is challenged in the context of the data.

The thesis arrives at four main conclusions. First, it addresses differences between conceptions of racism as an exception, a singular, event-bound phenomenon and a part of a structure. While exceptionalist views on racism and discussion on events are common in the data, there are efforts to address racism as structural phenomenon. Relatedly, as the second main finding, the thesis shows how exceptionalist understandings of racism are produced through intersectional categorizations other than those constituting racialization. This means that the societal significance of racism is diminished through connecting racism to societal margins or connecting it to a specific age group. The third main finding suggests that antiracisms differ from each other significantly according to the ways they (do not) address racialization and whiteness. Finally, a majority of the antiracist initiatives explored focus on different types of exclusions as opposed to understandings of racism as exploitation.

In brief, the thesis discusses the distinct uses of the label *antiracism*, and antiracist conceptions of *racism* in civil society in Finland and it provides

analytical understandings of similarities and differences between distinct antiracist approaches, strategies, and ways of conceiving racism.

# TIIVISTELMÄ

Väitöskirja tarkastelee aktivistien ja kansalaisjärjestöjen ajamaa antirasismia/ rasisminvastaisuutta 2010-luvun puolivälin kansalaisyhteiskunnassa Suomessa. Väitöskirja kehittää edelleen ja monipuolistaa tunnustettua havaintoa siitä, että rasisminvastaisuus ei ole pelkistettävissä rasisminvastakohdaksi. Siten väitöskirja tarjoaa analyttisiä tulkintoja rasisminvastaisuuden eri muodoista, erilaisten antirasismien laajuudesta ja rajoista sekä näihin liittyen rasismia koskevista erilaisista määritelmistä. Analyysi sijoittuu aikakauteen, jolloin monet rasisminvastaisuuteen liittyvät keskustelut voimistuivat.

Tutkimus perustuu seuraaviin aineistoihin: haastattelut ruohonjuuritason antirasistisissa aloitteissa toimivien aktivistien kanssa, rasismia vastustavien bloggareiden tekstit, kansalaisjärjestöjen rasisminvastaiset kampanjat sekä mainittuja aineistoja täydentävät havainnot rasisminvastaisista tapahtumista. Tutkimuksessa tarkasteltuja erilaisia rasisminvastaisuuden muotoja voi luonnehtia yleistävästi seuraavin määrein: yhdistysvetoinen antirasismi, PoC:n antirasistinen itsemäärittely, antirasismi ääri- ja laitaoikeiston rasismia vastaan sekä siirtolaisten oikeuksiin keskittyvä antirasismi. Aineiston analyysi perustuu ymmärrykseen siitä, että tarkastellut rasisminvastaisuuden muodot toistavat ja ainakin paikallisesti myös muokkaavat olemassa olevia rodun ja rodullistamisen diskursseja.

Väitöskirja sijoittuu kriittisen rodun ja valkoisuuden tutkimuksen alaan. Keskeiset käsitteet juontuvat rodun, rasismien ja antirasismien kriittisistä analyyseistä. Tarkemmin sanottuna työ perustuu käsitteisiin, joiden avulla on avattu sitä, miten rotu, rasismi tai normatiivinen valkoisuus sosiaalisen todellisuuden osina systemaattisesti ohitetaan. Samaan aikaan väitöskirja pyrkii havainnollistamaan sitä, miten hegemoninen järjestys myös haastetaan aineiston kontekstissa.

Väitöskirjan tulokset esitetään neljän johtopäätöksen kautta. Ensimmäinen niistä koskee sitä, miten rasismien määrittelyä yhtäältä poikkeukselliseksi, yksiläkiseksi ja tapahtumiin sidotuksi mutta toisaalta myös rakenteelliseksi ilmiöksi. Samaan aikaan kun rasismien esittäminen poikkeuksena on tavallista tarkastellussa aineistossa, aineisto sisältää myös esimerkkejä siitä, miten rasismia käsitellään rakenteellisena ilmiönä. Tähän liittyen työn toinen keskeinen johtopäätös on se, että rasismien esittäminen poikkeuksena tapahtuu myös muiden kuin rodullistamiseen suoraan liittyvien intersektionaalisten kategorisointien avulla. Tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että rasismien yhteiskunnallista merkitystä vähätellään kytkemällä se marginaalisiin ryhmiin tai tiettyyn ikäluokkaan. Kolmas johtopäätös koskee sitä, miten rasisminvastaisuuden muodot eroavat toisistaan siinä, miten ne käsittelevät (tai eivät käsittele) rodullistamista tai valkoisuutta. Viimeinen neljästä johtopäätöksestä on, että tarkastellut antirasistit keskittyvät

nimenomaisesti erilaisiin ulossulkemisen muotoihin sen sijaan, että rasismi käsitteellistettäisiin riistoksi.

Lyhyesti sanottuna väitöskirja käsittelee *antirasismia* eli *rasisminvastaisuuden* erilaisia sovelluksia ja *rasismia* koskevaa ymmärrystä Suomeen sijoittuvassa kansalaisyhteiskunnassa. Työ tarjoaa käsitteellisiä näkökulmia erilaisten rasisminvastaisten lähestymistapojen yhtäläisyyksiin ja eroihin sekä niissä valittuihin strategioihin ja käsityksiin rasismista.

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APPENDIX 2: ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF SUBSTUDY II

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

# LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This thesis is based on the following publications and manuscripts:

I Seikkula, Minna. 2019. "Adapting to post-racialism? Definitions of racism in non-governmental organization advocacy that mainstreams anti-racism." In *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 22(1), 95–109.

II Seikkula, Minna. 2015. "Rodullistavien rajanvetojen kyseenalaistaminen rasismin kohteeksi joutuvien blogiteksteissä". In *Sukupuolentutkimus*, 28(4), 20–31. [For English translation, see Appendix 2]

III Seikkula, Minna. 2019. "(Un)making 'extreme' and 'ordinary' whiteness: Activists' narratives on antiracist mobilisation in Finland." In *The Sociological Review*, 67(5), 1002–1017.

IV Seikkula, Minna. *In review*. "Contesting or affirming white innocence? A typology of antiracism in activists' accounts." An article manuscript in review.

The substudies are referred to in the text by their roman numerals.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

Picture two scenes. First, a group of adults and children, black, brown and white, picnicking on sunny green grass. They hold up different foods: berries that grow in Nordic forests, and fruits that are native to South America. One of the children holds a sign: “No to racism”. Everyone smiles. In the second image, a group of demonstrators stands with a banner in the dark night. As they are lit only by red, smoking torches, it is difficult to distinguish their faces, and some are also masked. They raise their fists in the air. “Smash racism, smash fascism”, the banner reads. Both scenes are examples of expressions of antiracism in the civil society in Finland in the mid-2010s. But does the sign that is held by the child in a Benetton-esque pastoral address the same racism the torch-holding demonstrators want to smash? While the colourful, upbeat pictures of people with different skin tones might appear incompatible with the images loaded with radical left or anarchist symbols, I show in this study that these expressions of antiracism also have commonalities beyond outspokenly opposing racism. Additionally, the sunny picnic and torch-lit street are just one example of how expressions of antiracism might differ from each other like night and day.

Discussing different antiracisms together to observe their differences and commonalities is part of my aim in this study. In addition to providing a mapping of different antiracist mobilizations by activists and professionalized civil society in mid-2010s in Finland, I also analyze the scope of phenomena different antiracisms strive to address. I present data from different antiracist initiatives that in rather broad and generalizing terms could be described as association-driven antiracism (cf. Malmsten 2007); antiracist self-representation by people of colour; antiracism against the far and extreme right; and antiracist activism for migrants’ rights. I have followed the related antiracist discussions and activities in civil society in Finland between 2013 and 2016, during a period when the field of antiracism was rapidly developing.

During the 2010s, antiracism became part of public political culture in Finland in its different manifestations (cf. Luhtakallio 2010; Kuukkanen 2018) perhaps more vocally than ever before. Racism—which was once referred to as a tabooed topic (Alemanji 2016; Souto et al. 2013; Tuori 2009)—was now being acknowledged and problematized by different non-governmental organizations working for the public good; NGOs ranging from small cultural associations to large third sector service providers made an effort to take a stance against racism. At the same time, through different initiatives, people of colour (for instance, black, brown, Muslim and Roma people), made visible their experiences of everyday racism, and lack of recognition to their experiences in different arenas in Finnish society. Distinct grassroots groups mobilized against the far right’s anti-immigration racist propagation. Further, mobilization against racism is connected to discussions on migrants’ rights in

Finland; the need to support newly arrived migrants grew significantly after the European border crisis (supposedly) began in 2015. In short, my research focuses on antiracisms during a point of time, when several discussions were evolving.

While antiracist discussions seem to have multiplied and spread phenomenally during recent years, this has also fostered confusion and debate: Who gets to define an antiracist agenda, is antiracism always good, and what if antiracists disagree? As antiracist voices have multiplied, their differences are perhaps gradually becoming more pronounced. The fact that there is no single antiracist point of view—and antiracist activism might even comprise conflicting points of view—is gradually becoming more widely acknowledged. As I soon discuss in more detail, challenging racism is also not a new thing in Finland, but broader societal recognition of antiracism, as well as its more nuanced analytical perspectives, might be. Through an analytical discussion that draws on the tradition of theorizing racism and antiracism critically, this research hopefully also provides some conceptual tools with which to approach those discussions.

An analysis of antiracism requires an acknowledgement of the phenomenon it seeks to address, namely, racism. In this thesis I discuss antiracisms as plural and heterogenous phenomena that potentially respond to racism as a notion referring to, an equally wide broad set ideologies, deeds, practices and structures (e.g. Essed 1994; Miles 1989; Mulinari and Neergaard 2017; for the Finnish context see Keskinen, Rastas and Tuori 2009; Lindfors 2016; Puuronen 2011; Pantti et al. 2019; Rastas 2005). It is incontestable that racism has always been a part of European societies, including Finland, and it continues to shape them while it connects daily lived experiences to a global network of power relations. The context of antiracist mobilization that I explore could also be described through the following aspects. There continues to be a growing number of people living in Finland who regularly experience not being recognized as equals by the people with whom they share their daily reality, as well as locals who are seen as perpetual immigrants (cf. Ahmad 2019; Ahmed 2016; Keskinen et al. 2018). As the people residing in Finland are increasingly diverse (see Official Statistics of Finland 2019), such exclusions impact a growing number of people, but none of this is a new phenomenon, given that histories that do not adhere to the oft-repeated narrative of a homogenous white nation state tend to be forgotten (see Keskinen, Skaptadóttir and Toivanen 2019). There are also a growing number of residents who lack the same rights as citizens. What began as a grassroots emergence of the far and extreme right in the early 2010s has since seemed to have infiltrated established parliamentary positions and persistent extra-parliamentary groups, following the trend seen in most other European countries. However, my starting point is that such phenomena are constantly being challenged and fought against.

Antiracism has also increasingly become an interest within academic discussions in Finland (e.g. Alemanji 2016; 2018; Custódio 2018; Haavisto

2018; Rastas and Seye 2019) and beyond (see Paradies 2016). The academic contribution relates to an adaption of the theoretical tradition of critical race and whiteness studies; through conceptual framework of that addresses race and whiteness, I explore the construction of antiracism and racism as well as their limits. Further, I situate critical scholarly discussions and theoretical devices within a Nordic context, as opposed to defaulting to the United Kingdom and the United States, where a majority of those discussions originate. While critical race and whiteness studies is gradually also becoming a recognized and established field in the Nordic countries, in Sweden in particular, those discussions within this theoretical tradition that also touch upon the Finnish context are still relatively rare. Hence, my work adds to the theorization of race and racism, and especially of antiracism, in a Northern European context. The results of my research provide an analytical understanding of contemporary antiracist discussions, including their strengths and pitfalls. As such, I hope that my research, in the format of this thesis or in other ways, finds readers beyond the academia, because I believe that the findings I present here can be useful for those who wish to develop antiracist tools in the struggle for a more just world.

My engagement with researching antiracism started from the desire to provide a testimony of ongoing mobilizations and to contribute to struggles against racism (but as I show in this study, this is not simple nor straightforward, and antiracist practices need to be exposed to critical scrutiny too). Engaging in discussions on antiracism from my position of a white European in their native context requires committed effort to exceed the epistemic boundaries of one's own lived experience. Acknowledging this, I deploy thinking from my academic background in feminist and postcolonial theorization that emphasizes both the agency of oppressed people, and ways to fracture normative orders. Through these tools I want to draw the attention to forms of resistance that are continuously taking place. However, anyone who is familiar with critical theorizations of racism and antiracism (e.g. Gilroy 1990; Ahmed 2012; Hesse 2007; Lentin 2004; 2016) should be well aware that not all declarations of ameliorating racism function flawlessly, and in fact, the question of the critical capacity of antiracism should be central to scholarly discussions about antiracism.

## **1.1 ANALYTICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ANTIRACISM**

### **1.1.1 THE TERM ANTIRACISM AND ITS DEFINITIONS**

Before going any further, I address some issues related to terminology and definitions. Antiracism as a term is likely to appear self-explanatory, as the prefix suggests an opposition to racism. An opposition to racism is also at the core of the rudimentary definition that Bonnett (2000, 3) suggests, pinning down antiracism as ways of thinking and acting that “seek to confront,

eradicate and/or ameliorate racism”. First, antiracism can be thought to always coexist with racism. Racism involving violent oppression and exploitation also generates resistant movements and resistant thinking (Omi and Winant 2015, 3), and resistance to racism or racialized oppression has always been part of those oppressions, whether later acknowledged or not (cf. Bhambra 2016; Bhattacharyya, Vidree and Winter 2020). In other words, antiracism is in a tense relation with racist oppression. Further, the prefix “anti” seems to tether its meaning to a reactionary response to racism, but a reactionary or responsive mode of antiracism has also been critically commented on in both scholarly and activist discussions. Such discussions also explore more nuanced understandings of antiracism that go beyond mere direct opposition, resulting in agendas that are not solely defined in relation to racism (e.g. Pitcher 2009, 2; Hage 2016). This opens venues for antiracism to exceed racism, to signal a utopian project not pinned down by existing oppression and exploitation. I agree with the importance to emphasize the importance of a focus beyond the perspective of reaction also regarding the different antiracisms that I have studied. A small gesture to underscore antiracism beyond the “anti” is to spell antiracism without a hyphen.

At the same time, antiracism as a definition points to a specific set of phenomena: it should not be mixed with attempts to silence and conceal racist intent, but also seeing antiracism as the primary label to all emancipatory projects by people subjected to racism might be misleading. In other words, antiracism should first be distinguished from denials of racism that seek to conceal racist intent (Pitcher 2009, 170; van Dijk 1992). The infamous “I’m not racist, but...” (van Dijk 1992, see for Finnish-language discussion Keskinen, Rastas and Tuori 2009) is an example of such discursive conduct. At the same time, antiracism might not be an apt label to apply to all historical and contemporary practices that stand up against racism. Or, interpreting all possible facets of human action that potentially confront or contest racism as antiracism, is likely to be reductive. On one hand, antiracist outcomes might be unintended consequences of another type of action, or a circumstantial thing that leads to ameliorating racism, such as practices carried out under different names and labelled as, for example, multiculturalism (cf. Pitcher 2009, 13). On the other hand, antiracism appears to be a limiting description for action that, for instance, strives for the emancipation of Black people—there is more to people demanding their dignity than the “desire to do away with racism” (Gilroy 1990, 251).

Regarding terminology, the term antiracism itself is “a twentieth-century creation” that only started to become more common in 1960s Anglophone and Francophone contexts (Bonnett 2000, 10). Historically in Finnish language discussions, for instance, Roma rights activism in the late 1960s and early 1970s—in part influenced by news and discussions on the US civil rights movement—was articulated as a struggle “against racial discrimination” (*rotusyrjintää vastaan*), “against racism” (*rasismia vastaan*), and “for equality” (*tasa-arvon puolesta*) (cf. Virolainen 1994). Following the language



of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the language of national legislation after the ratification of the convention in 1970s, some of the earlier antiracist discussions made opposition to racial discrimination their point of reference. Despite the earlier struggles against racism, the term gradually became a more commonplace term in the 1990s (Suurpää 2002, 13-15, see also Rastas 2005; Pantti et al. 2019, 505), antiracism (*antirasismi*, *rasisminvastaisuus*) has only figured more frequently in popular discourse fairly recently. For instance, the standard dictionary of Finnish language has no entry on antiracism (Kielitoimiston sanakirja 2020). In other words, the term antiracism can be interpreted as a relatively new addition to Finnish-language discussions.

### 1.1.2 RESEARCH ON ANTIRACISM

Academic work on antiracism has been described as scarce (see Lentin 2004), but scholarly attention on antiracism seems to have increased fairly recently as antiracism increasingly figured as a theme of academic conferences and scientific journals (see Paradies 2016; Bhattarchayya, Vidree and Winter 2019). It can be said that academic analysis of antiracism is a developing field. One key reason to analyse antiracism—which also motivates my research—has been to explore the extent to which distinct antiracist endeavours are able to fulfil their own promise (see Anthias and Lloyd 2002a, 5). I elaborate more on the theoretical tools that exploring this requires in Chapter 3. Here, my focus is on analytical descriptions of antiracism in order to provide an idea of the variety of phenomena analyzed under the title antiracism.

To begin with, it has been repeatedly pointed out that “antiracism” can be used in varying ways, and there is no clear shared definition of antiracism on a conceptual or practical level (e.g. Paradies 2016; Solomos and Back 1996, 102). In fact, most if not all scholars working to address antiracism analytically seem to agree that it refers to a myriad of practices and/or forms of thought (e.g. Bonnett 2000; Lentin 2004; Anthias and Lloyd 2002b). Or, as Lloyd (2002, 62) explains, antiracism should be understood as multiple locations on “a continuum between well-organized, bureaucratic organizations, pressure groups and protest or social movements which challenged dominant social practices and preconceptions”, and that also grasp racism in varying ways. Recognizing the heterogeneity of forms of antiracism is also the point of departure for this study, and the ways in which previous research has argued for multiplicity of antiracisms informed the ways in which I first oriented conduct my analytical work. Differences between antiracisms have been approached in various ways. To begin with, antiracism has been categorized both thematically—by focusing on the types of issues it strives to address—as well as through more structural and conceptual analyses. The different criteria used to categorize antiracism also serve as a basis for understanding the variety of actions and discourses labelled as antiracist.

Conceptually, one central distinction has been that of “universalism”, and what has been labelled differentialism or relativism. Earlier discussions on universalism and relativism in antiracism seem to resemble the debates on cultural relativism that underscored the advocacy of minority cultures, and their demand for recognition of specific cultural traditions and practices (Wieviorka 1997, 147-9; Bonnett 2000, 13). Instead of focusing on these debates which embrace “cultural tolerance”, I suggest that a more useful way to discuss the distinctions within antiracism is to also see antiracism as a potential critique of colour-blind universalism (cf. Anthias and Lloyd 2002a, 6-7)—at the same time, it needs to be recognized that attacks against multiculturalism and against minorities’ cultural practices are used to “conceal” racism (Lentin and Titley 2011). Universalism and its counter positions are also analyzed by Lentin (2004), who discusses the differences of what she labels “majoritarian” and “communitarian” antiracism (ibid.,197-218). She distinguishes a tendency to establish antiracist discourses either on (supposedly) universalist principles of European humanism, or through recognising the differences within lived experiences that call into question colour-blind universalism. In other words, a significant distinction in antiracism is between emphasising sameness in an assumed state of profound equality and emphasising how that supposed equality fails (Lentin 2016; Song 2014). This is illustrated, for instance, by considering the difference between the widely circulated slogan “All different, all equal” by the European Council, and the world-known “Black lives matter”<sup>1</sup>, spread from protests in the United States to Europe and elsewhere in the world, recently shaping and enforcing antiracist discussion significantly.

Relatedly, previous research has in various ways touched upon or further elaborated questions of agency and positionality in antiracism, i.e. whose agencies are recognized in antiracist advocacy and who are the ones (recognized) speaking in antiracist debates (e.g. Gilroy 1990; Hesse 2011); and recognizing the role of lived experiences, struggles, and the subjectivity of people of colour is undeniably critical in making race a focal point of antiracist resistance (e.g. Lentin 2004). Among other things, this means separating self-representation and the antiracism that draws from lived experiences of racism, as opposed to solidarity-based, or in some cases, tokenistic approaches (e.g. Lloyd 2002; Aquino 2015).

Antiracism has also been characterized by its (proclaimed) aims and functions. Conceptions of racism guide ideas on justifiable and effective antiracist strategies (Silva 2012), or as Sayyid (2017,13) notes, “the struggle for

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<sup>1</sup> The movement against police brutality and racist violence adopted the hashtag already in 2013. Since then movement has grown massive in the United States but also beyond. In 2020, the news of a police officer stroking dead George Floyd in Minnesota, US, the protests gained unforeseen momentum. Solidarity demonstrations acknowledging the protests in the United States and commemorating the victims of police violence have been arranged in Finland too, at least, in Helsinki in October 2016 and in June 2020.

the meaning of racism is locked in the possibility of the scale and morphology of anti-racism.” In other words, analyses of what types of inequalities are labelled as racism provide a basis to begin to grasp variations in antiracism. One way to approach this is to analyze antiracism on the axis of its proximity or distance to the structures of the nation state (Lentin 2004; Lloyd 2002). Relatedly, whether the liberal democratic nation state—assumed to be non-racist—is seen as the primary site to foster antiracism or the central mechanism to cause racist inequalities, will then produce different points of departure to antiracism that might then moderately aim to preserve or radically challenge existing structures. Further, antiracism has been described, for instance, through the functions of reducing occurrences of racism, supporting the victims of racism, empowering people targeted by racism, contributing to cultures that influence people to not act racist, or allowing people to see beyond the relations shaped by racialization (Hage 2016). In other words, antiracism can be understood either as affirmative or transformative (cf. Fraser 1995) in many different ways.

