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Preventing radicalisation through reading fiction

How reading *North of Dawn* or *The Lines We Cross* can teach adolescents intercultural competence and build resilience against radicalisation

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Abstract

The following thesis aims to look at how reading Nuruddin Farah´s *North of Dawn* and Randa Abdel-Fattah´s *The Lines We Cross* can create resilience to radicalisation and violent extremism. Building on the concepts of deep reading, vicarious experiences and theories on preventative work, this thesis will show how literature that examines radicalisation in a critical light can show the importance of intercultural competence; a competence believed to be central in resilience to radicalisation. This thesis will also explore how elements of intercultural competence and resilient traits overlap, showing how aspects such as empathy, multiperspectivity and thinking with complexity are central to both. Through the characters in the novels, the adolescent reader should be able to learn intercultural competence vicariously while also being presented with a narrative that is able to compete with the narratives of extremist groups. While this thesis by no means represents a final solution to challenges connected to radicalisation, it should instead be regarded as a suggestion to how teachers in upper- and lower secondary education can contribute to a larger multisectoral effort against radicalisation and violent extremism.

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List of abbreviations

CAN: Counter- and Alternative Narratives

CoE: The Council of Europe

CVE: Countering Violent Extremism

LK20: Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion 2020 (Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet 2020)

PVE: Preventing Violent Extremism

UDIR: The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet)

YAF: Young Adult Fiction

1 Introduction

Radicalisation and the transition into violent extremism is a phenomenon that cannot happen in a vacuum, as no child is born with an ideology or political conviction. This means that every child at some point in their life gets politically provocative input that, in extreme cases, evolves into acts of extremist violence. Considering the amount of time children and young adults spend in compulsory education, using this time to prevent or counter a potential formation of ideas that attack our democratic values should sound appealing to every teacher. Marking the 10th anniversary of the most violent act of terror on Norwegian soil since World War II and having just avoided a comparable occurrence in 2019, terrorism is fresh in Norwegian minds. How do we as teachers take the responsibility of our political mandate to contribute to the prevention of radicalisation and potential terrorism? Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai once said: "One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world." (16:37 - 16:46). Inspired by this quote, this MA thesis will investigate how we, as teachers of English literature in lower and upper secondary education, can modulate our teaching to help the prevention of future acts of extremism. Drawing on the concepts of intercultural competence, vicarious reading experiences, and deep reading, this MA thesis aims to look at how reading Nuruddin Farah´s *North of Dawn* (2018) or Randa Abdel-Fattah´s *The Lines We Cross* (2017) can function as an inoculator against radicalisation. This thesis argues that by reading literature about radicalisation, the importance of intercultural competence will become predominant. Literature and vicarious learning experience will enhance the development of intercultural competence and build resilience to radicalisation.

The "National Threat Assessment for 2022" compiled by the Norwegian Police Security Service (Politiets sikkerhetstjeneste (PST) states that Islamic extremists and right-wing extremists are the two groups most likely to carry out a terrorist attack in Norway. Despite not having seen any completed acts of Islamist terror on Norwegian soil ever, there are a few examples from our neighbouring countries, Sweden and Denmark. Compared to other European countries, Norway has seen few domestic tendencies of Islamic aggression, possibly due to Norway's peripheral state geographically and geopolitically. However, different numbers appear if we shift our focus to acts of extremism in other countries with participants who have a connection to Norway through either citizenship or residence. In 2014 PST and The Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS) estimated that roughly 100 persons with ties to Norway

participated in the Syrian Civil War. A significant number of them sided with jihadist groups such as ISIS and Jabhat Fateh al-Sham (Leraand et al. 2019). In connection to this, PST and NIS also suspect that numerous sympathisers in Norway contribute to violent extremism and terrorism through either financial funding or recruitment (PST, 2019). This sympathy is most likely expressed in either religious assemblages or online forums. Expressing sympathy and recruiting online is also a common trait among right-wing radicals. They have gone from a more street visible image into the digital arena (Jupskås 2019). This is not to say that they have become non-violent but rather that the magnitude of their completed and planned attacks has increased. On 22 July 2011, Anders Behring Breivik killed 77 people and physically injured 66, and on August 19th 2019 Philip Manshaus was overpowered while attempting to massacre a mosque. Both trials revealed that the perpetrators were radicalised through online forums and chat applications. This shift from extremism being more visible to entering less public arenas has led to PST emphasising the importance of multisectoral cooperation in preventing and revealing radicalisation (2021).

Although terrorism and extremism by no means are new concepts, the western world saw an increased focus on countering and preventing it in the wake of the September 11 attacks and consequently in the USA´s declaration of "the war on terror". A great deal can be said about the war on terror, but these efforts were mainly directed outwardly as if the "enemy" was from outside the country´s circumference. After the Madrid (2004) and London (2005) attacks, however, the west saw an increased concern around homegrown terrorists, and consequently, numerous counter-radicalisation efforts inwardly were initialised (Sjøen 2019).

Around 20 years later, there is a reason to believe that many counter-radicalisation efforts have been harmful as they framed certain groups, especially young Muslims (Sjøen 2019). Educational institutions, including the Norwegian secondary schools, having been part of the extensive multisectoral counter-radicalisation work, have arguably fallen into this trap of racial profiling and usage of identity markers to almost guess which pupils were at risk of radicalisation (Sjøen 2019). This practice is, by all means, damaging on an individual level and might even be counterproductive. Luckily, this tendency has been recognised, and there seems to be a shift in direction to more general preventative work that focuses on all individuals´ resilience to radicalisation. In short, there appears to be a well-founded shift from counteractive work that targets the individual to an approach that builds strong groups of individuals that are able to withstand radicalisation (see Stephens et al. 2021). Considering the elements discussed above, this thesis will therefore revolve around preventative work.

As this thesis will explore, is a central part of preventative work based on building arenas for discussion or exploration. Through these arenas, the hoped outcome is the formation of mindsets that facilitate a society that is less likely to incite people into radicalism while also providing the individual with the necessary tools to recognise and deconstruct extremist ideologies and thoughts (Stephens et al. 2021). This could, in simpler terms, be called building a resilient society with resilient individuals; that is, they can withstand various pull factors to extremist thoughts and communities. Multiple institutions, scholars and governments have put forth numerous suggestions for approaches to build such resilience, but as Stephens et al. write is, " a clear framework for resilience in relation to violent extremism" lacking (356). Especially requirements for good resilience-building at an institutional and social level are scarce (Stephens et al. 356). Being aware of the limitations of this MA thesis, this thesis aims not to offer a stand-alone solution to building resilience but rather a suggestion for how building resilience towards radicalisation can be incorporated into English education at a lower- and upper secondary level in Norway.

Given the educational system´s role in preventing violent extremism and creating well-functioning democratic citizens, there is, as shown below multiple reasons to believe that there is a strong connection between the national curricula and principles for PVE (preventing violent extremism). Intercultural learning, which holds a strong place in LK20, could be one way of either achieving or strengthening resilience towards radicalisation. Magne Dypedahl defines intercultural competence as "the ability to communicate appropriately with people who have different mindsets and/or different communication styles" (qtd. in Carlsen et al., 81, 2020). The Council of Europe (CoE) has a more extensive understanding of the term, which includes abilities to "establish positive and constructive relationships" and understand "oneself and one's own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural "difference" (2014, 16-17). Despite various ways of defining intercultural competence, scholars are relatively coordinated in their opinions on what intercultural competence is comprised of (see Deardorff 2006). The definitions provided here will, at an introductory stage, be sufficient, but intercultural competence and relating terms will be discussed more in-depth in the theory chapter.

In the following chapters, a juxtaposition of elements from intercultural competence and suggestions to building resilience to radicalisation reveals a striking overlap. For instance, according to both the Council of Europe (2018) and Stephens et al. (2021), aspects such as empathy and the ability to think complexly are central to creating resilient individuals. These

very same aspects also appear in the requirements for intercultural competence put forth by several scholars in the field, such as Michael Byram (1997) and Magne Dypedahl & Henrik Bøhn (2020). Furthermore, acquiring intercultural competence is well-founded in both the core curriculum and the subject-specific curriculum for English. This gives a relatively clear indication of where the focus for the preventative work within the English subject should lay. That is not to say that other elements of preventative work should be excluded from all English education but rather that, especially in the context of literary studies, a focus on intercultural competence will have a broad reach that touches upon numerous elements from preventative work.

When Nadia and Mugdi from *North of Dawn* discuss Ole Edvart Rølvaag´s *Giants in the Earth,* Nadia asks whether Mugdi believes that art can be a humanizer: *"*So you are saying art is the great humanizer?" (306). Just like Mugdi, this thesis will explore that this "is one way of putting it." (306). Bøhn & Dypedahl, among others, believe that reading fiction can be a fruitful way of acquiring intercultural competence, especially if it is written from a different cultural perspective (89). The two novels discussed in this thesis fulfil this requirement by both being written by authors who are not Norwegian and having characters with different cultural perspectives from the majority of Norwegian adolescents. Furthermore, most of the characters in Farah and Abdel-Fattah´s novels are refugees or immigrants, which accentuates the cultural similarities and dissimilarities by contrasting native and non-native cultures.

Another part of the rationale behind the choice of novels is based on findings done in The Beyond Bali intervention, which found that approaches that portray acts of violent extremism as something unjust and cruel build empathy and likely lessens the risk of moral disengagement, something that often preludes acts of violent extremism (Aly et al. 383). Therefore, this thesis will see how and why Farah and Abdel-Fatah´s novels can function as humanizers and thereby as inoculators to radicalisation through developing skills like empathy, tolerance, and multiperspectivity.

In many ways, *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* deal with the same themes in the form of extremism, radicalism, terrorism, and adolescent identity formation. It is thus, as this thesis will explore, plausible that they can serve the same purpose of building resilience to extremism. However, the main difference is that while *North of Dawn* could be considered "adult" fiction, *The Lines We Cross* is doubtlessly a work of young adult fiction (YAF). The idea of choosing one "conventional" novel and one YAF novel is to both give pupils a choice on which book

they want to read and to provide them with the option to choose a book that fits their reading proficiency as: "allowing students to make personal choices about what to read […] can help to increase their motivation and engagement" (Carlsen 213). Considering Norway´s high scores on indexes like the PISA test for reading proficiency and EF English Proficiency Index, offering non-YAF books to adolescents could be defended as many Norwegian adolescents hold the English level necessary for reading such books, especially on an upper secondary level.

Norwegian literary critic, Knut Hoem, described *North of Dawn* as a "bittersweet family drama that will inspire everyone that wants to combat extreme fanatics, be it in Somalia or Norway." (2019, my translation). In Nuruddin Farah´s Oslo-based novel, we meet the retired Somali diplomat Mugdi and his wife, Gacalo. As their son, Dhaqaneh blows himself up in an al-Shabaab terrorist attack in Mogadiscio[1], Gacalo and Mugdi take the responsibility of bringing his widow and her two children to Norway to ensure their wellbeing. The widow, Waliya, is undoubtedly either radicalised or en route to becoming radicalised. Mugdi and his family soon understand that saving her children, Naciim and Saafi, from the same fate is up to them. Through 373 pages, the reader follows Naciim and Saafi´s cultural tug of war and the process of finding themselves and their place in their new country as well as Mugdi and Gacalo´s struggle to liberate them from the extremist grasp of their mother. Although most of the characters in the book are of Somali origin, the novel depicts many intercultural encounters that highlight the internal heterogeneity of ethnic groups and illuminate the complexity of culture and belonging. Both "sides" of extremism are brought up with Dhaqaneh´s affiliation to al-Shabaab and the 22nd of July 2011 and other instances of violent right-wing extremism such as the bombing of the Al Noor Mosque in 1985.

In the same way that Mugdi and his family represent democratic values and Waliya represents values of a more dubious character, Mina stands as Michael's saviour from an unnuanced Weltanschauung. As already mentioned, *The Lines We Cross* is a work of YAF, which means that it has a somewhat more straightforward plotline, characters and dialogue. This does not necessarily mean that the didactic value is lesser than in Farah´s novel but rather that it might be easier to discern crucial didactic moments. In the novel, we meet Mina, an Afghani-Australian teen. She has just received a scholarship in a part of town with a higher socio-

[1] Standard English spelling for the capital of Somalia is *Mogadishu,* but as Farah uses the Italian, *Mogadiscio,* this thesis will do the same.

economic status and less ethnic distribution than in her previous neighbourhood, Auburn. At her new school, she meets Michael, son of the founder of an anti-immigration group called Aussie Values. As Mina starts to challenge Michael's preconceived notions on politics and, specifically immigration policies, he needs to take a stance where he either breaks with his family´s conception or keeps his inherited opinions. In a story that resembles a Rome and Juliet pattern, except for this novel not ending in tragedy, both Mina and Michael face experiences that challenge and shape them in what could be called a coming-of-age- story. Through meeting each other and standing up to friends and family, they both, to different degrees, apostatise opinions inherited or learned by others.

Although extremism and the various violent extremist fractions are inherently complex and hard to categorise, we could use the general terms Islamic extremism and right-wing extremism to roughly order the types of radicals and extremists represented in Farah and Abdel-Fattah´s novels. Although there is a reason to believe that all intercultural competence attained has applicability to other contexts, cultures and forms of extremism, a decision to focus on the two most likely types of extremism in Norway, following the PST threat assessment, seems reasonable. This is because the average Norwegian pupil is most likely to encounter these two forms of extremism.

Islamic extremism is a complex term that has yet to be defined in a way that comprises all aspects of this form of extremism. While most both Muslims and non-Muslims rightfully, agree that Islamic extremism has little to do with the faith of Islam, the denominator for the different branches of Islamic extremism is the usage of Islam as either a motivation or justification for extreme beliefs and actions ("Ekstremisme og terrorisme"). As the different branches can hold a wide variety of aims and motivations, we can only speak in general terms when attempting to find common divisors. A recurring aim of many Islamic extremists is the wish for a society to be ruled by a political form of Islam often based on Islamic law or Sharia ("Ekstremisme og terrorisme"). This, therefore, often results in opposition towards western countries, ideas and values. The UN writes that Islamists might work for this revolt in peaceful ways but that it becomes extremism the moment violence is regarded as a legitimate way of achieving it ("Ekstremisme og terrorisme"). Using violence to implement political Islam is also known as jihadism, which translates roughly to "holy warfare" (Leraand et al. 2019). The novels discussed in this thesis revolve around two Islamic extremist groups, the Taliban and al-Shabaab. Following definitions set forth later in this thesis, these two groups are terrorist jihadist groups known for their violent conduct and acts of terror. Whereas al-Shabaab, often

thought of as a Somali branch of al-Qaeda, has partaken in international terrorism, the Taliban has mostly been active domestically in Afghanistan.

While Islamic extremism is hard to define, right-wing extremism and radicalism might be of an even more indiscernible character. This might be because there is no common trait in the form of religion and that many of the ideologies connected to the far-right vary significantly in shape, organisation, and aims. Centre for Research on Extremism distinguish between right-wing radicalism and -extremism, where radicalism is defined as: "a specific ideology characterised by 'illiberal opposition to equality" and that it is "associated with radical nationalism, authoritarianism, populism, and xenophobia" (Jupskås 10). Right-wing extremism is in some ways a continuation of radicalism as it is "usually defined as a specific ideology characterised by 'anti-democratic opposition towards equality'" and in addition to having the same connections as radicalism to racism etc., it is also connected with exclusionary nationalism and conspiracy theories (Jupskås & Segers 7). Considering the imbricating elements, the line between radical and extreme might be a bit diffuse, something Abdel-Fattah´s novel demonstrates well through the heterogeneity of the members of Aussie values. Both books make mention of different fractions of the right-wing community, from the various members of the fictitious Aussie Values to the convicted terrorist Anders Behring Breivik. In common for all of the different right-wing radicals or extremists mentioned is the yearning for changes that breaks with either fundamental human rights or international law.

In Farah´s novel, in a conversation with his friends Birgitta and Johan, Mugdi says: "I would say that the violent culture of right-wing groups here in Europe is very much like Shabaab´s" (Farah 180). Intuitively, right-wing and Islamic extremism/radicalism sounds like the complete opposites as they, in most cases, are proclaimed enemies. Peculiarly enough, there is a striking similarity between these two "groups" both in aims, approach and ideology (see Bakali 2019). For instance, both sides want to break with international law and human rights. Both sides use utopian-like narratives to describe what their ideal world looks like, and to some extent, many of both right-wing extremists and Islamic extremists are interested in installing authoritative leaders. Furthermore, the antagonism of multiculturality and the idea of their own culture and values as superior are shared characteristics. This thesis will not explore the similarities and dissimilarities further. However, the similarities mentioned above give reasons to believe that knowledge about one form of extremism facilitates understanding other types of extremism.

The knowledge about one form of extremism and the fact that this knowledge can facilitate understanding of other forms of extremism suggest some applicability or transfer value. Applicability and transference of knowledge from one subject/theme to another immediately give association to in-depth learning. Referred to as "dybdelæring" in the national curriculum (LK-20), in-depth learning has come to hold an important position in modern pedagogy and curricula: "School must provide room for in-depth learning so that the pupils develop understanding of key elements and relationships in a subject, and so they can learn to apply subject knowledge and skills in familiar and unfamiliar contexts." (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 12). In-depth learning is, according to Ludvigsen-utvalget:

> [...] gradually developed knowledge and a lasting understanding of terms, methods and connections in subjects and between subject areas. This involves that we reflect upon our own learning and use what we have learned in different ways in known and unknown situations, alone or with others. (NOU 2014:7, 35, my translation,)

Seeing the abovementioned similarities between various extremist groups; a pupil who has in-depth knowledge about the concept of extremism or one or more extremist groups should be able to recognise comparable factors in other extremist groups. In building resilience to radicalisation, this is of significant importance as extremist groups seldom label themselves as extreme, and the individual has to determine this on their own.

