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# From blind spot to hotspot: representations of the ‘immigrant others’ in Norwegian curriculum/schoolbooks (1905–2013)

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## ABSTRACT

Tracing the representation of the ‘immigrant others’ in Norwegian schoolbooks over the past century, the paper examines their exclusion/inclusion in national curriculum/learning materials. It finds that a shift has occurred in the country’s national narratives over time through three distinct phases: once in the ‘blind spot’, the ‘immigrant others’ have moved into a ‘hotspot’, becoming both more visible and controversial over the decades. The paper also examines the ideological and contextual underpinnings behind this change. While specific to the Norwegian educational curriculum/school books context, the paper aims to contribute more broadly to the study of immigrant representations by analysing the ‘space’ dedicated to them in an educational context. In our increasingly globalized world, where classrooms are becoming more multicultural and diverse, the question of the immigrants’ ‘place’ in schoolbooks and society (both literal and symbolic) is ever more important and timely.

## KEYWORDS

Immigration narratives; majority/minority perspectives; textbook analysis; national-identity; exclusion/inclusion

## Introduction

Many children learn history as Simone de Beauvoir recalled of her 1920s schooling, ‘never dreaming there might be more than one view of the past events’ (Lowenthal, 2013, p. 347). School children, then, are not always aware of the ‘blind spot’—defined here as ‘a prejudice, or an area of ignorance, that one has but is not aware of’ (Collins Dictionary, 2010)—in their own school curriculum or teaching materials. This paper encourages readers to critically reflect on the ‘given’ realities of their own education in the context of knowledge of the ‘immigrant others’: did you, as a child/student, learn about the people from various immigrant communities through your history and social studies textbooks? If so, how were they represented? Who was included in the national narrative, and who was excluded, forgotten or silenced? These choices are normative at their core: what is worth remembering and what is not? Whose histories are legitimized and whose are delegitimized or simply forgotten? (Dessingué & Winter, 2016; Segali, Trofanenko, & Schmitt, 2018, p. 286)

More specifically, the paper investigates these questions in the empirical context of Norway: whether and how from the country’s formative years of citizenship building (1905 onwards), school children in Norway were exposed to the notion of the ‘immigrant’, and how and why these representations have changed over the past century. Three central arguments are put forward: firstly, the paper argues that over the past century Norwegian textbooks have witnessed a significant increase in content relating to the ‘immigrant others’ and thus their ‘place’ in Norwegian curriculum/learning materials has become more pronounced over the years (i.e. from blind spot to hot spot). Secondly, the paper identifies not just a quantitative shift, but distinctive qualitative ‘narrative’ shifts in the representations of immigrants. Finally, the paper identifies three distinct phases of this

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transition, which help to analytically separate the various ideological and historical contexts important to understand these narrative shifts of exclusion/inclusion, in/visibility of minority narratives/voices in textbooks.

Of course, the focus on immigrant 'blind spots' in the context of Norwegian educational curriculum/schooling suggests that this study is bound to remain *sui generis* to some extent—much like every nation's educational curricula/schoolbooks have distinct national and historical contexts. At the same time, a Norwegian case study is not entirely unique: as a young nation state, Norway has undergone similar transformations to those of other countries, which developed their own national identity as enshrined in their history/social studies schoolbooks, while also adjusting to growing demographic changes as a result of increased immigration flows from globalization, economic development, fluid borders, and international conflicts. Thus while the paper examines the Norwegian textbook context, its findings may have implications for 'representation's' studies of minorities in other textbook analysis, of which this paper wishes to contribute.

The paper is divided into four sections. The first section uses existing literature on 'representations' and omissions of minorities in textbook analysis both in the Scandinavian and global context to situate the paper's theoretical and methodological framework. The second section focuses specially on the omissions of immigrant narratives—the so called 'immigrant' blind spot—in the curriculum and history/social studies schoolbooks in light of the early 'nation building' phase where patriotism is identified as the leading cause of the 'immigrant blind spot'. The third section examines the initial rise in interests in immigrants against the backdrop of Norway's social collectivist forces in the post second world war era—arguing that despite a focus on immigrants 'beyond the borders'—a domestic 'blind spot' still remained as a consequence of the textbooks' ideological drive for collective 'sameness'. Finally, the fourth selection examines how the contemporary representations of immigrants has moved from blind spot to hotspot with the rise of cultural meetings with the 'immigrant others' over time, yet points to an underling 'problem narrative' that accentuates 'difference' over 'diversity'.

## Theoretical and methodological framework

The paper contributes to the study of textbooks in the field of history education. More specifically, it is rooted in the field of *critical* history education—the study of how educational materials help inform 'the schooled construction of the nation' (Sant, 2017, p. 107)). In the eyes of critical theorists, history and social studies textbooks represent the 'national discourses' as enshrined in national/government-approved curriculum and therefore reflect and perpetuate ideologically constructed national identities (Foster, 1999). They are learning materials that transmit national narratives of the past (Wang, 2008). As such textbooks are examined as historical 'artefacts' or 'snapshots in time' that reveal deep-seated governmental/societal values and priorities of their time (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Terra, 2013, p. 229) and therefore provide solid empirical grounds from which to analyse the 'transmissions of ideologies', patterns of the construction of knowledge ('the production and reproduction of ideas') and identity (Issitt, 2004, p. 688). Moreover, textbooks are documents that can be considered 'manifestations of the cultural memory of a nation' (Hintermann, 2010, p. 1) and therefore open up critical examination around whose voices and stories are included in the national narrative and whose are excluded? These choices are normative at their core: what is worth remembering and what is not? Whose histories are legitimized and whose are delegitimized or simply forgotten or silenced? (Dessingué & Winter, 2016; Segali et al., 2018, p. 286). Consequently, textbooks are not just dead documents of the past, they were and are dynamic learning tools that not only reflect, but also create values in the classroom (Carretero & Alphen, 2015; Carretero, Asensio, & Rodríguez Moneo, 2012; Segali et al., 2018). They play a formative role in shaping the younger generation's identity, perceptions and values on important questions related to representations of the 'self' and 'other', what constitutes 'true' or 'authentic' citizenship, and the place—or not—of minority narratives (Repoussi & Tutiaux-Guillon, 2010). Educational materials matter because they

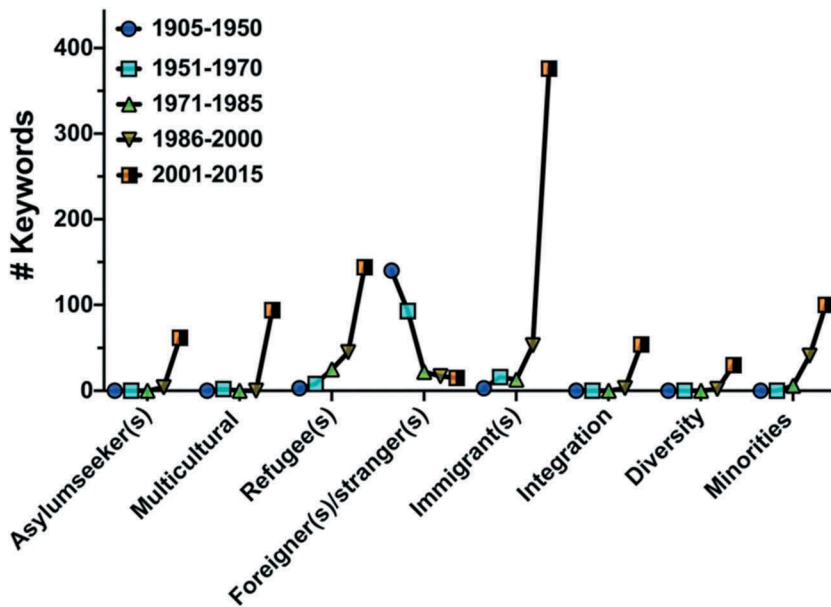
inform 'the self-identification of the citizens as nationals' in the present based on the narratives they choose to tell from the past (Sant, 2017; Wang, 2008).

