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Bunad, minorities and belonging in Norway

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ABSTRACT

The increase and visibility of non-white Norwegian minorities who wear the national costume, *bunad,* has generated much debate and rancor in the Norwegian media in recent years. This study employs a content analysis methodology of six cases from national newspapers that approximate the gamut of the discussion. Employing theories of belonging, *bunad* is broached as a prism that reflects current debates about the future of multiculturalism in a country that has witnessed rapid demographic change in a few decades. The locus of the debate is situated in the interstices between the minority individual's rationale for wearing the *bunad* and the positive views of significant Norwegians, such as the King of Norway, on the one hand, and those who refuse to 'grant' belonging to non-ethnic Norwegians on the other.

Introduction

This study employs the Norwegian national costume, *bunad,* as a lens through which the notion of belonging is broached. Following Habib and Ward (2020), we define belonging, not as a linear, developmental process of thinking where language, formal legalities, etc. predominate, but one that develops in a personal dialectic between individual and collective histories and is shaped by social milieu. The collective assigns positionalities that are negotiated through the construction of counter-narratives. '[…] Central to the analysis is how identity construction takes place in and through the making of places' (Habib & Ward, 2020, p. 4). The unit of analysis is individuals from minority backgrounds (non-western/non-white) and the reasons they elect to purchase and don the national costume, the bunad, on the National Day in particular (May 17) despite opprobrium from some members of the public.

Amin Maalouf (2001, p. 9) warns about the elusiveness of the concept of identity calling it a 'false friend'. Going beyond the particulars of official records, such as sex, nationality and profession, he is concerned with the diversity of elements that comprise one's identity, the need for reciprocity on the part of the majority, and the manner in which aspects of this identity take centre stage contingent upon the context; if threatened, religion may be ascendant, for example. His observation that 'the secret dream of most migrants is to

be taken for natives' (Maalouf, 2001, p. 38) underscores the desire of the minorities in this study to be accepted as Norwegians who, like other Norwegians, don the *bunad* with pride. The citation below, we argue, aptly captures the mutable and fluid manner in which countries can accommodate its citizens' multiple allegiances.

> [Societies] ought to make the necessary effort to demonstrate by means of visible symbols that they accept their own identities, so that every individual may identify with what he sees around him, may recognize himself in the image of the country in which he lives, and may feel encouraged to involve himself in it rather than, as is too often the case, remaining an uneasy and sometimes hostile spectator. (Maalouf, 2001, p. 160)

In addition to Maalouf's (2001) understanding of identity, Fukuyama (2018) argues that *thymos* – the part of the soul that craves recognition of dignity – must be acknowledged for the success of modern liberal democracies. 'Identity grows, in the first place, out of a distinction between one's true inner self and an outer world of social rules and norms that does not adequately recognize that inner self's worth or dignity' (Fukuyama, 2018, p. 10). This resonates with the experience of the subjects in the findings who were frustrated by the rupture between their need (inner self) to don the bunad and the incongruent response from sections of the outer society. In order to appreciate the significance of the bunad in Norway, the next segment briefly considers the historical contours of how the outfit came to take on national significance as a distinguished boundary and identity marker (Guibernau, 2013; Wimmer, 2013).

The origin and significance of bunads

In common parlance, *bunads* in Norway are associated with traditional folk costumes that are often linked to specific regions and donned on festive occasions. 'More than half the Norwegian population owns a bunad or a folk costume' (Martinsen & Torgersen, 2014). The outfits, often beautifully embroidered and ornamented, are invested with enormous symbolic value. Examples run the gamut from festive to solemn occasions: child baptisms, galas, weddings, confirmations in the Lutheran Christian and humanistic traditions, funerals and the National Day celebrations on May 17. There are about 450 different *bunads* in Norway (Martinsen & Torgersen, 2014) from different regions, with distinct patterns, motifs and colors, and each embodying a particular heritage. As festive garments, *bunads* originate in rural, pre-industrial society (Durán & Henriksson, 2013) in the heyday of national romanticism and were imbued with symbolic value during emancipation in 1905. Norway was under Denmark for 400 years after which she was in a union with Sweden until 1905. The *bunad,* hence, was valorized as a symbol of Norwegian national sentiment. According to The Norwegian institute of bunad and folk costume (NBF):

> The Norwegian nationalist movement opposed the union with Sweden and campaigned for that which was specifically Norwegian. They wanted to recreate the old rural, pre-industrial folk culture which was slowly vanishing, and reintroduce it in the rural and urban communities in an improved version … It is at this stage that the folk costume becomes *bunad.* The *bunad* became an important element in the political-cultural contemporary debate – a visible expression of a wish that the specific Norwegian should form the basis for cultural and political activities. (NBF, n.d.)

National romanticism co-existed with the enlightenment but emerged from within the civil servant stratum and was critical of the Danish-affiliated culture (Sørensen, 1998)

which the national romantics considered a 'foreign, European and degenerated city culture' (Neumann, 2000, p. 248). Norwegian history proper was situated within the Viking Age and the period after 1814 with the Danish intermezzo perceived as an unwelcome intrusion. Figures such as Christopher Bruun and Ivar Aasen perceived the peasant as the embodiment of the 'true Norwegian and the inheritor of the old Norse culture' (Neumann, 2000, p. 248). Precise dates for the transition from the enlightenment ideals of reason and learning to the celebration of a nation's inherent qualities is difficult to pin down but preceded the union with Sweden.

> Henrich Steffens lectured to Norwegian students on romanticism in Copenhagen as early as 1802–1803 and thus planted the philosophical seeds. Early interest in folkways – in the collection of national costumes, old songs, old myths – can also be found as early as during the first decade of the 19th century. Even an interest in the old Norse language and the first calls for a "national language" hail from this decade. (Neumann, 2000, p. 242)

It was in the interstices of these national romantics' molding of a distinct Norwegian subject that the bunad was also of interest. Neumann (2000) shows how the project of delineating 'real' and 'historical' folk attire, such as the bunad, was an eclectic process. '[…] activist Hulda Garborg trusted her own aesthetics, as counterdistinctive to actual use, when deciding what to represent as real/of the people and what to suppress. 'We want to dress modern European cultural thought in Norwegian folk costume (bunad)' (Nerbøvik, 1998, p. 333).