While many studies focus on certain singular forms of antiracism, Bonnett (2000) provides a broader view by introducing a thematic typology. He distinguishes the following six thematic functions. First, everyday antiracism, comprised of mundane actions by ordinary people, which are not coordinated by any state or other ruling structure, might among other things consist of spontaneous and possibly rebellious reactions, as well as being embedded within aspects of popular culture (ibid., 88-92). Bonnett’s typology dates back to a time before Internet memes and social media updates, but those undoubtedly would constitute significant material for how he would articulate everyday antiracism today, as his typology particularly emphasises cultural products. Others have made use of the notion of how everyday antiracism emphasizes more individual action, through the responses of those people either targeted by racism or witnessing it in their day-to-day lives (Aquino 2015; Fleming, Lamont, and Welburn 2012; Mitchell, Every, and Ranzijn 2011). Second, multicultural antiracism for Bonnett (2000, 93-9) refers to processes of accommodating “new cultural horizons” within supposedly monocultural environments; here, diversity is represented in different cultural products, and empathy and solidarity is cultivated through multicultural education. As such, Bonnett’s multicultural antiracism seems to resemble what in its narrow meaning has been characterized as relativist or differentialist antiracism (cf. Wieviorka 1997). Third, Bonnett’s (2000, 100-6) psychological antiracism refers to different kinds of attempts to influence people’s attitudes, and thus, address racism on the level of an individual’s psyche. Fourth, by radical antiracism, he refers to different revolutionary practices that attack or at least call into question surrounding societal structures (ibid., 107-110). Fifth, anti-fascist and anti-Nazi antiracism is also defined by its objective, as an action that challenges (neo)Nazis (ibid., 111-3). For some researchers, anti-Nazi antiracism constitutes the main understanding of what is antiracism (e.g. Jämte 2013). While such tendency

might be symptomatic to some current Nordic discussions, narrowing down antiracism to anti-Nazi mobilization is hardly anything new, as for instance Gilroy's (1990) discussion shows. Further, in popular discussions, anti-fascism is often associated with the (radical) left; Bonnett reminds us through historical examples that anti-fascist action has importantly been carried out by different minorities and religious communities as well (see also Kaihoviirta and Wickström 2017). Finally, antiracism in organizations refers to representation, and the presence of people targeted by racism in positions of power within different institutions. In other words, Bonnet's (2000, 114-8) antiracism in organizations brings forth the aforementioned question of positionality. Affirmative action—which is applied in the North American context, in particular<sup>2</sup>—is an example of an attempt to guarantee people of colour's representation within different institutions.

This study revolves around somewhat similar observations and analytical distinctions made in previous research on antiracism. In the analysis that follows, I draw from, among other things, discussions on agency and critique against universalism, while connecting these to the analytical vocabulary developed in critical race and whiteness studies. In the following section, I formulate the aims of this study and the research questions that guide this task.

## 1.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study contributes to the growing number of scholarly works on antiracism. As discussed thus far, antiracism is best understood as a set of heterogeneous practices that each address racist practices and structures in varying ways and to varying degrees. What previous research has highlighted, in particular, is that incomplete, trivializing or universalizing conceptions of racism shape and twist antiracist agendas too, and universalist assumptions of a profound equality that regards racism as a state of exception, or as alien and anachronistic rather than an actual challenge to societal equality, is something antiracism needs to tackle, otherwise it risks enforcing such assumptions (e.g. Lentin 2016; Pitcher 2009; Song 2014; Sayyid 2017; Joseph-Salisbury 2019). The aim of this study is to investigate this through the conceptual framework provided by critical race and whiteness studies in the context of antiracisms in civil society in Finland during the 2010s. More precisely, I investigate how central forms of antiracist engagement constitute their strategies and scope of action as well as the racism they seek to challenge. However, my attempt is not just to identify limitations, but also to highlight ways in which antiracism

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<sup>2</sup> In relation to some uninformed discussions in the Finnish context, it should be acknowledged that, despite the fact that legislation allows affirmative action in principle, no similar mechanisms have been put in place.

challenges what in academic work has been termed normative (or “ordinary”) whiteness, white innocence and post-raciality.

I provide an analytical understanding of the ways in which racism and antiracism are constituted activism and non-governmental organizations’ campaigns situated in civil society in Finland by focusing on the mechanisms through which effects of race are posited and challenged. I explore a variety of activities under the banner of antiracism—the ways in which both NGOs and grassroots activists mobilize against racism—and pay attention to their differences and similarities. On one hand, my analytical work focuses on the efforts of different antiracist orientations to contest racialization and normative whiteness—which is also one way to conceive of racism. On the other hand, instead of relying on a fixed definition of racism, I explore the ways in which distinct antiracist orientations perceive racism, given that distinct and differing conceptions of racism are likely to shape the focus and strategies adopted in their respective antiracist actions. In addition, I take into account how antiracisms’ entanglements with other intersectional categorizations shape its critical capacity.

I address the investigative aim—to provide an analytical understanding of what constitutes antiracism by grassroots activists and professional civil society and its embedded understandings of racism—through the following four research questions.

1. What kind of agendas do antiracist activists and civil society actors have: which themes do they address, and which strategies do they adopt?
2. Which understandings of racism does antiracism rely on?
3. How are different forms of racialization, particularly whiteness, de/constructed in antiracist activism?
4. How do other intersectional categorizations shape conceptions of antiracism and racism?

I answer the research questions through an empirical analysis of the distinct orientations existing within activism and other civil society initiatives—antiracist advocacy by non-governmental organizations; antiracist self-representation by people of colour; antiracism against the far and extreme right’s racism; and antiracist activism for migrants’ rights—which all explicitly commit to antiracism. In other words, the object of my research is antiracism, not the people involved in antiracist activism (nor their experiences), but a set of actions and discussions that aim to challenge racism or provide alternatives to it.

The results of empirical analyses are presented in four substudies (I, II, III, IV), which focus on distinct antiracist orientations, but also analytically highlight their different aspects. I am not reproducing an identical analytical gesture and applying it to different antiracisms. Instead, the analyses—that to varying degrees weigh up different antiracist strategies, conceptions of racism, and de/constructions of racialization—are adjusted according to what is meaningful regarding each of the antiracist orientations in question. At the

same time, in their own, distinct ways, all four substudies contribute to the overall aim of providing an analytical understanding of antiracisms; their differences and similarities when it comes to constituting racism as a problem; and their ways of challenging it. In regard to the research question on other intersectional categorizations, I am not predefining the “other” categories, but instead focusing on the ones relevant to my overall analytical aim.

## 2 RACISM AND ANTIRACISM IN FINLAND

Views on antiracism, and relatedly, on racism, have been noted to vary contextually. The kinds of activities that count as antiracism are informed by the histories of that given context (Lentin 2004, 197). Additionally, “different contexts make available (and attractive) distinct kinds of resources for resisting racism” (Aquino 2015, 106)—or, expressions of antiracism are of course bound to their context. In other words, it is important to understand the discussion carried out in this research against the backdrop of historical continuums and disruptions located in the geographical area labelled Finland. In this chapter, I contextualize my research on antiracism with the help of previous scholarship on related themes. First, I give a brief overview of the ways in which racism, and more recently antiracism, have been addressed, mainly in academic discussions in Finland. Despite very recent scholarly work on antiracism, it continues to be an overlooked topic. I reflect this together with a short reflection on dominant ways on conceiving racism and antiracism in Finnish-language discussion in the second section. Finally, I also mention some examples of previous or ongoing antiracist struggles.

### 2.1 ACADEMIC RESEARCH ON RACISM IN FINLAND

In Finnish academia, racism emerged as a research theme in the field of migration and ethnic relations research mostly since the 1990s, while prior research tended to conceive Finland as a homogeneous, and thus racism-free environment (see Rastas 2005). As I explain in the next section, while racism has been linked to a narrative of “a turning point in the 1990s” arguing that Finland suddenly became multicultural and diverse—or racist—is a problematic and false narrative. Yet, as a response to the 1990s societal developments<sup>3</sup>, including the harsh and violent racism with which newly arrived migrants were met in the 1990s, the state funnelled funding into research on migration and ethnic relations, mainly for the purposes of informing governance (Haikkola 2014, 9-10; Vuolajärvi 2014, 270). While this is a very different point of origin for research conversations than those in the theoretical tradition of critical race and whiteness studies that I present in the next chapter, it is important to acknowledge that the public investment on researching ethnicity, migration, and discrimination encouraged scholarly discussions on racism (e.g. Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind and Vesala 2002). The

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<sup>3</sup> The situation is depicted, for instance, by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination that condemned the “significant increase of racially motivated acts and violence” and “persistence of publications, organizations and political parties which promote racist and xenophobic ideas” (CERD 1996).

1990s research on racism in Finland focused on analyses of attitudes of Finnish people towards immigrants, as well as victim surveys (see Puuronen 2011, 35-7); attitudes remain the focus of social psychological and sociological studies on racism.

Racism as a historical phenomenon linked to the pseudoscience of race, colonialism, slavery, antisemitism, and national socialism has been highlighted for Finnish-language readers by Isaksson and Jokisalo (1999). Prior to this, pseudoscientific racial theories and the scientific racism that categorized Finns as representatives of a “Mongolian” or “Eastern Baltic” race—and hence, non-white—and Sámi people to an even lower position within this “racial hierarchy”, were explored in academic research from a perspective that, in a paradoxical way, accepted the reality of pseudoscience of race (Kemiläinen 1993; 1998, on the racialization of the Sámi, see Isaksson 2001).

More relevant to the theoretical framework and scope of my study are critical scholarly discussions on racism, which have been introduced to the Finnish (and more broadly the Nordic) context primarily in connection to discussions on postcolonialism, as well as through (partly overlapping) feminist discussions. Nordic critical research on racism, postcolonialism, and migration has been developed since the 1990s, particularly by scholars based in Sweden (see Keskinen and Andreassen 2017, 65). Additionally, postcolonial feminist research (Mulinari et al. 2009; de los Reyes, Molina and Mulinari 2002) has paved the way for researchers focusing on race and racialization; a key aim has been to articulate racialized relations and racist structures, not least as a part of the Finnish welfare state (e.g. Tuori 2009, 63-4). At the same time, several researchers have convincingly shown how racism and racialization are also connected to gender and sexuality (e.g. Keskinen et al. 2009; Keskinen 2018; Tuori 2009; Urponen 2010). Relatedly, several scholars have recently focused specifically on analyses of whiteness (Leinonen 2012; Keskinen 2013; Krivosos 2019). I discuss postcolonial feminism more in sections that follow.

Another important and partly overlapping field has been social scientific research on racism, and the experiences of racism and exclusions by scholars working in the field of Youth Studies, or otherwise dealing with topics related to young people. These have considerably advanced research on racism in Finland. The research topics have covered skinhead youth culture, everyday experiences of racism and belonging, as well as conceptions of racism (e.g. Puuronen 2001; Suurpää 2002; Rastas 2007b; Souto 2011; Honkasalo 2011; Haikkola 2012). Puuronen and other contributors to the edited volume (Puuronen 2001) focused on the skinhead youth culture that spread in Eastern Finland, particularly in the 1990s. Suurpää (2002) examined young people’s conceptions of racism and tolerance, while Rastas (2007b) expanded children and young people’s everyday experiences of racism to encapsulate racism more broadly as a social and cultural phenomenon. Many of the researchers focusing on children and youth draw on the concept of everyday racism.



Research that highlights everyday experiences shaped by racism can also make visible coping strategies and counteractions by the research participants (e.g. Rastas 2002, 14; Haikkola 2012, 74-8).

A growing number of studies and reports provide evidence of the frequency of repeated racist discrimination in Finland. To highlight a few examples: people of African descent reported the highest amount of experiences of discrimination in a comparative study of 11 EU countries (EU-FRA 2018, on discrimination against different racialized minorities see EU-FRA 2009); close to half of respondents of a questionnaire addressing the health and wellbeing of the Finnish Roma reported having faced discriminatory treatment in a public place (Weiste-Paakkanen, Lämsä and Kuusio 2018, on discrimination against the Roma, see Non-Discrimination ombudsman 2014). People who belong to racialized minorities in Finland are likely to be subjected to different measures of ethnic profiling, for instance, in contrast to the Finnish-speaking majority, Somali-, Arabic-, and Kurdish-speaking youth are much more likely to be stopped by shop clerks or security guards (Keskinen et al. 2018). Further, people with non-Finnish-language names are much less likely to be called to a job interview in comparison with applicants with similar skills and a Finnish-language name—this is particularly true for people with Somali or Iraqi names (Ahmad 2019). The results speak of alarming rates of racism. At the same time, the way in which current research is often set to reveal and discover racism suggests something about the absence of a general awareness around racism being an issue. As discussions on colonial complicity suggest, racism should not be understood as something that can be isolated within these examples, but instead, should be thought of as a multifaceted phenomenon that surfaces in these examples.

Racism has also been studied in connection to the spread of anti-immigration agitation and far right politics (e.g. Lentin and Titley 2011; Keskinen 2012; 2013; 2018; Horsti 2015; Mäkinen, 2016; 2017; Puuronen 2011; Pyrhönen 2015; Norocel et al. 2018). This analytical work provides a variety of insights into the ways in which anti-immigration racism has spread, the arguments it has used, and—to a smaller extent—the ways in which it has also been contested and the challenges this might produce (see Horsti 2015; Keskinen 2018; Mäkinen 2016). At the same time, as already stated, different expressions of antiracism have become increasingly a topic explicitly addressed in academic discussions too (Alemanji 2016; 2018; Custódio 2018; Keskinen 2018; Haavisto 2018; Rastas and Seye 2019). While a large part of this research uses the same analytical vocabulary to address racism, the investigative aims still differ from the ones in this research. Recent studies on antiracism have focused on the educational system, mediatization and the role of music in antiracism.

## 2.2 FINNISH EXCEPTIONS?

In this section, I focus on contextual specificities described in previous scholarship. On one hand, lack, absence, and novelty have been central ways of describing (research on) both racism and antiracism in Finland (e.g. Alemanji 2016; Suurpää 2002; Tuori 2009; Vuolajärvi 2014), and the societal context and discussions related to it differ to some extent different from, for instance, Western European ones. This also means that it can be claimed that Finland has had no widely recognized antiracist traditions (Tuori 2009, 75 & 165). On the other hand, it needs to be recognized that portraying racism as an absence resembles many other European contexts.

To begin with, scholars working on racism and related themes have brought up that addressing racism has a very limited history in Finland. For instance, in relation to the premise of her work, Suurpää (2002, 17) explains that there was no defined research tradition in researching racism in the mid 1990s, when she began her research. Describing the same geographical research context almost twenty years later, Honkasalo, Kivijärvi, Souto and Suurpää (2014) point out that both racism and antiracism might be still seen as ahistorical concepts in Finland. At the same time, this does not mean that the environment for receiving studies on racism remained unchanged since the 1990s. For instance, the number of associations and informal groups advocating for antiracism has increased considerably during the last few years, and several new antiracist groups comprised of people of colour have emerged (cf. Custódio 2018). Also, the spread and establishment of anti-immigration racism in parliamentary politics, put forward by both the far right and other political parties (Keskinen 2012, 2013; Pyrhönen 2015) and a strengthening of non-parliamentary extreme right groups (Keskinen 2018; Mäkinen 2017) as well as counterreactions (see Horsti 2015) provoked by these developments; as the increased number of people organized for asylum seekers' rights (cf. Keskinen 2018) have also extended racism as a topic from the margins of societal and political debates (cf. Alemanji 2016; Tuori 2009; Suurpää 2002), which is also reflected in current research. Yet, certain historical specificities continue to shape the current discussions.

First, there have not been similar large-scale self-organized protests by people of colour as, for instance, in the United Kingdom (Anthias and Lloyd 2002b; Gilroy 1990; Higgs 2016), let alone in the United States; migrants too have been relatively subdued compared to the scale of self-organizing occurring, for instance, in France. Instead, the Finnish context is different even from that of neighbouring Sweden, where mass protests in diverse suburbs have contested racism (Schierup, Ålund and Kings 2014). Yet, while observing the absence of large-scale recognized antiracist movements, one should be careful not to reinforce the well-known and tempting false narrative of a nation state that became diverse “only recently”.

In discussions on migration, racism, and antiracism, Finland is often presented as a new destination for international migration. Hence the nation

state's status as a multicultural or diverse society has been discussed relatively recently—in the early 1990s (cf. Tuori 2007; Leinonen 2012)—and thus racism is often seen as the consequence of this change (Tuori 2009). Yet, the image of a homogeneous white nation state (which the “recently multicultural Finland” story relies on) is false, and leaving the assumption of white homogeneity unchallenged masks a racism that has long been woven into societal narratives (Keskinen, Skaptadóttir and Toivanen 2019). First, although the number of people who reside in Finland but were born elsewhere has grown significantly during the last 30 years, this is only a part of the story. As several scholars (e.g. Leinonen 2012, 215; Tervonen 2014) have pointed out, the groups of people residing on the geographical territory that we in this moment know as Finland have always been diverse, and different migratory movements throughout and prior to the history of that nation state have contributed to that diversity. Second, racism is an integral part of the popular narrative of the white nation state, regardless of the presence of those bodies that racism targets. Rastas (2007a) shows how derogatory views about people of African descent appeared in Finnish-language newspapers and dictionaries in the early twentieth century, before these people themselves had a significant physical presence within Finnish borders. Additionally, Urponen (2010, 115-120) articulates how Finnish whiteness was constructed in opposition to national minorities such as the Roma, who were also described through similar colonial lenses. Although not always recognized, both long-term diversity and racism are integral to Finnish historical narratives that have been and continue to be perpetuated.

Such settings have been insightfully analyzed in Nordic postcolonial feminism. Research contributing to postcolonial analyses of the Nordic countries has emphasized regarding Finland, similar to other Nordic nation states, a willingness to identify with white, Western Europe at the cost of racializing those who are considered to not belong there; complicity in colonial endeavours; a position among beneficiaries of colonialist exploitation, and keenness to adopt a cultural position as part of the West (Vuorela 2009; Keskinen et al. 2009). These include the points that individuals of Finnish origin have historically taken part in European colonialist enterprises (Keskinen 2019) and colonialism has brought material wealth to what is now the Finnish nation state (Palmgren 2009). In other words, the colonial divide that can roughly be described as “the west against the rest” has had an impact on Finland as well as other Nordic societies. Or, the territory commonly labelled as Finland serves as one site for re-enacting a version of a common story, in which those who pass as white are considered more entitled than others. This set-up continues to inform dominant narratives within Finland as well as other Nordic countries, as well as how people are “seen”, and considered to be either local or foreign. It also influences how different societal and cultural practices and policies are applied, for instance, to “immigrants” (e.g. Keskinen 2018; Vuori 2009), as well as the ways in which racism is (not) regarded as a problem.

Another characteristic which might distinguish the Finnish case from many Western European mainstream historical narratives, is the relationship to anti-Nazi antiracism. The Holocaust and other crimes of Nazism are usually understood as a part of the collective memory in Western Europe; they are often presented as acts of pure evil, which is also acknowledged in critical research on antiracism and racism that problematizes understandings of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust as blueprints for racism in the European imagination (Goldberg 2006). Further, in some contexts, the collective defeat of the Nazis translates into a patriotic anti-fascist narrative, which allows the easy association between all antiracism with the (supposed) historical defeat of fascism (Lentin 2004). Similar shared narratives of opposing National-Socialist Germany have not been part of the mainstream, popular imagination in Finland. The dominant historical narratives in Finland have dismissed the narrations of a broader European Second World War history, and Finland's alliance with National-Socialist Germany is entangled within key stories of Finnish nationalism. Finnish history has focussed on its "own" war, or the military conflict between Finland and the Soviet Union (Huhta 2017), a "heroic defeat" keenly presented as separate from the Second World War. Histories such as turning over Jewish refugees to the Gestapo (Silvennoinen 2013), or the alleged war crimes by Finnish volunteers in German Waffen-SS (see Westerlund 2019) have remained relatively untold in the mainstream. In fact, the latter incidents caused political turmoil very recently as the public has been reminded about them. Neither fascist alliances nor anti-fascism are part of the Finnish nation state's grand narrative (cf. Silvennoinen, Tikka and Roselius 2016) and the history of anti-fascism in Finland has been called "unknown" in previous research (Kaihovirta and Wickström 2017, 47).

However, despite different silences and biases, antiracist mobilizations have also taken place in Finland earlier, which I discuss in the following section. Before that, it is worth noting that tracing antiracist pasts and presents prompts some disclaimers. I agree with Pitcher (2009, 14) who warns that a "'premature' embrace of anti-racism can effectively serve to conceal and perpetuate racist practice". Or, while antiracist histories can provide inspiration to contemporary discussions, it is important to bear in mind the possible biases that arise when struggles against racism or gestures of solidarity are commemorated. For instance, contemporary anti-immigration advocacy is at times challenged when remembering the past "success story" of Finnish people warmly welcoming "the first"<sup>4</sup> post-Second World War refugees from Chile (disregarding racism they since might have faced, which is described Marchant Aedo (2015), for instance). On one hand, uncovering the forgotten—or hidden (in the sense of deliberately concealed) histories of domination and oppression, and enunciating contemporary patterns of racism, can be considered gestures of resistance too. On the other hand, while, for instance, postcolonial analyses rightly show the continuity of colonial

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<sup>4</sup> People fleeing from the Soviet Union were not commonly regarded as refugees.

power relations in manifestations of contemporary racism, they often overlook the resistance. It can be even argued that overlooking antiracism contributes to “a flattening of history giving the impression that the emergence of colonialism and racism went largely uncontested” (Bhattarchayya, Vidree and Winter 2019, 3, see also Robinson 1983).

## 2.3 ANTIRACIST EXAMPLES

Antiracism has been in the focus of very few academic studies and a grand narrative of the histories of struggles against racism in Finland is yet to be written. Yet, I also want to highlight that the existing literature too provides some opportunities to grasp previous, and in some cases still ongoing, antiracist struggles, or at least it gives signposts to locate them. The following assemblage of examples illustrates that racism has not been silently approved, and ideally, it invites future research on the topic.

First, there are examples of sympathies and identifications with anti-colonial and anti-fascist struggles that can be understood as elementary parts of antiracist mobilizations. Despite multiple ways of committing to colonialism (see Keskinen 2019; Palmgren 2009), there were also dissenting voices against European colonialist enterprises. At the turn of the twentieth century, some Finnish newspapers expressed anti-imperialist views, and challenged “the civilizing mission” of imperial powers as hypocritical (Rantanen and Ruuska 2009). Rantanen and Ruuska connect anti-imperialist views to “the sensitivity” of Finnish people being subjected to “Russification”, the restrictive and oppressive policies of the Russian Empire. However, they also argue that such sensitivity was largely lost after Finnish independence in 1917, as the newly established nation state did its best to capitalize on previously critiqued notions of cultural and racial superiority. Similarly, while the pseudoscience of race was keenly adopted in Finland, this, as well as the politics of Hitler’s Germany, had their critics too (cf. Sana 2004), but the need for further academic research on anti-fascism has been pointed out by previous scholars (Kaihovirta and Wikström 2017; Braskén 2020). In regard to post-Second World War anti-colonial struggles, solidarity with the anti-apartheid movement particularly mobilized leftist student movements since the 1960s, but more broadly, NGOs, trade unions and the evangelical Lutheran church in 1980s (Soiri and Peltola 1999; Bergholm 2009). At the same time, an antiracism that addresses racism elsewhere is likely to do very little “here”.