In addition, the paper is informed by literature on minority and immigrant representations within textbook research and, in particular, about their marginalization in curricular and learning materials. This has been a topic of interest across disciplines: three decades ago, for instance, the German language instructor, Karl Otto, noted the almost complete lack of minority representations (in particular people of colour) in the post-secondary language textbooks (Otto cited in Ilett, 2009). Stuart J. Foster examined the representation of ethnic minorities in American history textbooks, asking critical questions around 'what' and 'whose' stories get told and how these portrayals validate the historical contributions of certain identified groups over others (Foster, 1999). 'Textbooks', he noted, 'represent a form of social control which validates the "official knowledge" of the Western canon and renders marginal or invisible the achievements and experiences of ethnic groups' (Foster, 1999, p. 278). Similarly, Henry A. Giroux, one of the founding fathers of critical pedagogy in the US, highlighted that the inherent 'production in knowledge' of textbooks often relies on a stereotype of so-called 'high' and 'low' cultures of which immigrants reside in the latter category (Giroux, 2000). In an analysis of schoolbook texts from different Nordic countries, scholars found a longstanding Scandinavian tradition of 'ethnocentric master narratives' that perpetuates and reinforces the stereotypes of immigrant communities in different Nordic countries (Loftsdóttir, 2009)—which they believe leads to the social exclusion of students of non-European backgrounds (Andersson, 2009, p. 34).

Several other international textbook studies also reveal how national 'master' narratives of the dominant, so-called 'hegemonic' majority effectively exclude or minimize the histories of other cultures and minority identities (Carretero et al., 2012; Grever, 2012; Hein & Selden, 2000): for instance in an analysis of representations of immigrants in Austrian textbooks, Christiane Hintermann found that of the 82 textbooks examined during the period 1970–2007, almost half of the sample made no mention of immigrants, leading to the impression that: 'although Austria has been an immigration society for some time, it has no history of migration' (p.1). Further immigrant 'blind spots' studies have been done, among other, in Dutch (Weiner, 2018), American (Foster, 1999, 2001; Kotoskwi, 2013), German (Ilett, 2009; Moffitt & Juang, 2019) and Catalanian (Rasero & Bochaca, 2011) textbooks, where scholars highlight how immigrants are rarely given a name, a voice or a history.

This study will focus on the change in representation of immigrant minority 'others' in the Norwegian textbook and curricular context. While research has been done on the historical omission or 'white washing' of indigenous minority communities in curriculums, schools and society in the Norwegian context and beyond (Brandal, Døving, & Thorson Plesner, 2017; Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, Chapter 5; Osler & Lybaek, 2014, p. 558; Shear, Knowles, Soden, & Castro, 2015), less attention has been paid to the immigrant 'blind spot'. For while, for instance, scholars in a special issue in the *Nordic Journal of Migration Studies* examined the notion of 'in/visibility' in understanding migration-related phenomena in the Nordic countries, they noted that: 'What seems to be missing ... is a broader theoretical consideration of the usefulness of the term in/visibility when researching migrants and minority groups.' (Leinonen & Toivanen, 2014, p. 161) Their issue examined in/visibility in different realms of everyday public sphere encounters (e.g. in the media), but did not include an examination of blind spots in the textbook/curricular context. This paper aims to fill this blind spot.

Empirically, this 'immigrant blind spot' will be examined in a textbook analysis of Norwegian primary and secondary schoolbooks in History and Social Studies ('samfunnsfag') from 1905 to 2013. A large number of textbooks were published during this period, rendering the inclusion of all of them unfeasible. Distribution and popularity were central criteria for textbook selection: Fifty-four textbooks (published from 1905 to 2013) were chosen based on the most prevalent/dominant textbooks used in the obligatory, public Norwegian schooling system. The Norwegian historian Svein Lorentzen's study of Norwegian schoolbooks as nation-builders (1814–2000) is one of the most comprehensive Norwegian textbook analysis to date and his selected list of textbooks was used (Lorentzen, 2005, pp. 229–232). The same criteria (distribution and popularity/publication numbers) was used to select the textbooks after 2000, that went beyond Lorentzen's list. All source materials



**Figure 1.** Graphic representation of the total word count over time in textbooks: 1905–1950 (9 textbooks), 1951–1970 (11 textbooks), 1971–1985 (10 textbooks), 1986–2000 (13 textbooks), 2001–2015 (11 textbooks). Trends indicate an increase in terms related to immigration, particularly after 1980s, with a noticeable decrease in more distant terminology ‘foreigner(s)/‘strangers’.

were accessed through the Norwegian National Library’s digitalized online archive, and hard copies through a local school museum library in Stavanger. All citations from the schoolbooks were translated from Norwegian to English by the author.

Once selected, a mixed-method textbook analysis was conducted using quantitative content analysis and qualitative narrative analysis. The first step to examining the blind spot in the textbooks involved identifying whether immigrants were at all mentioned. This screening was done digitally through a targeted word search of preselected and relevant search terms (see Figure 1). The few hard copy textbooks that were unavailable online were screened and tallied manually. As a methodology content analysis helps identify and quantify the specific labels that have been used to describe or portray the immigrants over time—so as to help identify trends or changes in vocabulary. Another advantage is that a quick digital word search greatly facilitates the cross-comparison of multiple textbooks. However, the content analysis was merely used as a first step for a subsequently deeper qualitative narrative analysis: The next step involved identifying narrative themes in the representation of immigrants. A narrative analysis involves evaluating the context or story within which the identified terms appear, what or whose perspectives they represent, the intended purpose of the text and how these may influence the implicit reader (Terra, 2013, p. 232). For instance, are the immigrants merely described as one homogenous people or are they given their own voice? Is there a normative angle (i.e. are they presented as a benefit, challenge, or threat to the country?) As a qualitative method, then, a narrative analysis helps tease out deeper, more subtle, questions related to the term’s context, meaning and purpose used to represent the ‘immigrant others’ and how these narratives have changed over time. The following sections present the central narrative themes that were identified in three distinct phases of immigrant representations in the schoolbooks over time.

