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A Qualitative Study of Racism Amongst
Swedish Football Supporters.



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Abstract

Over the last decades, it is possible to recognize how global mobility and migration has created diverse and multi-ethnic societies. In the Swedish football scene this can be seen in the existing diversity amongst the professional football players and amongst the supporters where varied ethnicities and backgrounds are represented. In many societies the impact of global mobility and migration has created challenges like social exclusion and racism. Sweden is no exception. This thesis takes place in the local context of Swedish football supporters. It is a study on how acts of racism are understood through the eyes of the supporters. As the supporter environment in Sweden is acknowledged by its members to be an arena where unity and fellowship is highly valued, the idea of this thesis developed through the curiosity on how acts of racism can be understood in the context of this multi-ethnic unity. In this thesis, the meaning of a unity will be examined as a tool for comprehending how supporters understand acts of racism occurring within it. The main material is gathered through qualitative interviews conducted with five supporters. The theory of the Other, developed by Edward W. Said and the theory of imagined communities, developed by Benedict Anderson, will be utilized besides theories of racism.

Keywords: Racism – Football Supporters – Fellowship – The Other – Imagined Community

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1. Introduction

That's what we are, there on the stand – we are a fish stream [...]. All too often it occurs that I am singing along with a song or shouting along with what is being shouted without having reflected over it (Kuick and Qvarfordt 2013: 206).¹

Katarina Kuick is a Swedish author who in 2013 published a book where she describes the community and the fellowship amongst supporters of Hammarby, a local football club in Stockholm. Her personal supportmentship is also discussed here. The quotation above is taken from this book as it embraces the curiosity I have towards the world of football. Kuick describes how she loses herself in the football match to a point where she is not reflecting over the words that she is shouting out (Kuick and Qvarfordt 2013: 206). Being half Argentinean, my own enthusiasm for football is restricted to every fourth year as my patriotic sentiments blossom and I am cheering for Argentina in the world cup. Therefore I find this sentiment that Kuick is describing as being especially fascinating. Kuick's metaphor of football supporters as a fish stream also provides a good expression of how one can understand the community and the connection existing between supporters of the same club. Following this metaphor the supporter community can be understood as a unity where individual actions are ascribed as collective behavior that to a certain degree takes over individual rationality. I do not think that Kuick is referring to the Swedish supporter environment as a whole. She is rather describing her experiences amongst the most passionate and devoted supporters who often are found in the standing area. These supporters are referred to as 'klacken' within the Swedish football environment.

Within the Swedish professional football clubs and amongst Swedish football supporters, it exists a multi-ethnic diversity in today's society. The curiosity I have for the football world is grounded in this multi-ethnic context. A couple of years ago I went to a live football match with my partner. During this match I was for the first time introduced to the

¹ Det är det vi är, där på läktaren – vi är ett fiskstim. [...] Allt som oftast händer det att jag sjunger med i en sång eller skriker med i det som skriks utan att jag har reflekterat över det.

Swedish supporter environment. As we were sitting in the seated area closest to where AIK 'klacken' was standing, we had a good view of the most engaged supporters as well as over the actual football match. In a conversation we were having on different groupings within the supporter environment and their backgrounds, we moved into the theme of racism. My partner explained how it is possible to witness racist attitudes amongst some of these groupings. This conversation made me interested in investigating how expressions and attitudes of racism, provided by certain supporters, can be understood in this multi-ethnic context. How can racist remarks be tolerated within an ethnic diverse supporter community, when they simultaneously claim to be united? Can this fellowship and unity for example be found between a supporter with a non-Swedish ethnic background and a supporter who can shout out racist remarks during a football match?

In Swedish football, the first sign of racism was found in the 1980-1990s when it was possible to see neo-Nazi activity in the stands (Cederquist 2010: 168). Alan Bairner, who is working as a Professor in Sports and Social Theory, claims that Swedish extreme Right movements utilized sports as an arena where they could proclaim a xenophobic and racist nationalism (Bairner 2001: 158). As racism became an increasing problem in Swedish football, Jonas Cederquist, a Swedish author, states that the football clubs soon began the work of eliminating all forms of political activity within the clubs. Several researchers claim that this extreme and very visual form of racism in the Swedish football stands is more or less gone today (Cederquist 2010: 168; Kuick 2013; Norrman 2003: 201). A total extinction of racism is however difficult to achieve. I find it important, as well as interesting, to study why racism exists in this context regardless of to which extent racism does encounter. During my preparations for this thesis I was told several times that if I wanted to study racism within football I should rather focus on other European clubs where racism is more visual and an evident problem. This is however one of the aspect which I found interesting and that motivated me, namely the notion of why racism in a Swedish context is not recognized.