Historical antiracist mobilization for the rights of people who belong to groups now labelled “national minorities” as well as other minorities has mainly not been systematically mapped. However, the struggles of Sámi have been addressed by several scholars (see Junka-Aikio 2016). Recent academic debates have framed past (and present) struggles often in terms of de/colonization instead of (anti)racism in contemporary discussions—yet, from the perspectives argued for in this study, these can be fitted under the

broad umbrella term antiracism. I would also like to mention two less cited examples of past antiracist action. Regarding the antiracist mobilization of Roma, Virolainen's (1994) discussion commemorates a not-so-often cited chapter in history of antiracism in Finland. The Roma rights movement of late 1960s and early 1970s, inspired by the transnational political influences of the time, lobbied for the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, against racial discrimination of Roma people, and for housing rights. An early example of migrant self-organizing and political protest is the Pakistani migrant workers' march for their rights in the 1970s. This is hardly ever brought up in contemporary discussions, which is understandable given Leitzinger's (2010, 39-41) condescending description of the protest march between the cities of Helsinki and Turku.

Promoting antiracism among the youth has been also a particular theme in research. Recognizing racism as a societal problem in the 1990s prompted state sponsored civil society initiatives against racism, often presented under the labels of multiculturalism and tolerance (cf. Pakolais- ja siirtolaisasioiden neuvottelukunta 1994). These initiatives included research and scholarly interventions, most noticeably in the city of Joensuu in Eastern Finland, that was identified as a central site for racist skinhead youth culture. Activities guiding youth to exit skinhead groups are now enshrined in the canon of Finnish racism research (Puuronen 2001). Beyond this, the antiracist countercultures of the 1990s are mainly left unexplored in research, yet stories of fighting back against skinheads live on in rap lyrics<sup>5</sup>, for instance. Scholars who engaged in these first antiracist projects that combined academic research with youth work have since continued their antiracist education work in schools, while also engaging in civil society initiatives for antiracism (Souto, Sotkasiira, Rannikko and Harinen 2013). Further, in the field of youth studies and research focusing on young people, everyday antiracism, coping strategies and counteraction by young people subjected to racism, has been discussed to some extent (e.g. Rastas 2002, 14; Haikkola 2012, 74-8).

Contributions by individual people speaking up against racism that they have experienced can be studied as such as antiracist knowledge production. Rastas and Päivärinta (2010) discuss autobiographies of people of African descent in Finland, published since the 1970s, as one example of counter-knowledges and counter-speech against racism. More recently, journalist Umayya Abu-Hanna's partly autobiographical work (2003; 2009; 2012) can be regarded as crucial initiation tools into contemporary critical discussions on racism.

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<sup>5</sup> An enlightening example is the way in which the song *Niinku97* by artists Seksikäs-Suklaa and Doslada (2016) commemorates with tongue-in-cheek an attack by racist skinheads on a group of people of colour on a football field in eastern Helsinki in 1997. The rap lyrics describe the 1990s skinhead problem from a perspective of fighting back and from a perspective of those subjected to the racist violence, which has not been a common perspective in the mainstream discussion.

As already mentioned, in the last few years, antiracist discussions in Finland seem to have increased. As Keskinen (2018, 162) notes, antiracist perspectives have predominantly been fostered by intersectional feminists. She specifically mentions the works of freelance journalist Maryan Abdulkarim, and the *Ruskeat Tytöt* [Brown Girls] blog by author and now-editor of the media platform *Ruskeat Tytöt Media*, Koko Hubara. While the *Ruskeat Tytöt* blog was also included in this research, I suggest that journalistic work by Abdulkarim and *Ruskeat Tytöt/Ruskeat Tytöt Media* content by Hubara and others should also be regarded as knowledge production on racism and antiracism to the extent that they comment on these themes. Within the field of art there are interrelated though overlapping realms of antiracist knowledge production. For instance, Sonya Lindfors has done ground-breaking work on Blackness in the context of Finland through her artistic choreographic practice, and two edited anthologies, *Toiseus 101* (2016) and *Blackness & the Postmodern* (2018), which contain important contributions to critical understandings of racism and antiracism.

The recent increase of antiracist activities also includes two unprecedented antiracist mass demonstrations in Helsinki during the second half of 2010s. Rastas and Seye (2019) address both, *Meillä on unelma* (We Have a Dream), in 2015, and *Peli poikki – rikotaan hiljaisuus* (Stop Racism—Let's Break the Silence) in 2016, and stress the role of professional musicians and event producers in organizing the events that mobilized an unforeseen number of antiracist demonstrators (on *Peli poikki* see also Haavisto 2018).

### 3 CRITICAL RACE AND WHITENESS STUDIES PERSPECTIVES ON ANTIRACISM IN A NORDIC CONTEXT

*“Anti-racism implies the ability to identify a phenomenon—racism—and to do something about it. Of course, different forms of anti-racism often operate with different definitions of what racism is.”*

*(Bonnett 2005, 3.)*

One of the central questions addressed in scholarly analyses of antiracism is the potential of antiracism as a critique, and racism as a critical concept—which kind of racial inequalities and oppressions do they cover (e.g. Ahmed 2012; Gilroy 1990; Lentin 2016; Paradies 2016; Pitcher 2009). While antiracism and antiracist activism can be analyzed from other theoretical point of views too (cf. Jämte 2013; Malmsten 2007; Fella and Ruzza 2013), the best analytical tools to scrutinize the relationship between antiracism and racism, and to discuss the ways in which different conceptions of race and racism manifest in and shape antiracist action, is provided by the rich intellectual work done on conceptualizing race and racism. The expanding field has been named in different ways depending on the geographical location, for instance, critical theorization of race, racism and antiracism; race critical theories; or critical race and whiteness studies (see Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Goldberg and Essed 2002; Hübinette and Lundström 2014; Keskinen and Andreassen 2017; Mulinari and Neergaard 2017). More specifically, critical theorizations of race and racism provide an analysis of an antiracism vocabulary that significantly differs from academic discussions that focus on ethnicity, tolerance, or multiculturalism.

The key concepts of this research derive from critical analyses of race, racism and antiracism—or, from traditions that could also be labelled as critical race and whiteness studies and Black feminism. Through these choices, I commit to researching traditions that, among other things, seek to address racism as a systematic, structural problem (cf. Mills 1999).

In this chapter, I discuss the contributions of these discussions as relevant to my analytical perspective, as well as situating the discussion questions within the Nordic context. Critical race and whiteness studies, as well as Black feminism, have primarily been developed in Anglophone contexts. Further, European analyses of antiracism tend to focus on its lineage within Western Europe. For instance, the anthology edited by Floya Anthias and Cathie Lloyd *Rethinking Anti-racisms* (2002) or Alana Lentin’s *Racism and anti-racism in Europe* (2004) both focus on Western European countries that used to be colonial centres. What does it mean to apply the theoretical perspectives and concepts developed in these traditions to a Nordic context? I start this chapter



by describing how Nordic postcolonial feminism serves as a steppingstone to start to grasp race, racism, and hegemonic whiteness, as well as containing efforts to challenge these. After this, I proceed to discuss the field of critical race and whiteness studies, and the conceptual tools it provides for my analytical aims.

### **3.1 A STARTING POINT: COLONIAL COMPLICITY**

An important point of departure to sketch the theoretical framework for this research is the work done in the field of Nordic postcolonial feminism (Mulinari et al. 2009). Mulinari and others (2009) explain that Nordic postcolonial feminism is a theoretical endeavour that draws from antiracist, postcolonial, Black feminist and queer scholarship, as well as from race critical theories. In other words, Nordic postcolonial feminism has been a platform to introduce Nordic academic audiences to critical theorizations of race and racism. This has been done in connection to highlighting the ways in which social realities in Nordic countries have been and continue to be shaped by (post)colonial relations. Postcolonial here refers to continuums of colonial relations (e.g. Ahmed 2000, 11-14; for Finnish-language discussion see Kuortti 2007, 15), rather than an assumption that the world would be on a single timeline in which “the colonial times” would have passed—this is a critique directed at postcolonial theory at times (see McClintock 1995, 392-396). Nordic postcolonial feminism, as well as postcolonial theory in general (see Bhabra 2014), is grounded on the intellectual work by Homi Bhabha, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak, among others. This has resulted in a particular emphasis on cultural processes, for instance, analyses of representations and discourses. As such, postcolonial theory brings forth how cultural and societal practices, policies, and knowledge production are shaped by a colonial logic that prioritizes Europe/West and European/Western people over the rest.

Research in the field of postcolonial feminism thus provides important intellectual groundwork for contextualizing analyses of race and racism within a Nordic context. The continuum of (post)colonial relations in the Nordic countries has been conceptualized as *colonial complicity*, a term coined by Vuorela (2009). Colonial complicity has become, for a good reason, a central way of describing and analyzing the ways in which colonialism still shapes social and material realities in the Nordic countries. As defined by Mulinari, Keskinen, Irni and Tuori (2009, 1-2) it refers to “processes in which (post)colonial imaginaries, practices and products are made to be part of what is understood as the ‘national’ and ‘traditional’ culture of the Nordic countries”. In other words, colonial complicity describes the logics of how a country like Finland has held a beneficiary role in the colonial order, despite never having had actual overseas colonies of their own. Instead, there has been a conscious political project to identify with the West, or, “being seduced by

the hegemonic” West has led to complicit relations with it (Vuorela (2009, 20). In other words, Nordic postcolonial feminism makes use of a theoretical framework that focuses on continuums of colonial relations, which is an adequate starting point to begin to explore antiracist discussions and practices in Finland. By continuums of colonial relations, I refer here to workings of race, i.e. ways of categorizing people according to colonial logics that differentiate between Europeanness and non-Europeanness (e.g. Hesse 2007; Goldberg 2006; El-Tayeb 2011).

Moreover, Nordic postcolonial feminism has particularly emphasised gender and sexuality and their intersectional connections over other categorizations, and thus, advanced understandings of the theoretical contributions of Black feminism in the Nordic context (e.g. de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005). Gender and sexuality indeed seem to be central techniques through which racialization operates in the Nordic countries, as demonstrated in the ground-breaking work done by authors of the anthology *Complying with colonialism* (2009), as well as in other insightful analyses (e.g. de los Reyes, Molina, and Mulinari 2002; Lundström 2011; Bredström 2008; Urponen 2010). At the same time, intersectionality has become utilized in feminist analyses beyond discussions on race and racism (see Lykke 2010). Further, European feminist discussions have been critiqued for the pan-European tendency to overlook the relevance of race in shaping social relations, as well as in academic knowledge production (Lewis 2013). Given that firstly, previous research has convincingly shown the relevance of gender and sexuality in the co-construction of race and racialization in Nordic contexts (not least in relation to the Nordic/Finnish ideal of gender equality), and secondly, that race and racialization are at times overlooked in research drawing from intersectionality (cf. *ibid.*), I decided not to set the main focus of this work as the intersection of race and gender or sexuality. Yet, while the main theoretical focus of this work is in critical race and whiteness studies, theoretical work done in the field of Nordic postcolonial feminism on intersectionality, as well as other areas of feminist theory, certainly informs my research. In other words, I do not suggest that racism could be “eliminated on its own” (Gilroy 1990, 251), and I discuss this in relation to my research findings, paying attention to how other intersectional categorizations crucially shape antiracist discussions on racism. I later demonstrate the links between racism and gendered and sexualized oppressions; class as social and cultural categorization (cf. Skeggs 1997); and as economic exploitation (Mulinari and Neergaard 2017). The main emphasis of my work, however, is the analysis of race, racism, racialization, and whiteness.

Further, the theorization of racialized power relations in postcolonial feminism draws upon the theoretical and methodological focus on opportunities of resistance. In other words, postcolonial feminism ideally exceeds a mere description of oppression because it draws upon Black feminism, among other sources, whose goal is emancipation (Hill Collins 2008). It encourages the seeking of fractures in the hegemonic structures of

racism and whiteness, so as to focus on opportunities of resistance (cf. Mulinari et al. 2009, 3-4). In other words, in postcolonial feminist theorization, the analysis of colonial power relations is closely connected to thoughts of re-shaping and possibly dismantling the same power relations. As I discuss more thoroughly in the chapter on methodology, also looking into the ways in which racist orders are challenged—rather than merely verifying the existence of racialized hierarchies (also in antiracism)—has been an important point of departure for my research. Further, feminist theorizations on intersectionality have highlighted the need to understand knowledge as contextual and situated, which I also elaborate upon in the methodology section in Chapter 4.

In sum, the intellectual work done within Nordic postcolonial feminism provides me with an important theoretical starting point that goes beyond the analyses of gender and sexuality. It has produced conceptual tools to situate discussions on race and racism in a Nordic context, but it also guides my focus towards questions of resistance instead of those of oppression.

## **3.2 CRITICAL RACE AND WHITENESS STUDIES**

Critical work on race and racism has been carried out under several labels, which are to some extent context-dependent. In the recent Nordic discussions, one of the applied labels is critical race and whiteness studies. Adopting the label remains rather unreflected despite the fact that in other discussions the naming of the theoretical tradition has been attached to particular meanings. In this section, I briefly discuss distinct, yet overlapping research traditions through which race, racism, and antiracism are critically theorized, and what I mean by defining critical race and whiteness studies as the primary theoretical frame of my work.

One of the well-known names to critical analyses of race is critical race theory (CRT). CRT has its origins in the United States, where its particular focus was developed in the context of legal studies inspired by (earlier) transnational Black liberation thinking, such as that of intellectuals like Sojourner Truth and W.E.B. Du Bois, along with different forms of Black radicalism, like the Black Power movement (Delgado and Stefancic 2017; Tate 2014, 68-9; Goldberg and Essed 2002, 4). The intellectual work preceding the establishment of CRT has its roots in the diasporic community of Black thinkers outside of the United States, for instance, in the Caribbean but also beyond. Black radicalism (Robinson 1983; Andrews 2018) can be considered as an overlapping, preceding, but also in a way more extensive<sup>6</sup> tradition. An equally important, also overlapping intellectual tradition is Black feminism,

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<sup>6</sup> For instance, a part of Robinson's (1983) argument is to show that histories of oppression and exploitation do not define Black people.

which highlights the meaning of gender in analyses of oppression and developing theorization on African American women's lives and experiences (cf. Hill Collins 2008). Although some theorizations of race seem to forget feminist discussions (cf. Bulmer and Solomos 2004, 2), it is crucial to recognize Black feminist thought as part of CRT—the theorization of the concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) being the most obvious example.

Since its formative days as an academic discipline in the late 1980s, CRT has expanded its focus in many ways, and it has become a point of reference for scholars in different geographical locations and disciplinary fields. For instance, Tate (2014, 68) describes CRT's "transatlantic passage" to the United Kingdom broadening its scope to policy and politics, while maintaining its focus on race-conscious analyses. Of course, UK-based analyses are not simply a result of this conceptual travel. Instead, an academic tradition was developed in response to, among other things, racialized oppression and violence in the political turmoil of the 1970s and 1980s (cf. CCCS 1982). Further, in UK academia, approaches labelled "research on 'race' and ethnicity" (Gunaratnam 2003) might share a similar point of departure, i.e. actively engaging in striving for social justice and dismantling racialized oppressions—or, as Gunaratnam (2003, 20) describes, it is "research that is involved in a 'race riot' at the epistemic level". At the same time, academic discussions initiated in the US context are often regarded as influential elsewhere in Western Europe in the creation of critical theorizations of race and racism (cf. Essed 2002; Essed and Hoving 2014).

There have been also deliberate efforts to broaden the disciplinary scope of CRT and to develop its theorization further. Essed and Goldberg (2002) introduced an alternative label for critical theorization that focuses on race and racism. They use the title race critical theories, which according to them, aims to highlight "taking race critically and theory race-critically" (ibid., 4). In other words, the critique of race as a construct through which power-hierarchies are maintained and reproduced, as well as a demand to take this into account in analyses of political, economic and social conditions, are the two essential elements of Essed and Goldberg's theoretical approach. This perspective of race critical theories might be reflected in Nordic debates, even if they do not use the label (cf. Rabo and Andreassen 2014).

As has become evident from the discussion thus far, it is not a given to include "whiteness" in the title for critical analyses of race. It is possible to group CRT and critical whiteness studies (CWS) together, or at least to see them as branches of the same tree. However, there is a difference in the focus of the two research approaches, and due to their disciplinary origin in the United States, they are often regarded as two separate—yet possibly complementary—disciplinary approaches (e.g. Matias et al. 2014), or CWS is regarded an offshoot of CRT. The genealogy of critical whiteness studies can be articulated in various ways (cf. Ahmed 2004), but embracing criticality underscores its connections to the agenda of other critical theorizations of

race. Also, theorizations of whiteness have their roots in the thoughts of W.E.B. Du Bois, whose seminal work on “colour prejudice” entails explicating white supremacy (see Du Bois 2007/1903). Additionally, more recent work within Black intellectual traditions has been crucial for developing critical analyses of whiteness (Twine and Gallagher 2007, 7-12). Since the beginning of the 1990s, and firstly in the United States in particular, there has been an increasing amount of academic work that explicitly discusses whiteness—Ruth Frankenberg (1993) and Richard Dyer’s (1997) works are often regarded as seminal in this strand of research. At the same time, developing the study of whiteness as an independent disciplinary approach has also prompted concerns: “whiteness studies is potentially dreadful”, says Ahmed (2004, 6) paraphrasing Dyer (1997) who critiques the reproducing of whiteness through declarations, “investing in itself, and its own reproduction” (Ahmed 2004, 6)—Critical Whiteness Studies needs to do something more than state that whiteness is a monolithic structure, or acknowledge its privilege of ignorant self-exploration.

As a label, critical race and whiteness studies potentially refers to a combination of the aforementioned approaches. For instance, it seems to serve as an umbrella term for critical studies of race, racism, and antiracism in Australian academia, and among other things, where there is a scientific association bearing this name (Nicholl 2014). Similarly, critical race and whiteness studies has recently become a point of reference for Nordic scholars doing critical work on race and racism, at least to some extent (e.g. Tigervall and Hübinette 2009; Hübinette and Lundström 2011; Andreassen and Rabo 2014; Keskinen and Andreassen 2017), although critical academic work on race and racism has not been plentiful in the Nordic context. As such, the situation is different, for instance, from that of the United Kingdom, where Solomos (2014, 406) characterizes the “study of race and ethnic relations” as “integral to sociology as a discipline”. Instead, as Mulinari and Neergaard (2017, 89) note, “--in the margins of most disciplines, there is an emergent field, often inspired by critical social theory exploring the centrality of racism”. In Sweden, the establishment of the Centre for Multidisciplinary Studies on Racism at Uppsala University in 2017 enshrines yet another name, while it also indicates that terminology within the field is developing rapidly. Some scholars, for instance, use critical race theory as their primary frame for theoretical identification (e.g. Mulinari and Neergaard 2017), and at times, critical race and whiteness studies seems to point primarily to critical analyses of whiteness (e.g. Leinonen and Toivanen 2014, 163). In most of the few cases, the label critical race and whiteness studies points to an interdisciplinary tradition of thought that I also make use of here. Further, given the particular persistence of histories of whiteness in the Nordic context, explicating it might have a particular value.

I have adopted the critical race and whiteness studies description for my theoretical framework to underscore that I draw from analytical perspectives and conceptual tools developed in critical race theory, race critical theory and

critical whiteness studies. At the same time, I connect my work to analytical descriptions of expressions of race primarily in the European context (e.g. Goldberg 2006; Lentin 2011; 2008; El-Tayeb 2011; Keskinen and Andreassen 2017).

Further, I have also adopted the label critical race and whiteness studies in order to give credit to the long traditions of analyses of race and racism, which are part of different rebellious movements within and beyond academia. In discussing the essence of critical race theory, it is usually the radical origin of the research tradition that gets stressed, along with its demands for “an epistemic involvement in a ‘race riot’” (cf. Gunaratnam 2003, 20); these have been formulated in different ways within different critical approaches addressing race and racism. Delgado and Stefancic (2017, 3) clearly define CRT as not only having an analytical tradition, but also as a combination of activist and scholarly engagement in studying *and* transforming power relations marked by racism and race. According to them, this also differs from “the traditional civil rights discourse” in its effort to question “the very foundations of the liberal order” (ibid.). In other words, understanding CRT as a transformative and/or emancipatory practice when it comes to race and racism is seen as the defining part of its theoretical tradition. At the same time, critical approaches to race have also been contested due to a striving for critical political commitment. For instance, Solomos (2014, 402) describes the debates that concerned the development of a sociology of race, and British critical race scholarship, as fields in which questions related to race and racism were politicized in the highly charged environment of the 1970s and 1980s. Solomos describes debates between academics who were cautious about taking a position in everyday politics, and other scholars and activists who stressed the importance of allying with everyday struggles against racism; Solomos gives credit to the latter for shaping the research field.

The discussions about the possibilities for critical and transgressive knowledges on race and racism to shape the institutionalization of the discipline are not over. Andrews (2018) positions himself in the canon of Black radical thought. Even if he speaks specifically about Black scholarly positions, his cautionary words apply to all scholars identifying with the theoretical traditions that are partly originated in Black radical thought; he comments on Black scholars’ positions at universities that in most cases remain white institutions, by arguing that embracing “radical theory but reject[ing] revolutionary practice” is more harmful than simply being complicit within racist practices (ibid., 20). Paying lip service to structures of oppression and “pretending that there is nothing we can do about it” (ibid.) undermines the transformative potential of this radical paradigm. Instead, he insists on committing to taking action too. In a similar vein, the challenge could be formulated by Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2009), who questions the emancipatory potential of a project carried out under the label “decolonial” in the institutional context of the university, asking “[w]hat happens when knowledge produced in social protest movements and understood as political

intervention sustains disciplinary curricula” (ibid., 57). Her concern is that institutionalizing revolutionary knowledge neutralizes its transgressive claims (see also Said 1983). I suggest that these considerations are relevant also for the developing field of Nordic critical race and whiteness studies.

When analytical conversations on race are conducted in contexts that might seem antithetical to the ones in which the radical traditions preceding the critical theorization of race were situated, concerns about them losing their critical potential are not unjustified (cf. Lewis 2013). Given the relative newness of critical race and whiteness studies in the Nordic context, and that thus far only a handful of scholars use the label, it might be too early to speculate upon how contemporary Nordic scholars take up the challenge of contributing to revolutionary, or at the very least transformative, practices. However, for instance, the Swedish context provides multiple examples of scholarly efforts to dismantle racialized power relations (e.g. Groglopo et al. 2015, in regard of Finnish research see Keskinen et al. 2018). Also, while my work attempts to show the relevance of research traditions rooted in large scale protests and rebellions elsewhere, albeit by placing them in a context that lacks identical social movements and histories of struggle, it nonetheless manages to connect previous analyses to the struggles that take place and have previously taken place in Finland. I return to the question of critical race and whiteness studies as a transformative practice in the methodology section.

In short, defining critical race and whiteness studies as the primary theoretical frame of my work means that I make use of the analytical perspectives and vocabulary developed in its research traditions, or, the analytical work that I do focuses on examining antiracism through concepts such as racialization, race and whiteness instead of those of multiculturalism and tolerance, for instance. Next, I elaborate the concepts and my conceptual choices.