### **The immigrant ‘blind spot’ in Norway’s national identity-building project**

This section points to a so-called immigrant ‘blind spot’ in Norway’s formative years after independence (1905–1949) when national-identity building was at the forefront of the country’s curriculum

development and schoolbook content. As this section will show, resistance to foreign influences, coupled with narratives of national grandeur, meant that textbooks during the period emphasized the heritage of the nation and its people—not the newcomers who threatened to dilute it—thus the ‘immigrant others’ subsequently fell in the ‘blind spot’.

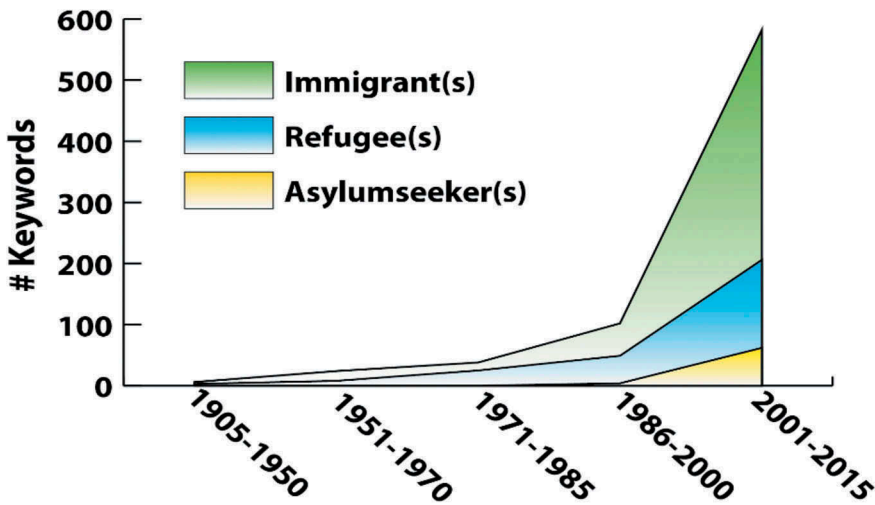
But were there many immigrants in Norway at the time? Data on Norway’s population rates reveal that immigration was a real and growing historical phenomenon: an estimated 180,000 immigrants entered Norway from 1815 to 1900 and approximately 300,000 entered from 1900 to 1946 (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 112). Although the percentage of immigrants compared to the country’s overall population was still relatively low (ranging from 1.2% to 2.9% in the period from 1865 to 1946), the arrival of new countrymen was, in certain circles, a source of concern: In 1899, for instance, the national-liberal Labour movement in Østfold sent a letter to parliament warning of the ‘influx’ of the so-called ‘foreign workers’, stating: ‘Many people who lack honour and respect are streaming in and settle far too easily. They carry evil and they spread evil. And Norwegian-ness is stifled . . . this shall become the rout of the Norwegian people’ (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 98). Immigrants, for some, threatened the very ‘Norwegian’ nature of the state.

### **Resistance to foreign influence**

In the Norwegian case, the context of longstanding foreign influence is a historical reality that likely fuelled the resistance to include ‘outsiders’ into the national narratives in Norwegian schoolbooks at the time. In several of the textbooks school children were made aware of how their nation suffered under an era of Danish and Swedish ‘foreign rule’ (Hovland, 2013), when ‘the people lost the power over their country’s care and governance’ (Kleppen, 1927, p. 105). Part of the country’s national narrative constructed in the schoolbooks therefore involved juxtaposing what was ‘Norwegian’ to what was not. As the social anthropologist, Marianne Gullestad pointed out, Norwegian national identity in the 1900 s was constructed in cultural opposition to Danish elites and political opposition to Sweden (Gullestad, 2002, p. 29). This strong sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ is illustrated in divisive textbook titles like ‘The Norwegians and ‘the Foreigners’’ (Hæreide & Amundsen, 1946). Thus Norway’s quest to forge its own national identity grew out of its historical context as a young and newly established nation state—wanting to carve its identity on its own terms given its long standing history of foreign influence (first by Denmark until 1814, then Sweden until 1905 and later by Germany during the period 1940–1945).

Resistance to ‘foreign influence’ can also be seen in the context of the early schoolbooks’ first account of ‘immigrants’ in Norwegian history. One of the first immigrant populations described in several textbooks was the German tradesmen known as ‘Hanseatene’ who came to Norway from the late 1200s to 1500. Interestingly, accounts of these first immigrants, later classified as ‘work migrants’, were mostly negative. The German ‘foreigners’ largely took over most of the trade in the country, contributing to ‘the country sinking into poverty’ (Skretting, 1940). In one schoolbook the German tradesmen are included under the section heading ‘Norway’s era of descent: foreign kings, the black-death, Hanseatene’ thereby grouping ‘the foreigners’ together with a fatal pest that killed almost 25% of Norway’s population. They ‘intimidated and *forced themselves* up on the nation’ and lived according to their own laws: ‘they didn’t care about Norwegian laws and rights . . . and . . . they had stolen or committed a crime against the Norwegian people’ (Kleppen, 1927, p. 106). These discursive choices in the textbooks reveal a strong ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy. Moreover, as [Figure 2](#) demonstrates, early nation-building era textbooks predominately use the term ‘foreigners’ or ‘strangers’. This word choice assumes a greater degree of distance compared to later terms. Similarly, in the German context, Kotowski points to how the term ‘foreigner’ or ‘stranger’ is prevalent and contributes to a self/other distinction that in turn fuels a strategy of ‘dissimilation’ aimed at the construction of a national difference (e.g. in titles like ‘Strangers among *us*’ the German textbooks establish a hierarchy of belonging whereby ‘Germans’ belong *here* and *they* do not) (Kotoskwi, 2013, p. 308). Moreover, the narrative emphasis in these early textbooks’ account of immigrants in Norway is on the ‘deficit’ perspective, that foreigners ‘took away’ something from the country, rather than enriched it.





**Figure 2.** Graphic representation of total word count of specific terms in textbooks (same as above) over time. The figure shows an overall increase in the use of the terms ‘immigrant(s)’, ‘refugee(s)’ and asylum-seeker(s)’ from 1905 onwards, particularly after the mid-1980s.

### **Emigration, not immigration**

Apart from negative portrayals of a few past immigrant communities, little to no emphasis was placed on including the ‘foreign’ countrymen or ‘existing’ national minorities in the overall contemporary national narrative. For instance, in a textbook from 1909 entitled ‘Social Relations in our Country’, no single mention is made of immigrants or national minorities (Holmsen, 1909). In fact, this blind spot persists in books from this first phase where the notion of ‘diversity’ or national minorities such as the Sami people, the Roma gypsies, or the Finn forest workers is absent (Eriksen, 1928; Hæreide, 1909; Hæreide & Amundsen, 1946; Holmsen, 1909; Kleppen, 1927; Knutsen, 1934; Skretting, 1940; Stokke, 1940). Some textbook authors do in fact appear to want to inform schoolchildren of notions of ‘migration’ and human movement, but the emphasis is placed on the brave Norwegians’ ‘emigration’ out of the country, not the ‘immigration’ of the ‘immigrant others’ into it. As one textbook accounts, ‘the Norwegians emigrated during the Viking age and settled down according to their Norwegian way. They built farms on Iceland, had the same laws and rights as in Norway and felt like one common people.’ (Kleppen, 1927, pp. 67–68) ‘They took as much land as they wanted, almost like small kingdoms ... where they continued to live as they had done in their own homecountry’ another textbook author states, referring to the great Viking age (Knutsen, 1934, pp. 26–28). Thus emphasis on migration in these early textbooks is not only Norwegian-centric in terms of people’s emigration out of the country, it also accentuates their cultural and national preservation abroad.