During a live streaming of a football match on the 7th of October 2012, the Swedish football commentator, Bo Hansson, was accused of making a racist comment (Klaar and Norell 2012). When a colored player from the club AIK entered the field, Hansson is heard commenting "*not another black person*" (ibid).² This received great attention and instigated

² inte en svartning till.

debates on how comments in this manner were to be comprehended. I regard this as an evident reason for how racism still is in fact seen within the Swedish football community.

1.1 Previous research

When I began collecting the material for this thesis, I found it difficult to find research conducted on how supporters relate themselves to the issue of racism within the football environment. The study of racism in sports per se is manifold, although the majority of the material I encountered analyzed the notion of racism from an outside perspective. Little research has also been conducted on racism and the supporter environment in a Swedish context. I hope that this thesis will make a contribution in filling this gap and present an alternative standpoint for how racism amongst football supporters can be understood. In this section I will present a selection of the literature I have gathered and which I find relevant to the theme of this thesis.

A majority of the recent research I found on the phenomena of football and its supporters has been concentrated on hooliganism and the violence connected with this environment. As the development of hooliganism first was seen amongst English football supporters, an amount of research conducted on this field are grounded in an English context (Giulianotti 1994: 9). Recently, however, a rise of interest in studying hooliganism amongst its domestic supporters has also developed in Sweden. The material available on hooliganism does not only consist of scientific research. Several former hooligans have published biographies describing their life in this environment, which has given a unique insight to this otherwise closed and secluded environment. Although this thesis does not focus on hooliganism, the literature on hooliganism does provide a perspective on a particular grouping within the Swedish supporter environment. Regardless of its extreme being, I still found it both relevant and interesting to explore the mechanisms within this environment. I was also interested in investigating if this literature did in fact cover the aspect of racism in the supporter environment. It was however little attention directed toward this.

Johan Höglund and Tommy Deogan are two writers who have published their biographies describing their personal experiences in the hooligan scene in Sweden. Höglund as an active member himself and Deogan through his brother who was involved in hooliganism. Both of these books have become rather known in the context of Swedish

hooliganism as they provide an inside perspective of how men become involved in hooliganism and also what being a hooligan actually implies. The book Deogan has authored received great attention in Sweden as the book tells the story of the author's brother, Tony Deogan, who was a member of Wisemen. Wisemen are hooligans who are attached to the club IFK Göteborg. Tony Deogan became Sweden's first death victim within the hooligan environment when he was killed in July 2002 (Deogan 2009). This book does not touch upon the theme of racism, it rather describes the difficult life of the author and his brother. Social exclusion, crime, and violence are described as essential parts of their upbringing. The book provides a good insight on how certain norms and values of the Swedish society are not found within this extreme supporter environment, one example being the tolerance and acceptance of criminal activity and violence. What I found interesting in Deogan's book was the fact that although football is portrayed as the main source of interest within the hooligan environment, it appears that the violent way of living becomes the main attraction. Both in Höglund and in the book of Deogan, little attention has actually been given to the game of football.

Höglund's book is a description of the violent life he was living as a member of Firman Boys, hooligans from the Swedish club AIK. Höglund writes about his attraction to this violence, but also about the community and fellowship existing within this group. The majority of the content in his book are narratives of the many violent riots which Höglund himself has been involved with when fighting against other groups of men. In some of these narratives, Höglund also makes an effort to demonstrate how race is not a matter of importance within the environment. Höglund refers to the ethnic diversity of Firman Boys in the following statement as he rejects the existence of racism within the group: "*[a]mongst us there where no values substantiated by race ideology or politics. What counted was the love, the devotion and the loyalty towards AIK*" (Höglund 2005: 107).³ He also reacts strongly toward accusations made towards them of being Nazis and states that there is no truth to these accusations (ibid: 114). Throughout the book it is emphasized how the strong unity is based on a shared passion amongst the members for the club and especially for violence. While Höglund admits that many of the Swedish hooligans are what he characterizes as Right Wings, he states that a distinction must be made between being a hooligan and being Right Wing (ibid: 80). In a description of the relationship between hooligans and immigrant gangs in Stockholm, the latter group is referred to as a common enemy amongst the hooligans. As

³ bland oss fanns inga värderingar underbyggda av rasideologi eller politik. Det som räknades var kärleken, hängivenheten och lojaliteten till AIK.

Höglund describes how hooligan gangs gathers together to fight immigrant gangs, it seems like being members of different hooligan groups becomes secondary when fighting this common 'enemy', implying an existence of some social order (ibid). Höglund still argues that there are no racist affiliations as both groups are part of the same violent environment. He also points out that the social differences between Swedes and immigrants were growing at the time being, creating tension between them (ibid).