As to be explored in the section about preventing radicalisation (2.3), there is a reason to believe that intercultural competence and resilience to radicalisation is a form of deep knowledge. Although there are multiple ways in-depth knowledge can be acquired, Janice Bland writes, "Thus, the training of deep reading is a valuable and constructive component of the in-depth learning that is emphazised in Norway´s new Core Curriculum" (Bland 73). An assertion that supports this thesis´s focus on acquiring in-depth knowledge through deep-reading. Thus, by deep reading either *North of Dawn* or *The Lines We Cross* the desired outcome will be in-depth knowledge about intercultural competence and how this relates to radical and extremist ideas. Therefore, fiction needs to have the ability to change the pupils.

In both novels, various elements of intercultural competence become a sort of guiding lantern that takes characters out of trajectories to becoming radicalised, through either the characters themselves both consciously and unconsciously adapting intercultural skills or through other characters teaching or treating them with intercultural care. As the fundamental aspect of this

inquiry is the acquisition and development of intercultural competence through literature, this thesis relies on the premise that literature can have a metamorphic effect. As possessing and learning intercultural competence to a large extent revolves around attaining a certain mindset or attitude towards other cultures, the literature needs to have the ability to change the reader. This thesis will therefore rely on the theory of the vicarious reading experience put forth by, among others, Patrick H. Dust, who believes that: "imagination in literature can become not only a positive technique for reflection on human action and emotion, but also and above all, a potent instrument of transformation." (143). The fact that readers learn or attain various lessons from reading literature, be it grammar, spelling, etc., is not controversial considering the strong position literature has held and still holds in national curricula LK-06 and LK-20. However, as much of the didactic value of reading literature is focused on language learning, this thesis, supported by various scholars, argues that also mindsets, morality and social skills can be learned through deep reading of fiction.

In addition to being a source of intercultural competence, literature can also function as a counter- or alternative narrative to extremist narratives. Throughout history, different extremist groups have utilised the persuasive impact of fiction through means such as storytelling, literature, and movies. One example of such fiction is *The Turner Diaries* by William Luther Pierce. Having been connected to several convicted right-wing extremists and terrorists, like Philip Manshaus, there is little doubt that extremist fiction like *The Turner Diaries* can be used to radicalise people. However, similarly to how fiction can be used to create violence and hatred, it could counter or create an alternative to extremist messages. Linda Schlegel believes that "Because narratives seem to play such an important role in extremist communication and radicalization processes, it is only logical to assume that narratives could also support efforts in preventing and countering radicalization processes" (199). Tobias Richter and Markus Appel found that: "Contrary to general dual-process models of persuasion, models of persuasion through fiction also imply that persuasive effects of fictional narratives are persistent and even increase over time (absolute sleeper effect)." (113). This thesis will, therefore, based on Schlegel, Richter and Appel, also explore how *The Lines We Cross* and *North of Dawn* can hold a persuasive potential and why the novels could be considered to be high-quality counter- and alternative narratives (CAN).

The thesis is built up by 4 main parts. Part one "Theoretical Framework" is divided into three subsections where the first section seeks to elaborate on the term intercultural competence, and the second explains the terms radicalisation, extremism and terrorism. The third subsection of

part one seeks to show how teachers of English literature can contribute to preventing radicalisation through deep reading, vicarious reading experiences and utilising the persuasive impact of fiction. Part two and three will investigate how intercultural competence and resilience to radicalisation is portrayed in, respectively, Nuruddin Farah´s *North of Dawn* and Randa Abdel Fattah´s *The Lines We Cross.* Part four, "Discussion", seeks to tie together the theoretical concepts with the novels and argue that the in-depth knowledge of intercultural competence acquired from reading the novels could result in increased resilience to radicalisation. The discussion will also show how the novels can have a double function by working as counter- or alternative narratives to extremist narratives.

2 Theoretical Framework

The very core of this thesis is built on the thought that possessing intercultural competence will reduce the risk of radicalisation by creating resilient individuals that can withstand the forces of extremist ideas, ideologies, and Weltanschauungs. Therefore, the following sections will be devoted to explaining the concept of intercultural competence and how this relates to building resilient individuals. As this thesis is concerned with acquiring intercultural competence through fiction about extremism and radicalism, a discussion on the relationship between radicalisation and intercultural competence will also be conducted. This chapter also explores the persuasive impact of fiction by discussing theories on deep reading, in-depth learning, and counter- and alternative narratives (CAN).

2.1 Intercultural competence and its importance

Considering Norway´s role as a founding member of the Council of Europe, this thesis's definitions and fundamentals will be based on their pamphlet "Developing intercultural competence through education" from 2014, henceforth referred to as "CoE 2014". The rationale for this choice is the role the CoE has played and still plays in promoting human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Both the institution of the CoE and its values concur with the core values of education and training given by the Norwegian Directory for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet or UDIR). The pamphlet's values and contents also resonate well with the interdisciplinary topics from LK-20, which are *health and life skills, democracy and citizenship*, and *sustainable development*. In addition to the CoE and UDIR, this chapter will also draw on some other scholars in the field when found necessary to either strengthen or elaborate on some terms and concepts. As this thesis is concerned with what the CoE (2014) describes as formal education, i.e. a school setting, intercultural competence will be examined with an educational lens.

An understanding of intercultural competence is, as the CoE (2014) write, dependent on the definition and understanding of a handful of other terms such as identity, culture, intercultural encounter and competence (13). These terms will be investigated before an attempt to define intercultural competence is made.

Merriam Webster defines identity in the following way: "the distinguishing character or personality of an individual" ("Identity"). There are, however, more dimensions to this as an

individual can have numerous identities depending on context and that the individual builds their identity on several qualities. The CoE (2014) distinguishes between personal and social identities. Personal identities are, according to the CoE (2014), constructed by using personal attributes, interpersonal relationships or roles and autobiographical narratives. Personal attributes revolve around an individual´s personality traits such as extroversion, tolerance etc. Interpersonal relationships and roles are concerned with positions the individual holds to other individuals, such as father, boss, friend or teacher. The autobiographical narrative is the story about an individual´s self, often based on childhood and adolescence, drawing on education, family background, and life events. Social identities, on the other hand, focuses more on the association to social groups such as nations, religions, sports clubs etc. While the different qualities are weighted differently depending on setting and context, individuals also use several of them when identifying themselves; this is known as intersectionality. A person can, for instance be a caring Muslim mother who is also a manager of a football club.

As this chapter is about intercultural competence, cultural identities hold a predominant position in defining intercultural competence. Cultural identities are "the identities which people construct on the basis of their membership of a cultural group" (CoE 2014, 13). This leads us to the term culture and cultural groups. Defining culture has been proven to be hard and has been attempted by numerous seminal scholars such as Immanuel Kant and Jean Jacques Rosseau. The CoE (2014) explains the difficulty of defining culture by pointing to the fact that cultural groups are "always internally heterogeneous groups that embrace a range of diverse practices and norms that are often contested, change over time and are enacted by individuals in personalised ways" (13). However, there seems to be an agreement that the sum of material, social and subjective aspects produce what we think of as culture.

Bearing in mind the complexity of identity, culture is just as complex as an individual can belong to multiple cultures simultaneously. The young characters of the novels discussed below display this complexity by showing affiliation to multiple cultures. As displayed in the novels are the numerous constituents that make up culture not definite as, like the CoE (2014) describes, many of the aspects or resources that constitute cultures are: "contested by different individuals and subgroups within it." (14). This internal variability and contestation of membership by both people who belong to the culture and those who do not, create what the CoE (2014) describes as "very fuzzy" cultural boundaries (14). The fuzzy boundaries are further fuzzed by the fact that cultural affiliation is fluid and dynamic and that "[f]luctuations in the salience of cultural affiliations are also linked to the changes which occur to people's

interests, needs, goals and expectations as they move across situations and through time." (CoE, 2014, 14-15).

So how do individuals use cultural identities to create their own identities? The CoE (2014) write:

> The ways in which individuals relate to the cultures to which they are affiliated are complex. Because cultural participation and cultural practices are context-dependent and variable, individuals use the multiple cultural resources which are available to them in a fluid manner to actively construct and negotiate their own meanings and interpretations of the world across the various contexts which they encounter in their everyday lives. However, cultures also constrain and limit the thoughts and actions of individuals. Cultural affiliations influence not only how people perceive themselves and their own identities, but also how they perceive others, other groups and other ways of acting, thinking and feeling, and how they perceive the relationships between groups. (15)

As well as the subjective use of culture to form an identity and meaning, there is also the presence of others who might ascribe identities to an individual, usually based on visible characteristics, i.e., race, gender, and religious expressions. The attributes weighted in ascribed identities may not be of importance to the individual, but they can be damaging to the individual's welfare and social adaptation (CoE 2014, 15). This ascription is a central negative force in stereotyping, marginalisation and other processes related to intercultural encounters. See for instance how the bullies in *The Lines We Cross* call Mina a terrorist, because of her Muslim-Afghani affiliation (149).

The complexity of intersectionality, identity and cultural identity makes intercultural encounters no less complex. Considering the multiple identities a single individual can possess, an encounter multiplies the identities in the equation. Knowing the broad reach of the term culture, an intercultural encounter can therefore be the meeting of people that differ in matters such as countries, religions, sexual orientation, regions, lifestyles, generations etc. An encounter can be either physical or virtual and for it to be an intercultural encounter, the CoE (2014) write that the "cultural differences are perceived and made salient either by the situation or by the individual's own orientation and attitudes." (16). Dypedahl and Lund use the term "lenses" to describe discrepancies in intercultural encounters (19). Therefore, the case cannot

be made that every encounter is an intercultural encounter since culture is not always salient and the interlocutors could use the same lens for an encounter. But for an intercultural encounter to run smoothly with a successful outcome, intercultural competence is required (CoE 2014, 16).

This brings the term competence into question. Based on context and objectives, there are various ways of using the term competence; in this case, however, competence is the "combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied through action in any relevant situation." (CoE 2014, 16). As this thesis will discover is this concept of context-applied knowledge a central feature of in-depth learning. To get a better grip on the components of intercultural competence, one of the most prominent researchers in the field and co-author of the mentioned CoE pamphlet, Michael Byram, has broken it down into five "saviors" (1997). These five saviors are: attitudes, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and critical cultural awareness. Despite seeing other variations of the key components of intercultural competence, such as the UNESCO publication called Intercultural competences which has 10 points, one could argue that most of them overlap with Byram´s saviors. In addition to this, Deardorff (2006) found that: "It is important to note that 80% or more of the intercultural scholars and administrators in this study were able to reach consensus on 22 essential elements of intercultural competence" (254). These elements found by Deardorff also concur well with Byram´s model. The CoE pamphlet has, for the sake of its connection to education, named the components: *attitudes, knowledge and understanding, skills and action***.** Considering Byram's co-authorship in this publication and the fact that several influential scholars within the field co-author it, these components will be guiding for this thesis.

The CoE (2014) elaborate on the components by giving bulleted lists for every component. As these lists contain points of interest that will be recurring throughout this thesis, the entire list is attached as an appendix (Appendix A). The following paragraphs seek to synthesise the bullet points given by the CoE by elaborating on the key elements from the bullet list.

The *attitudes* component of intercultural competence has to do with the subject's approach and demeanour towards other cultures, values and people with different backgrounds. Respect, values, openness and empathy are terms central to the aspect of attitudes. An interculturally competent individual will respect people with different cultural affiliations and value cultural diversity and differences in view and practices. The interculturally competent individual will

also possess attitudes that make them open to and willing to approach and co-operate with people from other cultures. Individuals with interculturally competent attitudes are also tolerating the ambiguities and uncertainties intercultural encounters can bring while also being willing to question what one has previously taken for granted. Finally, willingness and ability to empathise with people regardless of cultural affiliation are central perquisites to an interculturally competent attitude. (CoE 2014, 19)

The *knowledge and understanding* component of intercultural competence has to do with comprehension of structures of identities, cultural groups, language and interactions. As already mentioned, culture, cultural groups, and identities are complex matters. The interculturally competent individual knows about this complexity and understands that cultural groups often are heterogenic and diverse and that factors such as beliefs, values and practices often are a result of one´s cultural affiliation. Knowledge and understanding also include understanding and awareness of cultural and social mechanisms such as stereotypes, prejudices, preconceptions, and discrimination. Additionally, an understanding of the importance of language and communication is central as they are factors that can influence how we and others express ourselves. Last but not least is the understanding of processes related to interactions and constructions of knowledge central to the knowledge and understanding component of intercultural competence (CoE 2014, 19-20).

The *skills* revolve around the subject´s ability to mentally break free from a single-tracked culturally determined mindset and behaviour, but also the ability to adapt to different cultural environments. The intercultural skills can be categorized into roughly 3 parts. Skills in (1) both discovering and interpreting information about other cultures is important as this is necessary for practising multiperspectivity, i.e. “the ability to decentre from one’s own perspective and to take other people’s perspectives into consideration in addition to one’s own” (CoE 2014, 20). Related to the ability to leave one´s perspective is the aspect of (2) cognitive flexibility, where the individual is able to adjust their thinking based on situation and context. That is not to say that the interculturally skilled conform to every other culture, but instead that they can make critical judgements about one´s own and other cultures´ cultural beliefs, values and practices. As part of this judgement is empathy a central aspect as the interculturally skilled needs to have “the ability to understand and respond to other people’s thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings” (CoE 2014, 20). Finally, (3) language and communication skills are essential as intercultural encounters often involve challenges related to differences in languages, linguistics and

sociolinguistics. Therefore, the ability to act as a translator, mediator, and interpreter in an intercultural encounter is central to the skills component of intercultural competence.

Like any other types of knowledge, intercultural- attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills are useless to acquire unless they are put into practice since the entire point of developing competence is to handle future situations better. The CoE (2014), therefore, write that "in order for an individual to be credited with intercultural competence, they must also apply their intercultural attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills through actions" (21). These actions will therefore be performed based on the attitudes, knowledge and understanding and skills components of intercultural competence. The *actions* revolve around using intercultural attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills to either 1) increase one´s own intercultural competence 2) interact and co-operate well with people of different cultural affiliations 3) challenge opinions and practices that do not concur with human rights and defence and protection of the dignity of people regardless of cultural belonging. Defending and protecting the dignity of others may include intervening in situations where discrimination and/or prejudice occur or challenging expressions that involve stereotypes. This could also be related to the action of mediating in situations where culture can be the root of the conflict (CoE 2014, 21).

The abovementioned elements constituting intercultural competence will be applied when the intercultural competence of the characters in *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* is examined and discussed. However, before seeing the elements in relation to the novels, a rationale for focusing on intercultural competence needs to be in place. Considering the educational scope of this thesis, the justification will be rooted in the national curricula (LK20).

The components of intercultural competence described above are, as already mentioned, essential for an intercultural encounter to run smoothly and, therefore an essential aspect in a significant quantity of all encounters. However, as teachers in Norway are pledged to teach according to curricula put forth by the government, teaching intercultural competence also needs to be founded on government-decided policies. As The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training holds the role of the guiding institution for teachers and employees in the Norwegian school, the Knowledge Promotion á 2020 (Kunnskapsløftet or LK-20) will provide the basis for the compulsory dimension of why intercultural competence is important.

The core elements of the English curriculum (ENG01-04) consist of three elements: *communication, language learning,* and *working with texts in English*. Given how intercultural competence is imperative to communicating smoothly with people of other cultural affiliations, intercultural competence certainly plays a central role in learning communication in our globalised world. Although the connection arguably is a bit weaker, language learning could be connected to intercultural competence because English is a lingua franca that could enable intercultural communication and experiences. Under *working with texts in English,* intercultural competence finds its most substantial support where it is stated that:

> By reflecting on, interpreting and critically assessing different types of texts in English, the pupils shall acquire language and knowledge of culture and society. Thus the pupils will develop intercultural competence enabling them to deal with different ways of living, ways of thinking and communication patterns. They shall build the foundation for seeing their own identity and others' identities in a multilingual and multicultural context. (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 3)

Therefore, developing intercultural competence through literature is not only a compelling didactic thought but also a compulsory demand for teachers in Norwegian schools.

In addition to finding support in the subject-specific curriculum, intercultural teaching also finds support in the core curriculum through the three interdisciplinary topics *health and life skills, democracy and citizenship* and *sustainability*. Dypedahl and Bøhn explain the connection between intercultural competence and the interdisciplinary topics like this:

> To be able to manage life at the individual level, it is an advantage to communicate constructively with other people. More generally, democracy and citizenship are based on tolerance of different mindsets and different ways of doing things, while agreeing on general principles. Similarly, sustainability both locally and globally requires tolerance of different perspectives, but also cooperation. (84)

Based on the connections between intercultural competence and both curricula, it is safe to say that focusing on intercultural competence could and should be done. Since the curricula make no explicit mention of how intercultural competence relates to resilience to radicalisation, the

following sections will therefore look at how the topics of radicalisation, extremism and violent extremism tie into intercultural competence and education.