This exclusion of minorities in early nation-building phases is not a uniquely Norwegian phenomenon. The American historian David Lowenthal’s analysis of ‘heritage’ more generally explains why minority and immigrant perspectives in any nation are largely absent in national textbooks, especially during the early nation-building phase. In ‘The Heritage Crusade’, Lowenthal presents ‘exclusion’ of minorities and immigrants as almost inherent in historical accounts that rely heavily on ‘heritage’ narratives. Priority is given to the majority culture and the forging of their common past/identity; any digression into ‘minority’ perspectives would be counterproductive to this nation-building project: ‘Each group’s heritage is by definition domestic. The past we prize as our own; foreigners’ pasts are alien and incompatible’ (Lowenthal, 2013). In addition, Lowenthal emphasizes that ‘what heritage does not highlight, it often hides’ (Lowenthal, 2013). Along similar lines, the Norwegian textbooks do not expose any of the longstanding exclusionary policies towards immigrants and minorities that were present in Norway at the time. For example, no Jews, Muslims or

Gypsies were allowed to enter the country as highlighted in the constitution (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, pp. 75–82). Poverty was another exclusion criterion. Only a few historical schoolbooks note how their new countrymen were met with discriminating policies that prevented their integration into society, such as being unable to marry locals. One author even justified discriminatory policies of immigrants to the schoolchildren, noting: ‘they came from a foreign land, they had no rights’ (Lødøen, 1905, p. 3). Instead, the underlying narrative in the textbooks is clear: Norway’s people are united and homogenous. They share a common ancestry that is heroic, strong and brave, and they are determined to preserve their own national identity, free from foreign influence. Those historical influences that came from the ‘outside’ threatened the very spirit of the nation. As such, minorities and immigrants either fall outside the vision parameters of the heritage-driven, national building project of schoolbooks in this era or are used as a negative ‘other’ to strengthen the image of a strong and unified ‘we’.

### **From patriotism to social collectivism: the ‘blind spot’ largely remains**

The second phase (1950–1979) of this textbook analysis of immigrant representations in Norway witnesses a conscious move against the patriotism enshrined in the schoolbooks of the early nation-building phase. Ideological nationalism was seen as a cause of the war spirit that had prevailed in Europe during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two world wars had left a bitter aftertaste of the effects of nationalism in Europe, which had a direct impact on the educational priorities of post-occupied Norway. A new path of ‘togetherness’ and collectivity was seen as the remedy to salvage Europe’s broken spirit, and the educational system was considered an essential means to drive this societal change. This period coincided with the ‘golden age’ of the Norwegian Labour Party and its influence also impacted educational reform and immigration policy. One may assume that the shift away from nationalist-centric narratives to more general notions of global citizenship in human society would improve the previous immigrant ‘blind spot’ in Norwegian history textbooks. Yet, as this section will argue, while some textbook during this period begin to expose children to the hardships of the ‘foreigners’ beyond their borders, little focus is placed on ‘intercultural meetings’ in a domestic context. Only in the mid-1970s did some textbooks begin to engage with the challenges of ‘foreigners’ and ‘foreign works’ inside the country—yet the language remains detached and a polarized ‘us’ vs ‘them’ narrative prevails. Thus the blind spot of immigrant representations largely remains.

### ***Becoming more worldly—beyond, not within our borders***

The content of the new history textbooks during this period moved away from nationalist-glorifying narratives towards a more socialist-driven narrative of the Norwegian welfare state as a global actor. Schoolbooks were becoming more ‘worldly’ as set out in the 1939 curriculum revisions that had been halted during the Second World War, but placed on the agenda again in the early 1950s. The educational reform of 1959 gave rise to the new subject ‘samfunnsfag’ (‘the study of society’)—partly influenced by the American ‘social studies’—and highlighted that ‘the primary objective of the school, together with the home ... is to strive for students to be good citizens in a broader human society’ (Lorentzen, 2005, p. 107). These later textbooks, then, make a concerted effort to integrate Norwegian history into a more global context (e.g. Bjøklund, 1975; Chistensen et al., 1966–1970; Hansen, 1966; Hilmo & Øverås, 1966; Koritzinsky, 1974–1976; Lund, 1974–1976; Olsen, 1967; Skogstad, 1968–1972). ‘Norway and the World’, for instance, is the chapter heading of one 1964 textbook, highlighting the country’s role in international organizations and other international development work (Øisang & Bjøklund, 1964). Aligned with the Social Democratic Party lines, the textbooks of the 1960s emphasize social inequality in the context of the north/south, developed/developing countries divide and called for global citizenship, social justice, and equality. As one textbook notes: ‘it’s time we come together as people of the world who see it as our common home ... When we speak of each other, we do it as we would in our own families, as we say “we” ’ (Øisang & Bjøklund, 1964, p. 256). Yet the notion of a diverse



and intercultural 'we' in a domestic context is largely absent in these earlier textbooks. For instance, a schoolbook on 'Community life in Norway' in the 1950s includes no mention of cultural diversity, national minorities or immigrants (Amundsen, 1953).

Emphasis in Norwegian schoolbooks in this period was placed on getting students acquainted with others' cultures *beyond the borders* rather than within them (Lien & Wik, 1967, pp. 325–328). In one textbook, for instance, images of half-naked aborigines with spears, feathers, face paint and bone necklaces are used to teach children that 'there are other cultures out there' and that they are different than ours (Hansen, 1966, pp. 28–32). Moreover, when immigrants are mentioned in textbooks, they are largely related to the past—not contemporary—context (Chistensen et al., 1966–70, pp. 78–86). For instance, in a historical trilogy schoolbook, the following question is asked in the first volume covering 'ancient history': 'did you know that there has constantly come new flocks of immigrants to our country?' (Hansen, 1966, p. 35). The textbook goes on to provide accounts of farmers who immigrated to the country a thousand years ago. Interestingly, though, immigrants are mentioned only once in the third volume on 'modern history', referring to European emigration to America (Hansen, 1968, p. 128). Immigration thus appears a distant and unrelated concept of the past, not a reality of the present day.

Yet sensitivity to other cultures and global perspectives become a key priority as articulated in the 1974 national curriculum revisions in history, which stated:

Students must not get the impression that [our own national history] is the most meaningful part of world history. Material about foreign cultures should be included as well as the development in other parts of the world ... History education in schools should not be about the white man's history' (National Curriculum Plan, 1974).

Interestingly, however, the 1974 educational reform did not mention anything about how to incorporate domestic diversity/multiculturalism into the curriculum, nor did it recognize the ongoing change in immigration demographics in Norway at the time.