Although a small country, Norway has a plethora of dialects and, for many, the *bunad* gives expression to their parochial sense of belonging – it gives expression to one's sense of local belonging within the broader framework of national belonging (Kvam, 2018). Through the *bunad,* the owner projects his or her personal narrative, image, values and communal identity (Sørensen, 1998). Thomas Hylland Eriksen (2018) refers to the bunad as 'A symbol of rootedness and belonging both local and national'. Its rootedness in a particular, 'authentic' geography/location is evident in the example Eriksen (2018) forwards in regard to Crown Princess Mette-Marit who was chastised in the media for donning 'a purely invented "fantasy costume" rather than an authentic bunad from her home region'. To his mind, the bunad is about identity. Given that folk dresses are associated with minorities in Europe, he posits that, 'perhaps the Norwegian identity is essentially a minority identity, even though independence was achieved through a bloodless secession from the Swedish-Norwegian union in 1905'. Relevant to our study is his postulation that the increase in the use of the bunad in Norway is 'saying something essential about the politics and poetics of identity in modern societies, where the quest for rootedness in the past increases with de facto uprootedness'. Seen in this light, one could argue that the antipathy towards foreigners wearing bunads stems from a sense of fragility – having been distilled in opposition to a Danish/Swedish culture in the heyday of national romanticism, some perceive black- and brown-skinned people wearing local bunads as a new threat to be fought off. The bunad's local distinctiveness is captured in the statement below:

> Because of the wealth of detail, a proper bunad cannot be made industrially in its entirety. This partly accounts for its high market price. Moreover, the knowledge and skill required to make a bunad is considered a cultural, local form of knowledge – a kind of inalienable possession. (Eriksen, 2018)

The design, color, embroidery and amount of jewelry in bunads has led to disagreements and even feuds between factions on the national day, according to Eriksen (2018). These are some of the ways in which owners project their personal narratives, images, values and communal identities through the bunad (Sørensen, 1998). Meanings invested into the bunad, like other cultural artefacts, have vacillated over the decades. Gran (in Dahl, 2014) cites a girl named Gudrun in 1899 who opined the bunad made 'the most handsome of youth look like a hag'. The first bunad was the dénouement of the efforts of Hulda Garborg (Eriksen, 2004) who drew upon extant folk costumes (everyday wear) from around the country in a manner reminiscent of Hobsbawn and Ranger's (1983) 'invented traditions' that nevertheless stake a claim to authenticity in a suitable historic past. Dahl (2014, p. 28) notes, 'Traditional bunad guidelines suggest that one should choose an outfit from where one is born, or from where one's parents or grandparents were born. They are often handed down through generations, and therefore confirm one's attachment to place and bloodlines'.

However, the onset of globalization and changing demographics in Norway in recent decades has challenged this ethnocentric focus. One third of the Capital Oslo's population are classified as 'immigrants/Norwegian-born of immigrant parents'. Other cities have the following breakdown: Drammen (29.4%), Stavanger (22.8%), Bergen (17.8%) and Trondheim (15.8%) (Revfem, 2019). Clearly, these significant changes in the urban demographic has had repercussions for the bunad debate. The Norwegian Institute of Bunad and Folk Costume (NBF) has responded by including the possibility of choosing a bunad from the area one currently lives in, along with the caveat: 'That you must be prepared for people asking you about your connection to the place of origin of your bunad'. In addition, there is the issue of status and cost.

Bunads are expensive to make, with hand-embroidered details on natural fabrics like wool, silk and linen, and a variety of accessories from ornate silver jewelry, belts, hats, shawls and sashes. The total cost of buying a bunad from the traditional *Husfliden* supplier (i.e. Norwegian made) amounts to somewhere between $5,000 and $10,000 (Dahl, 2014, p. 27). As will be shown later in the findings section, minority-background individuals who assert their right to wear the bunad are educated and relatively affluent. The acquisition of the bunad may be interpreted as staking a claim in a progressive 'invented tradition' that both bestows status and claim to belonging – not in a rural tradition dating to a pre-immigrant past – but one commensurate with NBF's allowance for 'choosing a bunad from the area one currently lives in' be it Oslo, Drammen, Stavanger, Bergen or Stavanger. Not least, given the significant costs involved in procuring a bunad, critical voices have drawn attention to issues revolving around segregation, race and class. For instance, the bunad could become a class signifier demarcating affluent and aspiring minorities from the majority, less affluent ones.

Cultural appropriation

As with other cultural artefacts, caught up in the confluence of globalizing forces, the *bunad* has been the subject of contestation. For instance, the colorful kente (meaning 'handwoven cloth') cloth is the traditional garment of the Twi-speaking Asante people of the Akan tribe of Ghana. Recently, Democratic US lawmakers, including the House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, wore the kente cloth

in a show of solidarity with the death of George Floyd at the hands of a police officer. This caused some to accuse the lawmakers of cultural appropriation, but Diana NDiaye, a senior curator and cultural heritage specialist at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage, considered it a gesture of solidarity (Sarmiento, 2020).

Cultural appropriation is a complex and controversial concept. On the one hand, proponents criticize powerful and dominant groups who insensitively appropriate cultural symbols of traditionally oppressed minorities. This has often been called the 'oppression account' (Matthes, 2019). On the other hand, adherents of the 'intimacy account' appeal on the basis of boundary policing of intimate practices that are expressively established (Nguyen & Strohl, 2019). The 'intimacy account' has been criticized for a group-endorsement model of determining membership. Schneider (2003) avoids the two extremes and posits a definition which perceives cultural appropriation, not as the pilfering of preexisting entities by preexisting groups, but cultural goods as objects of desire triggering a response by groups prepared to contest this appropriation. It is this third position that Lubna (Case study 2) gives expression to when she denies cultural appropriation. Much of the rancor opposing the use of bunads by minorities in Norway stem from adherents of the 'intimacy account' who double down on boundary policing of the bunad.

As the theory section argues, belonging and identity are not the realm of the individual alone, but are 'granted' or 'denied by' the community (Antonsich, 2019; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Technically, on a more formal, ceremonial level, it would mean acceptance into notions of the country and mythic notions of being a nation that we argue crystallized through the eclectic process of nation-building and national romanticism. However, and more importantly, following the case studies in the findings, belonging here is understood as being welcomed, not just as having a right to don the bunad, but genuine acceptance – evidenced in subtleties such as a nod or gesture of goodwill and encouragement. Clearly, some ethnic Norwegians do not perceive the new Norwegians with hyphenated identities as deserving of this discursive sense of belonging that the bunad now comes to represent. The manner in which individuals stake their claim to belonging and the degree to which members of the in-group are willing to 'grant' this overture is discussed next in the theoretical framework.