### **3.3 ANTIRACISM THROUGH THE LENS OF CRITICAL RACE AND WHITENESS STUDIES**

Critical race and whiteness studies equips me with conceptual tools to interrogate the ways in which antiracism challenges or fails to challenge racialized inequalities, and the ways in which racialized hierarchies are also possibly embedded in antiracism. In other words, this allows me to focus on the critical potential of antiracism. In this section, I first present my take on the concepts of racism, race, racialization, and whiteness, which are fundamental to my research’s theoretical orientation. After this, I introduce theoretical discussions and the analytical terminology that I have also made use of in the empirical analyses on antiracism and racism’s critical potential. Bearing in mind that introducing theoretical ideas to a new environment “is never unimpeded” (Said 1983, 226) and that critical tools developed in one context cannot be expected to do the same work in another context (ibid.),

throughout the following discussion, I also reflect the ways in which these concepts also need to be situated into contexts relevant to this research.

### **3.3.1 RACISM, RACE, RACIALIZATION, WHITENESS**

In this section, I discuss four interlinked concepts: racism, race, racialization, and whiteness. The problematic meanings given to racism in antiracist action are what this research seeks to interrogate. Therefore, instead of providing a fixed definition of racism here, I briefly introduce some discussions about different understandings of racism. Race, on the other hand, can be understood as a historical trajectory that anchors discussions on racialized inequalities and oppressions on the continuum of colonial histories. As such, categories to interpret race are inherently shapeshifting, which is underscored by the concept of racialization which focuses on relational process. Finally, I discuss whiteness, an assemblage of multiple qualities that point to ruling hegemonic positions in racial hierarchies and can also be labelled the problem instead of racism.

To begin with, while *racism* has multiple and contested meanings within everyday discussions, it is also one of the debated concepts within critical race and whiteness studies. A central concern of many critical scholars has been to develop distinct definitions of the concept: from Carmichael and Hamilton's (1967) ground-breaking work on introducing racism as a critical concept to describe the oppression of Black people in the United States, to Bonilla-Silva's (2018/2003) relatively recent theorization, one primary task has been to find apt definitions of racism. For Bonilla-Silva (2018), the disparity amongst conceptions on racism is among the key issues that point to why there are disagreements in "racial matters". Bonilla-Silva locates these disparities in views between "whites and people of colour" (ibid., 2018, 8). Another way to grasp different takes on racism is to observe the historical processes to which it is (not) associated. While some scholars see the Eurocentric genealogical trajectory of the term as limiting to its analytical and critical capacity (e.g. Hesse 2011), others have used it as an analytical tool to point out inequalities that derive from the divide of "the West and the rest" (e.g. Essed 1994).

Indeed, the term racism first appeared in discussions connected to historical events in Europe. As often stated, racism was first adopted as a positive definition for an ideology that supported the pseudoscience of race in early twentieth century Europe (Miles 1989, 59; also Rastas 2005, 72). Yet almost concurrently, it also spread as a critical term in the late 1930s through Magnus Hirschberg's book *Rassismus* (1934) (and its English translation in 1938), which along with other texts, contradicted the idea of hierarchizing human populations into races (Räthzel 2002, 4; Miles 1989, 59). As pointed out by several scholars, the pseudoscience of race and the practices of Nazi Germany continue to be at the core of commonplace understandings of racism in Europe (e.g. Goldberg 2006). After the Second World War, a series of statements produced in a UNESCO programme that aimed to "make known



the scientific facts about race and to combat racial prejudice” (Hiernaux and Banton 1969) defined racism as the false belief in a scientific basis for race. Yet, the term was also adopted and developed further, for instance, by the intellectuals of the Black Power movement in the United States (cf. Carmichael and Hamilton 1968). However, the concerns of the international community focused on events that took place on European soil, and as stressed by Hesse (2011), colonial relations were not understood to be a part of racist exploitation (see also Goldberg 2006). Similarly, early discussions around the notion of racism in Europe dismissed the postcolonial critics of the time like Franz Fanon and Aime Césaire. Yet, for instance, Fanon (1990/1961) labelled as racist both European colonialists views on Africans, but also the distinctions (produced by colonialism) among African people within Africa. In other words, it is to some extent debatable to what extent racism was used as a vehicle in critiques against colonialism (cf. Miles 1989). Yet, focusing on European discussions, it is unquestionable that the emphasis has been on the aftermath of Nazi Germany, or that critiques of racism were developed to condemn the discrimination and oppression that was particularly seen in the Nazis’ usage of racial categories to justify systematized violence (and similar acts of violence that took place elsewhere but were not condemned). And, while racism has since been used in other critical discussions, such as challenging the colonial divide (e.g. Essed 1994), Eurocentric shortcomings in defining racism serve as an important reminder to continue to pay attention to the ways racism is used both in lay and academic discussions, so as to consider whether some racial inequalities are recognized as racism more easily than others.

Compared to racism, it is more straightforward to link *race* to a longer historical trajectory. As a system of categorization and/or social organization that assumes “unpassable boundaries” (Bhattarchayya 2018, 3) between groups and individuals, it also serves as a theoretical nodal point and analytical category that connects different expressions of racism (discrimination, oppression, exploitation, violence) to historical trajectories of colonialism (e.g. Goldberg 2002; Hesse 2011). In race critical thought and Black radical tradition, race is understood as a system of hierarchization born in Europe, permeating feudal societies and enshrined under the Spanish inquisition (see Robinson 1983; Goldberg 2002). After this, race was bred in European colonialists’ encounters with people categorized as others, and was established in discussions within the European Enlightenment, and formed as a system of differentiation that invokes the historically instituted colonial relation of “European”/“non-European” (Hesse 2011). In other words, race has a long history of being embedded and reproduced in human action. Race’s construction of impassable boundaries might assume naturalized, inherent and thus unchangeable states of inferiority and superiority, or it might operate through a historicist interpretation that locates the differences in stages of maturity and development (Goldberg 2002). These boundaries also vary

across time and space, as tokens which define supposedly civilized Europeans and savage others vary contextually (Hesse 2011; Hall 1987).

The ways in which race is read from human bodies varies across time and space, and in this regard, Stuart Hall's famous "floating signifier" (1997a) is an apt characterization of race. Hall (1987) also provides an autobiographical example to illustrate this term, through reflecting on the different ways he was perceived in his Jamaican youth as a member of an aspiring middle-class family striving for English respectability, and later in the United Kingdom as a black immigrant. Also, the Nordic history of race and racism provides striking examples of these variations. In pseudoscientific race theories, Finnish-speaking Finns were categorized as non-white, among other things, due to their language that was not seen to belong to the family of languages of European civilization (Kemiläinen 1998). Creating representations of Finnish people as white Europeans was a deliberate political project, in which, for instance, white Finnishness was constructed as different from the supposedly inferior Sámi people (Kemiläinen 1998; Urponen 2010; Isaksson 2001). While the example of light-skinned, Finnish speaking Finns being perceived non-white is likely to appear far-fetched today, it aptly illustrates the ways in which "colonial meanings and significations of 'European'/'non-European' social existence" (Hesse 2007, 656) are assigned also to "cultural" elements. In other words, while the attributes of race vary—or it is a relational category, continuously under redefinition (Hall 1997a)—I understand these categorizations as continuing to project the colonial difference onto human beings, and as such, it provides for (an analyses of) racism's historical and geopolitical contextualization. Observing the ways in which distinctions such as civilized/savage or deserving/undeserving continue to be produced creates a pathway for grasping the workings of race today.

Seeing race elemental in exploitation of feudal workforce as well as in European colonial conquest and consequent processes of enslavement illuminates that differences produced through race overlap with economic structures. As race provides the supposed justification for white European people's greater entitlement, differences marked by race still tend to facilitate economic exploitation (e.g. Mills 1999). While the material aspects of race are central in discussions on racial capitalism (Robinson 1983), other theoretical discussions that I follow are less explicit about them. However, I address the point on economic exploitation in the discussion on my research findings.

Speaking of race often raises discomfort—for some scholars, the term's association with pseudoscientific race theories might seem to suggest that by getting rid of it, one could do away with racism too. This is particularly true in the Nordic context, where the concept of race has even provoked heated debates among academics (e.g. Rabo and Andreassen 2014); where literary translations to local languages associate it with animal breeds; and in everyday discussions, it's most significantly connected to the pseudoscience of race. However, reluctance to acknowledge race is not just a Nordic characteristic, and in fact, a significant amount of scholarly effort has been put into work

showing that erasing race from our vocabulary does not abolish its effects within social reality (Goldberg 2006; Lentin 2008). Silencing race appears as a shortcoming in both academic and non-academic European discussions, compared to their North American equivalents (e.g. Lewis 2013), although those might have their flaws too. Those scholars who wish to explicitly address it claim that in order to analyze the discrimination, oppression, and violence that is produced through race, talking about it is necessary. In other words, analyses of race can express how colonial difference is reproduced in the context of Nordic human sciences (see Hübinette and Lundström 2011; Vuolajärvi 2014).

Due to some inconsistencies in previous discussions, I see it necessary to explicitly consider the analytical aims of the work that makes use of the concept of race. In my view, there is no doubt that the construction of race shapes the social reality of Nordic countries too (e.g. Ahmad 2019; FRA 2018; Keskinen et al. 2018), but simply calling out (some aspects of) how race operates does not provide much of an analysis. Further, analytically, there are different understandings of the implications of racial attributes. For instance, in their critique on the lack of discussions about race in Sweden, Hübinette and Lundström (2011) address whiteness as a social construct. Yet, instead of seeing race beyond the phenotypical, they also distinguish between “the bodily concept of race” and the “cultural concept of ethnicity”, in their view, problematically conflated in popular discussions (ibid., 44). To associate only phenotypical or bodily features with race dismisses the analytical work done on how the category of race was produced through attributes labelled both “biological” and “cultural” (e.g. Hesse 2007; Stoler 2002; McClintock 1995; Robinson 1983). It is indeed important to take into account in academic analyses how skin tones, eye shapes, and hair textures also contribute to commonplace ideas around (a lack of) respectability and entitlement. Yet, equally important are such attributes as religious symbols, clothing, and spoken languages. In fact, if these are not taken into account, the discussion risks reproducing a pseudo-biology of race of its own (Hesse 2007). Here also the ways in which race is intertwined with other categorizations, such as gender and sexuality, is important to observe.

Given that contemporary discussions on race in the Nordic countries take place in a linguistic context in which static derogatory understandings of “race” are commonplace, I believe that academics of this region have a particular responsibility when addressing race. A careless popularization of the term might just lead to an uncritical spreading of pseudo-biological ideas, which for instance, appeared to happen in the weekly news magazine *Suomen Kuvalehti*'s (19 August, 2015) poll on Finnish people's prejudices about different races; even when the apparent intent was to reveal racist prejudices, questions on racial characteristics also reproduced the idea of fixed, existing races. In other words, it is worth considering using race parallel with the concept of racialization, which emphasizes both the constructedness and the

process-based nature of the way in which categorizations based on race become enshrined in human action.

To emphasize the processes through which people are placed into categories of race via human action and perception, I use the concept of *racialization*. This, also a debated concept, has alternate uses too (e.g. Song 2014), and some critical scholars also contest it completely (Goldberg 2009). Yet, as said, the concept might have particular benefits in linguistic contexts, where race as a term does not figure in antiracist discussions. The processual nature of racialization is highlighted in the often-cited definition given by Robert Miles (1989). Miles describes it as a dialectical process in which meaning is attributed to human features, and as a consequence, humans can be assigned to general categories of race (ibid. 76). Dialectically, it refers to the dynamics in which assigning racialized meanings happen simultaneously in two directions—the obvious target of racialization, as well as the location from which the meaning-making process is directed. At the same time, Miles traces the concept back to the work by Franz Fanon (for earlier uses, see Murji and Solomos 2005, 5-6). In his work on European colonialism, Fanon (1990/1967) describes racialization as a homogenizing mechanism of thought to lump together all Africans. Fanon's psychosocial work is continued in approaches that stress relationality in racialization, or that racialization means that all categories of race are produced by situating them hierarchically (Phoenix 2005). This is evident, for instance, in the aforementioned example of Finns being whitened to pass as white Europeans while simultaneously being distanced from the Sámi. Similar to Fanon's initial discussion on the racialization of thought, racialization has been used to characterize the hierarchization of epistemological systems, among other things (Hesse 2007). However, I use racialization to refer to the process of categorizing human beings according to a colonial logic, which potentially draws on a configuration of several distinct qualities that, at times, are only secondarily associated with the body (like assumptions of geographical origin and language).

From the perspective of studying antiracism, it is also significant that racialization underscores how categorizations of race are produced in and through human action, which I interpret as encouraging the disruption of such processes too. However, this does not mean that racialization would be somehow voluntary. Instead, given the embeddedness of race and racializing thought within culture, it is not possible to simply untether it. One way to describe racialization is to understand it as a performativity of race (cf. Lentin 2016; on performativity see Butler 1999). When seen as analogous to discussions of gender performativity, racialization relies on repetition in human action, and challenging it can be seen to happen through small and gradual gestures. The Finnish language translation of racialized (*rodullistettu*) has come to mean a person of colour. In an analytical sense, reserving racialization as a synonym for non-white would assume that whiteness is not a product of racialization. Therefore, it is important to distinguish the

analytical and everyday ways of using the term (see also Keskinen and Andreassen 2017).

Finally, *whiteness* holds a particular location in hierarchies of race and racialization, as it marks a position of power and privilege, and operates as the norm against which all other locations are measured. For instance, Mills (1999) uses global white supremacy synonymously with racism. Given the normative and privileged role of whiteness in racialized hierarchies (which is potentially also upheld in (some) antiracist discussions), I commit to analytically emphasising it. Whiteness here refers to a structure of power and privilege constituting multiple attributes (Hage 2000), which also means that whiteness (as well as other positions in the racialized order) should not simply be reduced to bodily features. At the same time, as the effects of whiteness as a structure become tangible in relation to bodies that either pass as white or do not, whiteness becomes both a social structure *and* an embodied position within this overlapping structure.

In Nordic contexts, whiteness is usually described as a power structure or a norm that has been left largely intact (cf. Hübinette and Lundström 2011; Leinonen and Toivanen 2012). In comparison to the North American discussions, for instance, (see Hughey 2012) it seems function in more insidious ways than as an explicit reference point for identification (see Kolehmainen 2017)—in all but extreme cases (see Keskinen 2012). The relative insidiousness is undoubtedly connected the presumed innocence and disconnection from colonial and racial hierarchies that has been described through the concept of exceptionalism (see Rastas 2012; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012). Yet, instead of describing whiteness as “an invisible norm” (e.g. Toivanen 2014, on in/visibility of whiteness see Ahmed 2004), or a natural given state, Nordic whiteness, too, should be regarded as a hegemonic power structure or a set of norms that are actively reproduced through human action, similar to other instances of racialization (see Keskinen 2018, Urponen 2010). My use of normative whiteness refers to such understanding.

### **3.3.2 THEORIZING SILENCES ON RACE**

In order to describe the ways in which race and racism are systematically dismissed in contemporary discussions (e.g. Bonilla-Silva 2018; Goldberg 2009), critical scholars have developed an array of terms that analytically address these shortcomings. Colour-blindness, culture of racial equivalence, post-raciality, white innocence, Nordic exceptionalism, and the distinction between extreme and ordinary whiteness (see Bonilla-Silva 2018; Goldberg 2015; Wekker 2016; Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012; Lawler 2012) represent different perspectives and slightly different theoretical and contextual backgrounds, but I suggest that broadly speaking, they aim to highlight similar mechanisms of trivializing race and racism—or, they produce assumptions about a non-racist space, and/or non-racism as characteristic of European and

Nordic nation states. In this section, I discuss these conceptualizations that are relevant to my analytical work, in relation to each other.

First, despite expressing concerns about their insufficient understanding of racism, much of the critical work on antiracism is founded on the premise of antiracism's paradoxical hegemonic position. Or, racism's social stigma—which is often summarized as an anachronistic practice shared by old or old-fashioned people—is one of the central premises of much of the critical scholarly work on antiracism. For instance, Pitcher (2009) argues that this seemingly discursive hegemony—or the constant lip-service paid to antiracism—shapes antiracist opportunities for action. That seeming rejections of racism (whether in the form of positive self-representations of supposed tolerance, or more direct denials of racism), might end up affirming racism and delegitimizing resistance, is not news in the field of critical studies on racism (cf. van Dijk 1992; Pitcher 2009; Ahmed 2012). For instance, van Dijk (1992) showed how denying racism waters down demands for antiracism; if there is no racism to begin with, antiracism appears as an unnecessary claim. Somewhat similar dynamics are theorized by Ahmed (2012; 2006; 2004), who focuses on institutional declarations against racism. She labels such speech acts of non-performative antiracism as declarations that do not deliver what they promise—the words do not transform on their own into practices against racism (see also Mulinari 2018). In other words, the backdrop of many of the analytical conversations is an understanding of racism as a condemned phenomenon on the surface. Here, I suggest, dominant discourses might vary contextually.

The supposed state of non-racism, where all discussions on race are equally suspect, has been addressed through the concepts of colour-blindness and culture of racial equivalence. Ideology of colour-blindness<sup>7</sup> has been used to describe the dominant way race is operationalized in the US (Bonilla-Silva 2018). While outright racism of the Jim Crow era is condemned, racial inequality is still produced through (seemingly) more subtle ways, and the way in which “normative climate in the post-civil rights era has made illegitimate the public expression of racially based feelings and viewpoints” (ibid., 11) opens up to the possibility for paradoxical concepts like “reverse racism”. Somewhat similar critique is directed against what has been called an emerging culture of racial equivalence in the UK, highlighting a tendency to denude racism of its historical basis and the false belief that almost anyone can be a target of racism (Song 2014). Further, a similar line of popular thought that shares the consensus of racism's historical horrors but disconnects the past from the supposedly racism-free present, has been described through the concept of post-racial (Goldberg 2015). The critical term gained popularity among scholars in the field of critical race and whiteness studies. Analyses of the post-racial stem from the US context, as they scrutinize the debate—accelerated in particular by Barack Obama's presidency—which for some

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<sup>7</sup> The ableist connotation should be also critically evaluated.

served as proof that race does not matter anymore, and racism is thus a historical relic from less civilized times. In other words, the critique points to a tendency to situate racism within history's chamber of horrors, but also to a tendency to undermine systematic or structural racism. In Goldberg's (2015, 62) words, "in neoliberal spirit, the post-racial individualizes responsibility". Further, such thinking cuts across 'antiracist' approaches too and, concurrently, through repeating the understanding that we have overcome racism, antiracism can become an assumption of "our" qualities as shown by several scholars (e.g. Pitcher 2009; Lentin 2016; 2011; Ahmed 2012).

The Nordic discussions might not be identical—for instance, as I argue regarding post-racialism in Substudy I, 'post' is not necessarily an indication of past significance in a similar vein as those American discussions, or, it is not possible to identify similar discourses of overcoming racism in Finnish/Nordic contexts. At the same time, persistent denial of racism has been thematized in the discussions on Nordic exceptionalism, i.e. the contestable perception of the Nordic nation-states as the global "good guys" (Loftsdóttir and Jensen 2012). In comparison, the aforementioned approaches tackle more explicitly the supposed absence of race. Thus, they provide conceptual tools and analytical language to grasp limitations also in antiracist agendas. A focus on the logic of event (Lentin 2016) or emphasizing individualization of racism (Song 2014) are examples of such conceptualizations that highlight trivializing racism.

To grasp the nuances of in the ways in which discussions around racism evolve in the Finnish/Nordic context, I suggest that Wekker's (2016) discussion on white innocence provides an analytical trajectory for understanding a denial of race and racism in a context of a small Northern European nation state. The characteristics of this are, for instance, that "racism is a feature found in the United States and South Africa", or it is "located in working-class circles" (Wekker 2016, 525). In Substudy IV, I argue that white innocence can be understood as a form of post-raciality, i.e. the constructing of racism as an exceptionality. In other words, the aspects constituting white innocence describe a way of distancing oneself from race and racism; instead of claiming being over race and racism, one sees oneself beyond or above race. Further, such descriptions of being not only over, but beyond race, correspond to discussions on Nordic exceptionalism—perceptions of Nordic countries as bystanders in processes of colonial conquer, rule, and exploitation (e.g. Keskinen et al. 2009). Wekker's characterization of white innocence, which reproduces the image of a homogeneous white nation through locating racism elsewhere or as a quality of others, instils distinct entities with the confidence to take a position beyond racism because of good intent, and additionally actively rejects the possibility of racism as a systemic phenomenon. This also corresponds to previous research observations on the ways in which racialized differences and hegemonic whiteness is reproduced in the Nordic context (e.g. Hübinette and Lundström 2014; Keskinen et al. 2019).

While perceiving racism as an exceptionality is one of the key characteristics of a supposed state of non-racism or of maintaining white innocence, a central mechanism of producing the aura of exceptionality is attaching racism to certain figures, “the racists”, placed in the margins of the society. The racism that is attached to the working class (Wekker 2016, 525); “the expression solely of the ‘far right,’ loony extremists” (Goldberg 2009, 180); or is projected onto a figure “who is ‘not us’, who does not represent a cultural or institutional norm” (Ahmed 2012, 150), has been addressed in several theoretical discussions concerning patterns of overlooking institutional and structural forms of racism. Predating my research, Mäkinen (2016) points out how the discussions on racism in Finland might follow similar patterns, as racism is connected to a stereotype of “tasteless, redneck, vulgar, illiterate peasants who smell bad and should be banished from Finland”, and who are “repeatedly laughed at because of how they are thought to be” (ibid., 550). In order to focus on the image of the outcast racist analytically, I make use of the conceptual distinction between extreme whiteness and whiteness as ordinariness developed by Dyer (1997) and followed by Lawler (2012). Extreme whiteness here refers to blatant expressions of racism—or of white supremacy—that stand out against the backdrop of white ordinariness (Dyer 1997; Lawler 2012, 410), at least in the imagination that produces white innocence. I use this analytical distinction to discuss the ways in which attaching racism to images of exceptionality masks a more overarching normative whiteness, as well as the occasions in which exceptionality is contested, by pointing out the connections between the extreme and the ordinary. In other words, the distinction between extreme and ordinary whiteness provides an analytical framework for discussing the ways in which a clear-cut image of “the racists” serves to isolate racism from the rest of society, and the ways in which such isolation is contested.

In sum, my analytical aim to grasp different dimensions of antiracist discussions is supported by theoretical apparatuses developed in the field of critical race and whiteness studies. More precisely, I draw from a set of conceptual tools that pin down different ways in which race and racism are systematically dismissed—and at the same time, address ways to challenge racism also in supposed non-racism. Adopting these perspectives in a Northern European context requires both an understanding of global patterns of race and an acknowledgment of the contextual specifics. In other words, critical theorization of race, racism and antiracism in a Nordic context becomes meaningful through an understanding of *longue durée* hierarchies of race and colonial hierarchies in the Nordic countries too. At the same time, instead of precise citing, for instance, American discussions on post-raciality, i.e. being over race and racism, the discussions in the context of a small Northern European nation-state might instead emphasize being beyond or above race—and yet, the techniques of silencing race are similar, as I show in the discussion on my research findings.