### **'Foreign workers' and the rise of 'different cultures'**

However, immigration trends in Norway reveal that the 1970s was a turning point, laying the foundations for what was later to become 'multicultural Norway' (Brochmann & Kjeldstadli, 2008, p. 212). With boat refugees from Vietnam and Chileans fleeing the Pinochet regime, along with Turkish, Moroccan and Pakistani citizens seeking opportunities abroad, the immigration landscape in Norway was changing and diversifying. While some countrymen welcomed the new demographic shift in Norway as a pathway to 'fargerike felleskap' ['colourful communities'] in the 1970s, others were sceptical towards these 'more foreign' foreigners. Not everyone was coming to term with the notion that 'guest workers' were settling in permanently in the country (Rogers, 1985)—which also became known as 'the foreign worker problem' (Brox, 1997; Dahl & Habert, 1986; Eitinger, 1981; Gullestad, 2002).

Although the textbooks during this period continue to use more detached terms like 'foreigner'/'stranger' [fremmede] (see Figure 2), some of the 1970s textbooks in social studies and history begin to include more direct references to 'the meeting of cultures'—with some textbooks even starting to blur the line between domestic and international cultures: one 1970s social studies textbook by the scholar and later chairman of the Socialist Left Party in Norway, Theo Koritzinsky, for instance, asked students to evaluate their own racial prejudices. In his textbook entitled 'the World and Us', Koritzinsky discusses the challenges of 'foreign workers' both in Norway and abroad who 'have low income jobs, and are often exposed to discrimination from 'the natives' (Koritzinsky, 1974–1976, pp. 26–27, 152, Vol. 3). Under the heading 'Racial Discrimination in Norway', Koritzinsky asks the students open-endedly: 'Many Norwegians are curious when they see a dark skinned person in the street. They may turn around. Just as likely as a Norwegian would generate attention if he found himself to be the only white person in a street of black people. Is this curiosity or racial discrimination?' (Koritzinsky, 1974–1976, p. 91, Vol. 1) While Koritzinsky wishes to highlight problematic racial prejudices, he also normalizes and relativizes it as something almost inevitable when someone is inherently different from the norm.

Thus a somewhat awkward engagement with racial discrimination (i.e. the prejudicial treatment of newcomers based on their race or status as immigrants) emerges during the 1970s in textbooks trying to familiarize and expose students to ‘the immigrant others’ and the dilemmas that may arise with these new cultural meetings. The following example from a central 1970s textbook is another case in point: In the social studies textbook ‘You and the Others’, Erik Lund raises the students’ awareness of the new immigration phenomenon: ‘In the largest cities in Norway we have received a new group of people *who stand out*. They are the “foreign workers”’. Lund then follows with an example from a national newspaper to illustrate ‘what happened to such a foreign worker in Oslo’. Under the heading “Knife Stabber Kicked Unconscious”, the article reports that a Moroccan ‘foreigner’ who, after having stabbed a porter in a restaurant with a knife, was chased by local customers in the restaurant and beaten to the ground. Students are then asked to discuss whether they think the Norwegians’ behaviour had to do with the Moroccan man’s dark skin colour. While Lund is clearly wanting to highlight the role of racism in inciting ‘native’ violence, his chosen example is—perhaps deliberately—complex given that the man from Morocco initiated the violence by stabbing a random stranger. There is an odd tension between wanting to make students more mindful of racial prejudice and therefore develop empathy towards immigrant foreign workers, while at the same time being aware of ‘their’ criminal behaviour. Emphasis is placed on their *difference*, or deviation from the norm, and, similar to other studies of immigrant representations, they are presented from a native/majority-oriented perspective; they are not given a voice, an individual biography or their own identity.

Instead, the immigrants as ‘different’ are often contrasted with the ‘sameness’ of the Norwegian majority. An identity-driven narrative, now no longer of nationalism, but of social collectivism, begins to emerge: In a following section entitled ‘Norwegians are also a Group’, Lund argues, ‘we must hold together’. Comparing Norwegian to larger scale ‘friendship group’, Lund insists that:

Unlike all who are not Norwegian, we have the following in common:

- We live in the same geographical area called Norway
- We speak the same language
- We have a lot of common norms that other nations don’t have.

This is how we are distinct from other foreigners and why there is a distinct group community feeling between Norwegians ... Just as the friends in a friend group are dependent on their community among their friends, so too are Norwegians dependent on the community with other Norwegians.

The passage shows a need to forge an identity bond between Norwegians that is not necessarily based—like in the first phase—on ethnic and ancestral ties, but on social and common features related to a collective ‘Norwegian’ friendship spirit. While the ideological source of this social cohesiveness is different, the dichotomous ‘us’ versus ‘them’/in-group versus out-group categories commonly seen in identity-based narratives, still prevail. As such a distinct narrative trend appears where discursive representations of the immigrant are perceived as inherently ‘different’ and ‘other’; they are a deviation from the national/collectivist norm. This representation is not unique to Norwegian textbooks, but is also consistent with other textbook analysis studies conducted on immigrant representations in other countries (Foster, 1999; Hintermann, 2010; Kotoskwi, 2013)

This second phase, then, clearly illustrates a concerted effort on the part of left-leaning textbook authors, supported by a social democratic government, to use the textbooks to help construct an identity around social collectivist ‘sameness’—the so-called citizens friendship group. Although a departure from patriotic narratives, it still holds at its core a bi-polar identity built on ‘us’ vs. ‘them’, ‘the ingroup’ and ‘the out group’, ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’. The ‘immigrant others’ in Norwegian textbooks of this period either fall in the blind spot of collectivist ‘sameness’ ideology or becomes a functional opposition to illustrate who are Norwegian citizens and who are not.

## From blind spot to hotspot: minority perspectives emerge

The third phase (1980s onwards) identified in this textbook analysis of immigrant representations reveals a significant shift from their 'space' in blind spots (or marginal sphere) to the 'hotspot' in more recent decades. With the increasingly globalized world of the 1980s, shared markets and more porous borders laid the foundation for demographic change that would in turn come to inform educational curriculum and materials in Norway. Indeed, over the last four decades Norway's immigration population has further increased and diversified: currently 1 in every 3 students in elementary school in Oslo has an immigrant background and immigrants now constitute almost 14% of the total population, up from 1.5% in 1970 (Statistics Norway, 2019). As this section will highlight, quantitative and qualitative changes in content and pedagogy have now placed 'cultural meetings' centrally in historical and social science educational materials. Yet while the blind spot has been removed, 'problem' narratives which accentuate 'difference' above 'diversity' still remain.