2.2 Radicalisation, extremism, violent extremism and terrorism

In the introduction, the terms radicalisation, extremism and terrorism were used interchangeably; considering their affinity and overlapping elements, it would be right to do so at an introductory state. However, for the sake of accuracy and apprehension of the topic, these terms and relating terms will be elaborated on in the following paragraphs. The definitions are based on the "Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture" by the Council of Europe (2018).

A radical is a person that wants to change the very fundaments of the existing political system or society. A common misconception is that all radicals are violent in their quest for change, but radicals can also advocate for their wish for change through more peaceful measures such as hunger strikes and sit-down strikes. Another pitfall of discussing radicals is the ever-changing dynamics of morality and what is accepted as right or wrong. Many people or movements that we today acknowledge as ground-breaking advocates for justice have been regarded as radicals at some point in history. This MA thesis is therefore concerned with radicals that hold opinions that oppose democratic values like justice, equality and non-violent political processes. This includes, as shown in the introduction, right-wing- and Islamist radicals. Because radicals deviate strongly from the majority in their opinions and that those opinions are a product of culture rather than biology, radicals have at some point gone through a radicalisation process. This is evident in Farah´s character, Waliya, who was "more into nightclubbing than praying" (131) before becoming radicalised.

Extremism could be thoughts, beliefs and behaviour that deviates strongly from the majority´s norm which in most contexts is related to human rights and freedom. In many ways is extremism a continuation of radicalism as extremists hold even more radical opinions. The Council of Europe writes that "if the behaviour that is associated with an extremist position does not violate or undermine the human rights of other people or does not aim to introduce non-democratic social or political change, then that position should be respected." (2018, 104) Nevertheless, when the extremist position starts to undermine human rights, restrict others´ freedom or aim to eliminate democratic practices, the CoE writes that restrictions prescribed by law are necessary to protect other citizens and the democratic society in general (2018, 104).

Violent Extremism is a position that either advocates, encourages, or makes use of violence. According to the CoE, the violence does not necessarily need to have a "transparent social or political goal" and often takes the forms of hate crimes directed towards racial, ethnic, and religious groups (2018, 104). However, the perpetrators are often associated with extremist beliefs and the acts of violence are likely a way of attempting to achieve a social or political change. An example of violent extremism that is often referred to in a Norwegian context is the murder of Benjamin Hermansen, who in 2001 was stabbed to death by three neo-Nazis based on his skin colour.

Terrorism is a specific form of violent extremism where violence, often against civilians, is used to spread fear to achieve political change (Sitter). Terrorism could therefore be regarded as a political strategy that combines violence and communication where scaring a society and influencing governments is just as important as creating damage (Sitter). According to the Center for Research on Extremism, terrorism is often compared to a theatre "because of the manipulative and often spectacular ways in which violence is used to create a particular effect (i.e., fear) in an audience" (Ravdal & Lygren 41). In Farah´s novel Dhaqaneh blows himself up at the entrance of an airport, killing several civilians in the name of al-Shabaab, an act that certainly is carried out to spread fear. The aim is also often to destabilise, polarise, and demoralise populations in order to make way for a political change. For instance, the terror group Islamic State, has expressed that they want to "eliminate the grey zone" (Vick 6) and divide the population into friends and foes. Most extremist fractions hold this unnuanced worldview in common but with varying narratives and foes.

It should be clear that transitioning into extremism, violent extremism or terrorism requires some form of a radicalisation process. As preventative work is inherently easier and more effective than battling problems after they have occurred, the next paragraphs will be devoted to examining studies that focus on preventative work. This focus is also justified by the fact that work like de-radicalisation and rehabilitation largely falls outside the realms of conventional education and literary studies.

2.3 Preventing radicalisation

Since this thesis is concerned with preventing radicalisation, an overview study on earlier preventative work against radicalisation seems like a logical basis for the following pages. William Stephens, Stijn Sickelnick and Hans Boutellier have reviewed seventy-three papers that offer suggestions for effective preventative work. The article immediately distinguishes

between Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) and Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE). CVE has seen much criticism as it has been regarded as an approach that likely leads to stigmatisation, primarily directed toward Muslim communities and young Muslim males (see Sjøen 2019). If CVE leads to stigmatisation, it can have counterproductive results as they contribute to marginalisation, a factor that increases the risk for radicalisation among young adults. PVE has therefore been the focus of this study and will also be guiding for this very thesis.

As this MA thesis is concerned with preventative work, preventing violent extremism essentially revolves around preventing radicalisation. The studies examined by Stephens et al. use the term preventing violent extremism and/or radicalisation. This is because much of the work addressing preventative work focuses on holding extremist ideas rather than actions (347). Having read the seventy-three papers in-depth, Stephens et al. concluded that there were four recurring themes "(1) the "resilient individual," (2) identity, (3) dialogue and action, and (4) connected or resilient communities" (348). These four themes appear in multiple disciplines as preventative work is a multisectoral task. This includes the education sector. As this MA thesis is concerned with building resilience and strengthening resilient identities, "the resilient individual" and "identity" aspects will be weighted here.

The resilient individual revolves around developing capacities, skills and characteristics that prevent the agent from becoming attracted to or drawn toward violent extremist ideologies or groups (Stephens et al. 348.) Stephens et al. have found three major approaches apparent in the literature studied; "(1) developing cognitive resources, (2) fostering character traits, and (3) promoting or strengthening values." (348).

Cognitive resources relate to the mental toolbox the subject has in encountering other people and ideas. This means that the person has capacities that make them able to question and assess messages. As messages and ideologies play a role in a radicalisation process, these ideas can be "undermined through developing certain ways of thinking." (Stephens et al. 348). Another approach focuses on the individual's ability to think with complexity as extremist ideologies often portray situations or the world in an unnuanced way, as black or white, right or wrong etc. This approach does not address the ideologies explicitly but instead focuses on: "facilitating an individual's normal development pathway towards value pluralism." (348). Relating to the two approaches above is the idea of developing the ability to think critically. This means that

educational institutions are not to tell their pupils what to think but rather equip them with critical skills to "resist attraction to extremist messages" (349).

Fostering character traits is connected to the idea that possessing certain character traits lessens the likelihood of engagement in violent extremism. The aspect of a well-developed empathy is central here, as engaging in violence against other humans is related to "a process of dehumanizing the "other"—disengaging from their normal internal moral sanctions that would otherwise prevent them from engaging in violence." (Stephens et al. 349). The intervention, called the Beyond Bali intervention, described in Stephens et al., revolves around developing empathy for victims of terror by showing how extremist violence is something "unjust and cruel" (349). Another approach suggested is the simultaneous development of empathy and self-esteem. This approach showed that the development of empathy was linked to a decrease in positive attitudes towards ideology-based violence but that self-esteem training potentially led to higher levels of narcissism and, consequently more positive attitudes towards ideological violence (349).

Promoting or strengthening values relates to building a set of values that are stronger than those of extremist ideologies. Human rights and citizenship has been promoted as one set of values that can withstand extremist values. Furthermore, the argument is that human rights "foster an inclusive culture" and consequently "equips young people to speak against extremism" (349). On a more specific level, some researchers suggest promoting values of tolerance and togetherness to "counteract the hatred and polarization of extremist narratives" (350). In the context of *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross,* Mugdi and Mina prevail as advocates for these types of values. However, most researchers believe that this construction of strong values lies within the realms of education. Seeing how the aspects of the resilient individual overlap with a large number of demands for intercultural competence, PVE might benefit from utilising intercultural competence education.

The aspect of identity is believed to be central in PVE as adolescence is a vulnerable period, and that lack of affiliation and identity can lead to marginalisation and susceptibility to radicalisation. Two suggestions are presented; "creating opportunities to discuss issues of identity and strengthening and validating identities" (350).

Stephens et al. believe that in adolescent years, extremist ideas can provide a basis for one´s own beliefs and that extremist groups can provide a sense of belonging. Considering that the

ages between 12 and 19, the ages Norwegian adolescents attend lower- and upper secondary education, is the majority of an individual´s adolescence, the role of education systems in the formation of identities and attitudes can hardly be overstated. Educational institutions could, therefore, play an important role in facilitating areas where youth can explore issues of identity and strengthen and validate various identities. Stephens et al., therefore, believe that this can be done by creating spaces where the exploration of "what it means to be human and what we understand by identity and community" is central (351). Furthermore, promoting a "sense of belonging and positive identity for all people of all heritages", is considered to be of great value. The aspects of identity are salient in both novels discussed in this thesis as many of the characters are in their teens and therefore in a period of identity search and opposition to inherited beliefs and values. As this thesis, through discussing the vicarious reading experience, will explore, creating spaces of exploration and promoting positive identities can be done through reading fiction.

2.3.1 Building resilience to radicalisation through education

Like most psychological phenomena, radicalisation processes evade simple explanations and patterns due to the large number of factors that can contribute to shaping an individual. The European Commission's Expert Group on Violent Radicalisation confirm this complexity by writing: "Although a number of contributing factors may be singled out as facilitators for the emergence of radicalisation processes leading to terrorism, it is impossible to identify one single root cause." (10). Radicalisation processes can vary significantly with regards to aspects such as period and approach; however, according to the Council of Europe (2018), there is a subset of conditions that could lead to an increased risk of radicalisation. According to the CoE (2018) and the aforementioned study by Stephens et al., educators and educational institutions could play an important role in eliminating or changing these conditions. Effective PVE is, as already mentioned, multifaceted and a multisectoral effort and should therefore be integrated into several aspects of education, including the English subject. Through targeted tasks and readings, English educators in Norway, and most likely in other countries, can accommodate their teaching to target some of these conditions (CoE 2014, 33). While all predisposing conditions listed can have some connection to educational institutions, four of the conditions relate directly to intercultural competence and, therefore the topic of this thesis. These four are "Difficulties with personal identity", "Simplistic thinking style", "Lack of exposure to positive role models and alternative points of view", and "Racism and discrimination" (CoE 2018, 106-107). The following paragraphs will therefore be devoted to showing how these conditions can

be countered through rising levels of intercultural competence through reading fiction about radicalisation.

As proposed by Stephens et al. is the formation of one´s own identity a central aspect in building resilience to radicalisation. While there are a handful of measures that can build strong identities both inside and outside the realms of education, there is reason to believe that this includes reading fiction. The aforementioned Janice Bland writes, "Deep reading literature can promote all aspects of cognition and engagement with text, including emotion empathy, ethics, knowledge of the world, ideology and social justice issues" (73). Returning to the CoE's (2014) definition of identity and personal identity, the aspects mentioned by Bland concur with central aspects of the formation of an individual´s identity; personal attributes, interpersonal relationships or roles and autobiographical narratives. This means that reading, especially deep reading, could have an alterable potential where readers' identities can be influenced. Literature could therefore be an instrument capable of building strong, resilient identities and, to some extent, function as a remedy against difficulties with personal identity. This point will be further discussed in the sections on the persuasive impact of fiction.

Seeing how simplistic thinking styles or "black/white thinking", according to both the CoE (2018) and Stephens et al. is a condition that often is present among radicalised individuals, developing intercultural competence seems like a logical solution to tackling this condition. Considering how the elements of intercultural competence overlap with Stephens et al.´s findings that highlight the development of cognitive resources, promotion of values and fostering of character traits as effective ways of building resilience to radicalisation, intercultural teaching should be a reasonable basis for developing these qualities. Aspects such as multiperspectivity and decentring represent the complete opposite of simplistic thinking. Therefore, successful intercultural teaching would also complex the pupils' thinking styles and strengthen resilience. In the context of literature, reading can be a way of challenging simplistic thinking styles as the text can showcase the falseness of the simplistic notions that the reader holds and debunk them. Furthermore, through taking on someone else's perspective, the reader is forced out of their own perspective, an action this thesis will return to. Both novels discussed in this thesis excel in showing the complexity of matters such as cultural groups, politics and values, something that could be interpreted as an opposition to simplistic thinking and portrayals.

"Lack of positive role models and alternative points of view" might be the condition where educators could potentially make the most significant difference. Which role models and perspectives pupils encounter or are exposed to in their spare time is outside a teacher's control. This means that the role models and perspectives the pupils encounter at school are of massive importance as some pupils lack good role models and perspectives outside school. Obviously, teachers should be good role models, but in addition, they can expose their pupils to good role models and points of view through their teaching. The CoE (2018) write: "being exposed to a wide range of ideas, opinions and reflections from other people and texts, can divert individuals who might be considering violent extremism from pursuing this path." (107). Therefore, teachers should strive to teach texts that offer alternative points of view and good role models. This thesis will discover that characters like Mugdi, Mouna and Mina are good role models and that *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross,* therefore are suitable for this aim.

As mentioned earlier, is marginalisation a common denominator for radicalised people. This marginalisation is often a result of racism and discrimination, which points to the importance of intercultural competence in combating marginalisation. As racism could be connected to radicalism and extremism, tackling racism would, therefore with regards to PVE, have a double effect; 1) reducing the likelihood of people becoming racist and, therefore possibly extremists and 2) avoiding pushing other people into radicalisation by marginalising them through racism. Dypedahl and Bøhn believe that the internal outcome of intercultural competence teaching is metacognitive intercultural awareness which means self-monitoring and decentring (85). A successful learning outcome of intercultural competence teaching would therefore be a person aware of one´s actions and therefore a person less likely to act in a racist manner. Furthermore, the ability to intervene and express opposition to acts of prejudice and discrimination is an essential part of relevant actions that comprise intercultural competence. This means that an interculturally competent individual will show resistance to marginalising behaviour and thus reduce factors that could lead to marginalisation. This restistance is displayed in the novels through, among others, the characters of Michael and Mugdi.

Based on the curricula mentioned above, how they overlap with intercultural competence and how the acquisition of intercultural competence is closely related to PVE, education according to LK-20 is already preventative. However, there is a reason to believe that literature directly concerned with extremism and radicalisation will strengthen the learning outcomes as these works underline the importance of intercultural competence. Literature that revolves around extreme opinions is likely to challenge the pupils, something Sissil Lea Heggernes believes is

essential for learning to occur (114). Furthermore, literature that displays the negative effects of terrorism and extremism is more likely to build empathy, an important element in intercultural competence and resilience to radicalisation (Aly et al. 383).

For literary education to have a preventative effect through the teaching of intercultural competence, the texts read by pupils needs to have an impact on them. Supported by arguments by, amongst others, Linda Schlegel, Patrick Dust and Kidd & Castano (2013), the following section will display why literature is an effective didactic remedy for teaching numerous elements that constitute intercultural competence.

2.3.2 The persuasive impact of fiction

Fictional narratives can, according to Markus Appel and Tobias Richter, "have a persistent implicit influence on the way we view the world, and that these effects may last longer than the effects of typical explicit attempts to change beliefs by presenting claims and arguments." (129). This finding shows the potential persuasive power that fiction holds, something that in the context of PVE should be of interest considering how modern adolescents, to a large extent, immerse themselves with fiction of various forms i.e. Netflix, cartoons, etc.

Seeing the importance of alternative points of view and positive role models to lessen the risk of radicalisation, Linda Schlegel´s discussion of the persuasive impact of fiction in counter- and alternative narratives in PVE and CVE sounds like a logical addition to this thesis´ theory. Schlegel starts off by describing how fiction can lead to changes in an adult's attitudes, values and behaviour towards things like perception of crimes, attitudes towards homosexuality and stigmatised groups (194). Similarly to how adults use stories to teach children lessons and values, narratives also influence and teach adults. Therefore, narratives are a large part of extremist communication as well; this includes both right-wing and jihadist extremists. Schlegel then points out that if narratives can be used to radicalise, they might also be used to prevent it. In this sense, fiction could have an inoculative effect. While fictional narrative persuasion is a well-founded concept in influencing attitudes, values and behaviour (Johnson et al. 2014, Vezzali 2015 & Green et al. 2004), its relation to counter- and alternative narrative (CAN) campaigns is yet to be explored extensively. Schlegel, therefore, offers four suggestions for developing high-quality fictional CAN campaigns: "transportation, identification, perceived realism, and utopian narratives" (218).

Transportation relates to the reader´s ability to enter a state where "all mental systems and capacities become focused on the events occurring in the narrative" (Schlegel 202). This state makes the reader vulnerable to being altered and consequently change their attitudes, beliefs and intentions (203). Transportation is, as discussed below, an essential part of the vicarious reading experience and deep reading. The level of transportation is essential in building a convincing CAN. This means that the books should offer a graspable world, likeable characters and generally have a high degree of quality (203). These features are as explained later a central part of why *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* could be convincing CANs.

Identification revolves around the degree of identification the reader gains through the characters. This means that the CAN is more likely to be persuasive if the reader is able to put "oneself in the protagonist's shoes" (205). Schlegel writes that perceived similarity is more likely to lead to identification if the similarity is drawn from factors outside demographics, such as psychological similarity, also known as psychological proximity (205). Characters´ likeability is crucial in building identification and emotional appeal. If the identification is good and the narrative is of high quality, they may override the ideology held by the audience, making them more susceptible to change their attitudes and beliefs. Schlegel also mentions the usage of non-realistic characters and that the identification with them has applicable dimensions to real life. The importance of identification is also stressed by Sissil Lea Heggernes, who believes that this can strengthen the readers´ engagement with the text (113). Naciim and Michael are characters that the Norwegian upper- or lower secondary pupil could identify with as they share multiple denominators connected to psychological proximity. The fact that Michael and Naciim are male could also increase reading motivation among male readers according to Christian Carlsen (212).