Cederquist has written a historical overview of the changes in Swedish supporter culture, with a special focus on football clubs in Stockholm (Cederquist 2010). The development of hooliganism and racism in Swedish football are also phenomenon which are discussed in his book (ibid). Cederquist argues that such developments lead to a reaction amongst Swedish football clubs, which began the work of eliminating all forms of political activity in the stands (ibid: 168). The growing ethnic diversity in Swedish football is also discussed, as Cederquist analyzes the development of the Swedish 'Allsvenskan' in the 21st century. 'Allsvenskan' is the Swedish professional football league for men. Cederquist remarks the growing number of football players with foreign nationality. In 2008 there were 106 players in comparison with the approximately 20 players a decade before (ibid: 18). This is an increase of over 500% in only 10 years. Cederquist also recognizes a more violent and hateful atmosphere in the stadium, which he argues can be found in the different chants sung by football supporters (ibid: 147). Further, Cederquist claims that the chants in themselves become actions that enforce a group identity in the stadium (ibid: 142). In his discussion on the transformation of the supporter culture, Cederquist describes how the previous gentleman ideal has been replaced with a new sense of local patriotism, where strong sentiments and an emotional atmosphere is found in the stadiums instead of the more civilized norms of the gentleman culture (ibid: 75-76). Torbjörn Andersson and Aage Radmann, who are both researchers within the Science of Sports, have also acknowledged this change in their study on Swedish football culture and its historical transformations (Andersson and Radmann 1998).

Fredrik Schoug, an Ethnologist who has his research area within sports and media, also discusses the aspect of local patriotism. This is done in his doctoral thesis on the paradox of minimalistic and gigantic forces found in sports (Schoug 1997). Schoug argues that the minimalistic forces are found in the intimate ideals of the society, local patriotism being one example. The forces of gigantism are certain aspects of the modern sport that are comparable to an industry (ibid: 11). The impact of sponsorships, the spectacles and the excess linked to

the sport industry are some examples on gigantism that are brought forward (ibid). Schoug describes how local patriotism becomes important in cases where minimalistic and gigantic forces collide. One example of this is when football players change clubs. A transitioning to another domestic club can be experienced as a disloyal action amongst the supporters in comparison to when a player leaves for an international transition (ibid: 50-51). Schoug's notion of the minimalistic and gigantic forces can therefore also be utilized to explain certain influences shaping the supporter environment.

Brainer has written a book on the relation between sports and nationalism (Brainer 2001). This book can be related to Cederquist work on the historical changes within the Swedish football clubs. Brainer presents an insight to how we can understand the notion of extreme right movements. Here he argues that it exists a link between nationalism and sport-national identity (ibid: xi). In doing so, Brainer is denying the theory which many researcher withhold, namely that globalization has decreased the meaning and impact of national identity. The relation between sport and globalization is also presented in various examples throughout the book. As I have mentioned previously in the introduction, Brainer states that the Swedish stadiums have previously been utilized by Right Wing nationalists as an arena to promote their political agendas. Brainer believes that with the increase of immigration, a fear for the survival of a Swedish identity manifested amongst the extreme Right Wings (ibid: 157-158).

Les Back, Tim Crabbe and John Solomos have together published a book on racism, identity and multiculturalism within the English football scene (Back et al. 2001). Back and Solomos are currently working as Professors in Sociology while Crabbe is a former Professor of Sociology. All three researchers have a common interest within the fields of race, racism and sports. Crabbe was also one of the pioneers behind the international campaign 'Kick Racism out of Football'. Back et al. argue that the ideology of racism is complex and constantly changing, it needs therefore to be "*situated in specific social and political environments*" (ibid: 2). Back et al. argue that to face the challenges of racism the focus needs to be on the actual acts of racism. The aim is to make people take responsibility for their own actions (ibid: 284).

Christos Kassimeris, a researcher with a background in Political Science, International Security and Sociology, has written a book on how to tackle the challenge of racism within European football (Kassimeris 2008). Kassimeris argues that the occurrence of racism within

football needs to be tackled as it “*challenges the notions of integration and cultural diversity*” (ibid: 1). The meaning of the local football stadium is described in the following manner by Kassimeris:

It is a meeting place for like-minded people, ordinary individuals, who shares a passion and wish to emphasize their sportsmanship, making good use of football’s capacity to promote a sense of collective identity (ibid: 55).

While emphasizing the importance of the football stadium as an arena where the unity between the supporters is enforced, Kassimeris also argues that this is a place where racism and political ideologies can be promoted (ibid: 3). The problem of racism within the European football teams is regarded as severe. The people who follow racist ideologies are described as “*those who failed to acclimatize to the novel cultural, economic, political and social realities that characterize modern Europe*” (ibid: 179). Campaigns and education to raise awareness of the occurrence of racial discrimination are some of the tools that are brought forward to eliminate racism within football (ibid: 180-182). Kassimeris believes that this is achievable as he emphasizes that only a minority within the football environment share a racist ideology (ibid: 179).