## 4 DATA AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I describe the research process, then introduce the different sets of data that I collected and analyzed in the publications. Further, I explain the methodological choices made and distinguish the methods used in the analyses and reflect upon my own role within knowledge production. I start by describing the research process and my position through my striving for an antiracist research agenda. After this, I present the different types of data used for this research, and then my analytical take on them. Finally, I describe the ethical considerations that guided my work.

### 4.1 RESEARCH PROCESS

The initial idea for this research was prompted by my awakening regarding a lack of stories and histories of antiracism in Finland. The very initial plans for this research were created in 2012, when the aftermath of the previous years' parliamentary election—and the electoral triumph of the far-right party True Finns—was fresh, and also prompting a lot of concerns in public debates. The same year, journalist and author Umayya Abu-Hanna sparked public debates by stating that racism is normalized in Finland (*Helsingin Sanomat* 31 December 2012). As *racism* seemed to be increasingly addressed in different discussions, the popular concerns about racism or attempts to challenge racism were accounted for to a lesser extent, if at all. At the same time, through my own involvement in migrants' rights activism, it seemed to me that there were people committed to building antiracist alternatives that did not necessarily feature in public debate. In regard to academic discussions, this seemed particularly true, as anti-immigration racism, for instance, was picked up as a topic by some researchers, but activist efforts to respond to racism or dismantle racism had not yet figured as a theme. Recognizing antiracisms' urgency and importance made me consider that a study on antiracism could perhaps serve as a way to amplify antiracist voices, and I also considered that academic knowledge production could possibly learn from activist knowledges.

After these initial considerations, I researched literature on antiracism, which also made me consider different understandings of the broad range of phenomena that the term refers to, and the possibly contradictory demands that different antiracisms contain (see Anthias and Lloyd 2002b; Gilroy 1990). I combined theorization with empirical observations that I made through my own engagement in migrants' rights activism, and by actively following antiracist activities advertised on different antiracist forums during the autumn of 2013 (e.g. Rasmus—Network against Racism and Xenophobia newsletter; autonomous media platform *Takku*; and various Facebook

groups). I decided not to focus on a single thematic orientation of antiracism (cf. Malmsten 2007; Jämte 2013), but to study antiracist actions by various groups, who possibly had different antiracist goals. These considerations translated to a working classification of different antiracist orientations in my research plan, and the classification plays a central role in how I constructed the object of my research to be distinct forms of antiracist civic action.

The working classification that I came up with shaped the data gathering and the research process as a whole, and therefore I will present it first as the rationale that guided my data collection for this study. In the working classification, I distinguish between four different antiracist orientations.

First, in the field of professionalized civil society, several non-governmental organizations created campaigns against racism in the mid 2010s. Finnish civil society has been characterized as conformist, and the established associations have close relations with state institutions (Luhtakallio 2010; Alapuro 2010), and thus, NGOs have a distinctive role compared to the activist pursuits that I also address. At the same time, explicit discussion on racism has been regarded “difficult” in Finland—for instance, Rannikko and Harinen (2013, 159-160) describe their experiences of antiracist advocacy work in schools, where they have been met with a critique that “racism” is a word that is too “rough” (also Alemanji 2016)—in light of the NGO field’s previous focus on tolerance and multiculturalism (see Kivijärvi 2014). While NGO advocacy in most cases is created by working professionals, many NGOs’ activities are also based on the work of volunteers who both consume and spread their message. Considering all this, I decided to distinguish *antiracist advocacy by non-governmental organizations* as a category of its own.

Secondly, it seemed essential to focus on antiracist advocacy by people who themselves are subjected to racism. On one hand, Finnish civil society could be characterized as having “significant levels of equivalent immigrant or ethnic minority-led activism [that] are yet to emerge” (Fanning and Michael 2017, 8). On the other hand, there is no doubt that people subjected to racism have stood up against it. As I discussed in the Introduction, such views have not been customarily recorded in academic research, apart from a few exceptions (e.g. Rastas and Päivärinta 2010). At the same time, Abu-Hanna (2012, 233-236) brings up how experiences of racism and efforts to call out racism by people racialized as non-white are constantly undermined in Finland (see also Ahmed 2016; Hubara 2016). In early 2014, I attended a discussion aimed at popularizing academic discussions on whiteness to a feminist audience. In the Q&A part of the discussion, the participants seemed to me to conform to the opinion that whiteness in Finland is left unchallenged due to the fact that non-white people “have not found their voice”—and some of the participants speculated about “what will happen when the Somalis in Finland find their own voice”. The rather absurd discussion of voiceless residents with a 30+ year history in the country underscored to me how assumptions of silence can actively silence, or even serve as a tool for wilful ignorance to listen (cf. Mills

1999). Given this, I deliberately sought *antiracist self-representation by people of colour* to be included in the data. At the same time, grouping together various perspectives where the only common denominator is shared experiences of racism might seem generalizing, and this is something that I discuss later in this study.

Third, as I explained previously, my initial idea to start developing a research project on antiracism was very much influenced by an observation that the heightened anti-immigration racist political discourse—and to some extent, the striking emergence of extra-parliamentary right-wing extremism (see Koivulaakso, Brunila and Andersson 2012)—also provoked counteractions, some of them using antiracism as a descriptive term. For instance, groups and campaigns to call out racism in parliamentary politics and politicians' connections to right-wing extremist groups emerged in the early 2010s, and the radical leftist, autonomous and anarchist scene(s) have also outspokenly organized against fascism and racism. On one hand, these mobilizations sprout from very different political ideologies. On the other hand, to some extent they seemed to share similar understandings of racism. Therefore, I grouped these perspectives together as one orientation, *antiracism against the far and extreme right's racism*.

Fourth, partly guided by my own experiences with migration justice activism, and partly drawing from literature on antiracism (e.g. Anthias and Lloyd 2002b), I saw it was important to also regard anti-deportation activism and similar small scale but still existing initiatives for migrants' rights, as a part of the field of antiracism. Therefore, I included perspectives from migrants' rights advocacy groups who also explicitly commit to antiracism. In particular, the European border crisis in 2015 shaped the field of migrants' right advocacy, as many citizens mobilized to support newly arrived migrants. In the first place, this appeared primarily as a version of a "culture of welcome", and hence, somewhat different from, for example, anti-deportation activism. I interviewed activists from different groups in order to include *antiracist activism for migrants' rights* within my research.

The working classification guided my data gathering process, which I describe in more detail in relation to the distinct types of data I collected. My initial plan was also to include each orientation as a separate substudy in the research. However, I ended up regarding antiracist activism for migrants' rights with somewhat of a lesser emphasis in the empirical analysis compared to the other orientations, as Substudy IV focuses on comparing different antiracist views. This happened for two reasons. First, as I gathered the data, I realized most of the antiracist discussions comment upon migration in distinct ways. Second, while people involved in migrants' rights activism agreed that antiracism was an apt description of their work, they did not necessarily highlight it as public advocacy. Keeping in mind my research agenda, where I underscored the analysis of different uses of antiracism, I saw an analytical discussion on the distinct ways migration figures in different

antiracist agendas as providing a more accurate answer to the questions I was posing.

A PhD thesis (as perhaps any research) should be thought of as a learning journey. I started with one understanding of antiracism, but digging deeper into both academic and activist conversations has made me wary—or in a way, I am writing this work from a place of continuous insecurity. By this I do not mean that I would be uncertain of my research findings, but that I strive to be mindful of what kind of contribution this piece of research can make. Taking seriously the understanding in critical theory that knowledge practices are inseparable from their historical, cultural, and social contexts, and that research does not only mirror the social reality it talks about, but also participates in reproducing that reality (cf. Gutierrez-Rodriguez 2010; Suoranta and Rynänen 2016), I have made an effort to write this thesis from a perspective committed to antiracism and informed by critical reflections on it. This means also that, besides an object of knowledge for research, antiracism can be understood as a research paradigm or agenda (e.g. Rastas 2007b; Honkasalo et al. 2014). In other words, critical discussions on antiracism also inform my work methodologically, which I discuss next.

## **4.2 ANTIRACIST RESEARCH AGENDA AND POSITIONALITY**

Reflections on a researcher's positionality are an important part of qualitative research. However, instead of providing confessional lists of personal characteristics or biographical details, I interpret positionality as referring to (power) relations between the researcher and the research participants, as well as the researcher's paradigmatic, theoretical, and methodological choices. Different aspects of my position as the author of this research are linked in distinct ways to an aim that I set for myself at the beginning of the research process. In my first draft for a research plan, I wrote that "my aim throughout the research project is to develop (and further) an antiracist analytical stand, which would support the aims of this research through the practices and methods I adopt".

Before explaining what striving for an antiracist research agenda entails, I articulate why this aim is so needed. Pursuing an antiracist approach in research is connected to understanding research's productive nature. Research does not simply make and report observations of social reality—making detached and neutral observations is not possible (see Haraway 1988), and further, research outputs also participate in shaping that reality (Jokinen, Juhila and Suoninen 2000, 21-24; on research on racism see Goldberg and Essed 2002). This does not mean that research would be purpose-oriented, but that asking questions and reporting answers is not a neutral activity, and that the results reconstruct an image of a social reality. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the ways in which research questions are

formulated, as well as to what sort of assumptions theoretical and methodological choices bear. For instance, the data gathered for this research could also be framed by such concepts as tolerance and integration, which intimates different understandings of power relations than my chosen conceptual framework. In other words, one of the implications of my pursuit for an antiracist analytical stance was considering the ways in which my work participates in a racialized social reality. Therefore, I sought ways to challenge racialization and racism in and through the research, through theoretically locating it in critical race and whiteness studies (cf. Goldberg and Essed 2002).

Similar concerns about inadvertently adhering to the tenets of racism are a part of what Rastas (2007b, 57-8) describes antiracist research agenda should take into account. Rastas underscores that researchers and their knowledge are also situated within the racial hierarchies and social relations of a society, and an antiracist research agenda entails critically evaluating one's own actions and choices, as well as striving to grasp their limitations. On one hand, as I soon explain in more detail, it is important to understand that a researcher's knowledge arises from epistemic and theoretical traditions. My position and perspective are different from, say, an example that Alemanji (2016, 11) brings forth: according to Alemanji, a Nordic reality of race, and discussion on racism appears incomprehensible when explained to a person whose perspective is situated in West Africa. In other words, the challenge thus becomes how to see the known and taken-for-granted in a different light. Here, discussions within postcolonial and decolonial theory have been invaluable. On the other hand, I agree with Rastas that one's personal, epistemic location needs to be considered within the process of knowledge production (as it has been argued in feminist theory for decades, see Haraway 1988). This research is undoubtedly shaped by my position in hierarchies of racialization as well as my involvement in activist pursuits for migrants' rights. The ways in which the research participants perceive my racialized position; my involvement in activism in related fields; and my proximity or distance to groups and forms of activism contribute to framing my position as the conductor of this research.

First, as a white Finnish citizen in Finland, I am not subjected to racism; I have no first-hand experiences nor experience-based understanding of it. This describes the way in which (some of) the research participants saw me. The most explicit expression of this was the refusal of a potential interviewee, who explained that because discussions on racism seem always to happen on the terms of white people, they preferred to opt out and not be quoted in an article written by a white person; as I write in Substudy II, this makes a lot of sense. I also understood that separatist and milieus established for people of colour's antiracist self-organizing, such as discussion forums for people of colour in Finland, were off limits for me. Further, I tried to define my focus in a non-intrusive way, so therefore I focused upon actions aimed at or available to the general public (too). At the same time, in the context of academic research, discussing whiteness as a fixed and determined position is not simple.

Rastas (2007b) stresses that if a project aims to dismantle racialized positions, then whiteness as a categorization should also be deconstructed. I agree that describing a researcher's position through essentializing and fixed notions might enforce a stagnant idea of whiteness and other racialized categorizations, but at the same time, I see that a commitment to deconstruct a researcher's racialized position risks hijacking attention from the main topic in a similar vein as confessing one's whiteness (see Ryden 2013). Instead, I agree with de los Reyes and Mulinari's (2005, 91-3) suggestion that a researcher position located within whiteness is not an excuse to produce research that marginalizes non-white lives and experiences. In other words, a researcher's position should not determine one's capability of producing critical work. Instead, making use of theoretical and methodological tools that aim, for instance, at exposing or dismantling racialized hierarchies, should provide one with the ability to conduct an analysis that does not simply confirm hegemonic whiteness, and at the very least, recognizes the existence of multiple perspectives. This has been the effort of my analytical work—to not let my position determine the research results.

Secondly, a commitment to an antiracist research agenda underscores the political role of the researcher (see Rastas 2007b, 58). For me, this meant a partly unresolved attempt to sort out the roles of a researcher and an activist in a way that produced what I call a shadow life of this thesis—a set of activities that are unaccounted for in the empirical studies, but that have nonetheless guided my analytical interpretations. First, my interest in antiracist activism arose partly from my involvement in migrants' rights activism, and my knowledge of other forms of antiracist engagement is partly due to the networks that grew from this involvement. However, I have not used my activist work per se as a source of data gathering (and I suggest that anyone who considers such a pursuit, should carefully consider issues around voluntary, informed consent). Second, to meet the aims of this research, I did not collaborate with any group or movement in particular, yet my motivation was to “amplify antiracist voices”—to highlight an expression of one of the interviewees quoted in Substudy IV—as well as to distribute critical perspectives in Finnish language discussions. A part of the process has been an active (yet, not activist) engagement in disseminating knowledge related to antiracism within non-academic milieus. I have aimed to make the studied antiracist perspectives and voices more widely heard for both academic and non-academic audiences, and to this end, I wrote blog posts and statements, and participated in and organized discussions. The two most important contexts for this were two initiatives that I co-founded: Antiracist research network RASTER, and Anti-racist Forum ARF. The reason I mention this shadow life is that participating in the discussions that related to efforts to organize a joint event with people from distinct antiracist groups—and witnessing debates related to this—has undoubtedly deepened my understanding of different antiracist viewpoints. Also, presenting my research

to people engaged in these types of activism has prompted me to consider the analyses in ways that may not have arisen without this engagement.

### 4.3 DATA

In order to explore antiracisms in plural, I gathered the data for this study from various sources. The distinct antiracist initiatives in my study followed different rationales, and naturally their actions took on different forms, so I needed to rely on different forms of collecting data. Further, in order to receive a more nuanced understanding of different thematic orientations, I also collected different types of data on different orientations (for instance, my reading of the NGO campaigns is complemented by participatory observation of events that relied on the materials in question). The data constitutes interviews, media texts (such as websites, blog texts, event invitations), and notes from participatory observations in workshops, demonstrations and discussion events. I now explain more thoroughly what the different data sets allowed me to capture within antiracist discussions. Besides following the working classification that I presented earlier, the main criteria for the data selection was an explicit positioning either *against racism* or for *antiracism*. In other words, I included texts that explicitly speak against racism, and interviewed people who self-identified as antiracists. Another criterium for the data selection was that I was only interested in actions intended to be public. In other words, I was not interested in actions intended to be underground.

#### 4.3.1 TEXTS

I analyze different texts—or different materials promoting antiracism—that were spread both online and in print. These include blogs discussing racialization; NGO campaign materials and manifestos; event invitations; and online discussions promoting anti- far right mobilization. Some of these are a result of professional editorial processes (the NGO campaigns), while others are written by amateur authors (private people’s blogs—although some blog authors identify as professional writers).

First, I have included in the data promotional materials from NGO campaigns, which I consider to be representative of mainstreaming antiracism. I collected explicit antiracist advocacy by non-governmental actors of different sizes, from third-sector social-services providers, to smaller associations. These I found through their circulation on different online platforms, as well as at physical events during The Action Week Against Racism, but also at other occasions during late 2013 and 2014. The materials are produced between 2010 and 2014. I collected guidebooks (containing pictures), websites (containing videos), and posters produced by 12 NGOs. This resulted in 26 items, which I refer to as texts, and approach via discourse analysis. The texts from the NGO campaigns allow me to account for the

discursive shift addressing antiracism in the NGO field (see Kivijärvi 2014), and given the NGOs' positions in Finnish civil society, I understand them as representing a semi-official, mainstream-compatible form of antiracism. In other words, the NGO campaign materials are the primary source to which I ground my analysis of discursive hegemony in antiracist discussions.

Second, the blog post texts that discuss racism and racialization are written by authors who self-identify as people of colour or other racialized minorities. Given their nature as an author-controlled medium, I considered blog texts as an autonomous counterpublic (see Eckert and Chadha 2013) in the broader context of a white normed media space. I understand blog posts as attempts to challenge the tendency to undermine people of colour in Finnish language public debates (e.g. Abu-Hanna 2012, 233-236; Ahmed 2016; Hubara 2016).

I choose to focus on blogs after having encountered some through online platforms profiling antiracist activities. Other forms I considered included op-eds, after having come across some that addressed racism in recruitment practices and in public space, but considering the possible editorial processes op-eds are subjected to, I decided that blogs better served my research aims. After researching this further, I included data from 11 blogs that fulfilled the following criteria: they explicitly commented on racism in Finland—at least partly in either Finnish or English—and they are written from the perspective of the author (or authors) self-identifying as a person of colour or another racialized minority. Some things I excluded from these 11 blogs included, for instance, election blogs related to parliamentary politics; I did so throughout the process of defining my research aim, so as to keep focused on the context of civil society. The blogs had been updated at some point between 2013 and 2015, and they vary in style and scope. Some authors acknowledged their professional journalistic experience, while others are clearly more amateur. The number of posts in individual blogs varied from approximately twenty to 1,000. I first identified 225 blog posts that explicitly discuss racism and racialization, and then chose 51 for a close reading in the analysis section.

As I point out in the Introduction, it is only recently that different antiracist groups focusing on perspectives of people of colour have emerged to take space in the public sphere. However, such public actions were less visible when I began this research in late 2013. As I gathered the different blogs, it became clear that this realm was an obvious place to locate antiracist critique by people of colour and other racialized minorities who are subject to racism, so as to obtain a broad and heterogenous perspective on the topic. By reading texts by a heterogeneous group of people parallel to each other, I am not suggesting conflating the authors to a single category. Instead, the texts provide a spectrum of viewpoints that challenge white normativity. Similar discussions exist and continue to take place in the field of art, and, for instance, performing arts or music could have been a ripe context to explore self-representations by people of colour. For instance, choreographer Sonya Lindfors's groundbreaking piece *Noir?*, premiered in 2013, explored representations of blackness in a unique way in the field of performing arts in Finland. However,



given the refined and complex codes of communication in art, I did not consider including works of art to my data collection.

Third, a smaller set of texts complement my analysis of antiracist activism against the far and extreme right. In connection to participatory observations during events between 2014 and 2015, I collected event invitations for the demonstrations and discussion events I attended. Further, I included in the data manifestos of two groups—Varis, a direct-action anti-fascist network for the general public that established itself in early 2014, and Paljastettu, an online advocacy group active between 2011 and 2015. I also followed one Facebook discussion group used mainly for information-sharing by people active in distinct mobilization against the far and extreme right. My non-participatory observation (see Mäkinen 2016) of the group's discussions—by which I mean, I read without engaging further—is best understood as a collection of texts. At the same time, the role of my non-participatory observation is secondary: the group members discussed my admission to the private group beforehand, and prior to joining the group, I agreed not to cite its conversations directly nor to disclose specific information about the group members or topics addressed. The conversations that I followed guided my analysis of the other texts and the interview data.

#### **4.3.2 INTERVIEWS**

I chose to interview people engaged in antiracist activists in order to hear how they defined themselves, and how they understood the need for and aims of their antiracist engagements, such as producing blogs; organizing demonstrations and discussion events; and engaging in other forms of antiracist activism. I also saw this as an opportunity for the interviewees to comment on my research agenda. The interviews are my primary data for my analysis of antiracism against the far and extreme right's racism (III), and a comparison of different views on antiracism and racism (IV). Interviews are co-created talk in which the interviewee has an opportunity to redefine the questions posed by the researcher and guide the direction of the conversation (Holstein and Gubrium 1997; Ruusuvuori and Tiittula 2009; Silverman 2006, 117-8). Yet, analytical interpretation of interview data is the responsibility of the researcher (cf. Back 2007, 20-1).

I reached out to people and groups who had organized public activities against racism in civil society, according to the aforementioned working classification. Instead of sending out open calls, I contacted individuals and groups directly by email or via social media accounts, or approached them in person, for instance at demonstrations. In some cases, this meant contacting people with whom I had no prior contact, while on other occasions, I knew the people through my own activism or through mutual acquaintances. I also received interview suggestions from other interviewees, who recommended I speak with their collaborators. When approaching potential interviewees, I explained that my research is about antiracist activism, and if they saw this as

an apt description of their activities, I invited them for an interview. I also positioned myself as an ally, for instance by mentioning that I find antiracist organizing important and timely. I believe that my explicit antiracist positioning facilitated connections between me and the interviewees (Ruusuuvuori and Tiittula 2009, 33-35).

In order to talk with people engaged in distinct forms of antiracist activism, I deliberately contacted people with varying activist profiles. My focus is not the interviewees' personal experiences as such, but the ways in which they participate in antiracist discussions, and as discretion and anonymity are particularly important, I disclose a limited amount of the interviewees' personal information. In the substudies, I refer either to pseudonyms or give other, non-recognizable characterization.

First, I contacted the authors of some of the blogs from my data, as well as other people of colour engaged in creating antiracist self-representations like videos or live events, in a descriptive manner that makes clear that they have experienced racism. In other words, the bloggers, video makers, and event organizers expanded their everyday antiracism (Aquino 2015) to projects that seek to enunciate their experiences to a broader public. I reached out to the interviewees through their blogs or accompanying social media accounts. The interviewees' backgrounds vary—some are migrants, while others are Finland-born Finnish citizens; the majority are of African or Middle Eastern heritage, but some are also of Sámi or Latin American heritage. Also, the way in which the interviewees explained their antiracist aims varied. Some explained they were hoping to educate white Finnish people, while others underscored that they were not interested in such an unrewarding task and they were primarily speaking to their peers. With this first group of informants, I conducted 9 interviews with 11 interviewees between spring 2014 and early 2015.

Second, I contacted people involved in antiracist and antifascist groups, along with individuals who had arranged demonstrations and other protests against the far and extreme right's racism, or carried out online campaigns connected to different elections—in short, initiatives that define their antiracist niche explicitly against the far and extreme right's racism. This meant that the interviewees came from both the radical leftist and anarchist activist scenes, as well as from more liberal circles (cf. Jämte 2013). Some were active in different social media projects and focused on the parliamentary far right, while others were involved in direct action on the streets with a focus against the non-parliamentary extreme right. However, in many cases, these foci also overlapped. Activists involved in the radical end of the spectrum tend to prefer to work anonymously, and I met some suspicion when trying to reach out to potential interviewees. I reached some of these interviewees through mutual acquaintances or by first introducing myself during public events. Some of those with connections to radical direct action groups and/or engaged with open confrontation with right-wing extremists were also explicit in considering “what to reveal” in the interviews. However, I was not interested in revealing identities or any other sensitive matters, and in one case when two

interviewees did not want their voices recorded, I made thorough notes of our conversation. In another case, one interviewee preferred an email interview, so I sent them my interview protocol, then asked clarifying questions in two more emails after having received their responses. The majority of the interviewees are white Finns, but three self-identified as non-white. I conducted 19 interviews with this group of 26 interviewees during 2015.