Perceived realism is a key factor in the persuasiveness of fiction, which means that the narrative needs to be coherent and believable within the story world constructed (209). This means that genres like science-fiction might work as long as they have high internal realism. If the reader perceives the work as realistic, they are more likely to evoke emotional involvement and identification with the narrative's characters. Similarly, if the perceived realism is low, the narrative will likely have a reduced persuasive impact (209). Since perceived realism is something that is up to the individual to judge, deciding the realism of the novels in discussion could be hard and, as discussed below, an aspect that could influence the persuasiveness of the novels.

Extremist persuasive fiction often tends to paint dystopian and utopian pictures. They describe the horrors of the worlds where their ideology is lacking and the utopia and bliss of a world where their ideology is ruling (Thorleifsson, 2019; Winter, 2015). This dystopian and utopian narrative can be found in the aforementioned neo-Nazi-novel *The Turner Diaries.* Schlegel believes that current CAN literature has been struggling with countering this as they have been concerned with the defence of the status quo. Furthermore, it is problematic for CAN to use utopian narratives as they often encourage grand revolutionary changes that would conflict with our democratic ideals. Schlegel, therefore, suggests that CAN should hold utopian elements where the fiction presents an alternative vision for societal progress through "acknowledging the imperfection of the current system and grievances of the target audience in a fictional setting while providing room for revolutionary aspirations." (215). The role of the fictional characters is also important as they can give the reader a feeling of empowerment and significance that can be translated into the real world, thereby giving readers the idea of the individual´s role in changing the world. (215). In Abdel-Fattah´s novel, Michael represents such empowerment and revolutionary aspiration when he confronts Aussie Values on live television (355).

For fiction to achieve the effects that change the values, attitudes and beliefs of the reader, a *vicarious experience* needs to take place. This is because literature as opposed to, for instance, videogames is non-interactive in the sense that the reader has no saying in the choices made in the text. Oxford Learner´s Dictionary defines "vicarious" as "felt or experienced by watching or reading about somebody else doing something, rather than by doing it yourself" ("Vicarious"). This points to the effect a text can have on a reader and how reading could be a way of decentralising, a term that is also central in the components for intercultural competence. The vicarious experience is twofold, where the reader first must transition away from reality to acquire the experience and then return to reality to incorporate the experience(s) into their perceptions and thoughts. A process that resembles both Piaget´s cognitive theory of assimilation and accommodation and Bandura´s social learning by its connection to observation, imitation and modelling.

P.H. Dust believes that the two agents, reader and text, should be called imagination and symbol as these terms are more specific to describe the process. Using the term symbol eludes texts that do not invite participation for the imagination, texts that are not "fundamentally different from and transcends our ordinary experience of reality" (144). Imagination describes the "strange capacity we possess of occupying a space that goes beyond the real." (145) and therefore considers that the reader does not always have to de-realize for all texts. Dust

describes three stages of an aesthetic experience: first, the reader has to surrender to the symbol, secondly, the reader's intuitions are either verified or rejected as appropriate or inappropriate before it thirdly "culminates in the possession of the work as a complete, coherent and autonomous whole" (146).

Dust believes that the two opposing views in the debate regarding imagination's impact on "real life" is the question of whether it functions as a trickster or a midwife. Those believing that the imagination in a literary experience functions as a trickster believe that aesthetic experiences are subtle forms of escapism where "the imagination forges the symbol as a powerful fortress against reality" (150). The thought of the imagination as a trickster finds support among some philosophers and orthodox psychoanalysts. Sigmund Freud compares the writing of literature to children´s play and fantasy: "The creative writer does the same as the child at play. He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from reality." (144). This distancing from reality could be related to Peter Wessel Zapffe´s ideas that man uses distraction as a remedy against what he calls "the pain of living" where man "limits attention to the critical bounds by constantly enthralling it with impressions" (no pag.). Immersing oneself in imagination could therefore by some be seen as a way of tricking the mind to avoid reality. Dust, on the other hand, believes that "imagination in its involvement with the symbol can be a midwife, a kind of bridge leading to a qualitatively richer and more valuable existence." (152). This opinion finds support among more modern psychologists such as Erik Erikson, who uses the same comparison between children's play and literature. Erikson believes that "mature man´s inspired toys: dance drama ritual" offers an "intermediate reality" (qtd. in Dust 153). Literature, or the symbol, therefore, becomes an arena for mental experimentation where man can grapple with challenges and difficulties and thereby "bind together an inner and an outer world" or the imagination and reality (Dust 153). Considering the primitive need for wholeness and completion, Dust believes that the reader is pushed into reconciling literature with life as a result of both unconscious and conscious processes (153). Experimental research can support Dust´s assertions as Kidd & Castano (2013) found that the brain responds similarly to emotion regardless of whether it is experienced in fiction or in real life.

The idea of the symbol as the midwife finds support among didacticians and constitutes a large part of the rationale behind why literature should be read in compulsory education (see Bland 2020 and Bøhn & Dypedahl 2020). Multiple benefits of reading have already been mentioned. Still, it is also worth mentioning that deep reading of literature can develop children's and

young adults´ Theory of Mind, i.e., their ability to make up a theory of another person's mind and shift perspective (Kidd & Castano 2013 and Bland 74). Theory of mind and the vicarious reading experience are closely related as they both require the agent to leave their mindset and take someone else's into account. Such an experience requires full devotion to the symbol, something that can be achieved through deep reading.

So far, the approaches for acquiring intercultural competence have been theoretical. That is why the concept of deep reading and its connection to in-depth learning will be discussed as they offer a more graspable/pragmatic/functional approach to intercultural teaching in literature.

Deep reading as a term was coined by Sven Birkerts, who in *The Gutenberg elegies: the fate of reading in an electronic age* writes that deep reading is "the slow and meditative possession of a book." (196). In a chapter where Birkerts is highly critical of audiobooks, he writes, "We don´t just read the words, we dream our lives in their vicinity." (146). Deep reading is essentially the individual process of giving oneself to the words of a text and giving it one´s own personal meaning, it is, therefore, the antonym of skimming and superficial reading. According to Maryanne Wolf and Mirit Brazillia, deep reading revolves around reflection, critical analysis, deductive reasoning, analogical skills, and insight (131). In this process, where the reader attempts to construct meaning and grapple with the text using earlier knowledge, "they learn to build knowledge and go beyond the wisdom of the author to think their own thoughts." (133). Although complicated terms are used to describe the processes that occur during deep reading, deep reading is, in practical terms, the process of reading a book at a speed and setting that allows the reader to think beyond the written words. This process could be related to the aspects of transportation and surrendering to the symbol as described above. This could point to deep reading as a viable approach to acquiring a deeper understanding of intercultural communication and encounters. This approach could be further supported by the fact that many of the processes connected to deep reading resemble the processes of in-depth learning, a pedagogy that holds a strong position in LK20 and modern pedagogy in general.

In-depth learning is, as described in the introduction, the state of having a deep enough knowledge to think complexly and interdisciplinary about a given topic. Although a clear global consensus around the definition of in-depth learning is lacking, the definition from Ludvigsen-utvalget will be guiding for this thesis:

> […] gradually developed knowledge and a lasting understanding of terms, methods and connections in subjects and between subject areas. This involves that we reflect upon our own learning and use what we have learned in different ways in known and unknown situations, alone or with others. (NOU 2014:7, 35, my translation,)

Since the knowledge is deep, it is self-explanatory that it is a form of knowledge developed over time, which means that an elaborate learning process has to occur. Deep reading of literature could, as already mentioned, facilitate such a process as, according to Ludvigsen-utvalget, "[…] learning something in depth demands active involvement from the pupil" (NOU 2015: 8, 11, my translation). This does not mean that the teacher is revealed from their duties, as "Sufficient time for specialisation [fordypning], challenges accommodated to the individual and the groups level of proficiency, and support and tutoring are keywords in the work of the teacher." (NOU 2015: 8, 11, my translation).

Considering how the sought outcome of an in-depth learning experience is applying "what we have learned […] alone or with others" (NOU 2014:7, 35), Ludvigsen-utvalget´s definition of in-depth learning points in the direction of a resemblance between resilience and in-depth knowledge. Bearing in mind Stephens et al. and the CoE´s (2018) ideas of enhancing knowledge to create resilience; One could assume that resilient individuals possess knowledge that they are able to operationalise in different contexts and in encountering different types of messages. Resilience is thus a form of in-depth knowledge and likely a deep knowledge constituted by intercultural competence. Pupils who deep read either *North of Dawn* or *The Lines We Cross* could therefore acquire an in-depth knowledge of an intercultural character that in turn can make them resilient to radicalisation.

3 Intercultural competence in *North of Dawn*

The main task of this thesis is to demonstrate the connection between literature that examines radicalisation and extremism in a critical light, intercultural competence and resilience to radicalisation. The novels that were chosen, therefore, need to reflect these topics. This chapter will explore how Nuruddin Farah´s *North of Dawn* portrays extremism, radicalisation and intercultural competence and how this portrayal in turn relates to resilience to radicalisation.

Described as "a perennial also-ran for the Nobel Prize in literature" (Eldridge, 141), Nuruddin Farah (24 November 1945) is regarded as one of the most influential modern African writers. A Somali refugee, Farah has lived in multiple countries in several parts of the world. Having a degree in philosophy, literature and sociology, Farah has an academic and sophisticated fundament for writing about complex social matters. As *North of Dawn* is dedicated to his sister, Basra Farah, who in 2014 was killed by the Taliban in Kabul, Nuruddin also has personal experience with the wretchedness of terrorism and extremism. In addition to giving the novel extra significance, Farah´s background also symbolises a sophisticated and diplomatic response to the extremities of the world. A response that resonates well with the message of this thesis.

3.1 Intercultural encounters

Considering the didactic function of fiction, as explained in 2.3.2, there is reason to believe that reading about intercultural encounters will offer an opportunity for learning and reflection. It is, therefore, necessary to discover some crucial meetings in the novel to discuss their didactic potential and, eventually their possibility of building resilience to radicalisation in the reader. Having discussed the multiple variables in the discussion around culture and identity, it is safe to say that *North of Dawn* is rich in intercultural encounters. The character gallery is rich, and to explain every intercultural encounter in the book would be difficult; therefore, the main focus will lay on Mugdi, Waliya, Saafi and Naciim. This focus is due to the thesis´ focus on radicalisation, where Waliya and Dhaqaneh represent the radicalised, Naciim and Saafi represent the ones vulnerable to radicalisation, while Mugdi represents the resilient and integrated individual.

Vivian Gerrand writes that Farah valorises "humanist cosmopolitanism, and convivial democratic coexistence" (106). Based on multiple incidents from the book, there is reason to believe that these values, to a large extent, are represented through Mugdi. Through various incidents, the reader understands that Mugdi values pluralist societies where different

ethnicities and backgrounds can coexist. This is revealed by the sadness he shows when he comes to think that scenes "where a variety of races congregate at a public arena, are unavailable in Mogadiscio" (21). Furthermore, Mugdi is, through his work as an ambassador and diplomat, a champion of democratic processes, equality and peace. Finally, Mugdi is concerned with seeing the nuances in cultural groups and the individuals that represent their customs: "Mugdi is upset, not so much with the boy as with the tradition that pampers the male species." (52). Mugdi challenges the stereotype of Muslim-Somali males as aggressive and overtly masculine through his gentle character and support of women´s rights.

As much of the novel revolves around the relationship between Mugdi and Naciim, this encounter is intercultural for several reasons. Firstly, Naciim is Mugdi´s step-grandson and twelve years old, and there is naturally an age difference. Secondly, Mugdi is well integrated into a western country and has lived in Norway since 1988. Naciim is raised in a war-torn Somalia and a refugee camp in Nairobi. Thirdly, Naciim is the child of an extremely religious mother and can be considered a religious person at the start of the novel, as opposed to the "culturally" Islamic Mugdi. Therefore, despite hailing from the same country, at least three aspects could make their encounter intercultural. As these aspects often are salient in their encounters, it is safe to say that the Naciim – Mugdi encounter is intercultural. For instance, at their first encounter, Mugdi understands that Naciim is the family´s *Mahram*, male guardian; however, he promptly tells Naciim that he has no reason to badmouth his mother and sister and that his family won't approve of such behaviour (52). Mugdi´s values of equality clash with Naciim´s inherited and inequal values.

Considering Naciim´s status as an immigrant in a city and country that differs greatly from Nairobi and Somalia, many of his encounters with both non-Somalis and members of the Norwegian-Somali diaspora are of an intercultural character. As Naciim quickly adapts to a lifestyle where his own and others´ cultures can interact comfortably, cultural differences become less salient in his later encounters. But as Naciim gradually becomes a comfortable integrated Somali immigrant, his encounters with his mother and her religious acquaintances have an increasing degree of interculturality as Naciim and his mother drift apart culturally. A process that shows the fluidity of culture and identity as "[f]luctuations in the salience of cultural affiliations are also linked to the changes which occur to people's interests, needs, goals and expectations as they move across situations and through time." (CoE, 2014, 14-15). This thesis will explore how the intercultural encounters Naciim goes through shape him into becoming a resilient, culturally confident and liked young man.

Saafi, Naciim's sister, is, as Gerrand writes, "significantly more traumatized" (111) than her two-year younger brother. Being a rape survivor and suffering under the oppressive customs of the religion imposed on her by her mother, Saafi´s cultural identity is, to a larger extent more salient as she is both female and more religious than her brother. Her encounters with Mugdi, Gacalo, Timiro, Qummoa and Mouna -people central in her process of breaking free from the extremities of her mother, are intercultural as they all have backgrounds, religious convictions, lifestyles and ages different from hers. These people are central to building Saafi´s intercultural competence and, therefore resilience. Although given less space in the novel than her brother, Saafi prevails as an interculturally strong and resilient individual that is able to settle comfortably in her new surroundings.

Naciim and Saafi´s background makes them significantly more at risk of becoming radicalised compared to other adolescents. Their stepfather Dhaqaneh, also Mugdi´s son, held a central position in al-Shabaab and killed himself in a suicide terrorist attack. Waliya, their mother, is radicalised and has several extremist acquaintances who frequent their home. On top of this are Naciim and Saafi, as Stephens et al. describe, in a vulnerable period of their life, i.e., their adolescent years. Additionally, until they arrive in Norway, there is reason to believe that they lacked positive role models and alternative points of view, which could mean that they have been taught a simplistic thinking style. Looking back at the Council of Europe´s list of predisposing conditions for radicalisation, including "Difficulties with personal identity", "Simplistic thinking style", and "Lack of exposure to positive role models and alternative points of view", Naciim and Saafi are at risk of being on the trajectory of becoming radicalised.

Mugdi believes that the children, Naciim and Saafi, "are of a different generation and mindset" (90) than Waliya. Considering the novel's ending where Waliya fails to find her place in Norway and heads back to Somalia, and most likely the Shabaab, there is reason to believe that integration attempts either failed or had no effect on Waliya. Unlike her children, culture is a lot more salient in her encounters as she could be considered a more extreme character and, therefore further away from the other characters culturally. Compared to every other character, except Zubair and Imam Fanax, Waliya is an extremist that holds values that undermine human rights, restrict others´ freedom and is anti-democratic. As this thesis is concerned with PVE (preventing violent extremism) and not CVE (countering violent extremism), Waliya´s encounters will be used to show how extremism stands in clear contrast to intercultural competence and resilience.

3.2 Attitudes, knowledge and understanding, skills and action

Vivian Gerrand believes that the main characters of *North of Dawn,* Mugdi and Naciim, "are both highly resilient" and that "[…] Saafi too proves to be highly resilient" (111). Taking this point a step further, I stated in the introduction that the basis for the characters´ resilience is either conscious or unconscious adaptation of elements of intercultural competence, or it is achieved through interculturally proficient teaching or treatment by others. Therefore, the following pages will look at how the different characters´ resilient traits can be related to the demands for intercultural competence set forth by the Council of Europe (2014). These traits are revealed through incidents from the novel, which means that this chapter will rely on juxtaposing incidents from the novel with the CoE list over components of intercultural competence. As the CoE list consists of 31 components, this section will, for the sake of brevity, either combine some of the components or not prioritise them at all. This does not mean that the components omitted are lacking or not present. The CoE´s list, which is available in the appendix, will either be referred to by quotes in quotation marks or paraphrased.

Attitudes

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, attitude is a component of intercultural competence related to the subject's approach and demeanour towards other cultures, values, and people with different backgrounds. In Farah´s novel, there are numerous examples of incidents where subjects either possess, lack or learn attitudes that ensure smooth intercultural communication and coexistence.

As two of the points in the CoE list concern "being willing to seek out opportunities to engage and co-operate with individuals who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own." and "being open to, curious about and willing to learn from and about people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own;" (19), Naciim promptly reveals that he already possesses some degree of intercultural competence. He is curious from his first meeting with Mugdi and quickly finds friends from various cultural backgrounds. In strong opposition to his mother, Waliya. This opposition is evident in how Waliya reacts to Naciim´s new friends: "There are these Palestinian twins whom he has befriended […] Only yesterday did he tell me that the twins are Christian and he has been eating their haram food. And they have an older sister. It angers me to hear this." (101). Their differences in attitudes to valuing and engaging with people of other cultures culminate when Waliya violently pushes Edvart, Naciim´s Norwegian friend, out of their flat and calls him an "infidel" and claims that

everything he touches is haram (147). Naciim furthermore describes the constitution day as: "the happiest day since coming here [Norway]" (171). This quote, combined with the fact that Mudgdi, Gacalo and Himmo explained to Naciim how the 17th of May is a national beacon for a pluralistic and multicultural Norway, suggests that Naciim, in accordance with the CoE list over intercultural attitudes, values "cultural diversity and pluralism of views and practice" (19).