Theoretical framework

There is a burgeoning corpus of literature that seeks to produce a comprehensive analysis of the notion of belonging (Antonsich, 2019; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Habib & Ward, 2020; Marcu, 2014; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Antonsich (2019) employs two major analytical approaches to the notion of belonging. The first is belonging understood as 'a personal, intimate, feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-belongingness)' while the second dimension envisages belonging as 'a discursive source which constructs, claims, justifies, or resists forms of socio-spatial inclusion/exclusion (politics of belonging)' (Antonsich, 2019, p. 4). Citing the black feminist scholar, bell hooks' (2009) journey back to the hills of Kentucky, Antonsich (2019, p. 7) contends that belonging to a place is deeply imbricated in the narratives and processes of self-formation. There are echoes of Weber's (2009) *Gemeinschaft* – a subjective and affective sense of belonging felt by an individual – commensurate with the first dimension of belonging outlined.

Having reviewed the literature on belonging, Antonsich (2019, p. 8) outlines five salient factors that impact on belonging: autobiographical, relational, cultural, economic and legal. Briefly put, the autobiographical factor encompasses childhood memories that engender emotional ties to a particular place (Dixon & Durrheim, 2004). The second factor, relational ties, signifies the strength of bonding with family and friends, including strangers with whom we share the public space. The following criteria affect the salience of relational ties, according to Baumeister and Leary (1995): whether they are long lasting, positive, significant, frequent or few physical interactions and number of persons. Baumeister and Leary (1995, p. 498) argue that 'belongingness can be almost as compelling a need as food' which places belonging on the same tier as physiological needs (air, water, sleep, shelter, etc.) in Maslow's (1968) motivational hierarchy. The third, the cultural factor, considers the degree to which the individual masters the language and other tacit codes, signs and gestures shared in the same semiotic universe (Cohen, 1982).

Economic factors constitute the fourth factor and suggest a correlation between higher earnings, professional status and belonging (Yuval-Davis & Kaptani, 2008). Antonsich (2019, p. 10) argues that 'This sort of economic embeddedness matters not only from the material perspective, but also in relation to make a person feel that s/he has a stake in the future of the place where s/he lives'. Finally, a sense of belonging is contingent upon the sense of safety and security that a legal status bestows, what Fenster and Vizel (2007) call the formal structure of belonging. The current unease felt among European Union citizens caught up in the Brexit turmoil is a case in point.

Leaving the personal, intimate dimension of belonging outlined above, we turn to the second, discursively constructed dimension of belonging. Yuval-Davis (2006, p. 199) considers the fluid and contested manner in which societies engage in the 'politics of belonging'. Gender, race and class, among others, are 'not just different categories of social location, but categories that also have a certain positionality along an axis of power, higher or lower than other such categories'. Anderson's (2016) understanding of nations as 'imagined communities' is critiqued because it assumes that 'if all members of the nation could meet face-to-face, imagination would be redundant' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204). Rather, who is included and who is excluded in the collective 'we' involves an 'act of active and situated imagination' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204). The conundrum is captured in the citation below:

> Could Jews be included in the boundaries of the German nation? Is there "black in the Union Jack"? Do Québécois form a separate nation from the Canadians, one with its own boundaries? The different situated imaginations that construct these national imagined communities with different boundaries depend on people's social locations, people's experiences and definitions of self, but probably even more importantly on their values. (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204)

Significantly, political agents can challenge this process of boundary maintenance imposed by hegemonic powers. Applying Antonsich (2019, p. 13) to the findings in this study, political agents (e.g. the King of Norway, the Progress party (Fremskrittspartiet) politician, Christian Wedler), are part of the 'side which has the power of 'granting' belonging' and agitate on behalf of the 'side which claims belonging'.

As some of the findings reveal, minorities clearly are caught in the firing line between their desire to belong by donning the bunad, the archetypal symbol of 'Norwegianness',

and the ambiguity created by the inimical response of members of the public who refuse to 'grant' belonging on the grounds of race, lineage, religion etc. Although minority experience in Norway is dissonant to that of the black American experience in the nineteenth century in the USA, some have clearly internalized aspects of what W.E.B Dubois called 'double consciousness'.

> The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife, - this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging, he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost. He would not Africanize America, for America has too much to teach the world and Africa. He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world. He simply wishes to make it possible for man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (Dubois, 1990, pp. 8, 9)

The bunad, then, becomes a metaphor for this negotiation of the 'two belongings'. In his book, *The Racial Contract*, Mills (1997, p. 23) shows how, beginning with the Catholic church's legitimation of the conquest of Native American territory, race gradually became the formal marker of a differentiated status which was left unchallenged by the rise of the Enlightenment and secularism. We argue, following Mills' (1997, p. 40), that a world made in the cultural image of white hegemony would resist attempts to undermine meanings secreted into cherished cultural artefacts such as the bunad. Hence, the perception of bunad-wearing visible minorities as pejorative spaces that must be challenged and tamed. If some bunad-purists can only imagine a particular, white somatotype as the norm, then visible minorities are denied belonging.

Furthermore, the black Stanford psychologist, Jennifer Eberhardt (2019), draws on Lippmann's (1922) study to understand the role played by stereotypes in engendering 'confirmation bias'. Stereotypes function as 'the pictures in our heads' and give expression to subjective perceptions that come to stand in for objective reality – what our culture has defined for us and the need to dislodge images that are incongruous with 'the pictures in our heads'. Commensurate with this notion of stereotypes and 'confirmation bias', the denial of belonging to visible minorities wearing bunads is indicative of a mindset that is wedded to a particular mental representation of the world – one where bunad is inextricably linked with whiteness.