Third, I interviewed people involved in actions supporting newly arrived migrants and working for migrants' rights in Finland. Interviewees in this group also came from activities that could be categorized in different ways. Some were active in supporting newly arrived migrants, either by participating in a "culture of welcome", through engaging in claims-making for migrants' rights, or through different action stemming from a critique against the European border regime. I knew some interviewees directly through being involved in similar activities, while others I reached out to through groups focusing on aiding newly arrived migrants. The 12 interviewees included white, native-born Finns and people of migrant backgrounds. They were all interviewed individually in the early spring of 2016.

All interviewees permanently resided in Finland at the moment; the majority live in the southern part of the country, either in or close to the three biggest cities: Helsinki, Tampere and Turku. However, a few interviewees lived in more regional parts of the country. Their ages varied between 18 and 60, and they came from different socioeconomic backgrounds: some had or were pursuing tertiary education, some had successful working careers, a few had acquired basic education, and some were unemployed at the time.

The interviews were semi-structured, and conducted either individually, or as five pairs, or as two groups of three—the interviewees could decide what formation they found comfortable and meaningful. Initially I turned down suggestions to meet in cafes and bars, mainly due to worries about acoustics. We met instead at the university or local library meeting spaces. However, after conducting five interviews I reflected that these at times windowless rooms might not provide the most relaxing conversational surrounds, so subsequent interviews were conducted at locations suggested by the interviewees—at cafes and bars, but in some cases at workplaces or homes.

My interview protocol was loosely followed in conversations that often bounced between several topics. In most cases, the interviewees primarily seemed eager to tell me about their activism, and many commented upon conclusion that the conversation was a pleasant experience. However, on a few occasions, I sensed that some people felt intimidated or uncomfortable about having to prove themselves as "experts" who knew a lot about racism—for instance, someone commented after the interview that "you weren't scary at all, although that's what I expected from a university person". In every encounter I positioned myself as an ally by expressing the importance of antiracist activism. Some interviewees also asked me to position myself in regard to their views on antiracism. The position I adopted was either to simply agree with the interviewees, or to rather carefully suggest alternative

interpretations on a relatively theoretical level. In a few cases, I found the interviewees' comments controversial, or in hard to condone. For instance,

*Interviewee: Can you call that [True Finns activities] a part of being Finnish?*

*[break]*

*MS: Yea, I guess, maybe, it depends on the definition [break] It's a struggle over definitions?*

*Interviewee: A struggle over defining first, who is really Finnish, and what is patriotism.*

Elsewhere in the same interview, the interviewee stressed that racism did not adhere to his idea of Finnishness, and then expected me to react to this provocation. I did not feel comfortable confirming the interviewee's interpretation of racism as something "non-Finnish" or "not patriotic", but at the same time, I chose not to say this directly. Instead of directly taking a stance to define Finnishness and racism as mutually exclusive, I re-framed the question from a meta-perspective. In other words, besides stressing my sympathies for the interviewees' work, the way in which I positioned myself in the interview situations was to cautiously suggest alternative perspectives.

#### **4.3.3 PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATION**

In order to better understand antiracist materials circulated by NGOs and discussions related to antiracism against the far and extreme right, I took part in different events in Helsinki, Turku, and Tampere. However, in relation to other types of data, participatory observation data has a complementary role. My notes from participatory observations of different events complement other data on NGO campaigns and activism against the far and extreme right, and as such, they have a smaller presence in this research compared to the texts and interviews. However, I believe that taking part in different events gave me insights into which aspects to emphasize when reading the other data. I attended public or semi-public events such as workshops, discussions, and demonstrations. In the case of workshop and seminar-type events, I contacted the organizers and enrolled if required (or in the case of a workshop targeting youth, I agreed with the event organizers that I could participate as an observer). The open events like demonstrations I attended without notifying anyone. I see the role of the participatory observation data primarily as a means to gain better insight into the way in which antiracist advocacy operates.

First, I conducted participatory observation in 12 events that were arranged by different NGOs in 2013 and 2015 in connection to distribution of the materials I also analyze. These were different info stands during the Action Week Against Racism, workshops, seminars and discussions for the general public, and in one case, two workshops for teenagers. On some occasions, the events were directed at passers-by and only demanded a brief engagement: I

collected materials provided at different info stands or, for instance, wrote my antiracist message onto a sheet hung on a wall in a shopping mall basement. After the brief engagement with personnel/volunteers, I stayed around to observe how other passers-by were approached. On other occasions, the events were workshops and seminars, and their length varied from an hour to half a day. I took part in the arranged activities together with the other participants, but only observed the two events directed at youth. In each instance, the focus of my observation was on the delivery of the antiracist message, not the (other) participants' conduct. I did not emphasize my role as a researcher to other participants, but in discussion exercises, I brought forth my sometimes-contradictory views. Engaging in most of the events underscored to me an approach that, in Substudy I, I label as one of the two simultaneous meanings to antiracism mainstreaming, namely compliance with societal order. It was noticeable that the info stands and similar events targeted to passers-by oozed an aura of feel-good harmlessness and non-disturbance, the most striking example being volunteers handing out roses to passers-by as an activity for the International Day Against Racism.

Second, I participated in publicly advertised discussions and demonstrations related to counteractions against the far and extreme right's racism. I attended 15 events between December 2014 and 2015. The majority of the events were demonstrations or similar protest events, but I also attended a couple of discussions on the far right, or about planning events for future demonstrations. Similar to the participatory observation data on NGO campaigns, my notes from these observations complement the analysis of other data. Further, I also contacted some of the interviewees at the events. Taking part in these events highlighted to me the central role of juxtapositions and antagonisms to advocate for antiracism—I explain this more thoroughly through the following example from my participatory observation notes.

*The “Turn your back against racism” event is created as a protest against a True Finns election event in Turku library, whose announced speakers are key figures of the True Finns party, as well as a Swedish politician known for racist agitation. At the library, there is some confusion about who is allowed in the room where the event is about to take place. In the event call, the organizers of the protest have advised us not to disclose one’s identity as a protestor, but the organizers of the election event seem suspicious as they are asking for people’s IDs. While standing by the door, a man my age comes to talk to me and asks if I can’t get in either, he jokes about whether we are attending the event as supporters or protestors, and from his tone it is obvious to me that he doesn’t expect me to be a True Finns supporter. I assume that my flea market clothes and asymmetrical haircut make me blend in with the crowd of protestors making his assumption “justified”. [...] After standing up and turning our backs to the speakers, we, the group of demonstrators who were allowed in, are escorted from the seminar room. We join another group of people*

*protesting outside of the seminar room. Some hold up signs that feature pictures of crossed-out swastikas and no Nazis signs. After a while, the police come and request to see IDs. This is mildly contested and we, the silently standing protestors, are escorted out of the building. [...] The day after, the largest newspaper in Finland publishes a short piece on trouble-makers who disturbed an election event, and the story quotes the anti-immigration ideologist of the True Finns, who says that he is afraid that violent forms of activism are spreading from Sweden to Finland—his statement is not contested.*

This passage from my notes first underscores the dividing lines that constantly actualize in antagonistic protests against the far and extreme right. Protesting entails being up to date on the doings of the far right and anticipating tactics of “the opposing side”. Similarly, in counterdemonstrations, the antiracist protesters carefully followed what their opponents were planning to do, for instance, the route plans and advancements of the far right’s demonstration marches. Second, the passage from my notes also illustrates the illegitimate and questionable status given to antiracist activism in the mainstream media. The peaceful protests I witnessed were portrayed in the media differently, which also made me pay attention to the theme of a lack of public recognition of antiracism when analysing the rest of the data. Finally, the passage illustrates the way I joined a protest event and was recognized as an antiracist protester.

## **4.4 ANALYSIS**

### **4.4.1 METHODS FOR ANALYZING DISCURSIVE MEANING-MAKING**

In this section I discuss the chosen analysis methods as well as the choices I made in the analytical process. The questions that I ask the data relate to the ways in which understandings of antiracism and antiracist understandings are constructed in/through human action. In other words, I am interested in the shared meaning-making process related to antiracist activism, which, as pointed out by several scholars in social movement studies, is one of the essential elements of social mobilizations (Polletta 2006; Polletta and Kai Ho 2006). This also means that the epistemic premises of my analysis are anchored in an understanding of the importance of the discursive dimension of social reality. Its role is well described by Hall (1996, 444):

*events, relations, structures do have conditions of existence and real effects, outside the sphere of the discursive; but that it is only within the discursive, and subject to its specific conditions, limits and modalities, do they have or can they be constructed within meaning. [...] how things are represented and the ‘machineries’ and regimes of representation in a culture do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role.*

In other words, my analysis concerns the discursive or cultural meanings of/in antiracist activism, and the ways in which antiracism adopts and affirms broader societal discourses but potentially challenges them too—and thus, participates in discursive struggles over meanings given to social and material reality (Wetherell and Potter 1992, 62-65).

While practices of antiracist activism are material in multiple ways, the focus of my analysis is on meaning-making processes, or on the ways in which these figure on a discursive level. I analyze distinct justifications, rationalizations, categorizations, attributions, ways of making sense, and naming, blaming and identifying, as Werthell and Porter (1992, 2) characterize the functions of discourse. However, my methodological approach cannot simply be described as discourse analysis, if this is understood as analytical practices that identify discourses as broad, vastly shared meaning-making cultures, or relatively fixed and broad formations (cf. Jørgensen and Phillips 2011). In Substudy I, I make use of discourse analytical tools. In substudies II, III and IV, the specific methods that I use to systematize the data also allow me to trace patterns in meaning-making on a micro-level, within relatively limited-sized activist groups and communities.

First, in Substudy I, my data analysis leans on the tools provided by Carol Lee Bacchi's (2009) "What's the problem represented to be?" (WPR), an approach that Bacchi developed to capture her interpretation of Foucauldian discourse analysis. The WPR approach is to map dominant discourses on a given theme, using Bacchi's toolkit that comprises a series of questions that strive to highlight how suggested solutions to social problems implicitly construct the problem they aim to solve. Although it was initially developed for policy analysis, I maintain that a framework that aims to deconstruct social problems through their suggested solutions provided me with the analytical tools to scrutinize the ways in which the NGO campaigns construct racism as a problem in their representations of antiracist solutions. At the same time, Bacchi describes WPR as a method that traces the genealogies of the examined discourses. This aspect of the analysis I touch upon only superficially, in reference to the European metanarrative of racism and linking antiracism's age-related emphasis to preceding pan-European antiracism campaigns. In the process of identifying definitions of "the problem", racism, I first relied on locating reoccurring themes and descriptions in the data, which I then compared with the theoretical literature. Instead of the brief dictionary-like definitions that occur in the data, explicitly mentioned in Substudy I too, my analytical interest was in descriptions of antiracist action and encouragement for antiracist practices and thought. This way I first identified two problem-definitions that I named, using previous literature, exceptional racism, and racism in everyone's beliefs. After this, I returned to the data specifically to look for definitions that would differ from the first two. The third definition, racism in invisible structures, appears only in a handful of examples. Yet, I decided to include it in the analysis because it illustrates an alternative to the

more commonplace definitions and, partly, it also challenges the setting critiqued in the theoretical frame.

Second, in my analysis of blog posts, I focus on strategies of talking back to racialization—identifying defiant speech acts that claim respectability and/or assert a voice against attempts to silence (hooks 1989). This I do through an analysis framework using feminist close reading (Lukić and Sánchez Espinosa 2012; Mills 1995) and theoretical observations on talking back (Hall 1999; Juhila 2012; 2004). That is to say, my analysis highlights the ways in which racializing patterns are contested in the blog texts. Feminist close reading emphasizes the context of the text and encourages to consider patterns of gendered or racialized oppression in relation to it. This means that in the analysis I identified passages in which the blog authors critique, reshape and reclaim racializing views, perceptible beyond the blogs too. Here, I considered both, explicit discussion on racism as well as discussion on categories that through an analytical understanding of race can be regarded significant (e.g. Finnish, immigrant, Muslim). I did not decide beforehand which discussions of racialization to consider. Instead, I strived to recognize multiple ways of challenging normative whiteness and racialized divisions. As discussed in Substudy II, the interview discussions with the blog authors guided my interpretation in regard of some details. In the analysis process, I constantly compared my detailed observations of the blog texts to literature that discusses racism and racialization in general as well as to specific discussions on talking back. In the end, I identified three strategies of talking back. This I did on basis of an inductive analysis, where I compared the analyzed texts with each other. To discuss the strategies further, I relied on previous literature. For instance, in giving analytical significance to claiming belonging to Finnishness, I drew from analytical observations on talking back and analyses of race and racism that address exceptionality and ordinariness (Juhila 2012; Andreassen and Ahmed-Andersen 2014).

Third, I analyze mobilization narratives in activism against the far and extreme right's racism. In the analysis, I provide an analytical interpretation of narrative as a discursive form through which social injustices and mobilizations become intelligible (Polletta 2006). I decided on using the tools of narrative analysis after my initial observation that a majority of the interviewees explained their activist engagement through a narrative structure. Further, they also told me stories, often with a dramatic beginning, about how they saw far-right racism becoming a problem in Finland. Using stories is understandable against the backdrop that narratives function as a means of persuasion, and as such, they have a crucial role in the constitution of social movements, as well as in mobilization efforts that never grow into movements (*ibid.*). Depending on the success of particular movements, such narratives might or might not be shared with broader audiences, and I do not suggest that the analyzed narratives necessarily repeat dominant discourses. Instead, they should be understood as more localized ways of meaning-making. As said, what first caught my attention was the plot. After choosing



narrative analysis, I explored the elements of plot further and I started to pay attention also to characters through whom the stories are were told (see McKernan 2018). Protagonists, villains and victims were depicted in majority of the cases in a consistent way, which I discuss further through theoretical discussion on whiteness. However, I also intentionally sought for alternatives that would challenge the pattern. As a result, I found some, although a significantly fewer number of examples that draw the spotlight to agency of people considered minor characters in much of the data.

Fourth, I analyze the ways in which activists from different initiatives frame antiracism. In the analysis of the interview data, I rely on frame analysis (Polletta and Kai Ho 2006; Cress and Snow 2000). Frames are interpretive packages that people joining social mobilizations might share and through which they describe rationales for their action (Polletta and Kai Ho 2006). As such, frames describe a smaller set of shared meaning making than a discourse (ibid.). In practice, making use of the analytical tools of frame analysis meant that I organized the transcribed interview data in the following way. First, I created thematic codes that reflected central characteristics of frames, as described by Cress and Snow (2000, 1072)—“who or what is to blame” and “what needs to be done in order to remedy it”. After this, I differentiated between two approaches: framing antiracism as a demand against and as a demand for societal change. For a more nuanced analysis, I drew from previous discussion on advancing social justice. This allowed me to specify a difference among already identified demands for transformation, and as a result I located three alternative frames. These, I discuss further through theoretical literature.

The presented four analysis methods might seem to tap into different elements of antiracist advocacy. Yet, they should be understood primarily as tools to identify discursive patterns in speech that contests racism in distinct ways. The shared epistemic base of all the methods allows for a discussion on the ways in which conceptions of antiracism and racism are constituted. At the same time, the specific methods explain the ways in which I perceive the nature of the data, and the ways in which I have systematized it. However, these methods do not serve as a thorough description of my analytical interpretation of the data on their own. On one hand, as also discussed in connection to the analysis methods, my interpretation is partly guided by the theoretical framework I presented earlier. On the other hand, the already discussed antiracist research agenda—but also lenses of intersectionality, and a focus on the soon-to-be-described contestation of hegemonic structures—also guide my reading of the data.

#### **4.4.2 INTERSECTIONALITY**

While the main emphasis in the analytical work that I do is on the interrogation of race and racialization, my reading of the data is also informed by the notion of intersectionality. I understand intersectionality as a

theoretical-methodological device that underscores “that all categories are associated with power relations and cannot be neutral” (Phoenix and Bauer 2012, 492). The term was famously coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to describe discrimination that simultaneously contained racialized and gendered elements, and its roots are in Black feminist thinking. Since the term’s creation in the late 1980s, intersectionality has become broadly used in feminist research, and its use has also been widely debated (see Phoenix and Bauer 2012; Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013). Without going deep into the scholarly disputes on intersectionality, I describe here my understanding of it, and the analytical work it has allowed me to do.

My take on intersectionality is grounded first on an understanding that socially constructed categories are co-dependent (Davis 2008; de los Reyes and Mulinari 2005)—categorizations like race, class, and gender co-construct each other interdependently. For instance, class is never empty of race. Second, intersectional analysis strives to describe power relations. I agree with Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013, 795) who maintain that “—what makes an analysis intersectional—whatever terms it deploys, whatever its iteration, whatever its field or discipline—is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and *its relation to power*” (my emphasis). In other words, while there are endless amounts of overlapping categorizations, a critical understanding of power relations determines the ones that are relevant for an intersectional analysis.

Combining the notion of co-dependent categories with an analysis of power relations, I sought the ways in which categorizations like age, class, gender, and sexuality shape the scope of antiracist critique and understandings of racism. However, I did not start with a predetermined idea of which intersectional categorizations to focus on. Instead, after identifying the discursive patterns through which the different antiracist definitions and understandings are constructed, I paid attention to whether categorizations not directly related to race appeared repeatedly in the data. For instance, the NGO campaigns I analyze provide almost univocal definitions of racism as discrimination related to the attributes of (skin) colour, culture, mother tongue, ethnic origin, ethnic background, , and religion, which can be understood as attributes of race. At the same time, victims of racism are often portrayed as children, or the antiracist messages target schools and youth work contexts. Observing how a specific age group/categorization is emphasised led me to discuss age-bound understandings of racism from the perspective of power relations.

#### **4.4.3 FOCUS ON RESISTANCE**

A methodological challenge that I considered throughout the research process is the analytical and critical gesture my work is making. Although critical race and whiteness studies’ origin is somewhat different from that of (other) critical theories (see Delgado and Stefancic 2017), approaches such as Marxist,

feminist or postcolonial theorization, for instance, share the same epistemological premises of critical theory. This means that the processes of knowledge are understood to be a part of historical, cultural and societal structures. Further, the analytical contribution of critical theorization might be an explication of power relations and the structures that maintain them. In other words, in some cases, critical analyses focus on providing proof of the oppressive structures that shape the social and material reality—and that has been the core of my academic education in feminist theory. While I full-heartedly see this as crucial, I also think that analyses that repeatedly arrive at the same monolithic and totalitarian power structure—be it racism, whiteness, colonialism, patriarchy or capitalism—equip us with very limited understandings of what means we have, if any, towards making change (cf. Gibson-Graham 1993; 1996).

In my view, the field of critical race and whiteness studies appears rather divided in this aspect. On one hand, there are analytical perspectives that stem from the tradition of Black radicalism and Black feminism set emancipation as their goal, and specifically commit to different acts of rebellion (e.g. Hill Collins 2008; hooks 1989; Andrews 2018). On the other hand, analyses of whiteness in particular (e.g. Hughey 2012) at times highlight the perpetual failure of overcoming and/or describing racialized and static structures. I am not suggesting that whiteness should be described as an emancipatory practice, and in general, linking whiteness to any success stories would be misleading and dangerous. However, if whiteness is repeatedly described as a permanent structure that lurks in the background of every critical analysis, then there is not much we can do about it. Drawing also from other discussions in the field of academic feminism, I have made a deliberate effort to not to focus only on “failures”, but to also locate possibilities for challenging racism and hegemonic whiteness in my data.

The habitual practices of critical theory often entail an act of revealing/unveiling, an analytical gesture, critically (!) examined by Kosofsky Sedgwick (2002), that she labels “paranoid”. While her discussion focuses on habitual practices identified as emblematic of the field of queer theory, I suggest that Kosofsky Sedgwick’s discussion on the “methodological certainty of suspicion” (2002, 125) is useful for methodological considerations more broadly, and can be applied to different critical theories. The discussion pays attention to the ways in which analyses heavily invested in the theorization of hierarchical power relations might end up repeatedly revealing and exposing similar patterns of power already identified in the theory. Then, a valid question becomes, does the analysis depend on an assumption of “an infinite reservoir of naïveté in those who make up the audience for these unveilings” (ibid., 141)—who do they serve? As an alternative to the gestures of exposing and revealing, Kosofsky Sedgwick suggests reparative reading, a style of critique that in its execution is less predetermined on the power relations it is grounded on in the first place, and that also makes an effort to allow a discussion on repairing the damages and restructuring/dismantling the power

relations in question. For me, this meant, for instance, considering fractions in what I label post-racial tendencies, or hegemonic whiteness, in the analyses. Instead of simply reciting and reproducing a critique, I make an effort to consider the ways in which the hegemonic order is/could be challenged in the context of the data.

## 4.5 RESEARCH ETHICS

*Interviewee: What we have now said, what I said, I hope that it will help you. However, all speech can be taken advantage of [...] that might happen, I have noticed it when I was involved in an art project, and I saw how some artists use it in the opposite way to what I meant, perhaps unintentionally, but it becomes something else than what I intended. Of course, my one interview doesn't have such a huge impact, I'm just one person you have interviewed. But I hope that that would be taken into account, when something is written, or in an artwork, because it has an impact, and any text can be taken advantage of, of course.*

*MS: That's a really important point.*

*Interviewee: I'm quite careful about whom I talk to, and that's why it was a bit difficult to decide if I wanted to participate in the interview. But when I decide to talk, I talk. [...] But now, when I have spoken with you, I wish that you don't take advantage of that [...] you seem an alright person, but not everyone is [...] What I perceive has an adverse effect, is that when a person is not observant of their own position, that they see things from their own perspective. Even if they are an alright person. I have seen many people who try to help, who act out of goodwill. But what is not written, and what is done, is just the thing that means bad things to me or to people like me.*

These words from one of the interviews summarize the many ethical requirements of research. The interviewee brings up the risk of misrepresentation and addresses the unequal power relations between the research participants and the researcher (as someone who might take advantage of the research participants). The interviewee also explains that they considered whether to consent to give an interview. Finally, they bring up the possibility of adverse effects to people like them, which, given their biographical details, I understand as referring to both people of colour, and people who have arrived in Finland as asylum seekers. At the end of a two-hour interview, the tone of our conversation was friendly, but also firm. Addressed directly at me, it reminded me of the accountability required of me (regardless of whether I am prompted by interviewees). In this section, I discuss the very basic and fundamental ethical principles of non-maleficence and voluntary, informed consent, as well as ethical considerations deriving from my aforementioned antiracist research agenda. I also reflect on the unequal power relations between researcher and research participants, as also acknowledged by the interviewee.