Saafi being more under her mother's influence, is more reluctant or afraid to adapt to her new surroundings. However, supported by various characters in the novel, Saafi both shows and acquires intercultural attitudes. Mouna, daughter of Mugdi and Gacalo´s friend Himmo, is central in this process. She displays the possibility of maintaining one's roots and culture while also taking in other cultural customs. Mouna behaves in concordance with one of the CoE´s demands for intercultural attitudes that reads "valuing cultural diversity and pluralism of views and practices" (19):

> Because Saafi never misses a prayer, Mouna has taken upon herself to make sure that Saafi's choices and prayer times are taken into account and accommodated. Nor does Mouna allow Naciim or anyone else to tease Saafi cruelly. And when Saafi absents herself from the group, something she does every now and then, either praying or because she is uninterested in the rough and tumble games the others are fond of taking part in, Mouna never fails to forbid the others from pestering her. When any of the others describe Saafi as someone in the slow lane and Saafi is too timid to defend herself, Mouna steps in and retorts that Saafi will catch up and surpass them, no doubt about it. (136)

Strengthened by Mouna´s inclusiveness and Qumman´s therapy sessions, Saafi, with increasing self-confidence, wants to take in Norwegian cultural influences and attend Norwegian school. Throughout the novel, she also, in line with another one of the CoE´s points, starts questioning what previously she has taken for granted as "normal" (19). Saafi questions the practices and beliefs of her mother and her extremist acquaintances. This is, for instance, reflected in how she thinks about the women in the gym that behaved "as though they were equal to men" and how all her life, she has "been used to one way of looking at the world. Now the visit to the gym has shown me [Saafi] that there is an entirely different way of seeing." (201). She goes on to speak about how different ways of being raised might influence the way women think about themselves (201). Saafi, like Naciim, acquires and demonstrates the intercultural attitude of

"being open to, curious about and willing to learn from and about people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own" (CoE 2014, 19).

Mugdi and Gacalo affect their step-grandchildren in two ways; through treating them with an intercultural competent attitude and teaching them attitudes related to intercultural competence. By doing this, they contribute to the formation of two resilient identities that withstand the radical impulses from their mother and her social circle. Early on, Mugdi explicitly states that Naciim has as much to learn as he has to unlearn […] if he is to navigate his way around this new environment." (57). There is little doubt that Mugdi, in this situation, points to the attitudes Naciim holds regarding various cultural conditions, e.g., gender roles. The way Mugdi and Gacalo offer Naciim and Saafi a haven and help them settle in their new country shows their intercultural attitude of "being willing to empathise with people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own" (CoE 2014, 19). Often, they also scaffold the development of the children´s intercultural competence when they challenge the attitudes they have taken for granted or when they introduce them to people of different cultural orientations, such as Himmo, Mouna, Johan and Birgitta. When they expose them to cultural impulses such as 17th of May celebrations or a Norwegian gym where the genders behave as equals, they implicitly give Naciim and Saafi the chance to immerse themselves in new cultural impressions.

Apart from the attitudes they display in the presence of the children, Gacalo and Mugdi demonstrate that they possess many of the attitudes connected to intercultural competence. Considering their close friendship with Johan and Birgitta and Mugdi´s relation to Nadia, suggests that they, as stated in the CoE´s list of demands for intercultural attitudes, are "respecting people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own;" and are "willing to seek out opportunities to engage and co-operate with individuals who have different cultural orientations and perspectives" (19). Furthermore, seeing how Mugdi reflects on the beauty of a multicultural society on more than one occasion shows that he values diversity and pluralism. Mugdi´s admiration of Henrik Wergeland also suggests this, as Wergeland was one of Norway´s most prominent advocates for pluralism and diversity. Additionally, seeing how he has immersed himself in Norwegian culture and history suggests that he, in concordance with the CoE´s list, has been "open to, curious and willing to learn from and about people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives" (19). It is also important to note how Mugdi, through his intercultural attitudes, becomes a good role model for Naciim and Saafi and thereby

addresses the predisposing condition for radicalisation that relates to "Lack of exposure to positive role models and alternative points of view" (CoE, 2018, 106-107).

Knowledge and understanding

Knowledge and understanding revolves, as mentioned above, around the comprehension of structures of identities, cultural groups, language and interactions. This could be related to the characters´ ability to, as Stephens et al. call it, think with complexity and, therefore, the building of resilience.

Early in the novel, Naciim expresses rigid ideas about different groups and how they are supposed to act. This is evident in how he sees himself as the guardian of the family and the belief that this comes with privileges such as having the right to choose the best sleeping room and being the only one allowed to open the entrance door to their flat. Naciim is unaware of his own "overt and covert discrimination" (CoE 2014, 19), therefore lacking a central element of intercultural knowledge and understanding**.** However, through his developing attitudes, he soon learns to see the nuances of both his own culture, the Norwegian culture and how different extreme cultures influence each other. One instance where these nuances are pointed out is when his friend Edvart, after Naciim has excused his mother´s rude behaviour and pushing, points out that "We are never responsible for what our parents say or do" (151). Edvart displays intercultural knowledge and understanding as stated in the CoE´s list and understands "the internal diversity and heterogeneity of all cultural groups;". Due to this knowledge, Edvart resists basing his impression of Somalis on Waliya, something that would have resulted in a wrongfully negative impression.

In a conversation about the history of the 17th of May, Gacalo mentions the 1983 neo-Nazi bomb threats against schools that encouraged immigrant children to participate in the constitutional day celebrations. Naciim is shocked when he hears this and asks: "What is wrong with these people?", "Why all this hate towards Muslims?" (161). Mugdi goes on to paint a more nuanced picture when he explains that not only the right-wing extremists oppose "Wergeland's inclusive, peace-abiding interpretation of the principles of the Norwegian Constitution" (161), but that extreme Islamists also oppose these values. To further explain his point, Mugdi explains that when two elephants wrestle, it is the grass that gets damaged. When Naciim does not follow Gacalao explains that: "In other words, when the native-born extremists get into a no-holds-barred fight with the radical Muslims, the victims will be the innocent folks,

who belong to neither group," and she continues to state that "We must all beware of provocateurs, no matter their allegiances, who are enemies to the nation at large and of peace everywhere" (161). To this, Naciim responds: "Wergeland and every peace-loving person here and elsewhere would oppose both groups. Am I right?" (161), revealing that he has understood central parts of what constitutes the CoE´s demands for intercultural knowledge and understanding, namely **"**understanding of processes of cultural, societal and individual interaction", and" understanding the influence of one´s own cultural affiliation on one´s experience of the world and other people" (19). This understanding also points in the direction of Naciim reaching some sort of in-depth knowledge about the similarities of extremists as explained by Bakali 2019.

In clear contrast to Naciim, there is Waliya. She refuses to register for language training and believes that her children instead should learn and master "the blessed, sacred of the Prophet and the Koran" (66). She does, in other words, not understand "the fact that other people´s languages may express shared ideas in a unique way" (CoE 2014, 19), something the CoE believe is essential for being attributed with intercultural competence. Instead of showing "awareness and understanding of one's own and other people's assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and overt and covert discrimination;" (CoE 2014, 19), another aspect central in contributing to intercultural competence, she holds on to her preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices. This is apparent in her advising against Naciim and Saafi exploring the neighbourhood as "She thinks we [Naciim and Saafi] will be beaten up by the white gangs who rape black girls and do not like blacks or Muslims." (79). This fear could perchance be ascribed to experiences in a refugee camp and therefore be the result of trauma rather than opposition to new impulses. Another incident that shows Waliya´s lack of intercultural knowledge and understanding is when she ruins Naciim´s Norwegian flag because it depicts a cross and is a "Christian thing." (155). People with basic understanding of Norwegian culture know that the Norwegian flag is historically regarded as a secular artefact used by religious and non-religious people and groups. As the CoE believes that "knowledge of the beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural orientations" (20) comprises intercultural competence, it is safe to say that Waliya lacks significant parts of the "knowledge and understanding"-part of intercultural competence.

Skills

In *North of Dawn,* the resilient characters display a range of skills related to intercultural competence, i.e. they show the ability to perform mental processes that ensure smooth cooperation, understanding and respect between cultures. Central here are virtues like empathy, cognitive flexibility and adaptability.

Mouna, Himmo´s daughter, proves to possess multiple intercultural skills that teach Naciim and Saafi traits of resilience. Being a Norwegian-Somali born in Europe, raised to "embrace her hyphenated identity" (212), her cultural backdrop varies greatly from Naciim and Saafi´s. However, "Never having known what it is to be a refugee, and born and raised by a caring mother, Mouna has been the most empathic toward Saafi" (136). Saafi and Naciim both grow very fond of her: "Everything actually centers around Mouna." (135). Mouna´s inclusiveness and care for the two children shows that she masters multiperspectivity, i.e., "the ability to decentre from one's own perspective and to take other people's perspectives into consideration in addition to one's own." (CoE 2014, 20). Being highly empathic, she also has the ability to understand and respond to other people's thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings;" (CoE 2014, 20). The CoE lists empathy and multiperspectivity as skills involved in intercultural competence, supporting the argument of Mouna as interculturally competent. Gerrand describes Mouna as "one of North of Dawn's most resilient and hopeful Somali Norwegian characters" (112) something, based on the skills described above, could be due to her possessing high levels of intercultural competence. As Mouna represents the nuanced individual that defies a black and white worldview, her death at the gun of a terrorist shows that extremism is about, like the Islamic State stated, eliminating the grey zone. Farah´s decision to kill one of the novel´s most wonderful characters is a message against extremism by portraying it as something unjust and cruel. This portrayal concurs with the PVE efforts described in Aly et al. (2014) which suggests that portraying terrorism as something unjust and cruel lessens the risk of adolescents becoming morally disengaged.

Naciim early on shows an intercultural skill of cognitive flexibility, i.e., "the ability to change and adapt his thinking according to the situation and context" (20) as listed by the CoE. Although not always in the most respectful manners: "Look at them. Stepdad Dhaqaneh used to say that in Europe time is money. They must learn to move fast." (48). This cognitive flexibility is also evident in the fact that he, as opposed to Waliya, does not hesitate to follow Norwegian laws and customs, e.g., using a seatbelt (50). Furthermore, Naciim reflects on why

Waliya won´t allow him to say his prayers after he has finished his homework when, according to Naciim, Islam would approve of such prioritisation: “Islam allows that, but my mother doesn´t.” (131). This shows Naciim´s ability to “critically evaluating and making judgements about cultural beliefs, values practices and discourses” (CoE 2014, 20), a skill listed in the CoE´s list of intercultural skills. Despite his worsening relationship with his mother, Naciim shows intercultural competence when Waliya is arrested. When Naciim functions as both a translator and mediator between his mother and the police, he demonstrates that he, according to the CoE list, is interculturally skilled. This is because he shows **“**plurilingual skills to meet the communicative demands of an intercultural encounter” and displays his ability to “[…] act as a mediator in intercultural exchanges, including skills in translating, interpreting and explaining.” (20). During an unnecessarily brutal arrest at dawn, Naciim deescalates the conflict by using intercultural skills (314). The crude arrest and lack of common language between Waliya and the police could have created a conflict, but Naciim´s intercultural competence makes the encounter go smoother than it could have.

Mugdi, through his past as a diplomat and his interest in the translation of Ole Edvart Rølvåg´s *Giants in the Earth*, could almost be said to have had intercultural skills as his work and hobby. Mugdi´s profound interest in Norwegian history and emigration history displays his skills in discovering information about other cultures and perspectives. Furthermore, Mugdi often juxtaposes the situation of the emigrated Norwegians in the early 1900s Minnesota and Somali immigrants in Norway, something that, according to the CoE, shows intercultural competence as he displays “skills in interpreting other cultural practices, beliefs and values and relating them to one’s own;” (20). Mugdi is also highly competent in taking the perspectives of others. This ability is reflected in how he reacts to people holding values of a dubious characters. At one instance, a gay couple walks past the table where Mugdi and Nadia are sitting and express their dissatisfaction with Oslo's “preponderance of foreigners” (287). Instead of condemning them, Mugdi rather ascribes their views to ignorance and believes that if they: “had read the history of Norwegian migration […] neither of them would hold such views” (287). Mugdi is, on multiple occasions, also highly critical of the Somali culture, a criticism he occasionally takes too far, as Birgitta labelled him “the closest she had known to a self-hating Somali.” (28). Mugdi´s reflections on the synergy of cultures reveal his intercultural skills as the CoE believes that “skills in critically evaluating and making judgments about cultural beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products, including those associated with one’s own cultural affiliations, and being able to explain one’s views;” (20) is a skill involved in intercultural

competence. Once again, this stands in clear contrast to how Waliya regards everything that is not strictly Muslim as haram and infidel.

Actions

The most visible element of intercultural competence in *North of Dawn is* expressed in the characters' actions. Especially Mugdi is not afraid to intervene and challenge attitudes and behaviours that contravene or compromise human rights.

One of Naciim´s strong suits is his willingness to seek opportunities to engage with people of various cultural backgrounds. Evident in the different friends he finds throughout the novel and his solid friendship with Edvart and Janine, Naciim seems to have taken relevant intercultural action. Especially considering how the CoE believes that "interacting and communicating appropriately, effectively and respectfully with people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own" (21) is relevant intercultural action. The strength of his friendships should, of course, also be attributed to Edvart and Janine´s intercultural competence as well. Furthermore, Naciim also takes relevant action when he challenges his mother's radical opinions on several occasions**.** For instance, when Waliya, on a purely religious and possibly racist basis, pushes Edvart out of their flat, Naciim expresses opposition:

> "His mother was nice and she welcomed me." "What's that supposed to mean?" "She treated me well, as a human being." "Get out of my sight, before I change my mind and give you the smack you deserve." Naciim, in a rage now, says, "Why do you have to be so rude to my friend? Why chase him as if he were a stray dog with rabies? Why can't you welcome him nicely, the way his mother welcomes me?" "Because he is unwelcome in my home." "Remember, Mum, this is his country." (147)

This opposition concurs with the CoE´s understanding of relevant intercultural action which states that relevant actions include "challenging attitudes and behaviours (including speech and writing) which contravene human rights, and taking action to defend and protect the dignity and human rights of people regardless of their cultural affiliations" (21). Naciim´s defence of human rights and the dignity of people is also apparent in the fact that he reports and expresses dissatisfaction with the rough unwarranted arrest of his mother. An aspect that also shows that

Naciim has not become assimilated, or Nowegianized, but rather that he has the capability to keep a critical distance to both cultures.

Timiro, Mugdi´s daughter, takes relevant intercultural action when she cares for Saafi. Following the CoE´s list, she is **"**interacting and communicating appropriately, effectively and respectfully with people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own;" (21). Timiro takes intercultural action when she provides Saafi with a safe space where they can "discuss differences in views and perspectives" (CoE 2014, 21). This is done by both taking Saafi to Qumman, who restores her dignity and self-worth through therapy sessions, and through building her self-confidence and independence by teaching her how to use various items that would make her more independent, i.e. shower and tampons (83). Timiro also challenges Saafi on her opinion regarding her usage of the niqab. Through the treatment Saafi receives from, among others, Timiro, Qumman and Mouna, she becomes a resilient individual that strong enough to challenge Walyia´s behaviour and defend her own and Naciims dignity and human rights;

> […] but when Waliya threatened that she would give Naciim the beating of his life if he defied her instructions one more time, Saafi not only defended Naciim with vigor, but also reminded them that it was not their place to speak of matters that are not of their concern. She added that Naciim had the right to have a bit of fun so long as his actions are inoffensive to the community and our faith. (186)

Besides being a great display of intercultural action, Saafi´s emancipation supports the idea of the double effect of intercultural competence and resilience. Interculturally competent individuals, such as Timiro and Qumman, create new interculturally competent individuals and therefore also resilient communities. Another point of interest is how closely related the strength of Saafi´s identity and self-esteem are to her resilience. This suggests that Saafi´s helpers, most likely unconsciously, address the predisposing condition of "difficulties with personal identity" (CoE 2018, 106-107). This will be further discussed when Stephens et al.´s aspect of identity in PVE is discussed.

Mugdi takes intercultural action on multiple occasions by, as described by the CoE, "intervening and expressing opposition when there are expressions of prejudice or acts of discrimination against individuals or groups"(21). Especially one instance shows his ability to take intercultural action: When Mugdi hears a Somali couple making racist remarks about three

generations of an African family celebrating the constitutional day, he cannot let it pass: "Incensed, Mugdi can't control himself. Storming over to the couple, he inveighs against their behaviour, which white Europeans might use to justify their own discriminatory observations about black people. He adds, "Why don't you desist from this fascist behaviour today of all days?" (167). Although his reaction is stern and contradicts the idea of respectful interaction, it shows alertness to discrimination and prejudice. On a more subtle level, Mugdi also takes intercultural action when he is "challenging cultural stereotypes and prejudices;" (CoE 2014, 21). For instance, when he makes Naciim breakfast. Being rather uncomfortable with the fact that an older man in "a woman´s place" is making him breakfast, Naciim´s cultural stereotypes are challenged without a word being spoken (164). This challenging of stereotypes seems to have an immediate effect as Naciim offers to take the dishes after the meal.