Guibernau (2013, p. 38) cautions that national symbols are not set in stone, but are sufficiently ambiguous to 'allow those who employ them to supply part of their meaning'. Citing the example of the Union Jack, he points to its elasticity in permitting the Scottish, English, Welsh and Northern Irish to stake a claim in the flag. Guibernau (2013, p. 38) contends that the aim of this imprecision is to avoid 'a tyranny of orthodoxy' and rupture. He argues that such symbols are necessary in the interests of forging a cohesive national identity that creates 'an appearance of illusion' by masking real, internal differences. He concludes:

> If successful, such a process explains the ability of nationalism to cut across social, cultural, ethnic and gender boundaries. Symbols mask difference and highlight commonalty by fostering a sense of belonging among a diverse population. People construct the community in a symbolic manner and turn it into a referent of their identity. (Guibernau, 2013, p. 39)

For instance, Guibernau's (2013, p. 38) suggestion that national symbols allow for those who employ them to supply part of their meaning is evident in Case 1 where the Norwegian-Muslim politician, Sahfana M. Ali, combines the bunad with a hijab. Sahfana (and some in the bunad industry) rebuts criticism by invoking an earlier custom where Norwegian women wore a headscarf with the bunad. One can surmise, from the reference to the earlier headscarf tradition that Sahfana was not looking to incur the wrath of the purists, but some elasticity or common ground upon which to stake her claim. That others, such as Christian Wedler form the anti-immigrant populist party, Fremskrittspartiet, have supported Sahfana's claim, aligns with Guibernau's (2013) suggestion that national symbols avoid rigidity in order to promote belonging and a cohesive national identity.

Research on other national costumes, such as the Scottish kilt/Tartan and the indigenous Sámi national costume, clearly inform the subject of this study. The indigenous Norwegian Sámi dress, Kofte, was used on a daily basis in the past. However, its use as everyday wear gradually disappeared in some areas of Finnmark and Troms in the north of Norway due to the repressive official policy of Norwegianization (Guttorm, 2006). Today, many Sámi wear the costume with pride on festive occasions in particular. In her study, Ballo (2020) draws attention to the way in which the Sami costume has undergone much change with some open for change and experimentation and others reticent for fear of offending a historically oppressed national minority.

Dress items have long been used to demarcate national boundaries and identities (Barth, 1969). Loranger and Sanders (2020) have studied the contours of kilt and tartan as identifiers of Scottish culture and the manner in which they have been appropriated, manipulated, and transformed by the British in the quest for a cohesive United Kingdom. The fortunes of Scottish Tartan vacillated over the centuries. The British government introduced sumptuary laws with the intent of denigrating Scottish Tartan as an identifier of enslaved people in the British colonies in America (Sanders, 2011). From being banned with the institution of the Disarming Act of 1746, tartan was later championed by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. Hence, national costumes and their associated identities were either denigrated or promoted depending on the agenda of the hegemonic powers in the era of state building.

In summary, the following theoretically informed questions guide the study: What inferences can be drawn from the case studies with respect to feelings of being 'at home' (place-belongingness) and how is this affected by tensions generated by the politics of belonging? Furthermore, given that the minorities under consideration are culturally and economically well integrated, how does this privilege affect their sense of belonging?

Methodology

Access and delineation

A word search employing variants of the singular and plural form of the word 'foreigner' (Norwegian: *innvandrer/e, utlending/er, minoritet/er)* and the 'national costume' (Norwegian: *bunad*) was entered into the database of the National Library of Norway. The Library's newspaper collection is virtually complete since 1763 to the present and contains both national and local newspapers, according to its website (Nasjonalbiblioteket,

2019). Over 6000 references to the topic were carefully considered with the locus of attention distilled in the three areas below:

- Controversy about the coupling of the Muslim scarf, hijab, with the bunad.
- Visible minorities (non-white) asserting their right to wear the bunad.
- Authority figures (of ethnic Norwegian extract) championing the right of minorities to wear the bunad and belong.

Commensurate with the above, and having reached a point of saturation, six articles were designated as case studies broadly representative of the articles sampled for this study. In addition, we selected the most recent examples from the last decade to reflect current views. One important criterion in the selection process was the degree to which the cases were relevant to our research question. Rather than an abstract discussion about bunads and minorities, we were interested in finding concrete cases with names, faces and pictures, and the reactions triggered from members of the public. For example, one expert on bunads writes under the heading, 'This is why you can wear a bunad and a hijab' (Kopperud, 2015). The report juxtaposes two photos: one of the torso of a beautifully embroidered female bunad and the other of an unrelated smiling black girl with a white hijab. The photos are also superimposed with the symbols + =? There are no names and faces leaving the reader to wonder about the context and perhaps subliminally activate an intertextual (Fairclough, 1989/1995) topoi or repertoire of images from which a picture of reality is constructed (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, pp. 47–48).

The cases we selected were of individuals, some locally or nationally known, with rich contextual information, and some looking straight at the readers, creating what Machin and Mayr (2012, p. 71) call a 'visual address' in which the viewer is acknowledged and a response demanded. We are aware that such a study could usefully incorporate social media sites, but we surmised that national newspapers would be a more appropriate forum given their reach and the scope. Weighing in on the difference between traditional media and social media, one communication professional states, 'Where traditional media generally offers a wider audience pool, social media allows for more targeted distribution' (Lawlor, 2018).

Applying conventional content analysis

We employed a conventional content analysis to the six case studies broaching the subject of minorities and the reasons they give for donning the national Norwegian costume, bunad, on the National Day (May 17). According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1279), 'Conventional content analysis is generally used with a study design whose aim is to describe a phenomenon'. A thorough understanding of the context is a prerequisite in such an undertaking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is argued that our research team, comprising members of visible minorities along with an ethnic Norwegian researcher, has stood us in good stead in identifying key categories and arriving at a consensus.

The process was conducted in the following manner: having begun with the words *innvandrere* and *bunad,* we noted a word in the margin that captured what each protagonist (i.e. minority individual) in the case study expressed – e.g. emotion (anger, sadness,

optimism, defiance, confusion, condemnation); belonging (inclusion, ambivalence, exclusion); identity (confused, Norwegian, foreigner). The open coding followed an inductive process where each researcher independently coded and emerging categories were compared to enhance interrater reliability.

> However, there are no published recommendations on how the trustworthiness should be checked if the inductive content analysis is conducted by two or more researchers. Our suggestion is that one researcher is responsible for the analysis and others carefully follow-up on the whole analysis process and categorization. (Elo et al., 2014, p. 5)

This process of open coding was applied to all newspaper cases, and, later, some codes were combined while subcategories were derived from diverging codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Manning, 1997). In the final instance, the codes were arranged into a hierarchy of categories. Member checks and peer debriefing are important with the aim of enhancing credibility within the naturalistic paradigm of trustworthiness or internal validity. The cases distilled from the analysis are presented in the next segment. All translations from Norwegian to English are the authors'.