First, regarding the interviews, ensuring participants' voluntary, informed consent is relatively easy—those I contacted had the chance to decline; I explained my plans for the research, and they had the chance to ask questions. Informed consent is not usually understood as a requirement for working with publicly available texts, however in the case of the blogs, I also wanted to contact the authors (in two cases I either did not succeed, or my attempts were ignored), in order to inform them of my research, as well as to request an interview. I also asked the authors who blog under their own full name, whether to cite this in my text. I explained earlier how one of the authors declined to give an interview, however, I also specifically agreed with the blog author that I can cite their choice in my research. I considered the texts produced by the NGOs or the antiracist groups against far-right racism differently, and did not seek permission to use them, mainly because they are less personal in nature. In participatory observation, informed consent is a trickier question. In the public events I attended, informing everyone of my research often made no sense due to the fleeting nature of people's encounters. Also, in the seminar and workshop-like situations, I anticipated it might have disturbed the other participants to be asked to consider my presence, albeit with the caveat of not focusing on individuals. What I want to emphasize is that in the participatory observations, my focus was on the ways in which the antiracist message was formulated, delivered, and in some cases, received (in the media).

Second, non-maleficence or doing no harm can be thought as a rather straightforward ethical requirement, which in the context of my research relates, for instance, to the need for sufficient anonymization. In the era of online smear campaigns, I wanted to make sure that individual interviewees would not be identifiable through the information that I disclose. Besides providing a limited amount of information on the biographical information on the interviewees, I also made sure that the interview quotations I cite do not give away the interviewees' identity. At the same time, I do imply that *some* are associated with certain groups or are authors of *some* of the blogs that I analyze, however, I have made sure that it is not possible to identify individuals based on this. Further, causing no harm can also be interpreted as a more complicated requirement. As I discussed earlier, representations created through research matter as they participate in shaping the social reality.

Third, the relations between researcher and research participants are doomed to be unequal, at least in relation to the power of interpretation (see Oinas 2004). It is of course possible to ask the interviewees' views of one's interpretations. I shared two of the article manuscripts (Substudies II and III) with some of the interviewees, who had expressed prior interest in this. As anticipated, I received very brief or no responses to these emails. I met one interviewee for a lengthier discussion after the article in question was already published, and some of their remarks further shaped my subsequent analytical engagements—the interviewee highlighted for me the importance of explicit analysis of whiteness in the context of antiracism. However, the desire for

more sustained engagement from interview subjects also requires consideration. Ideally, this could be a conversation—but then again, it’s often not considerate to request more time or creative work from people who are busy with their lives and their activism. I am also somewhat hesitant to ask research participants to also provide analytical interpretations of the data. I do not mean that they would lack the capacity for this, but that the request would feel exploitative, particularly when the researcher receives both compensation and merit for the outcomes.

Fourth, in the context of social movement studies, the idea of reciprocity or “giving something back” to the field if possible, is often presented as an ethical requirement (e.g. Gillan and Pickerill 2012) of research. On one hand, I wholeheartedly agree. I told the interviewees to let me know if they saw a way for me to return the favour. This led to a couple of exchanges, where I was asked to provide academic resources for certain racism-related questions, or information about applying to university. I have also tried to contribute to breaking the white hegemony in discussions on racism (cf. Abu-Hanna 2012; Ahmed 2016; Hubara 2016) by, for instance, recommending some of the people I interviewed as panellists for different discussion events, or circulating the resources they have created. In the spirit of “giving back”, or antiracist engagement, I also engaged in discussions with some of the NGOs as they were developing their materials, providing my somewhat critical insights on how their materials could be further developed. On the other hand, it is also a hierarchical assumption to expect that the researcher is always the one in possession of resources, and useful to the research participants. Some research participants were engaged with transgressive, creative and impressive antiracist projects that I can equally admire and learn from.

## 5 SUMMARY OF THE FOUR SUBSTUDIES

The results of my empirical research are discussed in four substudies in which I explore antiracist conceptions of racism and antiracist strategies to contest distinct forms of racism in different antiracist orientations. I describe here the analytical aims of each substudy and the set of empirical data each substudy draws from and finally, I also summarize briefly the main findings.

In Substudy I, which is an article titled “Adapting to post-racialism? Definitions of racism in non-governmental organization advocacy that mainstreams anti-racism”, I analyze NGO campaigns that, according to my definition, aim to mainstream antiracism. More specifically, I focus on definitions of racism in the context of antiracism mainstreaming. Through a discourse analysis of antiracism promotional materials by NGOs and my notes from participatory observation in events where the materials were circulated, I identify three parallel problem-definitions of racism. Racism is described as an anomaly operating in the margins of society, as a universal phenomenon of the human psyche, or as an abstraction within invisible social structures. I discuss the problem-definitions through the theoretical prism of scholarly discussions on post-raciality, and argue that the empirical findings illustrate a tendency to understand racism as an individual flaw in a non-racist social reality. This is amplified by classed and aged discourses that first, connect racism to perpetrators from societal margins, and second, present racism and antiracism primarily as youth issues.

Substudy II is a Finnish-language article “Rodullistavien rajanvetojen kyseenalaistaminen rasismien kohteeksi joutuvien blogiteksteissä” [Talking back in blog texts: On challenging racializing distinctions] (for the English-language translation of the article, see Appendix 3). The language of the article was partly determined by its focus—the analyzed blog posts by authors who self-identify as people of colour or other racialized minorities and contest the racialization they face via blogs are written in Finnish or English. This means that they describe being racialized as non-white from different positions in Finnish, and thus contribute to antiracist language in a linguistic context which still struggles to find antiracist expressions to describe people of colour. The article focuses on antiracist strategies when contesting racialization and racist stereotypes. The primary data for the article are blog texts, and as complementary data—I also rely on interviews with some of the blog authors. Drawing from the notion of “talking back”, I distinguish three distinct ways of challenging racializing views. First, to claim a position as a Finn and critique normative whiteness; second, refusing and deconstructing the categorization of “immigrant”; and third, redefining the categorizations subject to racist stereotyping but which they still identify with. Drawing from theoretical discussions on racialization, I argue that the blog posts also challenge the nation state as a given framework for the analysis of racialization.

Substudy III is an article titled “(Un)making ‘extreme’ and ‘ordinary’ whiteness: Activists’ narratives on antiracist mobilisation in Finland”. It focuses on antiracist mobilization against anti-immigration racism and the far and extreme right. More specifically, I analyze antiracist mobilization narratives—the stories that the activists share, and the stories that circulate in antiracist discussions about the reasons and aims for antiracist mobilization. Drawing on empirical data about grassroots activists’ interviews, participatory observations, and texts circulated as part of antiracist mobilization, I analyze the plot-structure as well as the roles ascribed to different actors in the mobilization narrative. My narrative analysis builds upon the heuristic distinction between “extreme whiteness” and “whiteness as ordinariness” (or “ordinary whiteness”) made in the field of critical whiteness studies. I discuss the consequences of grasping racism primarily as anti-immigration propagation and right-wing populism, and argue that to overcome white-normativity, antiracist narratives are required to grasp extreme and ordinary whiteness as interrelated parts of the same power structure. In other words, besides shedding light on antiracist strategies, the article explores the de/construction of whiteness in antiracist activism.

Substudy IV is an article manuscript in review, titled “Contesting or affirming white innocence? A typology of antiracism in activists’ accounts”. In that substudy, I compare different framings of antiracism. I explore interviews with grassroots antiracist activists, whose activism has to do with distinct antiracist orientations (antiracist self-representation by people of colour; antiracism against the far and extreme right’s racism, and antiracist activism for migrants’ rights). These interviews I scrutinize through frame analysis. Based on this analysis, I distinguish between three antiracism frames: defence, recognition, and redistribution. They enable an understanding of how antiracism arises as either a preventative gesture, or a demand for change. Further, my analytical distinction explicates how antiracist conceptions link racism to cultural and socioeconomic structures. I discuss my empirical findings through a contextualized theorization of an exceptionalist assumption of a non-racist space of white innocence. At the same time, the article provides an analytical understanding of the conditions in which the assumption of non-racism is also challenged in antiracist discussions.



## 6 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, I discuss the key findings of the individual substudies together. This means that I discuss together both the results of discourse analysis of antiracism mainstreaming and more localized discursive patterns. By bringing together different types of data and discussing it further with the help of conceptual apparatuses from critical race and whiteness studies, I strive to map out the conceptual horizon of the antiracisms I analyzed. In other words, my aim here is to demonstrate the different interpretations of antiracism that my research findings allow. By focusing on conceptualizations that might outlive individual antiracist projects, I hope that my research findings can benefit also future discussions on antiracism. In brief, I present here the antiracist conceptions I found in the data in order to provide an understanding of alternative possibilities in antiracist discussions.

I start by introducing the key themes in antiracist action and discussions; the ways in which racism is conceived of in antiracism practices; and strategies to counter racism. After this, I present my findings on the ways in which racialization and whiteness are de/constructed in antiracist activism. This is followed by a discussion about the ways in which other intersectional categorizations shape the forms of antiracist action I observe. Finally, I conclude by arguing that the different antiracisms resemble each other in their focus on exclusions (as opposed to exploitation).

### 6.1 ANTIRACIST FOCUS: THEMES, STRATEGIES AND CONCEPTIONS OF RACISM

Next, I provide an overall description of central themes in the antiracist action I studied. After this, I address antiracist strategies adopted for challenging and defeating racism. An analysis of antiracist understandings of racism is a part of both discussions, but I focus on these more explicitly in connection to antiracist strategies in the second section. In other words, this subchapter answers the first research question on themes addressed and strategies adopted in antiracist activism and civil society action, and the second question on understandings of racism in antiracist activism and NGO action.

#### 6.1.1 CENTRAL THEMES

Three central themes cut across different forms of antiracist action and antiracist discussions. These are racist perpetrators; the general public; (im)migration and (im)migrants. In the following section, I briefly reflect on the implications of each of these themes. However, these are explored more in depth in the coming sections.

First, different antiracist orientations repeatedly link racism to incidents of racist harassment in public places or to actions by people supporting anti-immigration racism. A common denominator in discussions on incidents that vary in scale from slurs (I, II, III) to extreme-right terror attacks (III, IV) is that they rely on a clear-cut understanding on who the racists producing racism are. In brief, antiracism focuses on non-acceptable, exceptional or even extreme behaviour by racist perpetrators. In regard of the NGO campaigns, I discuss variations of a scenario, where racism is presented as acts by racist perpetrators (I). Such focus on eventness (Lentin 2016) suggests racism is singular and containable. Similar logic is present in those antiracist discussions that see spreading neo-Nazi symbols both online and in physical environments the only or at least as the main indication of racism (I). In such occasions, the perpetrator is not necessarily personified, and yet, they are acknowledged through their deed. In regard of antiracism against anti-immigration racism (III), the interviews I conducted with activists are replete with detailed observations on racists. Further, I show that in discussions on the “opposing side”, racism is intelligible through its perpetrators. Politicians pushing anti-immigration racist agendas and racist extremists are central references also in other antiracist orientations (I, II, IV). I suggest that making racism intelligible through known perpetrators is connected to the idea of racism as an event (Lentin 2016), and as I argue in the following section, such a focus risks to enforce an exceptionalist understanding of racism.

Another frequently addressed theme is the general public. More precisely, the analyzed antiracist orientations identify to different degrees “the problem of the silent majority”, a lack of willingness to engage in antiracism and a lack of antiracist awareness. First, a significant part of NGO advocacy focuses on encouraging passive bystanders to step up against racism (I). For instance, in repeated scenes of harassment on public transport, those directly not affected are guided to stand up to confront racism. In other words, the campaigns address ignorance and indifference, and suggest that an active antiracist engagement would not allow racism. Second, a lack of public engagement in antiracism was described explicitly to enable anti-immigration mobilization (III). The activists engaged in addressing the far and extreme right’s racism saw a discrepancy between their own views and the public debate. While they identified a danger in outright racist statements and extremist deeds, in their view, these were met with ignorance or disregarded by most people. Different antiracist orientations also postulate the need to inform and educate the general public against racist attitudes and misconceptions, for instance through blogs (I, II, IV). The examples stressing the role of the general public suggest that racism takes place in the absence of antiracist engagement, or even that lack of antiracist engagement enables racism. Here, the implications differ significantly from the ones produced by the focus on racists—yet, as I show in section 6.2, this setting can be critically considered from the perspective of analyzing racialization.

Finally, almost all the discussions address explicitly migration and/or (im)migrants in one way or another. At the same time, the differences in the ways in which the theme is addressed highlight the nuances amongst antiracist approaches and understandings, which are also sometimes contradictory. First, antiracism mainstreaming (I) introduces information on immigration as antiracist knowledge. The NGO campaigns provide migration-related facts and technical explanations to words related to migration governance (e.g. immigrant, refugee, reception centre). I interpret this as an attempt to respond to false information on migration, which is—for a good reason—associated with anti-immigration racism (see Pyrhönen 2015). As I point out in Substudy I, the provided definitions unpack some misconceptions circulated as part of anti-immigration racist discussions and present multicultural governing and migration control as neutral (or perhaps antiracist) practices. In comparison, in activist discussions that challenge differential entitlement and the citizen/migrant distinction, for instance, reception centres are critiqued as inhuman places (IV).

Second, similar juxtapositions appear in the ways in which the term “immigrant” figures in discussions by distinct antiracist activists. On one hand, in some antiracist narratives, “immigrants” are presented as the obvious victims of racism (I, III). On the other hand, claiming agency as a migrant in antiracist discussions, as well as unpacking the flattening and dehumanizing categorization of “immigrant”, and the tendency to ascribe an “immigrant” background to everyone who does not pass as white in Finland, are also critiqued, mainly by people subject to this categorization (II, III, IV). Also, discussions that specifically point out racism also concern groups other than (those categorized as) migrants, but are nonetheless often shaped by strong associations between migration/migrants and racism: for instance, a focus on experiences of racism might require a caveat to stress that the story is not about migration or migrants (II). In other words, the occurrence of the theme reflects the discursive environment of antiracism—which El-Tayeb (2011) describes as “the belief that there are only migrants, no minorities in Europe” (see also Goldberg 2006).

### **6.1.2 DEFINITIONS OF RACISM AND ANTIRACIST STRATEGIES**

As pointed out by several researchers whose work predates mine (e.g. Bonnett 2000; Sayyid 2017), antiracist efforts are inherently tied to related understandings of racism, so I thus discuss different ways of conceiving racism and antiracist strategies together. Lentin (2004, 114) summarizes this by saying, “the emergence of anti-racism cannot be adequately explained without an understanding of how it constructs the object of its opposition: racism”. In the following section, I discuss definitions of racism that I identified, and the related antiracist strategies. My discussion on varying antiracist strategies relies partly on my analysis of distinct conceptions of racism that encourage either preservative or transformative antiracist gestures (IV). In addition, I

discuss two strategies that are not tied to a specific conception of racism—awareness-raising and consciousness-raising.

First, as already mentioned in the previous section, a common way of describing racism in the data is to connect it to known perpetrators and isolated and containable events. Racism is repeatedly defined as incidents of harassment on the streets, extremist symbols, and statements supporting anti-immigration racism, as well as actions by the far and extreme right, including extremist attacks (I, III, IV). Exceptionality of racism in these cases is constructed in the following ways. The discussion on racism stresses racism as a quality of marginalized individuals (I, III). Racist perpetrators are depicted as individuals who stick out from the general public (more on this in section 6.4). In some cases, racism was depicted as an anachronism—for instance, a reincarnation of 1930s extremist ideologies. Further, exceptional racism assumes a racism-neutral space around itself. Such a space is built by describing racism as a recent change in history (e.g. electoral support to the far right as a surge of racism). Relatedly, the abnormality of racist incidents was underscored through statements like “Finland has always been such a nice country”, as described one interviewee (III), which stress the supposed absence of racism. Anachronism, racism as a quality of marginalized individuals and the assumed absence of racism match the ways in which post-racial theorization has described discussions on racism (Goldberg 2006; Lentin 2016; Ahmed 2012). As pointed out in critical theorization, exceptionalist notions of racism allow seeing racism separate from the rest of society. In my data, some interviewees explained that aligning against a known “opposing side” facilitates antiracist mobilization (III, IV)—yet, describing racism mainly or only through deeds of certain individuals risks considering everyone and everything else as non-racist.

Antiracism that counters exceptional racism primarily constitutes preservative strategies (IV) aiming at defending a supposedly racism-free space against easily distinguishable racist deeds, symbols, and perpetrators. Antiracism as defence means both directly confronting racism and employing more indirect ways of undermining the premises linked to exceptionalist racism. First, encouraging standing up against individual racist harassers, erasing racist symbols (I), and confronting known racists on the streets and online (III), are all examples of direct confrontation. For instance, one interviewee envisioned self-defence forces that would take on Soldiers of Odin in the streets (IV), which can be read as an example of how known, concrete enemies might make participating in radical antiracist action more attractive for some (III). Further, some forms of direct confrontation can be described as no platforming (see Bray 2017)—which means interrupting or preventing the public presence of the extreme right. Another particular form of direct confrontation is ridiculing “racists” in different ways. Some antiracist discussions focused on presenting racist perpetrators as pathetic and lacking cognitive capacities, through focusing on spelling mistakes and the unrefined language they use (III).

Direct confrontation also highlights antiracism as an antagonistic stance (see Pitcher 2009). Previous research discussions have noted that this potentially weakens antiracist movements if the antagonism escalates. I argue in Substudy III that the focus on juxtaposition centres the conflict between racists and antiracists at the cost of racializing conceptions and recognizing lived experiences of racism. The antagonism has developed a vocabulary of its own, which also reflects its limits. I discuss this in relation to a particular term, “toletard”, which is an example of the foul language that anti-immigration discussants have successfully launched in order to ridicule and stigmatize antiracists and liberal multiculturalists. Some people involved in antiracist action have adopted the term in the manner of “reclaiming”, or perhaps due to the lack of another apt identifier. I discuss an example of the tug-of-war between “racists” and “toletards”, in which the antiracist goal becomes showing that the “toletards” are alright (III). I am not suggesting that all direct confrontation falls into the trap of focusing on antagonism, but that it is a potential pitfall in the direct confrontation strategy.

Following a strategy of no platforming, direct confrontation might also challenge the exceptionalist understandings of racism. Or, as I show, the antiracism that strives to dismantle the far and extreme right’s racism does not necessarily confine racism to a post-racial exception (III). In practice, this means that activists focus on pointing out the far and extreme right as a part or product of society. They argue that the problem is not only the far and extreme right’s mobilization, but also that the general public *allows* the far and extreme right to gain space, for instance, by echoing their views uncritically, and through not being willing to confront anti-immigration racist agendas. At the same time, racism linked to exceptional and extremist events also prompts indirect antiracist strategies. Some of the interviewed activists who were engaged in aiding newly arrived migrants explained that this was a way to contest anti-immigration racism. For example, I discuss a case in which the interviewee explained that an extreme-right terror attack had prompted her antiracist engagement in assisting newly arrived refugees (IV). In other words, engaging in activities that challenge anti-immigration agendas on an ideological level was seen as a way to counter the influence of anti-immigration racism within the societal atmosphere.

Secondly, racism is connected to universal prejudice. Such views appear mainly in the context of mainstreaming antiracism (I). In connection to fear and prejudice, racism is presented as an inevitable part of the human individual psyche and without any historicity. This reliance on “colour-blindness” or a culture of racial equivalence allows conflating different prejudices, as I discuss in more depth in section 6.2. In some cases, the discussion on common and interchangeable misconceptions, that can target anyone and everyone equally, opens up to the bogus notion of “reverse racism” (see Song 2014). The repertoire of counterstrategies against universal prejudices is rather limited. I identified testimonies of (overcoming) different types of prejudices, as well as depicting racism as a loss to prejudiced people.

In other words, strategies to defeat universal prejudices seem to include rather vague encouragements for self-reflection and are contingent on the implication of a loss. An example of the latter is a story of a white child who learns racist prejudices from their grandparents. As a result, the child is left without playmates at the playground (I). I argue that portraying racism in terms of loss for white people importantly still recognizes racism as a system that regards whiteness as a supreme position, and thus is different from arguments for “reverse racism” (cf. Song 2014, 119). Yet, as I argue “making this the ultimate tragedy of racism recentres whiteness and white vulnerability” (I, 103). On one hand, I hold onto this interpretation. On the other hand, I suggest reconsidering the decisiveness of my argument. Depicting racism as a loss also faced by white people could be interpreted as an attempt to describe racism as a relational system that in the end does not benefit anyone—as famously phrased by the civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hammer: “until I am free, you are not free either” (see Brooks 2010). Yet, I do not suggest this as a common characteristic of discussion on universalist racism.

Thirdly, racism is identified as (lived experiences of) racializing stereotypes and racist representations, i.e. exoticizing, inferiorizing and dehumanizing views of people of colour, as well as attitudes and practices that rely on those—for instance, systematic reproductions of hegemonic whiteness in culture, schoolbooks, and media (I, II, IV). While this definition of racism too addresses racist prejudices, discussions on racialization do not assume a similar space of profound equality to the one that underpins universalist racism. Instead, the starting point is to recognize at least some degree of uneven power relations. Further, the discussion on racializing stereotypes and racist representations and introduces an explicit discussion on racialization, which is not apparent in discussions related to the two former definitions. In other words, this discussion interrogates whiteness as a norm (cf. Wekker 2016).

Antiracist strategies to confront racist representations include both challenging white normativity, for instance, in media spaces or schoolbooks (I, II, IV) and contesting racist stereotypes in different ways. As such, antiracist strategies to confront stereotypes and representations aim for transforming racializing images, attitudes, and practices, and more specifically, these different strategies could be collectively described as a demand for recognition (IV). These discussions critique directly representations that misrepresent or overlook the existence of people of colour and other racialized minorities, and, for instance, in the blog posts that I analyze, provide antiracist alternatives.

In regard to blog posts talking back to racialization (II), I identify three distinct strategies to contest racialization and racist stereotypes. First, the blog authors position themselves and other people of colour as ordinary people and as locals in Finland, or, in a context where common euphemistic expressions link being non-white to being foreign. Further, by creating and reciting Finnish language vocabulary to describe their positions as people of colour in

a linguistic context that still struggles to offer antiracist expressions to describe people of colour (see Rastas 2014; 2019), they also challenge normative whiteness. Second, their contestation of racialization deconstructs the flattening stereotype of “immigrant” that is oftentimes imposed on everyone who does not pass as white. The blog authors appeal both to facts as well as to affective features in order to unpack racist views relating to migrants. For instance, they remind readers that the countries of origin of the majority of migrants in Finland is Estonia and Russia; or contest intentional bias in discussing sex crimes and presenting migrant men as likely perpetrators by citing statistics more accurately. They highlight individualizing and humanizing characteristics of people who have been victims of racist hate crimes, a form of affective repertoire. Third, the blog authors redefine negative, stereotypical representations by providing their own, emancipatory definitions of categories they identify with. On one hand, some redefinitions can be interpreted as replacing “bad” and “negative” words with “good” and “acceptable” alternatives (see Hall 1997b, 272-3). On the other hand, some of the blog authors specifically stress creating representations on their own terms and disregarding normative expectations. In other words, emancipation here should be understood in relation to oppressive, racist images. Fourth, I also discuss examples of reversing stereotypes (see Hall 1997b, 270-1): for instance, as opposed to the common, racist stereotype of the oppressed Muslim woman, some blog authors carnivalize anti-Muslim racist views on the hijab, and encourage feminists to empower themselves in order to overcome the fear of scarfs. Here, the previous discussion on racism as a loss gets another meaning.