Seeing how Mugdi and Gacalo are an established and well-integrated Somali couple that interact respectfully and smoothly with most people suggests that they are highly interculturally competent. Furthermore, the fact that they, with the help of other characters, can help Naciim and Saafi out of a radicalisation trajectory imposed on them by their mother suggests that they know how to bring forth and teach the necessary nuances to understand the fallacies of extremism. While Waliya "is forever creating havoc, unable to come to terms with her new country's climate, culture or faith, nor able to tear herself loose from all that defined her back in the land where she was raised" (195), Naciim and Saafi either possess or learn the skills necessary to feel comfortable and become integrated into a new society. Gerrand believes that the explanation behind Saafi and Naciim´s resilience to radicalisation lies within their "bridging capital," i.e., their "capacity to link and interact meaningfully between communities with different backgrounds, values and belief systems" (110). Considering how Gerrands definition of bridging capital concurs with definitions of intercultural competence given by, amongst others, the Council of Europe, there is reason to believe that the resilience displayed in *North of Dawn* in essence is intercultural competence. Seeing how Waliya ends up going back to Mogadiscio and the Shabaab while Naciim and Saafi thrive in their new country embracing their new hyphenated identity, the novel leaves little doubt about the importance of intercultural competence.

4 Intercultural competence in *The Lines We Cross*

Bearing in mind this thesis´ focus on finding the connection between literature, intercultural competence and radicalisation, this chapter will, following the same structure as the previous chapter, seek to locate these connections in Randa Abdel-Fattah´s *The Lines We Cross.*

Frequently used in Norwegian education[2], Australian author Randa Abdel-Fattah (6 June 1979) has established herself as an expert on issues about feminism, racism, and islamophobia. Having written her PhD on "Islamophobia and everyday multiculturalism from the point of view of the perpetrators" (Abdel-Fattah 2020, 97), Abdel-Fattah has a unique insight into right-wing radicalism and extremism. Described as "keen to use her intervention into popular culture to reshape dominant narratives around racism and multiculturalism" (Abdel-Fattah 2020, 97), Abdel-Fattah´s *The Lines We Cross* could be regarded as such an intervention. Through the analysis presented below, it becomes apparent that reshaping narratives could be done through acting interculturally competent, which is why the following section will look into how intercultural competence is displayed through the characters of Mina and Michael.

4.1 Intercultural encounters

Considering the definitions of intercultural encounters outlined in the theoretical framework and applied in the chapter on *North of Dawn*, Abdel- Fattah´s novel also contains several intercultural encounters. While Farah's novel displays cultural encounters of a more complex character, the intercultural encounters in *The Lines We Cross* are easier to discern, possibly because it is a work of young adult fiction. Bearing in mind the topic of radicalisation and resilience: Michael's parents and *Aussie Values* represent the radicalised. Michael represents the individual vulnerable to radicalisation, while Mina represents the interculturally competent individual that brings nuances to Michael´s initial black/white understanding of the world. As Farah´s novel is concerned with Islamic extremism, Abdel-Fattah´s is concerned with right-wing extremism, something that will give the opportunity to compare and contrast the seemingly opposing fractions of extremism.

Michael´s parents, Alan and Mary, represent a civilised, calm and educated fraction of the far right. They are also non-violent in their wish for change, and calling them radicalised might be

[2] For instance: an excerpt from her novel *Does My Head Look Big in This* (2005) appears in the upper-secondary English textbook *Skills* (2020).

somewhat of a stretch. However, when observing the people they associate themselves with in their organisation, *Aussie Values*, one gets the impression that they do not explicitly refrain from supporting extremist ideas. Alan and Mary´s values and organisation give people with more extreme opinions affinity. Giving affinity and not taking a stance against extremists legitimises their opinions and encourages further extremities. This is evident in the way Michael´s mum responds when she is asked about what a conspiracy theorist who spreads far-fetched racist conspiracy theories online does in their organisation: "He´s not ideal, I know. But well, it takes all sorts to spread our message." (80). Furthermore, many of the opinions Michael´s parents hold go against both international law and human rights. For instance, the wish for stopping Muslim immigration contradicts articles 14 (the right to seek asylum) and 18 (freedom of religion) in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Finally, when the TV-program "Don´t Jump the Queue" describes Alan as "the man who wouldn´t mind the return of White Australia Policy" (193), Alan does not publicly refute this. Something that could be interpreted as an indication of how heavily invested he is in racist ideology.

The most prominent encounter in *The Lines We Cross* is between Mina and Michael. As they are the story's protagonists, the novel mainly revolves around how they go from a complicated relationship with seemingly incompatible differences to becoming a romantic couple. Their encounter is intercultural for several reasons. Firstly, Michael is a white, born and raised Australian, while Mina is an Afghani refugee who has fled the terror reign of the Taliban. Secondly, Mina is, to some extent, Muslim, whereas Michal is the son of the founder of the Islam- and immigration-critical Aussie Values. As discussions about politics and values permeate the novel, Mina and Michael's cultural differences are salient in most instances, making their encounter intercultural. This is also evident in the fact that Abdel-Fattah created Michael's character with the hopes of offering "some insight into the struggle and rewards of taking up that fight [against racism]" (Abdel-Fattah 2020, 114-115). Mina´s strong and independent character also combats the stereotype of Muslim women as oppressed and submissive.

Apart from the obvious Mina – Michael encounter, there is also the encounter between Mina and her new best friend, Paula. Paula being an upper-middle-class teenager with parents who work in highly prestigious jobs; her cultural background varies greatly from Mina´s, as she lives in a mansion in the prosperous part of Sydney. Paula and Mina become best friends, most likely due to their ability to appreciate the nonmaterial qualities of each other. Their friendship is likely the result of both characters holding higher levels of intercultural competence.

As Mina´s family, her mother and stepfather, move from Auburn to the Lower North Shore of Sydney, the family leave a multicultural part of town and move into a more homogenous district inhabited mainly by white Australians. In their new neighbourhood, the family has multiple intercultural encounters with customers at their restaurant, Kabul Kitchen, neighbours and members of Aussie Values seeking to vilify Muslims. Many of these encounters portray a lack of intercultural competence and are therefore rude and lacking smoothness. These encounters will be used to show how lacking intercultural competence could be synonymous with extreme views.

4.2 Attitudes, knowledge and understanding, skills, and action

In her article "The Double Bind of writing as an Australian Muslim Woman", Randa Abdel-Fattah asks: "How do you "unlearn" racism? How do you find the courage to question your parents' beliefs? How do you rise to the challenge of interrogating the sensationalized narratives that bombard us in tabloid media, talkback radio, current affairs and breakfast talk programs and public debates?" (113). Based on the paragraphs to follow, there is reason to believe that the answer to these questions could be the adaptation and practice of intercultural competence. As the following paragraphs will juxtapose incidents from the novel with the list of components for intercultural competence by the Council of Europe, this chapter will explore how Michael becomes a resilient individual through practising elements of intercultural competence. Additionally, this chapter will also show how various encounters, opinions and discussions are influenced by different levels of intercultural competence. As in the chapter on *North of Dawn* are the different elements from the CoE list referred to in quotation marks or paraphrased.

Attitudes

From the start of the novel, Michael is open about his opinions being inherited: "I wear my politics like hand-me-down clothes: Some bits feel like they don´t fit properly, but I expect I´ll grow into them, trusting that because they´re from my parents they´ve come from a good source." (36-37). Considering Aussie Value´s wish for assimilation of immigrants, Michael does not, initially, display the intercultural attitude of "valuing cultural diversity and pluralism of views and practices;" (CoE 2014, 19). This changes later on when he, on his own initiative visits Auburn and finds it to be a vibrant area with lots of life and impressions. His earlier impression of western Sydney as "tacky and unsophisticated. […] gangland and ghetto, underclass and trouble." (202) is challenged. This could not have been possible if it was not for Michael possessing the intercultural attitude CoE defines as "being open to, curious about

and willing to learn from and about people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own;" (19). This change in attitude is also evident in the fact that he seeks to engage in conversation with Mina on numerous occasions. Through these conversations, Mina teaches Michael the intercultural attitude of "being willing to question what is usually taken for granted as 'normal' according to one's previously acquired knowledge and experience;" (19). For instance, Mina criticises him for defending his friend Terrence who "speaks of Indigenous Australians as Abos" (88)[3].

As opposed to Mina and Michael, Mary, Michael´s mother does not possess the intercultural attitudes of valuing diversity and pluralism and "being willing to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty;" (CoE 2014, 19): "You can´t wear the hijab, get a negative reaction, and then complain. You have to take responsibility for yourself and think: *How are people going to treat me? Am I inviting trouble?*" (21). While this statement contradicts "western values" such as freedom of religion, it also shows a lack of respect for people with different cultural affiliations**.** Michael´s parents seldom question what they take for granted and immerse themselves in "facts" that are unnuanced, racist, highly stereotyping and wrong. This is noticeable in their support of Andrew, who accuses the Kabul Kitchen of funding terrorism through buying and serving halal food. Their unnuanced worldview is also apparent in some of their youngest son, Nathan's utterances. Such as: "Dad says Muslims are violent." (72).

Knowledge and understanding

At one moment, Michael becomes aware of his Weltanschauung lacking nuances: "It´s so much easier to live in a world where everything is black and white. I´ve never done gray before, but I suspect it´s one of those things that, tried once, you can never go back." (150). This realisation points in the direction of Michael realising that he needs to extend his knowledge and understanding to communicate and socialise more smoothly with Mina while also being able to live with his parents. Instead of choosing either black or white, Michael realises that he needs to think with complexity to discover his beliefs and values.

Before the realisation mentioned above, Michael was already making an effort to extend his knowledge when he conducted independent research regarding the accusations about halal food funding terrorism. When he reads a federal government inquiry that states that halal

[3] "Abo" is a derogatory term, often used to offend.

certification and terror funding have nothing to do with each other, he extends his intercultural knowledge and understanding by showing, as the CoE writes: "awareness and understanding of one's own and other people's assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and overt and covert discrimination" (19). On several occasions, either Mina unsolicited gives Michael facts about her background as an Afghani refugee, or Michael asks out of curiosity. In both situations, Michael expands his intercultural competence in accordance with the CoE´s demands as he gains **"**knowledge of the beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural orientations" (20). As the novel progresses, Michael´s interaction with Mina and his willingness to expand his knowledge and question his handed-down values culminates in Michael standing up to his parents on live TV:

> "I guess I feel there is a racist way to be worried about the economy, or people dying at sea, and there´s a nonracist way," [...] "We´ve signed up to international laws." […] Legally we have to help these people. Instead, we lock them up. We abuse them. Then we bring in laws so that we can jail people who report the abuse. I don´t get how we can let that happen in a democracy." (355)

Discerning how there are multiple ways to look at political, moral and social matters, Michael shows that he is becoming interculturally competent. Because "understanding of processes of cultural, societal and individual interaction, and the socially constructed nature of knowledge" (CoE 2014, 20) according to the CoE is believed to be central in being attributed with intercultural competence. This understanding, combined with the skills needed to acquire this understanding, builds Michael´s resilience to his parents and their organisation´s extreme views.

Although not carried out by one character in particular *The Lines We Cross* excels in showing "the internal diversity and heterogeneity of all cultural groups" (CoE 2014, 20). A reader that reads and learns about this diversity and heterogeneity will, therefore, according to the CoE, enhance their intercultural competence. In the context of this novel, Abdel-Fattah shows how immigrants, refugees, Australians, and right-wing groups comprise a wide variety of people. For instance, "There´s Li Chee, born in China, migrated to Australia in the late sixties. Totally against increased migration and boat people." (79). This shows that right-wing groups not necessarily are comprised of whites only. Furthermore, the novel seldom portrays any of its characters as either good or bad, but rather as complex human beings. For instance, Terrence is a sexist, racist bully, but he is also loyal to Michael and protective of people with handicaps.

Showing that he has some compassion. Apart from accurately reflecting how cultural groups are "in real life", this also gives the reader the ability to, as Michael elegantly put it: "living gray". Because if the novel depicted the various groups in a black/white manner, it would fall for the same fallacies as extremist rhetoric and thereby become an unnuanced piece of propaganda. *The Lines We Cross* facilitates thinking with complexity and challenges simplistic thinking styles.

Skills

Considering how Michael goes from "living in a world where everything is black and white" (150) to "living gray", he has, in the course of the novel, attained some skills for bringing nuances to his previously one-sided perspective. This change in perspective can, to a large extent, be attributed to Michael acquiring intercultural skills.

As already mentioned in connection with *North of Dawn*, one central skill in intercultural competence is multiperspectivity, i.e. "the ability to decentre from one´s own perspective and to take other people´s perspectives into consideration in addition to one´s own."(CoE 2014, 20) As Michael reflects on his move to "living gray", he asks himself: "How can my parents be right, be good, if it means people like Mina end up getting hurt?" (151). By asking himself this question, he shows the ability to decentre, but also empathise, another skill related to intercultural competence. Michael displays "the ability to understand and respond to other people's thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings;" (CoE 2014, 20). Michael's empathy is also reflected in how helping his parents and Andrew with spreading memes from the English Defence league makes him feel: "A sick feeling lodges in the pit of my stomach. I realize that I´m seeing the memes from the point of view of somebody like Mina. I feel conflicted and dirty, helping Andrew out." (211).

Reflecting the CoE´s point on "skills in critically evaluating and making judgements about cultural beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products and being able to explain one´s views" (20), Mina is central in nudging Michael into questioning his own cultural beliefs and values:

> Before Mina, my life was like a completed jigsaw puzzle. Mina´s come along and pushed the puzzle upside down onto the floor. I have to start all over again, figuring out where the pieces go. But some of the pieces to the puzzle don´t seem to fit the way they used to. (150-152)

As part of this process of restructuring the jigsaw puzzle, Michael seeks information from alternative sources that would stand in opposition to the opinions of Aussie Values: "[…] I trawl through different websites on refugees and asylum seekers. […] I allow the hammock to gently sway as I navigate through one of the pro-refugee websites." (163). This instance, combined with the fact that he, on multiple occasions, seeks opportunities to engage in conversation with Mina, suggests that he possesses "skills in discovering information about other cultural affiliations and perspectives." (CoE 2014, 20). A skill that according to the CoE, is involved in intercultural competence. This also addresses the predisposing condition of "Simplistic thinking style" as Michael starts thinking more complexly around politics, culture and identity. Additionally, Mina also stands as a role model that gives Michael an alternative point of view that he did not get from his friends and family.

One instance that shows a lack of intercultural competence is the instance at Kabul Kitchen where two customers create havoc when they find out that the restaurant exclusively serves halal meat: "Is it too much to ask that a person doesn´t have halal food shoved down his throat in Australia?" […] "We. Don´t. Eat. Halal." […] "It´s barbaric and inhumane and who knows what halal funds. So we refuse to eat it." (310). Although these people might have been there to create a fuss on purpose, their behaviours show a lack of intercultural competence. This is because they don´t have "skills in adapting one's behaviour to new cultural environments" (20), a central skill in intercultural competence according to the CoE.

Actions

In the course of the novel, Michael becomes a highly intercultural competent character who can challenge and stand up to his inherited beliefs, his parents, and his friends who hold opinions of a racist character. Going from having an unnuanced Weltanschauung to confronting his parents´ organisation on live television can largely be attributed to Michael becoming increasingly more interculturally competent. The attitude, knowledge, understanding, and skills Michael acquires lead to him taking actions that reflect his intercultural competence and resilience.

On two occasions, Michael visits more intercultural parts of Sydney. Although Michael is reluctant or afraid to strike off a conversation with the inhabitants, he is by one of the CoE´s demands for intercultural competence **"**seeking opportunities to engage with people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own" (21). Although he is

doubtlessly driven by attraction, Michael also seeks to engage a lot with Mina, who is of a different cultural orientation. Through Michael´s engagement and discussions with Mina, they take multiple intercultural actions like **"**co-operating with individuals who have different cultural orientations on shared activities and ventures, discussing differences in views and perspectives, and constructing common views and perspectives;" (21). This shared construction of views is nicely summed up in the last lines of the novel, where Mina states: "He [Michael] thinks he´s learned from me. He´s wrong. It´s me who´s learned from him. He´s taught me to never give up on anybody." (389). While Mina indeed has learned from Michael, she is wrong in that Michael has not learned anything from her. Although not necessarily in the most pedagogical ways, Michael has been pushed into reconsidering his values and beliefs. Therefore, had it not been for their intercultural discussion, such a bridging and mutual learning process would not have been possible. Mina´s realisation that she has learned to never give up on anybody is also a depolarizing statement that brings hope of reconciliation and a sense of nothing ever being too late.

The sum of Michael´s gained intercultural competence leads to him taking intercultural action and expressing opposition to the beliefs and people he supported and believed in earlier. When Michael, on live television, condemns the actions of the vandals at Kabul Kitchen, he takes intercultural action by "intervening and expressing opposition when there are expressions of prejudice or acts of discrimination against individuals or groups;" (CoE 2014, 21). Vandalism is violent and threatening, and "Fuck Off We´re Full" and "Halal funds ISIS" (369) are accusations of an abusive character. The vandalism could, therefore, be said to contravene article 12 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states: "No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation." (United Nations). Michael´s interview, where he opposes Aussie Values and defends the people connected to Kabul Kitchen, displays several aspects of intercultural action as described by the CoE. He is firstly "challenging attitudes and behaviours (including speech and writing) which contravene human rights", and secondly "taking action to defend and protect the dignity and human rights of people regardless of their cultural affiliations" (21). On a smaller scale, Michael also takes similar action when he opposes and distances himself from Terrence´s racist remarks and behaviour: "At some point in your life you have to decide what you believe in. I don´t want to be that guy who figures it out when it´s too late" (334).