Several studies have employed discourse analysis in Scandinavian media. The aim is to go beyond quantitative content analysis where patterns and frequencies are aggregated and to consider 'what the speaker or writer is doing through discourse and how this 'doing' is linked to wider inter-personal, institutional, socio-cultural and material contexts' (Richardson, 2006, p. 24). In the aftermath of the Icelandic economic crisis of 2008, Guðjónsdóttir and Loftsdóttir (2017) have examined how Norwegian social discourses of Icelandic migrants reveal larger Norwegian debates on racism, desirability and cultural belonging. In addition to 28 articles from seven websites, the analysis was extended to include readers' comments due to their ability to generate engagement. Hagelund (2020) analyzed 304 articles from six Scandinavian newspapers in her study on how the refugee crisis was framed in the respective national contexts using the analytical concepts from discursive institutionalism (cognitive, normative, coordinative, and communicative). Thomas (2017) employed critical discourse analysis to six Norwegian online newspapers and their coverage of the Muslim school debate in Norway in 2014, when permission was initially granted, and then rescinded, for the establishment of a Muslim school in Oslo.

Fowler (2013, p. 4) contends that the news media does not represent the world in a value-free manner but 'constructively patterns that of which it speaks'. We also found the widely accepted analysis of news values outlined by Galtung and Ruge (1973) to be germane to our task of categorization of paragraphs, sentences and words. For instance, the majority of reports featured just prior or during the national day celebrations (coded F1 to denote frequency following Galtung and Ruge, 1973). While this editorial selection criteria may be obvious and relevant given the context of the national day, Fowler (2013, p. 13) draws attention to the manner in which these frames culturally 'perform a gatekeeping role, filtering and restricting news input'. For instance, part of the reason for the newsworthiness of minorities in bunads is the 'unexpectedness' factor (F6, Galtung and Ruge, 1973). While the journalists never explicitly mention the 'unexpectedness' factor, reports and pictures of pigmented individuals wearing a cherished national costume trigger this 'unexpectedness' factor, often in a subliminally negative manner.

The list of emotions, such as anger, sadness, optimism, defiance, confusion and condemnation, for instance, were considered in light of Galtung and Ruge's (1973) news values analysis as filtered through the lens of a particular portrayal of Norwegian culture. The category of 'reference to persons' (F10) was salient given our focus on six individuals. For instance, when Diako (see Case 5) states, 'I do not look one hundred percent Norwegian, but I am not familiar with any other culture beside the Norwegian. This is why it hurts not to be accepted', the sentence was coded 'sadness' and 'confusion'. In a second step, we consensually established what cultural artifice Diako was responding to – i.e. bunads are reserved for 'white Norwegians'. However, when Diako refuses to abandon the bunad and states that he wants to pave the way for others like him, we coded this attitude 'defiance'. In sum, the stories score high on most of Galtung and Ruge's (1973) criteria but of note is the consolidation of the stereotype of 'Muslim/alien, non-westerners from the developing world engaging in cultural appropriation'. The meaningfulness (F4) of a selected story only makes sense to the reader if it can be reflected through an ideological, often stereotypical lens. 'A stereotype is a socially-constructed mental pigeon-hole into which events and individuals can be sorted, thereby making such events and individuals comprehensible' (Fowler, 2013, p. 17).

Findings

Case 1

> *Headline:* 'Sahfana (37) fikk sydd bunad med hijab. Har utløst et skred av hatmeldinger og rasisme. Har anmeldt kjent islam-motstander'. Translation: 'Sahfana (37) was sewn a bunad with a hijab. Triggered an avalanche of hate messages and racism. Has reported a known Islam-opponent'. (Case 1; Lofstad, 2016)

Sahfana M. Ali (37 years old), originally from Sri Lanka, is a councillor in the city of Stavanger in the Southwest of Norway and deputy leader of Stavanger Labor party. She has resided in the city of Stavanger since she was 10 years old. In 2016, she ordered a traditional Norwegian bunad with a bespoke hijab. This custom-made bunad was intended as a bridal gift from her ethnic Norwegian husband, Ingve. However, once she published a picture of the bunad on *Facebook,* it triggered a massive wave of racist messages laced with profanities and physical threats. For instance, one commentator signed off with images of five guns. According to the report, while some are vexed about her ethnic pedigree, it is the bespoke hijab which is hardest to swallow. It was dubbed the 'sharia hijab'. Sahfana explains this cultural amalgamation in the following manner:

> I do not see anything wrong in wearing a hijab with the bunad. Traditionally, most bunads had headscarves. On the contrary, a hijab goes well with a bunad. In this manner, we exhibit the diversity we have in Norway today by combining these. (Case 1; Lofstad, 2016)

> This is what is great about the Norwegian society. If other girls are in the same situation as I am, and see my bunad, then it can be perceived as pioneering work for a more including Norway, and I can be a symbol for a more diverse and tolerant society. (Case 1; Lofstad, 2016)

Such was the ferocity of the attacks online that Sahfana had to close down her *Facebook* page. A nationally known activist, Mona Hodne (46 years old), whom the newspaper report brands an 'opponent of Islam', published a doctored picture of Sahfana with the

caption, 'This is an insult against our Norwegian culture. Stay away from Embla bunads, if you oppose this!' Embla refers to the retailer that produces bunads in Stavanger. Incidentally, Embla has a picture of five young females modelling different bunads with one of the models of black/African ancestry. On the other hand, the newspaper report also features a politician from Stavanger, Christian Wedler, from the Progress party, a party broadly considered anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim (Thomas, 2019), who defends Sahfana's credentials and right to wear her modified bunad. Wedler calls her an 'integrated woman with a job and proud to be Norwegian even going to the extent of procuring a bunad from Frafjord' (about one hour east of Stavanger), and laments the animus against her.

Case 2

> *Headline*: 'Bunaden min får du aldri. Jeg er norsk. Dermed driver jeg ikke med kulturell appropriasjon'. Translation: 'You will never get my bunad. I am Norwegian. I am not engaging in cultural appropriation'. (Case 2; Jaffery, 2019)

The article displays a picture of Lubna Jaffery in a bunad. Jaffery is a politician for the largest party in Norway, the Labor party. She has held several high profile positions as political advisor in the Ministries of Labor and Social Inclusion and Health and Care Services, for instance. She was also State Secretary in the Ministry of Culture as a part of former Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg's (current leader of NATO) Second Cabinet. She shares that her parents who came to Norway from Pakistan did not confirm her as is common in Norway in the Lutheran tradition and did not see the point of purchasing such an expensive garment. She summarizes some of the hostility targeted at Norwegian minorities brave enough to wear bunads.