### *The multicultural nation*

More 'space' has been dedicated to diversity and immigrant/minority perspectives in Norway through three critical educational reforms (1987, 1997 and 2006). In particular, 'knowledge about multicultural society' became one of three 'core value principles' in the 1997 national educational plan, which explicitly acknowledged and welcomed the changes in the society:

The meeting between different cultures and traditions gives both new impulses and foundations for critical reflections. The school has received many students from groups that now make up different cultural minorities in our country. Education must therefore convey knowledge about other cultures and exploit the opportunities for enrichment that minority groups and Norwegians with other cultural backgrounds give. Knowing about other people gives one's own and others' values a chance to be tested. (National Curriculum Plan, 1997)

In the context of this curriculum reform a noticeable shift occurs in the textbooks with a growing emphasis being placed on diversity and 'kulturmøte' (the meeting of the cultures) Often the textbooks ask students to discuss whether Norway is a multicultural nation, before moving on to assert that Norway's citizenship makeup is indeed under transformation, and that this shift has brought with it both challenges and benefits. One textbook notes for instance that: 'Norway has "always" been a multicultural society. Immigration is nothing new, but the number of immigrants has significantly risen over the past thirty years' (Henningsen & Andersen, 2009, p. 42). Most modern textbooks now dedicate approximately one fifth of the book to the notion of 'culture', 'cultural understanding' and 'cultural meetings'—to align with the 2006 curriculum plan (Arnsen, Berdal, Heir, Skøien, & Schrøder, 2009; Berner, Borge, & Olsen, 2008; Borge & Berner, 2006; Dale, Bergstrøm, & Garstad, 2013; Henningsen & Andersen, 2009; Lundberg, Borge, & Aass, 2006; Westersjø, Lauritzen, & Berg, 2009). This content level differs significantly from a study on immigrant representation in Dutch textbooks during a similar period (1980–2011). Weiner found that immigrants were completely excluded from the majority (81.3%) of Dutch primary school history and social studies textbooks published during this period (Weiner, 2018, p. 161).

In Norway during this period, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2, we see the use of terms associated with the phenomenon of immigration steadily increasing in the textbooks over time. Moving away from the 1970s definition of immigrants as 'foreign workers', a new category of immigrant emerges in the modern textbook: The 'fleeing' immigrant, the asylum seeker, the refugee. They also define and distinguish between more complex concepts of 'assimilation', 'integration', 'segregation', 'identity', 'inclusion', 'exclusion' and 'diversity' to expose students to the different types of interactions with foreign cultures—terms that did not exist in the two prior phases (Amundsen, Mikkelsen, & Sveen, 1987; Blom, Christophersen, & Vennerød, 1997–1999; Ertresvaag, 1988–1990). Moreover, the quantitative increase in immigrant-oriented terminology as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2 is associated with five distinctive qualitative shifts in narrative.

### **Norwegianness as dynamic, not fixed**

Firstly, unlike books from the previous two periods which sought to cultivate a sense of uniform 'Norwegianness' or socialist 'sameness' identity, modern textbooks often engage head-on and problematize the notion of national and collective identity. What does it *actually* mean to be Norwegian? What is a citizen? Who is a 'typical' Norwegian citizen? (e.g. Aarre, Åsta Flatby, Grønland, & Lunn, 2007, pp. 192–197; Berner, Borge, & Olsen, 2007, pp. 30–32; Libæk, Mathiesen, Mikkelsen, & Stenersen, 2008, p. 12) The notion of a dynamic and changing cultural identity is stressed (Arnsen et al., 2009, pp. 64–65; Berner et al., 2007, p. 31; Dale et al., 2013, p. 36; Westersjø et al., 2009, p. 196). According to one textbook, for instance, 'culture is not static—it develops and is renewed ... To be Norwegian today is not the same as being white, Christian, going skiing and eating meatballs. Cultural expression in Norway today is fundamentally different from what it was in the 1980s' (Dale et al., 2013, p. 36). The book therefore not only mocks the stereotypical identity of the 'Norwegian' archetype, but also opens up to the idea that national identity is fluid and forever changing. Another textbook introduces students to more complex identity notions that have arisen in multicultural Norway like 'hyphen-identities', 'ethno-kids' or 'street-mix' children, who straddle different identities (Helland & Aarre, 2006, p. 120). Thus the narrative shift now presents identity (whether national or foreign) as malleable, dynamic and complex—not homogenous, bipolar and fixed.

### **Immigrant-oriented perspectives**

Secondly, there is a distinctly new narrative shift in the modern schoolbooks with a move towards a more *immigrant-oriented perspective*: articles are not just written *about* the immigrants, but increasingly *by* the immigrants themselves as illustrated in a textbook quote by immigrant Khalid Salimi in 1996 who expresses his identity challenges in an empowering way: 'I have a right to not justify who I am all the time. I have a right to be Norwegian, and also not to be. I shall be accepted for who I am. I have a right to change my identity' (Helland & Aarre, 2006, p. 120). Khalid defines his own identity in a distinctly new, almost rebellious, and certainly more empowering self-expression of identity. In previous textbooks, questions of immigrants' self-identification were not addressed; they were not given a voice.

Immigrant-oriented perspectives are also developed in an increasing number of textbook vignette stories of immigrants and the reasons behind their moves. In the previous phases, the textbooks often presented immigrants as a homogenous group and paid little attention to their motives for moving. This changes in the new schoolbooks: in one textbook account entitled 'White Man's World', for instance, Saynab Mohamud, who was born in Somalia, but moved to Norway when she was 12, describes the cultural challenges of her integration into Norwegian society and the sore memories of leaving behind her old country. Goiko, a 13-year-old boy, tells of his escape from war-torn Sarajevo at the age of 4. A 12-year-old Iranian girl, Shirin, reveals how she escaped to Norway following her mum's political activism in Iran (Åsta Flatby, Aarre, & Lunn, 2008, pp. 94–96). Thus, the textbook draws upon contributions from the immigrants *themselves*, in various types of prose, in which they raise deep, complex and controversial questions about identity, belonging, acceptance, exclusion, and racism. This is a distinct narrative shift that now includes the voices and stories of immigrant themselves, something that was not the case in previous phases in Norway, and is still not the case in certain European countries today (Carretero & Kriger, 2011; Hintermann, 2010; Rasero & Bochaca, 2011; Weiner, 2018).

In addition to sharing the voices of immigrants by giving more 'space' to honour their narratives and lived experiences, the modern textbooks critically engage the school children around ethical issues. A more proactive and reflective pedagogy has clearly evolved over time as students in the more modern textbooks are asked to reflect, consider, discuss, engage, 'stop and think' about questions that the texts raise. From an early age, children are asked questions that clearly aim to elicit understanding and empathy with the refugees and their troubled past. For instance, after

seeing statistics of unaccompanied minors arriving to Norway in 2005 (322 children in total), the schoolchildren are asked to reflect about ‘how they would feel if they had to arrive in a foreign country alone’ (Holm & Løkken, 2007, pp. 203–205). A new ‘perspective taking’ approach becomes apparent where school children are asked to consider what life must be like for people ‘on the move’, who may have needed to leave their home, friends, family and life back home to save themselves from persecution. Other questions and activities invoke a sense of responsibility and agency as students are asked ‘How can we best accommodate for the integration of immigrants?’ (Henningesen & Andersen, 2009, p. 39). Another textbook personalizes this question: ‘what do you think you could do so that Saynab could have it better where she lives now ...Could you consider becoming her friend? Justify your answer’. These questions at their core urge understanding, empathy, dialogue and proximity between the ‘us’ and the ‘them’. This is a distinct shift from previous narratives, which merely labelled problems in the past and urged reflections, not actions, to solve them in the present.