Jonathan Long and Karl Spracklen have published a book where they discuss the notion of racism in sports (Long and Spracklen 2011). While Long is a Professor with research interests within the field of Social Change and Social Justice, Spracklen is a Professor in Leisure Studies. The material for their book has been gathered through empirical observation and interviews conducted over a longer period of time. During one of the observations, they describe how they came to overhear two supporters discussing how certain things no longer can be said in today’s society. This is how Long and Spracklen describe their reflection over this observation:

I applaud his sense of outrage and if the message is getting through that it’s wrong to use abusive stereotypes, that can only be welcomed. However, if

people still retain the stereotype, albeit unexpressed, there is still a way to go (ibid: 14).

Long and Spracklen argue that “[A]buse is used in sport to hurt, to gain advantage and to exclude” (ibid: 13). In the context of football supporters it is foremost verbal abuse that occurs, chants or comments with a racist content being one example. An interesting connotation here is whether or not a racist remark is intentional. Following Long and Spracklen’s theory on abuse, it is possible to understand how some supporters might be making certain remarks with the aim of throwing the other supporters or football players off their game. It may be understood as an act of supporting its own football club and not necessarily an act of racism. This will be further elaborated in part four, as an important question in this thesis is why some supporters turn to racism in their verbal abuse or their expressions.

1.2 Aim and research question

I am aware that I can not make a generalized presentation on the occurrence of racism amongst Swedish football supporters in the limited space of this thesis. Therefore, I have chosen to narrow down my focus to analyzing how racism is understood through the eyes of a supporter. I believe that this will offer a new perspective, which has received limited attention in the existing research. This will provide me with an inside perspective which will be crucial in answering my research question. My aim is to investigate how supporters experience acts of racism, how they interpret these actions and also if these actions affect the fellowship and the unity between supporters. To achieve this aim I have formulated a relatively broad research question: *how do Swedish football supporters understand racist attitudes expressed within the supporter environment?*

In addition to the research question I have also formulated three sub-questions to guide me in this research. These are: *Can a differentiation be made between supporters who hold a racist ideology and supporters making racist remarks during a football match; what are the racist attitudes amongst Swedish football supporters rooted in and at last; why and how can racist attitudes prevail amongst the supporters in today’s multi-ethnic society?*

1.3 Relevance to Global Studies

Football as a research area is highly relevant within the field of Global Studies. This thesis studies football at a local level with a focus on factors like ethnicity, racism and community. These are all phenomena that are elaborated in several of the research disciplines found within Global Studies, Social Anthropology being one example.

Global migration has increased during the last decades. In 2013 the total percent rate of international migrants reached 3.2, which constitutes an increase with approximately 57 million people during a period of 13 years (United Nations 2013). The global mobility of people is an important aspect of globalization, which has transformed many societies and created new challenges, social exclusion and racism being some examples. The impact of global mobility in the context of Swedish football can also be seen in the diversity amongst the professional football players and amongst the supporters, where varied ethnicities and backgrounds are represented. In the statement of Cederquist, on how Swedish football supporters have changed from embracing a gentleman culture to introduce local patriotism, it is possible to recognize how a societal change also has effected the supporter environment (Cederquist 2010). Racism in sports has become a global phenomenon. This is illustrated by the fact that international NGOs and campaigns have been founded to fight this problem. During the FIFA World Cup this year for example, we could see football teams posing with a banner, expressing FIFA's appeal against discrimination within the football, with the following message, 'say no to racism'. The extent of which racism exist or is visible within nations are variable. While I will be studying racism in the local context of Sweden, it is however possible to recognize how this is part of a global problem as many of the Swedish local clubs partake in the international campaigns to eliminate this form for discrimination.

1.4 Delimitations

There are several angles from which you can approach the subject of research in this thesis. One angle could be to study social structures in the society and how they have an impact on the supporters or the actors involved in Swedish football. For example one could focus on how the administrations within football clubs are organized and constructed in a manner that is facilitating discrimination. One could also study the correlation between racism and the football scene as a tool for building up a national identity and a national community

(Andersson 2008: 15). I have however chosen to investigate this topic through immersing the supporter environment and its members.