Like Waliya in *North of Dawn*, Michael's parents never challenge the attitudes of their fellow devotees. They are, according to the CoE´s list, lacking intercultural competence as they never take action and try to challenge their own opinions and protect the dignity of refugees. They also never display the intercultural action of "challenging cultural stereotypes and prejudices;" (CoE 2014, 21). For instance, instead of opposing the racist baloney, the conspiracy theorist Laurie is spreading online, they accept him as a member of their group because it benefits them (80). Furthermore, when Michael´s father tells about "one of them", a refugee, working as a trolley boy at Coles, not returning his "g´day", he chooses to focus on the man not returning his greeting. As Alan completely ignores the fact that the refugee is working and contributing to society, he does not take the intercultural action of "encouraging positive attitudes towards the contributions to society made by individuals irrespective of their cultural affiliations;" (CoE 2014, 21).

While Abdel-Fattah states that: "Mina is blunt with Michael that she is not going to "rescue" him from his racism; "babysit" him through his "enlightenment"" (Abdel-Fattah 2020, 113), she comes along and complicates Michael´s world. This is a necessary complication for him to step out of his ignorance and radicalisation trajectory. Through a series of situations, thought processes and actions, Michael displays that he either possesses or acquires a wide range of elements of intercultural competence that gives him the ability to start "living grey", and therefore see through the black and white beliefs of his parents. While Michael´s dad is unchanged by the trip he has made to the refugee camps and is locked in his opinion, Michael, sparked by Mina, not only counters the opinions of his parents but also becomes resilient to their ideas as he is able to deconstruct them and find alternative values that outcompete the ones of Aussie values. Although literary critic Karen Coates stated that: "While the lack of nuance makes this a book for the already convinced, left-wing activists" (369), the heterogeneity of Aussie Values and the likeability of the "bad" characters shows that values and beliefs don´t necessarily is about good vs evil, but rather disinformation or lack of ability to see through simple Weltanschauungs.

5 Discussion

Reading Farah´s *North of Dawn* or Abdel-Fattah´s *The Lines We Cross* was in the introduction suggested having an inoculative effect against radicalisation. This chapter seeks to further investigate this assertion by discussing the abovementioned incidents from the novels in connection with the theoretical framework. This will be done by examining how the novels reflect theoretical aspects of culture, intercultural competence as discussed in 2.1 and prevention of violent extremism as discussed in 2.3. This will further be connected to the theory of vicarious reading experiences, deep-reading and in-depth learning (2.3.2). Additionally, seeing how the novels concur with the suggestions for high-quality counter- and alternatives, this chapter will explore the persuasive potential of the novels. Finally, weaknesses in the initial argument and possible pitfalls in working with intercultural competence, PVE (preventing violent extremism) and literature will also be discussed.

5.1 Radicalisation, extremism and terrorism in the novels

As this thesis argues that fiction that deals with radicalisation effectively displays the importance of possessing and cultivating intercultural competence in the young adult reader, the novels chosen for this thesis should therefore depict radicalisation in a critical light. While Abdel-Fattah and Farah have chosen two different approaches to the topic, they both portray elements of radicalisation and extremism as defined by the Council of Europe and the Center for Research on Extremism. Although they represent the opposite sides of both the religious and political spectre, Waliya and Michael's parents advocate "for fundamental and far-reaching change or restructuring of a social or political system" (CoE 2018, 103). Waliya could be called an extremist as she holds an "'anti-democratic opposition towards equality'" (Jupskås & Segers 7), and by the fact that she is affiliated with convicted terrorists and violent extremists. Claiming that Michael´s parents are extremists would be more controversial, but some of their comembers in Aussie Values are people that advocate for "exclusionary nationalism and conspiracy theories" (Jupskås & Segers 7) and are therefore extremists.

Considering how *North of Dawn* describes Dhaqaneh's road to becoming a terrorist and Waliya´s transition from being "more into nightclubbing than praying" (Farah, 131) to becoming an extremist, Farah´s novel describes not only radicals but also radicalisation trajectories. Farah also writes real right-wing terrorists such as John Ausonius (The Laser Man) and Anders Behring Breivik into the story. By doing this Farah not only shows multiple examples of extremism, but also how the two different "sides" are similar in the fact that

"native-born right-wing extremists and a handful of radical Islamists […] make everyone else´s life difficult." (161). Dhaqaneh and Waliya represent the individuals that fall into extremism while Naciim and Saafi represents the resilient individuals able to deconstruct and dissociate themselves from the extreme views they could have inherited. Although *The Lines We Cross* does not have any characters directly linked with terrorism, Abdel-Fattah describes radicalisation trajectories through Michael and his brother Nathan. That is not to say that their parents are luring them into becoming terrorists, but rather that they from a young age have inherited beliefs that are associated to those of right-wing extremists and even terrorists. Seeing how the Aussie Values Facebook page contains comments such as "Bomb them to the crusades." and "Shoot the lot." (369), it is adjacent to think that Michael and Nathan are at risk of moving towards those values and thoughts.

5.2 Fiction on radicalisation

Having established that the novels in discussion deal with radicalisation, the next question should be whether they show the importance of intercultural competence. If they do, do they, with regards to teaching intercultural competence and building resilience to radicalisation, have an advantage over books that do not deal with radicalisation? To answer these questions, bringing some theoretical concepts related to intercultural competence might be helpful. Bearing in mind that the desired outcome of reading these novels is enhancing intercultural competence through vicarious learning, the books need to portray intercultural competence while also showing its importance.

Both novels excel in showing the complexity of identity, culture and intercultural encounters. Firstly, the novels portray how individuals hold both personal and social identities and how these identities clash and coexist. The potential intersectionality of an individual is demonstrated in the characters of, for instance, Naciim, Saafi, Mina and Michael. The characters´ identity markers often go against each other and create cognitive and social friction as some of their identities disagree and are incompatible. For instance, Michael´s personal identity as a curious boy who can change opinions disagrees with his identity as the son of the founder of Aussie Values. The discrepancy between their personal identities and cultural identities often becomes an object of friction but also a situation where intercultural competence could be applied. The novels also show the fluidity of culture and identity as they both portray characters that either acquire or get rid of identity markers of various types. These complex portrayals of culture, identity and intercultural encounters facilitate learning to think with

complexity, a point this discussion will return to when discussing how the novels can build resilience.

Following the Council of Europe´s (2014) definition of an intercultural encounter, which states that for something to be an intercultural encounter, "cultural differences are perceived and made salient either by the situation or by the individual's own orientation and attitudes" (16), several intercultural encounters are described in the novels. This could be ascribed to the fact that the novels deal with radicalisation. Considering how books on radicalisation portray individuals, groups, attitudes and opinions that deviate strongly from that of the majority, the likeliness of culture becoming salient is therefore bigger. This means that the potential for reading about incidents where intercultural competence is either present or lacking is higher. Thus, the probability of the reader discerning knowledge about intercultural competence should be equally higher.

Furthermore, while other books might show the awkwardness of lacking intercultural competence, books that critically examine radicalisation show the worst possible scenario of an individual lacking intercultural competence. In both *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross,* the characters that lack intercultural competence are the ones that hold the most extreme views, and acts of extremism and terrorism are portrayed as something unjust and cruel. Not only does this underline the importance of intercultural competence, but if we see this in connection with the findings of the Beyond Bali project, this also lessens the readers' risk of moral disengagement.

Considering how Lars Løvlie, professor emeritus in pedagogy, believes that political Bildung happens "in medias res" (51), i.e. when confronted with injustice or provocative events, the experience of terrorism and racism through literature can spark a political engagement in young adults. This does not mean that books that deal with intercultural competence in different ways are of less value. Rather, in the context of PVE, books on radicalisation are more relevant and address the importance of intercultural competence more directly. As described below, books that critically examine radicalisation will also have a double effect considering their potential function as counter- or alternative narratives.

5.3 PVE theory and the vicarious reading experience

As presented in chapter 2.3.2, the idea of the vicarious reading experience and deep reading is that the reader should learn and reflect parallelly with the characters and events of the novel,

something that resembles the CoE´s idea of "learning" intercultural competence "by doing" (2014, 37). In this context, the experience of resilience and intercultural competence are the elements that the pupil should acquire and incorporate into their "real life" perception and thoughts. This means that the acquisition and usage of resilient traits by the protagonists of the novels should reflect PVE theory. In order to strengthen the argument further, the act of deep-reading and in depth-learning must also find support in the literature on PVE as the process of vicarious learning while deep reading is twofold. In other words, both the contents of the novels and the process of reading them should concur with well-founded principles for PVE. Going back to the findings of Stephens et al. this thesis focuses on two recurring themes within suggestions for effective preventative work; "the resilient individual" and "identity". Both Farah and Abdel-Fattah´s resilient individuals reflect the principles set forth by Stephens et al. through either going through processes that resemble the ones described or through displaying abilities that suggest that they have been through such processes.

Stephens et al. divided the theme of "the resilient individual" into the subcategories 1) cognitive resources, 2) character traits 3) promoting/strengthening values. There is a reason to believe that all three aspects are represented in both the contents of the novel as well as the idea of vicarious learning through deep reading.

Cognitive resources revolve around "developing certain cognitive capacities in order to provide individuals with resources to assess and question messages, ideas, and propaganda […]" (Stephens et al. 348). One example of such an intervention is the "Being Muslim Being British" intervention that was based on the understanding that extremist ideologies are based on black/white thinking and distinguishing between "us and them" and "right and wrong" (Lith & Savage 2013). In both novels, the aspect of deconstructing and recognising radical or extremist messages is central to the characters' resilience. Naciim displays the ability to see this when he compares his mother´s values to those of a neo-Nazi "he decides that her attitude is no different from that of the neo-Nazis, those nativist skinheads so violently opposed to foreigners in their midst." (148). Himmo makes a similar comparison after her daughter is killed in the July 22 attacks; "We are caught between a small group of Nazi-inspired vigilantes and a small group of radical jihadis claiming to belong to a purer strain of Islam" (210-211). Gerrand writes: "Farah sustains this resistance [against destroying the grey zones] by privileging the gray contours of conviviality that emerge through the humanity of his complex characters." (107). Seeing how Michael explicitly becomes aware of the fact that he has been living in "a world

where everything is black and white" (150), Abdel-Fattah addresses the same ability to think with complexity. Michael also shows some cognitive resources, i.e., critical skills when he seeks to find information on political questions such as "sovereignty. Border protection. Floodgates. People smugglers" (163) etc. If the reader can learn vicariously through reading either novel, they should learn cognitive resources that strengthen their resilience to extremist messages. By learning to think more with complexity the pupils also address the predisposing condition to radicalisation that revolves around simplistic thinking styles.

Character traits could, through deep reading, be developed in two ways: 1) by the reader learning to express empathy through the characters of the novel 2) through the reader being exposed to incidents in the novel that fosters empathy cf. the Beyond Bali Intervention (Aly et al. 2014). Mugdi and Gacalo are highly empathic people, while Naciim and Michael become highly empathic and likeable characters. Empathy is expressed in numerous instances like when Naciim does not wish to have his mother punished for abusing him: "What is the point? Life has already punished my mother in so many ways" (238). Similarly, among other instances, Michael shows empathy when he pleads with his dad to leave the Kabul Kitchen alone for hiring people on bridging visas; "Why can´t you show some freaking mercy?" (319). In addition to the characters showing empathic traits, both novels describe instances that have the potential to invoke empathy in the reader as they portray extremism as something "unjust and cruel". The murder of the empathic and loved Mouna is nothing less than unjust and cruel and should have the potential to invoke and develop feelings of empathy in the reader. Counting in the fact that Mouna´s character is based on Mona Abdinur[4], who was killed by Breivik, Mouna´s fate should have the potential to invoke deep feelings of empathy. In *The Lines We Cross,* the story about how Mina´s father was shot point-blank by members of the Taliban invokes Michael´s empathy and should have the potential to do the same in the reader. The novels could, therefore, as suggested by Nadia in *North of Dawn,* function as "humanizers" (306).

Promoting/strengthening values is both Mugdi and Mina´s main contribution to the development of the characters at risk of becoming radicalised. In Farah´s novel, Mugdi gives Naciim and Saafi a set of values that can compete and withstand the extreme collection of values given to them from home. Mina plays a similar role in Abdel-Fattah´s novel, providing

[4] Mona Abdinur was a Norwegian-Somali youth politician known for her engagement in political questions regarding multiculturalism. She was killed on Utøya at the age of 18.

Michael with a "stronger, alternative framework of values." (Stephens et al. 349). Concurring with beliefs within PVE research (Davies 2016 and Miller 2013), Mugdi and Mina both promote the values of human rights and international law. Mugdi, having worked as a diplomat for several years, finds it "against his principles to go against the laws of Norway, the country that kindly hosted him when he couldn't return home" (25). Furthermore, seeing how Mugdi, on several occasions, challenges Naciim´s conservative and oppressive view on women, Mugdi is advocating for equality. Considering how diplomatic practices and Norwegian laws, at least in theory, should reflect human rights and international laws, Mugdi promotes civil human rights-based values. Mina´s framework of values is also based on international law and human rights; this is evident in how she criticises Michael for boasting about how "people have values in the West" (34). Countering Michael´s statement by pointing to the human rights-contradicting detention centres in Australia, Mina is challenging Michael's western "Aussie values" while offering an alternative frame of values. Through the values promoted in the novel, the vicarious reader could become more resilient in two ways: 1) through seeing how the "good" values triumph and therefore underscore their initial values or, 2) through being exposed to the values of human rights and international law their values are challenged and the newly acquired values could replace the old.

The second theme within suggestions for effective PVE, as presented by Stephens et al., is the aspect of identity. The idea of adolescence as a period of identity search and the threat of marginalisation that creates susceptibility to extremist messages is central here, and the suggestions for effective PVE are therefore related to "creating opportunities to discuss issues of identity" and "strengthening and validating identities" (Stephen et al. 350). Therefore, the vicarious experience should offer a display of how identity is central to resilience while promoting minority identities and allow the reader to explore their own identity.

Michael, Naciim and Saafi, the characters most vulnerable to radicalisation, are all adolescents in a "period of identity search" (Stepehens et al. 350). Both novels describe the process of young adults figuring out what they stand for and, therefore who they are. A contributing factor to them not falling into radicalisation might be that they had the space to explore their identity. In this case, their space to explore their identity has been in conversation with the other characters of the novels. One example that comes to mind is Naciim and Saafi´s numerous visits to Himmo, where Mouna, raised to "embrace her hyphenated identity" (Farah, 212), gave them the opportunity to discuss "multiple identities and how to prioritize them" and "discuss and

debate religious identity and respect and celebrate the diversity of Muslim youth" (Stephens et al. 351). Although Mouna might not have done this intentionally or even explicitly, Mouna´s empathic and diverse character stands as an example of identification for Naciim and Saafi to look up to. Gerrand writes that Waliya: "discourages her children from joining Norwegian society out of fear this will annihilate their Muslim and Somali identities" (112), which means that she does not want to give her children the space necessary to explore their identity. The aspect of identity might be less salient in Michael´s case as he is part of the white Australian majority and, therefore, less likely to fall into marginalisation based on external factors. However, the process Michael goes through with rejecting his friends' and parents´ beliefs could be regarded as the formation of an adult identity where his well-thought-out values replace his "hand-me-down" values. This process is allowed to happen since he has space to discuss these topics in the classroom, with his parents, and with Mina. In addition to seeing the importance of discussing and exploring identities, the vicarious reader could be encouraged to start asking themself the same questions as the characters and therefore start developing their own strong identity.

The second suggestion for effective PVE related to identity is the strengthening and validation of identities. This suggestion aims to "avoid experiences of marginalization" and, therefore, susceptibility to radicalisation (Stephens et al. 351). Most of the suggestions in this category revolve around forming and strengthening Muslim identities and belonging within countries where they are thought of as the minority. The idea is to have an inclusive approach that gives them a voice while also addressing the many prejudices they face (Stephens et al. 351). Naciim, Saafi and Mina prevail as strong and likeable characters that embrace the identity of Muslims in a non-Muslim society while also affiliating to their new country, something that could potentially strengthen the young Muslim identity in the reader. The novels also address the prejudice young Muslims face, something at least Abdel-Fattah did intentionally: "The material, psychological and emotional impact of Michael's family and their organization's racism on Mina's family is something I was keen for my young readers to understand and how racist discourses and practices impact deeply on people's lives." (Abdel-Fattah 2020, 114). Instances of racism and prejudice, which are also depicted in Farah´s novel, could, therefore not only invoke empathy in the reader but also create an awareness of the impact of conscious and unconscious racism and how this could lead to the radicalisation of others

Related to the idea of creating a space for discussing and exploring identities as a measure to prevent radicalisation, there is something inherently explorative about reading fiction. Patrick H. Dust believes that "imagination in literature can become not only a positive technique for reflection on human action and emotion, but also and above all, a potent instrument of transformation" (143). Through deep reading, the pupils are given the opportunity to explore the morals and values of the characters in the symbol (text) and compare them to their own. Furthermore, they are given the chance to explore other identities and see the synergy of identities and how different people use different markers to construct their identities in different contexts. This could mean that fictional characters could inspire the readers to build identities on traits they already possess instead of relying on extremist groups and ideas to provide belonging and identity markers. Furthermore, in an educational setting, fiction can function as a basis for discussions revolving around topics related to identity, racism, stereotypes etc. These discussions would resonate well with Dyepdahl and Bøhn´s ideas of addressing the theoretical concepts of ethnocentrism, stereotypes and values directly (168). Finally, there is also the aspect of metacognition where the reader might become aware of one´s own susceptibility to radicalisation at some stage in life. This relates to Dypedahl and Bøhn's beliefs that the internal outcome of intercultural competence teaching is metacognitive intercultural awareness which involves self-monitoring and decentring (85).