> I agree with those who state that wearing a bunad is not a human right. However, the right to wear a bunad is something I am not willing to abandon. There are people out there who argue that since I am brown and do not have a Norwegian ancestry, I should not don a bunad on 17 May, or that immigrants wearing bunads is a case of cultural misappropriation. (Case 2; Jaffery, 2019)

Lubna goes on to rebut the charge of cultural appropriation by pointing to an academic source where the term often involves an asymmetric relationship where the powerful illegally appropriate cultural artefacts. She contends:

> I am Norwegian. I am not engaging in an illegal appropriation and abuse of other's cultural production. Women skilled in Norwegian handcrafts and who keep the tradition alive sewed my bunad. (Case 2; Jaffery, 2019)

She concludes by referring to a time when rebels wore bunads and were spat upon.

> Today, you can risk the same, but it is those who spit who think they are the rebels. They believe they are rebelling against the so-called multicultural. You can spit, and you can say that I am not Norwegian, but you will never get my bunad. (Case 2; Jaffery, 2019)

Case 3

> *Headline:* 'Jeg følte meg mindre norsk i bunad. Jeg var 15 år og følte meg norsk. Men det var før jeg tok på meg bunaden'. Translation: 'I felt less Norwegian in a bunad. I was 15 years old and felt Norwegian. But this was before I put on a bunad'. (Case 3; Mæhlum, 2017)

Andrea was adopted from Costa Rica as a six-year-old. She recalls that to become Norwegian was of utmost importance to her as she embraced her new country. When she turned 15, the age when Norwegian youth are confirmed as Christians in the Lutheran tradition, her parents gave her a bunad. Rather than become excited, she writes that this triggered reflections about her own identity and a sense of belonging. She writes:

> To me, the bunad represents the essence of what it means to be Norwegian coupled with national pride. There is something solemn about the costume. Personally, I felt the opposite when I was 15. I was unsure about who I was, and what I stood for. The bunad underscores the fact that one has an identity. Did I have one? Why should I have a bunad when I did not feel ready to don one? The bunad often heralds where you come from. Not seldom, you hear the question: where is your bunad from? In my mind, I reformulated the question to: where are you from? I had no clear answer to this … I just wanted to remove the bunad as quickly as possible. (Case 3; Mæhlum, 2017)

Writing 21 years later in 2017, Andrea shares that she is now more comfortable with her identity and the bunad. 'It is only now, when I am an adult and have found my footing and identity, that I carry the bunad with pride and respect.'

Case 4

> *Headline*: 'Flere innvandrere i bunad viser økt integrering'. *Translation*: 'Many immigrants in bunad demonstrates more integration' (Case 4; Castello, 2019)

Utrop is Norway's first multicultural newspaper. The article then moves on to the story of 14-year-old Walaa Abduelmagd who was born in Egypt. The subtitle refers to her as 'finished wandering' (Norwegian *ferdigvandret*) a play on familiar and often negatively loaded term *innvandrer* (literally 'wander in'/immigrant). Walaa shares that she raised 16 000 Norwegian Kroners (roughly 1823 USD) about three years ago through friends on *Facebook*. Her desire to own a bunad was inspired by a speech in 2016 where the King of Norway stated that where one is from originally might be difficult to answer, but the place one calls home is where the heart is. 'This touched me', Walaa told the media.

A second authority on the function of the bunad with respect to belonging and identity construction, Camilla Rossing, is interviewed in the article. Camilla, who leads *Norsk institutt for bunad og folkedrakt* (roughly the Norwegian Institute for Bunad and Folk Costumes), highlights the natural need for Norwegians with multicultural backgrounds to express their sense of belonging and affinity to Norway by wearing the bunad on the May 17. 'I think it is completely natural that people want to express pride in their Norwegian identity as part of diverse identities. In this sense, the National Day has an integrating role', she argues.

Despite the inclusive attitudes of the bunad experts, the article tempers expectations with references to earlier polls that suggest the majority of Norwegians ought to select bunads commensurate with the specific geographic territory of the family lineage.

Case 5

> *Headline*: 'Diako Mavlodi (28) tar et oppgjør med bunadsfordommer. Jeg ønsker å bane vei'. *Translation*: 'Challenging bunad prejudice: I want to pave the way' (Case 5; Huuse, 2019)

Diako (28 years old) is of Kurdish origin and came to Norway from Iran through political asylum when he was just one year old. He shares that he always wished to put on a bunad like every other child in the National Day parade (Norwegian: *barnetog*/children's train/parade), but, like most minorities, his parents could not afford this expensive costume. Once he sold his flat in 2018, however, he seized on the opportunity to purchase a bunad. Significantly, he is in no doubt as to where his Norwegian roots in Norway are – in Gudbrandsdalen and the town of Vinstra in particular. He is determined to pave the way for other minorities to proudly display their affinity to Norway in wearing the bunad.

> I am one hundred percent Norwegian although people always give me the judging side-eye. I do not look one hundred percent Norwegian, but I am not familiar with any other culture beside the Norwegian. This is why it hurts not to be accepted. (Case 5; Huuse, 2019)

He shares how people gave him disapproving glances as he walked proudly beside his ethnic Norwegian girlfriend in Lillehammer, and laments that society has not progressed any further in 2019. Diako throws down the gauntlet to Norwegians: 'We must be united in regard to this beautiful land we live in. Perhaps the act of purchasing a bunad is not just a childhood dream fulfilled, but also a desperate cry for acceptance.'

Case 6

> *Headline:* Noman Mubashir: 'Trist at noen ikke liker å se nordmenn med en annen hudfarge på TV'. *Translation:* 'Sad that some do not like to see Norwegians of a different skin color on TV'. (Malm et al., 2018)

Noman Mubashir, of Pakistani origin, has worked for the national broadcaster, NrK, for several years. In 2018, he wore a bunad and was appointed to cover the National Day celebrations from the royal palace. Noman was born in Norway and is openly gay. The article reports that members of the public commented disparagingly about Noman wearing a bunad and covering such an important event. Two examples follow:

> May 17 is a celebration of Norway's Constitution, not a celebration of a multicultural utopia. NrK should have spared us this. Don't think a group of white people would be program leaders on the National Day in Pakistan or Somalia, to put it that way (Case 6, comments segment).

> Yes, even on our own National Day, NrK peddles the multicultural. God have mercy on those who wish to celebrate the authentic Norwegian, you will be branded with fire! (Case 6, comments segment).