One perspective I also have chosen to exclude from this thesis is feminism. Though numerous of theories exist within feminism, a red thread, which can be recognized through these approaches, is often found in the ambition of achieving equality (Diez et al. 2010: 155). As racism always will create a separation between a group of people, a 'us' and the Other, racism can be studied in relation to marginalization and exclusion. This would allow for a feminist approach as Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True argue in their book on conducting feminist research; *"feminism alerts us to the importance of studying marginalized and excluded peoples' experiences for understanding our local and global world"* (Ackerly and True 2010: 7). Ackerly and True are Professors who have specialized themselves within the area of feminist research methodologies. Many theories found within feminism have been utilized to study aspects like masculinity and identity, which can also be relevant when conducting research on a supporter environment. Another common factor for the majority of feminist theories is found within the mode of conducting research, which often beholds a critical perspective (Ackerly and True 2010: 1).

Identities and norms created in the stands are aspects within the supporter community which have been researched. Masculinity, homophobia and to a certain degree xenophobia are all phenomena that have been studied. Udo Merkel, who is a senior lecturer within the Social Sciences as well as Sport Sciences, has written an article about youth culture and football identity in Germany (Merkel 1999). In a section on football fans, Merkel writes about how symbols are utilized to enforce a sense of belonging to the supporter community (ibid: 57). An example of such a symbol can be different clothes with the club emblem, like a scarf or a shirt (ibid). As the supporter community historically consisted of men from the working class, Merkel argues that this explains why masculine norms has been internalized in the stands (ibid). Further, Merkel states that the masculine norms related to the working class are enforced by the chants targeting members of the society *"who do not conform with the working-class norms and values and the characteristics of aggressive masculinity"* (ibid: 60). While the work of Merkel is not directly relevant for this thesis, I found his research to be interesting as it presents an understanding of the social mechanisms within the supporter environment. Although all the supporters might not share these values, and it does in fact exist a counter movement today, it is still important to know why such mechanism does occur in a supporter environment. The counter movements are found in the notion of how certain

supporters and football clubs are taking a standpoint against for example homophobia and xenophobia. Campaigns like ‘Show Racism the Red Card’ has worked at a national level in Sweden and several of the largest football clubs have also developed their own policies in combating racism, violence and homophobia at their stands. Although the situation might have improved, it is still possible to recognize the existence of such masculine values and norms through many of the chants that still are sung. “*Whore, whore, whore, whore, Anders Svensson is a whore*”,⁴ can be hard when AIK meets the club Elfsborg which Svensson is playing for. This chant developed when Svensson conducted a transition from AIK to another domestic club. Like I have mentioned previously, it is not well received by the supporters when a player conducts a local transit.

I have already stated that my aim with this thesis is not to provide a critical perspective on why racism amongst supporters occur, but rather try to provide an understanding of how this is understood from within, from the supporter’s own standpoint. I want this thesis to present a new inside perspective on racism, which is separate from what has already been done. I believe that the unity and the fellowship within the supporter environment will be important to analyze as norms and values are created within this context. Rivalry and the creation of the Other will also be relevant. Theories on the Other and the imagined community will therefore be utilized besides theories of racism.

1.5 Disposition

I have chosen to outline the content of this thesis in five chapters. In the first introductory chapter I have account for the background information which constitutes the basis of this thesis. So far I have introduced the theme for this thesis, the aim and research question in addition to the relevant material I have read on the theme of this thesis. I halve also presented which delimitations I have done to narrow down the focus of my research.

In the second chapter I will be presenting methodology and the analytical framework I have utilized. In this section I will discuss the relevance for the methods I have chosen and also how these where implemented. A notion on the ethical considerations I have taken when conducting this research will also be presented in a subsection of this chapter. My

⁴ Hora, hora, hora, hora, Anders Svensson är en hora.

interpretation and use of Social Constructivism will be presented in relation to the analytical framework of this thesis.

The theoretical framework is presented in the third chapter. Here I will present theories and interpretations of racism, the Other and of the imagined community. These will constitute the theoretical fundament of my thesis.

I have chosen not to have separate sections on the material and the analysis, but rather to incorporate these in chapter four. I believe that this will create better fluidity in the thesis. Here I will be presenting the findings I have gathered from the interviews and the empirical observation and connect this with the theory. The analysis will therefore be incorporated in this presentation.

In the closing and fifth chapter I will present my concluding remarks as I present the results from the fourth chapter. With this section my aim is to conclude what I have gained from conducting the research, and I also connect the findings and analysis with the stated aim and research questions.

2. Methods and analytical framework

Qualitative interviews have been used as the main method for collecting the material for this thesis. As I was interested in studying how supporters understood and defined acts of racism, I believed that a qualitative approach would be the appropriate method to gather this information (Bryman 2012: 399). Qualitative interviews would allow me to interact with the supporters who are the subject of research and also to gather the relevant material for answering my research question. My aim was to conduct the interviews before the season of 'Allsvenskan' started in the end of March 2014. I would then have the opportunity to deepen my analysis by conducting empirical observation if I felt this was needed as a supplement to the interviews. After conducting my interviews I was pleased with all the information I had gathered and felt that this was sufficient to start writing my thesis. However, when one of my informants invited me to attend AIK's opening match for the season of 2014, I felt that this would be a good opportunity to observe one of my informants in a live match. It was also an opportunity to get a better insight into the supporter environment. I have therefore conducted one empirical observation in addition to my interviews.