### ***Immigration—‘a contemporary and enriching phenomenon’***

Thus a third narrative shift in this phase shows immigration as a real phenomenon in the present, not just a distant one of the past (as distinct from phase 2). Unlike earlier textbooks, Norwegian school children are increasingly exposed to the idea of people moving from war zones, leaving everything behind, and separating families. For instance, one history textbook deliberates over reasons why refugees have to leave and makes a parallel with the 50,000 Norwegians who were on the run to Sweden and England during WWII (Åsta Flatby et al., 2008, p. 99). The schoolbook authors are clearly attempting to put the notion of ‘escape’ not just in historic perspective to reveal the continuity of the phenomenon, but also to place the current migration crisis in context for the school children; to make it more relatable to them in the present.

A fourth narrative shift during this period stresses the positive influences of immigrants in multicultural Norway. A sense of pride in the growth of minority representation and diversity is detected in the narratives: one textbook, for instance, pointed to a study revealing that immigrants are more educated than the average Norwegian—27% of immigrants in 2001 had university level education, it mentioned, as opposed to 21 % of Norwegian natives (Henningesen & Andersen, 2009, p. 42). Several textbooks also include section highlights—‘The first immigrant to’—narrative to illustrate the successful integration of immigrants in Norway: for instance one textbook shows Afshan Rafiq (a Pakistani Norwegian conservative politician) wearing a Norwegian ‘bunad’ (the national costume) as the first person of immigrant descent to hold the national day speech in 2002 (Dale et al., 2013, p. 39). The idea here appears to show that ‘foreigners’ are integrating successfully, though emphasis in this case is placed on the ‘other’ following Norwegian customs and traditions (and can be perceived as relatively one-way). Other examples focus on a narrative framing that highlights ‘two-way’ benefits of cultural encounters as enriching and positive: For instance, ‘foreign shops’, one textbook insists, have contributed to Norwegians learning to use many new types of fruit, vegetables and spices (Lundberg et al., 2006, p. 78). Another textbook is similarly positive noting: ‘Meetings with other cultures can help us with our own cultural identity, because we get a further perspective on our own norms and values and can thus become more confident in ourselves’ (Dale et al., 2013, p. 41). Thus a distinct ‘enrichment’ narrative highlights the added national benefits of multiculturalism in the modern textbooks that is new and distinct from the previous phases.

### ***Problematizing immigration***

Unlike the romanticized nationalist-oriented history in the earliest textbooks modern schoolbooks are very critical and openly problematize Norway’s troubled past and current challenges. A fifth narrative shift has occurred with textbooks now critically engaging with the majority’s culpability in the exclusion of the ‘immigrant others’: One textbook, for instance, problematizes how Norwegian

media portrays 'the immigrant others'. Children are asked to examine newspaper extracts which quickly reveal a pattern where successful competitive athletes with an immigrant background are identified as 'Norwegian', yet, in the context of crime the immigrants' 'foreignness' is accentuated (Helland & Aarre, 2006, pp. 118–119). Another textbook frames xenophobia as the result of the majority population's sometimes lack of exposure to and knowledge of other cultures. This point is illustrated most effectively in a text extract by Odd Børretzen, a Norwegian author, who wrote for the Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers about his grandmother who lived in a remote area in Flekkefjord, Norway. 'My grandmother was a racist as long as I knew her', Børretzen confessed, 'but it wasn't so dangerous, because she never met neither a catholic, a Jew or a black person ...I don't even think she ever met a swede' (Westersjø et al., 2009, p. 208). The passage encourages students to critically reflect around the ignorance of foreign cultures, which is identified as one of the drivers of xenophobia.

The modern textbooks therefore also include a 'darker side' of immigration including prejudice (e.g. 'it is not seldom one hears remarks about immigrants like—"they come here to leach of our state', 'they are criminal' (Arnsen et al., 2009, p. 80)), racism (e.g. 'being commented at on the street or not being let into bars or nightclubs due to the colour of your skin' (Arnsen et al., 2009, p. 82)), discrimination (e.g. 'regarding immigrants who do try to get jobs, several have been told that they got the job after they changed their name to a Norwegian sounding one' (Arnsen et al., 2009, p. 82). Through provoking questions the schoolbooks encourage school children to be self-reflective and proactive: 'Is Norway's constitution inclusive? What can be done to overcome or resist racism and xenophobia?' (Arnsen et al., 2009, p. 76). In one textbook we see an image of a man of colour washing a toilet—the caption asks students to deliberate: 'is it unfair that non-western immigrants wash toilets even though they have higher education?' (Henningesen & Andersen, 2009, p. 48). Thus there is a distinct shift in both pedagogy and intention from previous textbooks moving the immigrant from the blind spot into the Spotlight.

Interestingly, however, the narratives of 'problems', 'challenges' and 'differences' prevail in contemporary textbooks. For example, immigration is raised as a problem or challenge in 12 out of 24 pages (50%) related to cultural exchanges in Dale et al. (2013), 12 out of 14 pages (86%) in Arnsen et al. (2009), 13 out of 29 pages (46%) in Henningesen and Andersen (2009) and 11 out of 39 pages (39%) in Westersjø et al. (2009). The identified 'challenges' or 'problems' are diverse, but are consistently highlighted in the textbooks. They include: lack of integration (e.g. 'many women who come from third-world countries struggle to become integrated' (Arnsen et al., 2009, p. 75)), language barriers (e.g. 'the Vietnamese face challenges learning the language and understanding the Norwegian system' (Westersjø et al., 2009, p. 218)), traditional gender roles that may prevent integration (e.g. 'it is often Pakistani women who have a lot of children, are home with them and therefore do not participate in the work force' (Arnsen et al., 2009, p. 74), unemployment (e.g. 'Only 60% of Pakistani men in the country are working and only 28% of the women.' (Arnsen et al., 2009, p. 76)), segregation (e.g. '[their] isolation from society, can lead to ghettos' (Dale et al., 2013, p. 40)), crime (e.g. 'statistically there are also more Vietnamese who commit crime than the average national' (Westersjø et al., 2009, p. 218)), and violent revolts as a response to this lack of integration (e.g. immigrant youth uprisings in France, Copenhagen (Dale et al., 2013, p. 40)). In one textbook, for instance, authors directly associate refugee status with the potentiality of violence/aggression: 'Many foreigners come to Norway as refugees. Their life has been threatened, and they have experienced everyday insecurity and fear. This can lead to psychological problems with aggression and violence' (Dale et al., 2013, p. 43). Moreover, cultural value 'clashes' or 'conflicts' with incoming immigrants such as arranged/forced marriage practices (e.g. Arnsen et al., 2009, pp. 229–232; Borge & Berner, 2006, pp. 87–92) and the use of the hijab (e.g. Lundberg et al., 2006, pp. 87–92; Westersjø et al., 2009, pp. 76–83) are frequently highlighted as 'problematic' in order to engage students in discussion around the challenges of cultural diversity and integration.