5.4 Counter- and alternative narrative potential

Considering how the novels can offer an alternative frame of values, strengthening/validation of values and inspiration for building resilient identities, *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* most likely also hold persuasive qualities. Drawing on the ideas of Appel, Richter and Schlegel, there is reason to believe that both novels could be used as counter- and alternative narratives in preventing violent extremism and radicalisation. Therefore, the following paragraphs will show how the novels concur with Schlegel's four suggestions for developing high-quality fictional CAN campaigns. These four suggestions revolved around "transportation, identification, perceived realism, and utopian narratives" (218).

Transportation relates to the reader's ability to become engaged in the text and therefore become alterable and open to changing their attitudes, beliefs and intentions. Considering how the basis for this thesis relies on a deep reading of the novels, the intended goal is to achieve a high level of transportation among the readers. For reaching high levels of transportation Schlegel suggest that the texts should offer a graspable world, likeable characters and generally

have a high degree of quality (203). Oslo and Sydney, the novels' settings, should be highly believable settings that the reader "can envision clearly" (202). Especially the setting of Oslo should be graspable for the Norwegian reader as it is likely for a Norwegian adolescent to have been to Oslo. Furthermore, Mugdi, Naciim, Saafi, Michael and Mina either are or become likeable characters, something that, according to Schlegel, will increase the narrative´s persuasive effect. Whether or not the books in discussion are of high quality would be for the individual reader to decide. Still, both the novels and the authors have received various literary prices, something that could indicate that the fiction is of high quality.

Comparable to the aspect of likeable characters, identification with the characters of the novel is essential in creating high-quality CANs. Schlegel writes that similarities derived from factors outside demographics, i.e. "psychological similarities of attitudes and beliefs", increase identification and thus persuasiveness. Furthermore, as most people are prone to see themselves as likeable and friendly, fictional characters who display the same traits are more likely to be found relatable to the reader (205). Additionally, identification is also more likely to happen if the reader can recognise and relate to the emotional experience of the characters (206). With the exception of Michael, the native Norwegian reader shares few demographic traits with the main characters of the novels discussed here. However, the characters from both *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* might have some "psychological proximity" to the Norwegian adolescent reader. The novels' protagonists are curious, open-minded young adults who struggle with finding themselves while also standing in opposition to their parents. These traits are common for many young adults and could lead to identification with the characters. Furthermore, although both Michael and Naciim display some unsympathetic traits early on, they evolve and become likeable and friendly characters, something that could increase identification. As most young adults at some point disagree with their parents, albeit not in the same extreme ways as the characters of the novels, the process of coming to terms with disagreeing with your parents is an emotional experience that is likely to be relatable for many young adults. Based on this, there is reason to believe that the novels' characters in the discussion score high on identification.

North of Dawn and *The Lines We Cross* score high on external realism as they both describe believable worlds, situations, and characters. Whether they are high on internal perceived realism could be discussed. Schlegel writes: "Narratives are never received by a 'blank page'; audiences have pre-knowledge, preconceived ideas and beliefs. If the story content is high in

perceived external realism but challenges such preconceptions, the story may be dismissed as unrealistic." (210). Both novels display the possibility of altering and changing people´s values and attitudes, a process that might sound unrealistic to some readers. The novels' external realism might not be a positive aspect for readers who have preconceptions about their own and other people´s values and beliefs not being alterable. This could be what Karen Coats meant when she wrote that the "lack of nuance makes this a book [*The Lines We Cross*] for the already convinced, left-wing activists" (369).

Utopian and dystopian narratives are given little space in either of the novels and unlike other CAN attempts, they don´t fall into the trap of defending the status quo either. They are instead, as Schlegel suggests: "acknowledging the imperfection of the current system and grievances of the target audience in a fictional setting while providing room for revolutionary aspirations." (215). Both novels acknowledge the imperfections of the current system by pointing to the detention centres in Australia, everyday racism, and the brutality of extremists on both sides. Although Abdul-Fattah and Farah acknowledge the system's imperfections, they also show how individuals hold the power to alter and oppose these imperfections. Evident in characters like Mugdi, Mouna and Mina, individuals can discontinue people from holding extreme opinions through various means. Michael also becomes a symbol of revolutionary aspirations as he opposes and deconstructs the message of Aussie Values on live television. Finally, there is also the aspect of both Naciim and Michael finding love despite cultural differences, which could be interpreted as a utopian element resulting from inclusive and pluralistic practices and behaviour.

Considering how the novels, to some extent, concur with Schlegel's demands for high quality CAN, *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* can therefore serve two purposes 1) the reader learns intercultural competence and its importance and 2) the novel can have a persuasive impact by functioning as counter – and alternative narrative against extremist messages and narratives.

5.5 Challenges

Regardless of how convincing the arguments presented above are, there are admittedly some weaknesses to this thesis that need to be addressed. Firstly, the changeability of an individual's attitudes and values might not be as uncomplicated and straightforward as argued above. Additionally, the aspect of altering and changing values and beliefs through fiction is an action

that needs to be looked at with an ethical scope. Secondly, the process of deep reading is a long and demanding process that might not be as easy to implement in teaching that needs to take an extensive curriculum into account. Finally, there is something inherently difficult about proving the effects of preventative works, which could threaten the credibility of the presented ideas. In the following paragraphs, these problems will be addressed and discussed.

In Naciim, Saafi and Michael´s case, the possession of intercultural competence takes them out of the radicalisation trajectory. However, the novels also portray characters that hold elements of intercultural competence while still being convinced by extreme opinions. Michael´s father, Alan, is one example of such a character. Alan´s travel to the refugee camps in Indonesia and Iraq shows his ability and willingness to seek opportunities to engage with people of other cultures. Furthermore, he is highly empathic in his meeting with the refugees, and even Mina finds herself liking him at moments (226). Similarly to how reading novels can have an alterable effect, a trip to refugee camps could have the same or better effects. However, as exemplified by Alan Blainey, some individuals might not be as alterable as hoped. This means that some young adults might take little to no alteration from reading the novels. As this thesis revolves around preventative work, using Alan as an example might not be just as he, in some ways already is radicalised. However, some young adults develop or inherit radical ideas early, and the effects the novels could have on these young adults is therefore uncertain. This aspect could be interpreted as a weakness to the suggestions for preventative work presented in the thesis. Still, it could also indicate how preventative work is multifaceted and should be a multisectoral effort. In other words, an in-depth learning experience in the English subject cannot prevent all radicalisation on its own but be part of a larger initiative.

As addressed by Schlegel (217) is the ethical dimension of using fictional stories in PVE something that should be discussed. In the same way we label extremist fiction propaganda, we should ask whether using fiction to make adolescents conform to democratic ideals is a manipulation of the individual and possibly even social engineering. Although there are mitigating factors to using CAN in PVE, this discussion undoubtedly adds to a bigger philosophical and political debate concerning the ethicality of means to create secure and peaceful societies. Teachers should be aware of this issue as democratic teaching somewhat paradoxically can become unnuanced and therefore undemocratic.

The deep reading process requires some level of language understanding as it is self-explanatory that to learn from a text, some level of understanding of the message needs to be

present. Within a group of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners, the reading comprehension level could vary greatly in lower- and upper secondary schools, indicating the importance of the individual pupil reading texts that are within their proximity of understanding (Heggernes 115). In this context, this difference in levels has been addressed by presenting two novels representing two levels of reading skills. However, there should optimally be a third option that offers an even more graspable reading experience. According to Sissil Lea Heggernes (115), graphic novels could offer such an experience and should be considered a third option to the other novels presented here.

Considering the close relationship between motivation and learning, succeeding with deep reading and, in turn in-depth learning necessitates the facilitation of motivation. In this thesis, this issue is to some extent addressed by the fact that the pupils can choose between two novels. This is admittedly not enough to accumulate motivation among all pupils. There is, however, a reason to believe that some motivation can be created through prereading exercises and exercises that can be done throughout the reading process (Carlsen 212-213).

The aspect of time is also central as the readers need to be given the time to digest and interpret the novels for in-depth learning to occur. Having already addressed how the theme of radicalisation and intercultural competence finds support in the curricula, there is little doubt that this focus is justified, but whether spending large amounts of time reading the novels is a correct prioritisation is a question that seems fair to ask. While this thesis should have argued that such a prioritisation is correct, there could be teachers and scholars who would disagree, given the vastness of the subject curricula.

One main weakness of preventative work is the measuring of effect and impact. While there are theoretical reasons to believe that reading *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* will increase resilience to extremist messages and lessen the risk of becoming radicalised, proving this impact can prove to be highly challenging. Furthermore, proving and testing resilience to radicalisation is next to impossible, at least in an ethical way. Suppose the connection between intercultural competence and resilience is as strong as proposed. In that case, one way of measuring resilience and the impact of reading the novels could be to test the pupils´ levels of intercultural competence. However, this is, according to Claire Kramsch, not unproblematic either. Kramsch believes that we should "measure what can be legitimately measured and refuse to measure the rest, even though it is essential that we teach it" (118). Regardless of the controversy revolving around the testing of intercultural competence, there are several ways of

"measuring" levels of intercultural competence developed by scholars such as Michael Byram. Whether or not intercultural competence is something that could be tested, the measuring of resilience is still dependent on the connection between intercultural competence and resilience to radicalisation. If, however, the connection between resilience to radicalisation and intercultural competence contrary to expectations is non-existing, focusing on intercultural competence and reading will have other benefits such as language learning, intercultural learning etc. Reading *The Lines We Cross* or *North of Dawn* is in other words, doubtlessly fruitful.

6 Conclusion

This thesis sought to determine whether reading Nurddin Farah´s *North of Dawn* or Randa Abdel-Fattah´s *The Lines We Cross* could develop intercultural competence that, in turn, could create resilience to radicalisation. Therefore, the idea was to examine if these two novels could be used in an educational setting as part of a larger preventative effort against radicalisation.

Building on definitions for intercultural competence set forth by the Council of Europe (2014), this thesis explained how complex the notion of culture, identity and intercultural encounters could be. Describing how the elements of attitude, knowledge and understanding, skills, and action comprises intercultural competence, this thesis also established a clear connection between intercultural competence and traits indicative of resilience to radicalisation. The traits indicating resilience to radicalisation further showed a connection to LK20 as they concur with fundamental principles from both the core- and subject-specific curriculum. Elements such as complex thinking, multiperspectivity, empathy and decentring are recurring in both the curricula and Stephens et al.´s suggestions for preventative work. LK20 also promotes the usage of literature in the development of intercultural competence, something that would justify a didactic approach where intercultural competence is acquired through deep reading. Therefore, the idea is that the resilient traits could be developed through vicarious reading and that the readers reflect and develop parallelly with the characters in the novels. Through this development, the hope is that in-depth learning will occur and that the reader will acquire knowledge that enables them to recognise and deconstruct extremist messages of all kinds. Abdel-Fattah and Farah´s novels both examine radicalisation and extremism in a critical light. According to the idea of vicarious reading and theory on the persuasiveness of fiction, they could function as counter- or alternative narratives (CAN). That means that the novels discussed could thus inoculate the young adult readers by teaching intercultural attitudes and offering a narrative that outcompetes that of extremist propaganda. Seeing how both novels, to some extent, reflect suggestions for high-quality CAN as put forward by Linda Schlegel, *North of Dawn* and *The Lines We Cross* could utilise the long-lasting persuasiveness of fiction as proposed by Tobias Richter and Markus Appel.

In Farah´s novel, Mugdi, Naciim, Saafi, and Mouna stand out as characters capable of teaching the reader intercultural competence through their actions that reflect PVE theory. In Abdel-Fattah´s novel, Michael and Mina display the same abilities. Although the two novels show two different types of extremism, Islamic and right-wing, they both demonstrate how the

interculturally competent individuals end up content, while the less intercultural competent hang on to their radical ideas and the discomfort that comes with them.

Suppose the theories and ideas presented in this thesis agree with reality. In that case, this thesis can be regarded as a contribution to suggestions for preventative efforts that can be incorporated into lower- or upper secondary English literary education. This means that reading *North of Dawn* and/or *The Lines We Cross* by no means is a panacea that will exterminate all budding radicalisation; but instead that it could function as part of a larger multifaceted and multisectoral effort for building resilience to radicalisation. Admittedly, there are some issues pertaining to factors such as reading abilities and motivation that this thesis has failed to address. Therefore, future research should look at the connections between preventative work, motivation, and language competence. It could be that PVE efforts could benefit from incorporating multimodal elements to increase motivation and include readers of all levels.

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8 Appendix

Appendix A - "The components of intercultural competence" in

Council of Europe. "Developing intercultural competence through education", Pestalozzi Series, No. 3, Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2014. ISBN 978-92-871-7745-2 pp. 19-21.

2. The components of intercultural competence

Scholarly research over more than five decades has investigated the nature of intercultural competence, with much of this research producing detailed lists of its components. The following lists of the components of intercultural competence are intended to be indicative rather than exhaustive, and focus primarily on those components which lend themselves to development through education. In reading these lists, readers should keep in mind the description of culture given in the previous section.

The components of intercultural competence may be broken down into attitudes, knowledge and understanding, skills and actions.

The **attitudes** involved include:

- valuing cultural diversity and pluralism of views and practices;
- respecting people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own;
- being open to, curious about and willing to learn from and about people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own;
- being willing to empathise with people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own;
- being willing to question what is usually taken for granted as 'normal' according to one's previously acquired knowledge and experience;
- being willing to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty;
- being willing to seek out opportunities to engage and co-operate with individuals who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own.

The **knowledge** and **understanding** which contribute to intercultural competence include:

- understanding the internal diversity and heterogeneity of all cultural groups;
- awareness and understanding of one's own and other people's assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes, prejudices, and overt and covert discrimination;
- understanding the influence of one's own language and cultural affiliations on one's experience of the world and of other people;
- communicative awareness, including awareness of the fact that other peoples' languages may express shared ideas in a unique way or express unique

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ideas difficult to access through one's own language(s), and awareness of the fact that people of other cultural affiliations may follow different verbal and non-verbal communicative conventions which are meaningful from their perspective;

– knowledge of the beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products that may be used by people who have particular cultural orientations;
– understanding of processes of cultural, societal and individual interaction, and of the socially constructed nature of knowledge.

The **skills** involved in intercultural competence include skills such as:

– multiperspectivity – the ability to decentre from one's own perspective and to take other people's perspectives into consideration in addition to one's own.
– skills in discovering information about other cultural affiliations and perspectives;
– skills in interpreting other cultural practices, beliefs and values and relating them to one's own;
– empathy – the ability to understand and respond to other people's thoughts, beliefs, values and feelings;
– cognitive flexibility – the ability to change and adapt one's way of thinking according to the situation or context;
– skills in critically evaluating and making judgments about cultural beliefs, values, practices, discourses and products, including those associated with one's own cultural affiliations, and being able to explain one's views;
– skills in adapting one's behaviour to new cultural environments – for example, avoiding verbal and non-verbal behaviours which may be viewed as impolite by people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own;
– linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills, including skills in managing breakdowns in communication;
– plurilingual skills to meet the communicative demands of an intercultural encounter, such as the use of more than one language or language variety, or drawing on a known language to understand another (intercomprehension);
– the ability to act as a mediator in intercultural exchanges, including skills in translating, interpreting and explaining.

While attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills are all necessary components of intercultural competence, possessing these components alone is

insufficient for an individual to be credited with intercultural competence: it is also necessary for these components to be *deployed and put into practice through action* during intercultural encounters. People often profess attitudes and often acquire knowledge and skills which they fail to put into practice. For this reason, in order for an individual to be credited with intercultural competence, they must also apply their intercultural attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills through actions.

Relevant **actions** include:

– seeking opportunities to engage with people who have different cultural orientations and perspectives from one's own;

– interacting and communicating appropriately, effectively and respectfully with people who have different cultural affiliations from one's own;

– co-operating with individuals who have different cultural orientations on shared activities and ventures, discussing differences in views and perspectives, and constructing common views and perspectives;

– challenging attitudes and behaviours (including speech and writing) which contravene human rights, and taking action to defend and protect the dignity and human rights of people regardless of their cultural affiliations.

This last may entail any or all of the following actions:

– intervening and expressing opposition when there are expressions of prejudice or acts of discrimination against individuals or groups;

– challenging cultural stereotypes and prejudices;

– encouraging positive attitudes towards the contributions to society made by individuals irrespective of their cultural affiliations;

– mediating in situations of cultural conflict.

In short, at the level of action, intercultural competence provides a foundation for being a **global citizen**. Intercultural competence has strong active, interactive and participative dimensions, and it requires individuals to develop their capacity to build common projects, to assume shared responsibilities and to create common ground to live together in peace. For this reason, intercultural competence is a core competence which is required for democratic citizenship within a culturally diverse world.

Because intercultural competence involves not only attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills but also action, equipping learners with intercultural