Noman, like Walaa Abduelmagd (Case 4), was elated when the King of Norway gave a speech in 2016 that was unprecedented in terms of defining a new and inclusive Norway. Noman mentions part of the speech: 'I was so glad that he included all my three identities in this speech. Whether you are a boy who likes boys, or believe in Allah, or have Pakistani parents, you are Norwegian.'

Discussion

Pioneers for a more inclusive Norway

The protagonists in the case studies perceive their roles as pioneers paving the way for a more multicultural and inclusive Norway. In *Case 1*, Sahfana defends her bespoke bunad

with a hijab by stating that 'a hijab goes well with a bunad. In this manner, we exhibit the diversity we have in Norway today by combining these'. The above is commensurate with Antonsich's (2019, p. 7) postulation that belonging to a place is deeply imbricated in the narratives and processes of self-formation. As a successful and well-integrated politician, Sahfana no doubt was cognizant of the vitriol that would follow, and yet posted the picture on *Facebook*. This high stakes risk, considering her public role, appears to be pro-pelled – not by a vacuous defiance of traditional sensitivities – but the desperate need for a vital aspect of her identity to be recognized in the public square. This resonates with Dubois (1990, pp. 8, 9) consideration of the internal strife that seeks to merge the double self (double consciousness) into a better and truer self. Paraphrasing Dubois' (1990), Sahfana would neither Islamize Norway nor sanitize Norway of Islam. Her Muslim identity is indispensable to her sense of belonging. As Dubois (1990) puts it,

> He [the black American] simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of Opportunity closed roughly in his face. (Dubois, 1990, pp. 8, 9)

In *Case 5,* Diako echoes Sahfana's sentiments. He emotively states, 'I am one hundred percent Norwegian although people always give me the judging side-eye … Perhaps the act of purchasing a bunad is not just a childhood dream fulfilled, but also a desperate cry for acceptance'. That these well-integrated and successful Norwegians with minority backgrounds are willing to tolerate the opprobrium of individuals who take a dim view of non-whites donning the bunad, is testament to Baumeister and Leary's (1995, p. 498) contention that 'belongingness can be almost as compelling a need as food'. As mentioned earlier, this would situate belonging on the same tier as physiological needs (air, water, sleep, shelter etc.) in Maslow's (1968) motivational hierarchy.

We argue in this study that Antonsich's (2019, p. 8) review of the literature on belong-ing, which distilled five factors – autobiographical, relational, cultural, economic and legal – omits one salient aspect, issues of race and ethnicity. The case studies analyzed show a strong correlation with the five factors outlined: the protagonists' biographies conflate with these five factors crystallized in the literature, and yet some do not 'grant' (Antonsich, 2019) them belonging based on their pigmentation. In our case studies, besides *Case 1,* the lightning rod issue is the skin color and lineage of the protagonists which drew the ire of certain members of the public. One could argue that *Case 1* would have been just as controversial even if the hijab was not an issue gauging from the reaction to the other case studies. This thread is fleshed out in *Case 3* below.

Loss and rediscovery of belonging

In addition to perceiving their roles as pioneers for a more inclusive Norway, the protago-nists' reflexivity reveals the *bunad's* potency as a preeminent cultural artefact of nation-ness (Anderson, 2016). In *Case 3,* for instance, Andrea's struggle with the bunad appears to be rooted not in any external antipathy, but her subjective discomfort at the stark physical contrast between ethnic Norwegians and her darker complexion. 'It was totally wrong and strange that I, who had dark eyes, brown skin and black hair, should don this apparel. Even in the song, *Norway in red, white and blue,* everyone sings on the May 17, *her eyes are blue as violet, she is the flag that waves in the wind*'

(p. 676). Andrea was too young at the age of 15 to negotiate the complexity that was her experience. The sight of the bunad spawned a process of reflection concerning her sense of self and belonging – the autobiographical factor of belonging (Antonsich, 2019) – but Andrea felt that her 15-year-old self was not precocious enough to negotiate the complexities involved.

Benedict Anderson (2016) refutes any notion of the end of the era of nationalism and argues, 'nation-ness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time' (Anderson, 2016, p. 3). He further expounds on the concept of 'imagined communities' where 'members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (Anderson, 2016, p. 6). Commensurate with the critique of Yuval-Davis (2006), even if the members of the nation meet face-to-face, imagination does not become redundant. This is evident in Andrea's reflections: although adopted from a very young age to Norway, she felt her dark eyes and complexion disqualified her from wearing the bunad. She had internalized Norway as a nation 'imagined' (Anderson, 2016) in terms of blue-eyed, white-skinned indigenes (as in the song: *her eyes are blue as violet*).

The bunad triggered a process of 'reimagining' a Norway where there was room for Norwegians like her with dark eyes and complexion, what Yuval-Davis (2006, p. 204) calls an 'act of active and situated imagination' encapsulated in the query, 'Could Jews be included in the boundaries of the German nation? Is there 'black in the Union Jack'?' (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204). As Andrea matured into adulthood, she accepted and even took pride in the bunad. No longer was it 'totally wrong' for her to wear the national costume. She concludes: 'That the bunad represents the Norwegian, the traditional and our Norwegian history is fine with me. I am proud to be Norwegian, and am proud to don a bunad.'

The role of authority figures in 'granting' belonging

Much of the rejoinders from the protagonists in the case studies are distilled in the interstices of hateful comments and threats of physical violence online. A case in point is the aforementioned Merete Hodne who was tried and convicted for refusing a woman wearing a hijab to enter her hair salon in 2016. However, there are also noteworthy individuals from the higher echelons of Norwegian society (political agents) whose support has boosted the morale of minorities who are determined to wear the bunad. One such 'political agent' (Yuval-Davis, 2006) is the king of Norway, Harald V. The kings of Norway have historically enjoyed a stellar reputation and King Harald's voice lent much-needed gravitas to 14-year-old Walaa Abduelmagd' sense of belonging as articulated through her fund-raising mission to buy bunad on *Facebook* (see *Case 4*).

Of note is also the support of the Progress party politician (Fremskrittspartiet), Christian Wedler, who praised and defended Sahfana's right to combine the hijab with the bunad. His support is anomalous given his party's reputation as anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant (Thomas, 2017, 2019). Wedler calls her an 'integrated woman with a job and proud to be Norwegian even going to the extent of procuring a bunad from Frafjord' (about one hour east of Stavanger), and laments the animus against her.