While focusing on the 'challenges' can be seen as an opportunity to raise and deal with serious ideological issues preventing integration, scholarship on immigrant representations also highlights



some of the dangers associated with this so-called 'problem' narrative (Hintermann, 2010, p. 13; Ilett, 2009, p. 55; Kotoskwi, 2013, p. 307; Moffitt & Juang, 2019, p. 2; Weiner, 2018, p. 160). Weiner's study of Dutch 'curricular alienation' of minorities, for instance, points to how polarizing discourses of 'us' and 'them' are prevalent in the Netherlands with nearly half of the books in her study highlighting immigrants' cultural differences. This tendency to differentiate 'them' from 'us' leads to a 'discursive positioning' in the textbooks, she argues, that 'essentialize[s] non-white immigrants as forever foreign regardless of how long one's family has been in the Netherlands' (Weiner, 2018, p. 162). This very sentiment of social exclusion is pointed out in the reflections of various Norwegian immigrant youths in one of the modern textbooks. One immigrant reveals that 'to be considered Norwegian, you have to look Norwegian'. The immigrant youth confesses that though she lives in Norway, has taken her education here, has many Norwegian friends and lives her life here, she is not considered Norwegian (Helland & Aarre, 2006, pp. 116–117). This is a self-narrated account of failed integration and a failure on the part of her peers to recognize her as one of them. Thus while the example enhances the representation of immigrant voices, it also points to their feelings of exclusion.

Scholarship also reveals that students from minority backgrounds in Norway express feelings of social exclusion, discrimination, unworthiness and lower teacher expectations within the educational system (Chinga-Ramirez, 2017). Teachers in Norway also report feeling 'ill prepared' for teaching in the multicultural classroom (Egeli & Thomassen, 2015). According to Gullestad, an othering-process still occurs in Norwegian schooling based on ethnicity and skin colour that is founded in a discursive reality of 'imagined sameness': 'Being a foreigner', she explains, 'describes an opposite imaged community ... in contrast to Norwegians imagined sameness' (Gullestad, 2002). Thus, while curriculum and teaching materials are becoming more inclusive of diversity in terms of content and pedagogy, the classroom climate and teaching methods/attitudes may not be. This raises deeper and likely more systemic questions about the 'applied' side of learning material in the classroom (i.e. how the materials are being taught and in which 'climate') that fall beyond the scope of this current article. However, it is nonetheless important to continue exploring these questions in the future, especially when considering the 'immigrant others' place in society, both real and symbolic.

## Conclusion

This paper has documented the presence and representation of immigrants in Norwegian schoolbooks from their initial omission in the country's early nation building days to their 'hotspot' presence in modern day textbooks. Through examining three distinct phases the paper identified two different ideological roots for this initial immigrant 'blind spot': in the first phase (from 1905 to 1949) immigrants, though representing only a relatively small population at the time, were excluded from historical schoolbook narratives (like indigenous minorities) because of the heritage-driven, patriotic narratives, which strove to forge a unified image of ethnical ancestors, the *Norwegians*, in this now independent land, free of foreign influence. Immigrants were associated with 'unnorwegianness' and terms to define them (e.g. 'strangers' and 'foreigners') as well as their placement/context in the textbooks were associated with negative circumstances (occupation, disease and poverty). While the era of patriotism gradually waned with the Second World War, a new ideological force of social collectivism came to embrace Norway in the second phase (from 1950 to 1979) continuing to maintain a 'blind spot' on immigration. While schoolbooks looked to familiarize students with 'immigrant outside' their borders, little emphasis was placed on questions of diversity at home. Immigration was portrayed as a part of the 'era of the past' with little relevance to current-day events, though the cultural landscape at the time was starting to transform. Similar to the consequences of heritage-driven patriotism, socialist-driven values of 'togetherness', 'sameness', and uniformity continued to stifle appreciation of the richness of cultural diversity and immigrants remained largely in the margins of the national curriculum and textbooks. With the increase in immigration in the 1980s, the Norwegian educational system was forced to recognize a changing

demographic landscape and educational reforms began to include notions such as ‘cultural diversity’, ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘integration’. Over three decades a significant shift would occur, moving the ‘immigrant others’ from their original blind spot into the spotlight.

The meeting of the cultures’ now holds a prominent place in educational curriculum and learning materials in Norway and beyond, with pedagogical strategies such as perspective-taking, community participation, and in-class debates aimed at having school children critically reflect on both the opportunities and challenges of an increasingly diverse classroom and country. Distinctive narrative shifts point to more fluid ‘grey zones’ of multicultural national identity that are now being both embraced and problematized. Modern textbooks also reveal a narrative shift away from a purely *resident/majority population-centric* approach (i.e. a ‘native’ description of the immigrant) to a more *immigrant/minority-centric* approach (i.e. a description by the immigrants). This change reveals the increased emphasis on minority immigrants voicing their own narratives, their own challenges, their own stories. Moreover, immigrants are now framed as an enriching, though also problematic, contemporary phenomenon. Modern textbooks now also encourage self-critical reflection around culpability for the exclusion of the ‘immigrant others’. In the meantime, underlying ‘problem’ narratives related to immigrants’ cultural differences, values and practices still prevail in the textbooks, which associate them with issues of, among others, unemployment, crime, and lack of integration, and thereby contribute to further problematize ‘the immigrant others’. Thus while immigrants have become more visible, they have also become more controversial.

Finally, this paper has focused on ‘the immigrant others’ space in Norwegian textbooks and curriculum and what this infers about their ‘place’ in society more broadly. Some scholars correlate immigrants’ exclusion in textbooks with their exclusion in society (Weiner, 2018, p. 161). One might therefore assume that an increased inclusion of ‘the immigrant others’ in the textbooks would correlate with their increased inclusion in society. Yet, social exclusion—as this Norwegian case study shows—persists despite the increased focus of immigrants and their narratives in recent textbooks. While this opens up questions of integration that go beyond the scope of this paper, it also encourages reflection on the role of qualitative narrative representations in the textbooks and the specific ideological and historical context within which they operate. These considerations are relevant to other textbook studies of immigrant representations beyond the Norwegian case study. This study, then, contributes to better understanding both qualitative and quantitative shifts in textbooks narratives of ‘the immigrant others’ over time, while also identifying existing ‘problem narratives’ which continue to drive the notion of ‘difference’ over the more inclusive notion of ‘diversity’. Thus although an immigrant ‘hot spot’ has replaced the previous immigrant ‘blind spot’ in textbooks, the portrayal of the ‘immigrant others’ continues to be singled out as a ‘challenge’/‘problem’/‘difference’ to be solved, more than a ‘diversity’ to be embraced.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

*Dr. Linn Normand* obtained her BA degree in Social and Political Sciences from Emmanuel College at the University of Cambridge (UK) and her MPhil & DPhil in International Relations from Nuffield College at the University of Oxford (UK). She was a Herchel Smith Scholar at Harvard University (USA) and later a Research Fellow at the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School. She has also taught at the University of California, Davis (USA). She is currently a research fellow in History Didactics at the Department of Cultural Studies and Languages at the University of Stavanger (Norway) and was a visiting scholar at UC Berkeley in 2019. Her book, *Demonization in International Politics: A Barrier to Peace in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, builds on her Ph.D. research at the University of Oxford. Towards the end of her Ph.D., though, she became increasingly aware of the future need to investigate the phenomenon of de-demonization, and “humanizing” narratives. Her present research project is entitled ‘Documenting the Undocumented: Immigrant voices of past and present’ – and includes investigating immigrant narratives and lived experiences in the United States and Norway.

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