I have chosen to use a footnote system in those cases where I have translated a quotation from a non-English source into English. As this thesis is based in a Swedish context and my informants are in fact Swedes, the majority of the data I have utilized are not in English. I present this information here to avoid the necessity of stating that I have conducted the translation behind every translated quote. The footnote system will be utilized because many of the quotations, in addition to the material collected through the interviews, are expressed in a manner which I find challenging to correctly translate into English. The original quotation will therefore be presented in a footnote in its original form and language. I also find this method to be a good tool for avoiding any misinterpretations of the translations I have conducted. The Harvard system is used throughout the text in my references.

2.1 Semi-structured interviews

When I was under the process of planning this thesis my original plan was to conduct interviews with people who could represent different aspects and perspectives of the supporter environment in Sweden. For example representatives from the relevant clubs, security guards or supporter hosts working at the stadiums or relevant organizations like ‘Show Racism the Red Card’. As an inexperienced scientist, I soon discovered that this would be difficult to achieve in practice. I was not prepared for the time consuming process of getting in contact with a possible informant and actually agreeing to a meeting where the interview could be conducted. I decided to prioritize interviewing supporters, as this was the group of interest. While my main focus was on finding supporters I could interview, I also tried to contact other possible informants. Football clubs, organizations and researchers within the field were contacted in this effort and the majority responded positively and supportive. However, they reported to lack knowledge on racism among football supporters. Delayed answers or no response at all were additional reasons for why I decided to focus on one group of informants. When the interviews with my five informants were conducted, I had gathered relevant and important data that I decided to use as the basis of my thesis.

Originally my idea was to have a main focus on AIK supporters. This was due to the rough reputation AIK has when it comes to racist attitudes and its extreme supporters. This is rooted in the 1980s when Nazi ideologies were transparent in their football stadium (Cederquist 2010). I decided however to utilize the method of snowball sampling to find informants through friends and family (Bryman 2012: 202), as I believed that this would

better my chances of the informant being more open when discussing such a sensitive issue as racism. I wanted to avoid finding my informants in such a manner that I would be completely unknown for them. Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt and Grethe Heldbjerg, who is a Professor and respectively a Lecturer, have written a paper on conducting interviews with friends or acquaintances (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg 2011). In this paper they state that *“most informants argue that they were more relaxed and honest and that they opened up more than they would, had the interviewer been a stranger”* (ibid: 19). Alan Bryman, Professor of Organizational and Social Research, argues that a possible problem with the snowball sampling may be that *“it is very unlikely that the sample will be representative of the population”* (ibid: 203). In this context, however, I believed that it would be more beneficial to find my informants through my own social network.

By choosing the method of snowball sampling, I had less of an option to focus only on supporters from AIK. What type of supporter my informants were became more important than the actual team they were supporting, as I wanted to interview people who were active and committed as supporters. By this I mean people who often are found within ‘klacken’, meaning people which are attending several matches live as well as people who’s supportmentship has taken a part of their daily life. The reason why I wanted to interview people who are part of ‘klacken’ was that I felt that this is where you can find the core of the people who contribute in developing the supporter environment. As a non-member of the supporter environment I was concerned that it would be difficult to gain access to ‘klacken’. I was also concerned that the supporters would feel uncomfortable discussing their supportmentship. I feel that these issues were avoided by utilizing the snowball sampling. Further I wanted to interview young adults in the age group of 20-35, as I understand this age group to be the most engaged in ‘klacken’. Factors like ethnicity, gender and background became a variable factor, which I did not set as a requirement when searching for informants. Being an active member within ‘klacken’ was something I regarded as more important and valuable than these variable factors.

In total I interview five people who are supporters of AIK, Djurgården and Hammarby. These are all clubs located in Stockholm and this thesis will therefore be focusing on them. Four of my informants I had never met prior to the interview, while one informant is an acquaintance of mine as he is part of the social network of my partner. This informant was also the informant who I followed to the football match. This person was a valuable informant in the conduction of the empirical observation. All my informants are within the age group of

20-35. They are all working full time and four are living in what can be defined as a city, while the remaining person lives in a smaller town. Three of my informants are men; Steven, Olle and Torsten, while the remaining two are women; Anna and Marie. All of my informants argued that they themselves do not utilize words or chants which they understood as racist. They also argued that they do not embrace a racist ideology. This was in all cases brought forward by the participants themselves and not something I had asked them. All my informants have been active supporters since their childhood. They have in other words gained a long experience within the supporter environment.