The fifth and final racism definition sees racism as also linked in varying degrees to different institutions, and societal and socioeconomic structures. First, antiracist mainstreaming mentions “structural racism”, but it becomes difficult to pinpoint what these structures are, given that they are primarily characterized as “invisible” (I). Further, discrimination within education and the labour market were also briefly mentioned as examples of structural or institutional racism. Besides this, activists from different radical initiatives willing to contest societal order more broadly, and activists engaged in struggles for migrants’ rights (these groups overlap at times) seek ways to address the differential entitlement that manifests, for instance, in the citizen/migrant distinction in the context of the European border regime through understanding this as racism (VI). A similar, (but not the same) difficulty that hinders the pinning down of “invisible structures” also characterizes activist discussions on racist structures. Some interviewees described hesitating whether or not to use “racism” in their advocacy to label instances of unjust practices relating to a person’s origin. For instance, they pondered whether to label as racism the deaths of people trying to access Europe by crossing the Mediterranean Sea. At the same time, one particular interviewee willingly pointed out that legislation might have racist biases too, even if the authorities mandated by the same legislation do not recognize this. Or, as they put it: “If a restaurant claims that they are not letting black people

in, then the authorities might react. But now, when there is a [discriminatory] law, they take no moral stand” (IV). In sum, defining racism as a structural phenomenon appeared difficult in the context of the data I observed for this study.

Antiracist strategies contesting structural racism also contain a limited repertoire of means. First, the NGO discussion mainly just briefly acknowledges the possibility of structural racism, but there are no explicit discussions on the ways in which often unspecified structures could be challenged. Second, antiracist activists demanding redistribution of rights that also guarantee access to economic resources either rely on awareness-raising—“getting the message out” that they regard borders as discriminatory—or focus on specific and detailed practical problems.

Awareness-raising, making a critique of racism or/and antiracism known among the general public is also referred to in other antiracist orientations. Antiracism mainstreaming (I) relies specifically on awareness-raising. The different campaigns provide information on racism, and encourage people to participate in antiracist action, particularly against racist harassment and extremist symbols, but also to some extent to acknowledge their own racist prejudices. Similarly, different grassroots antiracisms address the general public. Activists strive to make racism (as they understand it) acknowledged and condemned more broadly. This means spreading information about various topics, for instance, on politicians’ connections to right-wing extremism (III); on different identities and cultures bearing racializing stigmas (e.g. Sámi cultures; different interpretations of Islam, II); or on the consequences of differential entitlement (e.g. violent consequences of European border policies, IV). At the same time, the tone of awareness-raising varies. I argue that the aesthetic hallmarks of antiracism mainstreaming—bright colours and pictures of smiling people—suggest a conformist tone, while different activist initiatives often adopt more confrontational styles.

While awareness-raising is mainly directed at the general public, a part of antiracist self-organizing by people of colour is mainly directed at peers, and other people targeted by racism too (II, IV). In such cases, some of the interviewed activists described their actions in a manner that could be termed as consciousness-raising—drawing attention to the conditions they are collectively subjected to, and providing knowledge for dealing with that (cf. Essed 1994). Both, awareness-raising directed at the general public, and consciousness-raising among peers, suggest that antiracism deals with knowledge (and/or values) that are not widely shared in broader society. In other words, antiracism does not appear as secured normative. Instead, the two discussions suggest that antiracists see something in the world that the general public overlooks.



## 6.2 RACIALIZATION AND WHITENESS

This section provides an answer to my third research question through discussing three different stances that arise through addressing racialization and whiteness in antiracism. I discuss the ways in which racialization and whiteness are de/constructed in the antiracist discussions I analyzed. The distinct antiracist approaches differ significantly from each other—for instance, while some antiracisms are silent about racialization, others contribute to creating a language that challenges whiteness as a norm.

To begin with, a part of antiracist advocacy relies on “colour-blind” views of social reality. The way in which racism is constructed as interchangeable prejudices in a culture of racial equivalence (Song 2014) is apparent in two anecdotes, presented parallel to each other in antiracism mainstreaming (I). I analyze an example in which an anecdote of a false accusation of shoplifting against a young Roma woman is presented as equivalent to a case in which a young woman of colour testifies having had prejudices against skinheads. The first young woman explains that the shoplifting accusation was in the end proven wrong, and the second young woman reflects on learning about antiracist skinhead culture. In my discussion of these examples, I suggest that reducing racism to unfortunate misconceptions that all human beings experience assumes a social reality without racial hierarchies, in which everyone can equally be positioned as a target and victim of racist misconceptions. Further, it also allows the pursuit of the bogus idea of “reverse racism” (see Song 2014).

Secondly, I observe how some antiracist discussions and strategies reproduce white normativity (cf. Wekker 2016). An implicit commitment to whiteness has also previously been identified as a characteristic of perceiving racism as an exception (Hughey 2012; Hage 2000; Hübinette and Lundström 2011). I address this in relation to grassroots antiracism against the far and extreme right (III) as well as in the encouragement to “the silent majority” to step up against racism (I). These conversations, relying on exceptionalist definitions of racism, cast people of colour as passive victims, whose agency is left in the shadow of white antiracists. Further, the examples that I analyze illustrate that an exceptionalist understanding of racism does not necessarily encourage a critique of racialization.

For instance, I show that the tipping points in antiracist mobilization narrative, and the roles assigned to different people prioritize the agency of white people. In antiracist narratives, repeatedly commemorated events, regarded as proof of the danger and threat of the racist far right, largely focus on political violence against white, Finnish anti-fascist and antiracist activists, and left-wing politicians. On one hand, these are undeniably alarming acts of political violence, and it is easy to grasp why they prompt particular concern amongst people who see their political ideology attacked (cf. Mulinari and Neergaard 2012). On the other hand, from the perspective of analyzing racialization in general, and whiteness in particular, the named key events

tend to regard the experiences of people of colour and lived experiences of racism as secondary, as the focus is placed on the aforementioned antagonism between racists and “toletards” (III). Ahmed (2016) discusses a similar incident (see also Bouteldja 2014), and her analysis of the power struggle between “toletards” and racists also underscores the dismissive nature of the conflict: “the struggle happens on behalf of those who are tolerated. They are not seen to have a competence of their own or the right to participate in the debate on values among ‘real Finnish people’” (ibid., 52, my translation). This suggests that whiteness-centring scenes need to be carefully considered. However, I want to also add some clarification to this line of argument. Encouraging passive people to step up against racist harassment and violence is surely also an important message. Certainly, also people who are not directly targeted by racism, should have a role in dismantling racism. Yet, assigning people of colour in the roles of mere objects of racism leaves all agency in the hands of white people, portraying them as saviours.

Thirdly, while fostering “colour-blind” or white-normed notions does not allow for adequately critical discussions on racialization, there are also antiracist discussions that challenge these directly. The most obvious example of these are blogs that talk back to racialization (II), firstly through contributing to dismantling white normativity in media spaces, and secondly through contesting racialization in distinct ways. The discussions in the blogs are an example of a conversation that vocalizes non-white subject positions in Finnish (cf. Rastas 2014; 2019); a somewhat similar gesture is introducing terms like racialization and exoticization in the context of antiracism mainstreaming (I). Further, the blogs provide examples of distinct strategies of undermining racialized assumptions (see 6.1.2). At the same time, similar attempts are made via other initiatives too. For instance, I show that some interviewees involved in antiracist orientations other than producing antiracist self-representations—where contesting racialization is often the prominent aim—share similar aims of challenging racist misrecognitions, unpacking stereotypes, and contesting behaviour informed by such perceptions. I specifically discuss migrants’ rights activism (IV). Some interviewees identified a need to contest other activists’ views on newly arrived migrants as less developed and traditional as opposed to the supposedly modern Finns or Europeans.

I have described here the different degrees of (not) challenging racialization and whiteness in the activisms I studied. This discussion is also in part tied to the activists’ racialized positions. Yet, the ability to contribute either to confirming or contesting racial hierarchies and whiteness is not predetermined by a person’s own position. As briefly acknowledged, in some of the antiracist discussions I studied, people subjected to racism might also participate in enforcing racializing hierarchies (I, II)—and, people categorized as white can participate in dismantling those hierarchies. However, as the discussion here aims to point out, this requires a deliberate effort.

### 6.3 INTERSECTIONAL ELEMENTS

In this section, I discuss the ways in which the post-racial notions of racism as exceptionality and assumptions on a culture of racial equivalence also depend on categorizations like age, class, gender, and sexuality, and how intersectional power hierarchies are recognized in antiracist conceptions of racism and racialization. In other words, the discussion here responds to my fourth research question. I argue antiracism also constructs itself through other discourses (e.g. related to class and age), which in turn shapes the critical capacity of different antiracisms. The limits of antiracism are also produced through other categorizations than the one(s) primarily connected to racism, i.e. race (and its attributes), ethnicity, religion, and culture. Further, I also address the ways in which racism and racialization are recognized as intersectional systems of discrimination and oppression.

Antiracism mainstreaming (I) often targets a certain age group. Racism and antiracism are presented primarily as phenomena relevant to children and youth, similar to earlier pan-European antiracist initiatives (see *All Different, All Equal* 1996). Some antiracism mainstreaming is conducted by NGOs that focus on children's rights, but NGO actors whose niche is not limited to young people also mount broader campaigns directed at this age group and/or encourage young people to make antiracist statements; address people working with adolescents; and portray victims of racism as children. Upon first glance, the focus is probably both needed and strategic—a focus on adolescents can be read as a future-oriented and strategic choice, and appealing to a child's best interest is undoubtedly an influential discourse. The discourse of “a child's best interest” has been described as a political totality (Edelman 2004)—“what would it signify *not* to be fighting for the children?” (ibid., 2). Indeed, who would want to harm children—or who are those individuals who harass innocent children as in the examples I analyze (I, III)? To be clear, I am not questioning the need to defend children from racist attacks. Instead, I am asking what happens to conceptions of racism and antiracism when they are tied to the discourse of a child's best interest. Describing racism as attacks and harassment against children contributes to an understanding of a universally condemned phenomenon (cf. Lentin 2016, 35), an example of pure evil. Further, characterizing racism as a youth problem diminishes its connections to adult power regimes. The campaigns with a focus on youth do not address the labour market, migration governance, or income distribution. Antiracist demands can rather easily ignore the structural dimensions of racism if their sole focus is on adolescents who are encouraged to produce music videos and drawings to defeat racism (I). In brief, I argue that the focus on children and youth contributes to exceptionalist understandings of racism, which further depoliticizes antiracism.

Exceptionality is also constructed through a classist discourse, which undermines the respectability of those regarded “an underclass”. I discuss how some antiracist representations of racist perpetrators depict them as shabby,

at times drunken, uneducated, or otherwise inarticulate and foul (I, III). Such attributes underscore marginality and/or lack of respectability of racists (see also Goldberg 2009, 360; Jones 2014, 233; Mäkinen 2016, 550). Ahmed (2012, 150, original emphasis) insightfully describes the function of the figure of an outcast racist, “it is relatively easy for someone to respond to a critique of racism by insisting or even showing *they are not that figure*”. In other words, complicity in racism is depicted as a class-bound quality and depicting racists perpetrators as distinguishable from middle- and upper-class subjects also protects such people from being considered as perpetrators of racism (see also Wekker 2016, 525). Some of the activists I interviewed also contested this characterization by stressing that supporters of the anti-immigration agenda include also well-off people in influential positions, with steady incomes and university educations (III). In other words, they saw supporters of anti-immigration racism as interlocutors whose influence on the societal atmosphere should be taken seriously and contested. Here the interviewees underscored difference between their own views and what they perceived the public debate. At the same time, the marginality attached to racist perpetrators seems to stick also to the antiracist activist: the interviewees explained in distinct ways how vocal antiracism in their view made them susceptible to judgement in the eyes of the general public.

The antiracisms I have studied also provide descriptions of the ways in which racism and racialization draw on multiple attributes. First, as shown by several scholars, gender and sexuality are intimately linked to racialization (e.g. Mulinari et al. 2009). Therefore, it is no surprise that blog posts talking back to racialization address gender and sexuality too: bloggers unpack racist stereotypes about violent non-white masculinities, particularly in regard to sex crimes, as well as racist stereotypes related to supposedly oppressed black and brown women (II). Racism expressed through sexualizing stereotypes also surfaces in antiracism against the far and extreme right (III). I discuss an example where the interviewee becomes caught in a tug-of-war between “racists” and “toletards” and receives sexualized threats that make use of racist stereotypes of “immigrant men”. Yet, in antiracism that does not focus on contesting racialization, this is a secondary concern. At the same time, the example also highlights sexism and misogyny within anti-immigration racism advocacy. The antiracisms I explored do not address this specifically, but in the context of feminist activism, there have been protests “against the use of women’s issues for racist purposes” (Keskinen 2018, 161).

Second, antiracist activism provides insights about the role of other categorizations or power structures in racism and racialization, which are worth considering in research discussions. Previous research has shown that national belonging and racialized boundaries overlap (e.g. Anthias, Yuval-Davis and Cain 2005; Gilroy 1990), and as I also show in my analysis on talking back to racialization, calling out normative whiteness means calling out racialized boundaries of national belonging. For instance, people who do not pass as white underscore that they are Finns, or that they are not migrants (II).

In Nordic research discussions, analyses of racialization tend to find similar boundaries regulating national belonging in different nation states, and discussions on whiteness often merge with discussions on nationality (e.g. Toivanen 2014; Andreassen and Ahmed-Andresen 2014; Hübinette and Lundström 2011). I point out in my discussion on blog posts that even if bloggers use wording that refers to national belonging, what is at stake in some cases is simply being recognized as a local in one's everyday life. At the same time, similar emphasis on being local and ordinary are made without mentioning national belonging. Based on this, I suggest that it would also be important for research to discover ways to describe everyday racialization and struggle against it independent of categories of national belonging, otherwise research might end up reinforcing nationalism. Finally, some of the interviewed activists also reconsidered the commonly acknowledged aspects of racism and racialization, drew attention to racialized aspects of the citizenship/migration distinction (IV). They advocate for an understanding that regards citizenship/migration status as one attribute through which one's racialized position is interpreted. While such views are not uncommon in critical research (e.g. Balibar 2004), they encourage reconsidering the scope of antiracism.

## **6.4 ANTIRACIST SILENCES**

I conclude this discussion on research findings by addressing one particular commonality that I argue is characteristic of close to all antiracist discussions I analyzed. Common to most of the different antiracisms addressing issues from slurs at the bus stop to discrimination in the labour market, and from right-wing terror to maintaining the whiteness of media spaces, is that a majority of conceptions of racism can be described as exclusionary racism, as a distinction from exploitative racism (Mulinari and Neergaard 2017; Hage 2016). As Mulinari and Neergaard (2017) explain the distinction, exclusionary racism refers to wider forms of discrimination, from mundane practices of separation or exclusion, to extremist forms that even include annihilation. In other words, racism is defined as a set of (very different) exclusions, creating and maintaining boundaries between groups. Mulinari and Neergaard use the term to distinguish exclusionary racism from another form of racism, which they label exploitative. According to them, exploitative racism refers to discursive and institutional practices that create an exploitable, racialized labour force. Or, as they further explain, “policies that make workers vulnerable to exploitation, on one side, and employers using the precarious labour market positions of workers, on the other side” (ibid., 92).

Among the antiracisms that I studied, there were very few examples of what Mulinari and Neergaard (2017) term exploitative racism. It is possible to analyze, for instance, racialized prejudices explicated in some antiracist discussions as contributing to the creation of a racialized labour market—for

instance, that people perceived as immigrants are allowed to participate in society only through enacting the assumptions attached to “immigrants” (II), which undoubtedly impacts their labour market position too. At the same time, antiracist discussions occasionally addressed labour market discrimination, but in these cases, access to (any) employment is mainly portrayed as a goal, and the critique points to the lack of access to—or exclusion from—the labour market (I, II). In this sense, the only example of addressing labour market exploitation that I discuss (IV) stands out in the data. In brief, an understanding of racism as exclusionary attitude, event or structure dominate the discussions I analyzed.

## 7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research is concerned with the distinct uses of the label *antiracism*, and antiracist conceptions of *racism* in civil society in Finland. I have addressed antiracist endeavours as a set of heterogeneous practices and discussions. My aim has not been to identify “a best antiracism”, but to provide analytical understandings of similarities and differences between distinct antiracist approaches, strategies, and ways of conceiving racism, and explore the ways in which these relate. To conclude, I raise some key themes that have wider implications for my research questions and for the field as a whole, instead of providing an all-encompassing overview of the research findings presented in the previous chapter. I argue that these themes are relevant for future analytical discussions on antiracisms, regardless of whether they take place within or outside of academia. However, I start by reflecting briefly upon the theoretical and methodological choices as well as the context of my work.

Regarding conceptual tools to grasp antiracism and racism, I have drawn from critical race and whiteness studies. More precisely, I have relied on a set of concepts that point to dismissing race as an aspect of social reality. While this allows describing limits of conceiving race and racialization also in antiracism, in my analysis, I have also made an effort to both identify and suggest ways to possibly overcome those limitations. I see this as an important task for critical research: to provide ingredients to imagine alternatives.

The empirical examples I discuss are situated in a certain geographical context. I have reflected on some contextual particularities that distinguish discussions in Finland from those situated in Anglophone contexts, for instance. The broader context of the analyzed antiracism can be described through the notion of white innocence (Wekker 2016). White innocence points to patterns of imagining racism-free spaces, either by linking racism to countries like the United States or South Africa, or to societal margins at home. Such characterization of discourses on racism transcends nation-state borders. Although I too frame my work partly in the context of a nation state, I suggest that the Nordic and European discussion on racialization should make a more serious effort to step away from methodological nationalism. Repeatedly finding the racialized boundaries of a nation-state draws the focus away from the transnational patterns of exclusion and exploitation that race creates. I ground my position on my research results, which indicate that even if racializing notions make use of boundaries of national belonging, from the perspective of contesting racialization, national belonging might appear irrelevant. Hence, the challenge for research—at least Nordic research—is to analyze racism and racialization beyond repeatedly showing the limits of who is recognized as a Finn (or Swede or Dane)—what is at stake is a broader process of boundary-making (cf. Hesse 2011).

When reflecting on the other central findings of my work, I wish to underscore the following four findings. The first one is related to the ways in which racism is addressed as an exception and as a singular, event-bound phenomenon or as a part of a structure. Exceptionalist views on racism and discussion on events are common in the data. While a clear-cut problem-definition might facilitate antiracist mobilization, defining racism as isolated and containable risks to create concomitantly a representation of otherwise racism-free society—and thus, to contribute to maintaining post-racial discourse (Goldberg 2015), or those of white innocence (Wekker 2016). Such views also translate to defensive antiracist strategies focusing on defeating racists, and at times centralizing the antagonistic conflict against racists rather than the struggle against racism itself. However, I also identified efforts to address racism as structural or systemic phenomena. In connection to this, I observed difficulties with describing systemic, institutional or structural racism. A striking example of this is invisible structures that in their invisibility escape definition. Further, antiracist strategies that address structural racism are less developed and specific—if they exist at all—than the defensive strategies addressing mainly racism as an exception.

I argue that the emphasis on racism as an exception and the difficulties in addressing racism underscore both broader discourses of racism (cf. Pantti et al. 2019) and knowledge resources available. For instance, the lack of statistics could be a part of the reason, why the logic of event appears tempting also in antiracist discussions on racism. Here, I see that academic research can be of use too: research should be able to contribute to both concepts and empirical understandings of racism beyond isolated incidents and extremist cases. Of course, analyses of systemic racism produced elsewhere than within the academia, should be also considered.

In my second main finding, I show how exceptionalist understandings of racism are produced through intersectional categorizations other than those constituting racialization. Framing racism through age or a classist discussion—as a youth issue, or a problem of the societal margins—undermines its severity as a serious social injustice (see Gilmore 2007, 28). While the image of the marginal racist has also been discussed in previous research (e.g. Ahmed 2012; Goldberg 2015; Wekker 2016), the way in which antiracism is marginalized or depoliticized through age-bound narratives opens a new trajectory for critical analyses. My work highlights how intersectional overlappings can also function to deflate attempts to address hierarchical power relations. For future analyses of antiracism as well as antiracist strategizing, I suggest this underscores the importance of reviewing to whom antiracism is primarily directed, and whether this reinforces that racism is limited to certain, marginalized groups in society.

My third main finding addresses racialization. I show how the analyzed antiracisms address racialization and whiteness in strikingly different ways. Some of the analyzed antiracisms enforce a colour-blind interpretation of the social reality or remain silent about racialization. In other words, some forms



of antiracism have a limited understanding of whiteness as a structure, and as I show, antiracism can inadvertently recentre whiteness and disregard people of colour as equal interlocutors in societal debates. In other words, also some forms of antiracist work require a consideration of the systematic ways in which people, customs, cultures, religions, histories, and languages are regarded on the continuum from modern, developed and deserving to traditional, undeveloped and undeserving (cf. Hesse 2011; Keskinen et al. 2009). However, I also analyze antiracist endeavours to challenge whiteness as a norm, for instance by critiquing racist stereotypes and by vocalizing non-white subject positions through antiracist self-representations. Ideally, such critique would be considered more broadly in order to identify and question the ways in which race hides in plain sight (cf. Goldberg 2015).

Finally, a majority of the antiracist initiatives I explored—big and small; radical and moderate; highlighting lived experiences or condemning extremist forms of racism—focus on different types of exclusions. In contrast to this, there are individual examples of antiracist discussions that underscore the ways in which racist structures facilitate exploitation. Addressing different discriminations and exclusions is crucial, but it leaves the exploitative aspects, for instance, production of cheap labour, untouched (see Mulinari and Neergaard 2017). This makes antiracism potentially compatible with other discourses of neo-liberalism (cf. Goldberg 2015; Pitcher 2009).

Taking seriously the challenge posed by critical race and whiteness studies, to participate in a race riot, at least on an epistemic level (Gunaratnam 2003, 20), is also to consider all the ways in which race is naturalized in our everyday lives. The challenge then becomes to re-evaluate conceptualizations of race, racism and antiracism. Ideally, critical conceptual devices serve as means to sharpen antiracist discussions.

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