The vitriol and support can be usefully analyzed within the framework of the discursive dimension of the 'politics of belonging' where gender, race and class are assigned a certain positionality along an axis of power, higher or lower than other such categories (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 199). Identity and belonging are constructed in the confluence of the subjective (autobiographical) and social context. Noman Mubashir (*Case 6*), for instance, shares his delight that the King of Norway acknowledged all three of his identities – an ontological affirmation of his difference. The latter puts the salience of values in sharp relief:

> The different situated imaginations that construct these national imagined communities with different boundaries depend on people's social locations, people's experiences and definitions of self, but probably even more importantly on their values (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204).

The Jamaican-born, British theorist, Stuart Hall (1993, p. 361) presciently stated, 'The capacity to live with difference is, in my view, the coming question of the twenty-first century' (Hall, 1993, p. 361). He pointed out that, among others, globalization created ethnically and culturally diverse societies and multiculturalism is one way to deal with the challenges created by globalization. This is commensurate with Guibernau's (2013, p. 38) observation that successful nation building factors in room for its citizenry to 'supply part of the meaning'. Sahfana's *hijab* coupled with the *bunad* and the sight of black and brown skins in *bunads* are the latest incarnations of a plethora of diverse *bunad* traditions that have coalesced into that one amorphous concept of national *bunad*. Following Guibernau (2013), the degree to which the 'granting' entity is willing and able to mask the 'new' difference by absorbing it into the symbol of the *bunad* is the litmus test in a multicultural Norway.

Bunad purists are uncompromising in policing the 'pure lineage' of the bunad which represents a symbol of local, historical and family belonging. While their efforts to ward off transgressors mostly involved other Norwegians who did not share in their local roots, one could argue that this antipathy to what they perceive as an unwelcome cultural appropriation has become more virulent when recent immigrants – some with hijabs – insist on wearing the bunad. The above is reminiscent of Americans with roots in Scandinavia who perceive their Norwegian and Swedish bunads as emblems of their 'ethnic difference' from the mass of non-distinguished whites that is America. As one of Gradén's (2014, p. 367) interviewees from Minneapolis puts it,

> There's a lot of new immigrants in the US, which I think is amazing. But there's so much diversity and diversity is only viewed as sort of this black or white skin thing. I think there is this really valuable diversity within, within European culture, also within the Nordic cultures. It is like, oh, we don't really talk about that, because we're all just . . . white Caucasian. (Gradén, 2014, p. 367)

The antipathy towards minorities in the case studies can also be usefully considered through what Hall (2017) calls 'space–time compressions or disjunctures of distances and temporalities' brought on by globalization. Globalization has obfuscated and rendered identity 'homeless', according to Hall. The bunad in this sense serves as a buffer keeping out the dislocating and fragmenting features of globalization. The bunad, then, becomes a terrain of contestation – not only against fellow ethnic Norwegians who do not belong locally – but all the more so for minorities some of whom seek obdurately to wed the bunad to the hijab, for instance.

Conclusion

We have considered the manner in which minorities give expression to the notion of belonging through the prism of the Norwegian national costume, the *bunad,* on the National Day (May 17) in particular. Commensurate with the literature, belonging is negotiated in the interstices of minority background of individuals and discursive processes in the public realm. The six case studies analyzed indicate that well-integrated individuals from minority backgrounds are proud and determined to exhibit their sense of belonging and affinity by wearing a *bunad* on the National Day. However, this ostentatious display is forced to grapple with inimical voices contending this claim to belonging in the national 'we' commensurate with the observation that belonging and identity are not the realm of the individual alone, but is 'granted' or denied by the community (Antonsich, 2019; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The debate throws into sharp relief contemporary challenges related to issues of a multicultural nature. In a sense, the *bunad* is perceived as one of the 'last frontiers' among the ranks of some cultural purists with xenophobic views. We have further shown how lineage, religion and pigmentation coalesce to reinforce the animus on the part of the 'granting' party (ethnic Norwegians). It is significant that five of the six case studies reviewed – despite their successful integration – were denied belonging by some in mainstream society solely due to the color of their skin. Further studies in the emerging field of belonging will need to contend with the machinations of racism – a term that is undertheorized in Scandinavian educational research in favor of words like 'immigrants' and 'ethnicity' (Beach & Lunneblad, 2011; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2012; Thomas, 2016). One limitation we would like to point out is the difficulty of ascertaining the degree to which those who deny belonging are the same few regular contributors with hardline views in the comments section of the online papers studied. This is an important caveat that has some bearing on the representativeness of online reader comments.

The individuals in this study are well educated and relatively affluent. Their strong desire to belong aligns with research that shows a positive correlation between success and belonging. For instance, Yuval-Davis and Kaptani's (2008) research among Kosovan, Kurdish and Somali refugees in East London indicated that refugees who were professionals scored higher in terms of belonging than those who engaged in casual labor. This points to another limitation in our study which did not focus on Norwegian minorities from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, which further research could consider.

Finally, the cases reviewed demonstrate the importance of support received from 'political agents' (Yuval-Davis, 2006) such as the King of Norway and the Progress party (Fremskrittspartiet) politicians. The views of these autochthons clearly has a morale boosting effect on the discursive task of 'granting' belonging. Caught in the turbulence of an ambiguous double-consciousness (Dubois, 1990), the backing of these important stakeholders can tip the balance in favor of belonging. Thomas' (2019) recent work highlights the manner in which populists in Norway undermine multicultural education. In this climate, where religious fundamentalism meets the rise of ethno politics, there is a desperate need for ways to enhance 'the emotional dimension of belonging as a sentiment binding the individual to the group or community' (Guibernau, 2013, p. 180). We argue that the *bunad* represents one such preeminent ritual of belonging that can serve to mitigate alienation and engender bonds of commonality that transcend parochialism.

Research on the bunad and its meaning for identity and belonging should be of interest to sociologists, pedagogues, anthropologists, journalists, politicians and others engaged in debates about the emerging 'new Norway'. A brief article in one of the national newspapers in Norway about some of our preliminary findings generated much interest and several exchanges. Further research, of a quantitative nature, could look at the numbers of first- and second-generation Norwegians from minority backgrounds and their views on the bunad followed by in-depth interviews. How many have considered purchasing a bunad? What are the motivations and impediments? Issues of equity, identity and belonging have been given a new impetus with the increase in global migration and changing demographic in several western nations in the last few decades. Integration and belonging are not just exercises in tolerating the sight of Norwegians of darker complexions in the urban landscapes, but the kind of responses triggered by the sight of dark-skinned Norwegians wearing the national costume.

Disclosure statement

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