2.1.1 Implementation of semi-structured interviews

I had prepared for my interviews by writing an interview guide which I had divided into three themes: 'personal background'; 'community- us and them' and lastly 'supporter culture'. The interview guide was utilized in a flexible manner during my interviews, as the aim was not to ask these questions from top to bottom. Spontaneous questions were also asked in those cases where I wanted to follow up certain statements made by the interviewees. During the actual interviews the interview guide became a helpful tool for me to lean to and it also functioned as a form of checklist to make sure that we had covered the main themes. All the interviews were conducted in March 2014 and they lasted between 45–75 minutes.

When arranging a meeting with my informants I gave them the opportunity to choose the location for the meeting. Four of my interviews were conducted at a café, while one was conducted at the home of the informant. With the permission of all my informants I recorded all of the interviews, which I later transcribed. I choose to transcribe the full extent of the interviews. This process was time consuming but I wanted to have all of the interviews available in text in case I were to, for example, change my angle of focus. After transcribing the interviews I coded them into the following themes: 'racism'; 'the other'; 'imagined community'; 'rivalry' and 'personal supportmanship'. I was inspired by these themes when building up the structure of this thesis. Overall I am very pleased with the interviews I have conducted and I felt that my informants could talk openly about their experience as a football supporter as well as their experience regarding racism.

2.2 Empirical observation

Anyone can buy a ticket to a football match and study the supporter environment as a spectator. The empirical observation was however a unique opportunity as one of the informant I had interviewed became my key informant when we were watching the game. My aim for doing this type of empirical observation was to observe the supporter environment at a closer stand. I did not have any expectations to witness racism so my main focus was to study the fellowship existing between supporters. I also wanted to study how they interacted with each other. As we had conducted the interview prior to the observation, I had the opportunity to deepen some of the discussions we had during the interview. I could also talk to my informant about certain of the events happening around us as my informant could explain the causes of these events. I would argue that my role as a researcher at the stadium can be understood as both active and passive (Bryman 2012: 446). The active role was partly preformed by merely being there, as I did not stand on the outside and study the environment from a distance. My role was also active as I interacted with several of my informant's friends. To those supporters I merely observed and did not interact with, my role as a researcher became passive. I became one in the crowd and I felt quite anonymous while observing. Although I did not experience any acts of racism while observing, it was still a giving experience as I could observe and partake in the supporter environment and the fellowship amongst the supporters.

I wanted to devote my full attention to observing the events occurring around me. Therefore I choose to not write down full field notes during the actual observation. I brought with me my phone where I could more discreetly write down some jotted notes to further elaborate after the observation was conducted (Bryman 2012: 450). The full field note was written down the day after.

2.2.1 AIK vs IFK Göteborg

The 31th of March I attended AIKs premiere match for the season of 2014 where they met Gothenburg at Friends Arena, which is the stadium of AIK in Stockholm. This Monday morning we were a group of people traveling with one of the supporter busses organized by the fan club Black Army. The observation took place the whole day, as the bus trip started at 10 am and we did not return before midnight. The majority of the supporters in the bus were

men, with an age span varying from approximately 18-45. As the bus was nearing Stockholm, the atmosphere in the bus became quite high and the chants were sung with higher frequency and in higher volumes. It became a clear manifestation of a certain us against them sentiment, AIK against Gothenburg, as all the chants incorporated certain digs against not only IFK Göteborg, but also against Gothenburg as a town. When we arrived Stockholm we attended a parade where thousands of AIK supporters demonstrated their support for the team. The team players were brought to Friends Arena in a bus departing from their former stadium, Råsunda. The atmosphere can be compared with that of a carnival. The streets were full of people singing different chants from the top of their lungs. The difference was that instead of seeing people dancing around to samba beats, the view was rather limited as a result of smoke bombs and flares.

The day before this match an incident occurred in the city of Helsingborg, which was to impact the whole supporter environment of Sweden. A football supporter from Djurgården was killed when attacked by what was assumed to be hooligans from the Swedish club Helsingborg. This impact was also seen throughout the football match, which started with a manifestation to express the sorrow for this event. It was a lot of talk amongst the supporters about this event, and both sorrow and sadness was expressed towards the family of the deceased as well as the club Djurgården. One particular observation occurred spontaneously after the football match had ended. While waiting in the kiosk line, I overheard a girl dressed in AIK cloths expressing her resentment toward supporters of AIK. Many of the AIK supporters, including the majority of those around me in 'klacken' had several times during the match sung chants expressing hate against both Gothenburg and against Djurgården. The girl in the kiosk line was upset that chants expressing hate against Djurgården would be sung so soon after a supporter being killed, arguing that this was both disrespectful and unnecessary. I had not reflected over this prior to overhearing this conversation and I find it to be an interesting demonstration of supportmentship. While the relation between AIK and Djurgården is known to be particularly rival, the event from the day before seemed to have created room for a discussion on how far this rivalry is to be taken.

2.3 Ethical considerations

As the theme for this thesis can be regarded as a rather sensitive issue, I was very careful not to offend any of my informants or not make them uncomfortable during the interviews. One

aspect I was concerned with when preparing for my interviews was that the informants would not feel scared of being understood or portrayed as a racist, which for many can have strong, negative associations. During the empirical observation I was introduced to other supporters who were acquaintances of my key informant. Although I did not conduct any interview with the other supporters I still felt that it was important that they knew the motivation I had for being there. The supporters I engage in conversations with were explained that I was there conducting a research.

All of the supporters I interviewed are anonymized. This was stressed to all my informants due to the sensitive theme of the thesis. I have therefore changed their names. Exact age and the place they are from will not be presented. I have chosen not to write which club the specific informant is a supporter of, as I do not find this information to affect the reliability of the informants or the material in general. I also felt that this would be a mode of further assuring that their anonymity would be guaranteed. All of my informants had the opportunity to read through the parts of the thesis that concerned them and where I had utilized the material gained through the interviews. In this case they were given the opportunity to approve this information and confirm if they were satisfied with their anonymity. I did receive this approval.

2.4 Analytical framework

A social constructivist approach has been applied in this thesis. I believe that this method will allow me to interpret how the supporters, which in this case would be the main actors, create their social reality. A social constructivist standpoint will also give me a better opportunity of understanding the motivations behind certain acts and how this is understood within the environment. I find this to be essential as I am interested in investigating how the supporters understand the phenomenon of racism in their environment. As all my informants have been found by utilizing the method of snowball sampling, Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg argue that a social constructivist stand is appropriate (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg 2011). They state the following:

[r]esearchers who refer to reality as being socially constructed through interaction among individuals and their life-worlds of subjective

interpretations may generate especially valuable results by interviewing friends and/or acquaintances (ibid: 5).

The standpoint of Social Constructionism can therefore be argued to be especially valuable in relation to the method I have used to gather the material for this thesis.

Thomas Diez, Imad El-Anis, Lloyd Pettiford and Jill Steans are all researchers who have, or are still, working within the field of International Relations. They have together collaborated on publishing an introductory book to theories of International Relations. Here they propose the following definition of social constructivism:

[h]uman beings are always situated in particular contexts which inform their actions, they also reproduce, or construct, their ‘world’ through their actions. The world we live in is therefore always contextual (Diez et al. 2010: 183).

Diez et al. also emphasizes the importance of norms in people’s behavior when defining social constructivism (Diez et al. 2010: 187). From what I have witnessed of the world of football, I would argue that it is possible to recognize how norms are contextual here. The transformation of the Swedish football environment, from a gentleman culture to local patriotism where rivalry is appreciated, also demonstrates how the supporters are part of changing and creating their ‘world’ within the football environment (Cederquist 2010). Following the definition of social constructivism provided by Diez et al., it will be relevant for the thesis to study the contexts building up the supporters ‘world’. When this is done it will be possible to further comprehend certain actions conducted by the supporters. In this case, acts which can be understood as racist. The different contexts that will be studied are found in part four of this thesis.

3. Theoretical introduction

As I have already demonstrated through Kuick’s quotation in the introduction, the supporter environment within a football club is often talked about as a unity. I will incorporate relevant

theories to comprehend this unity as I regard this to be necessary in answering my research question. Theories on the Other and the imagined community will be utilized in my approach as they target the differentiation made between members and non-members within the 'us' supporters of a specific football club (Crawford 2004:31; Finn 1994:95; Schoug 1997:65-66). Within the Swedish supporter environment, I believe that racism is more evident to be found in certain comments and expressions with racist undertones. My focus will therefore be concentrated here.

3.1 Racism

There are varied definitions and theories on the topic of racism. Here I will give a short presentation of a sample of these theories. George M. Fredrickson was a Historian who specialized himself in the history of racism. In his historical overview of the development of racism, he dates the roots of racism back to the 15th century when racism was comprehended in religious terms (Fredrickson 2003). This event took place in Spain where newly converted Jews were not recognized as properly converted to Christianity due to their 'unpure' blood (ibid: 38-39). Fredrickson encouraged that a clear differentiation is to be made between racism and hostile or negative sentiments expressed against a people (ibid: 15). He therefore differentiated racism from ethnic discrimination and from xenophobia (ibid: 19, 33). Fredrickson claimed that racism needs to be understood as something "*more than theorizing differences between people or to dislike a group you can not control*" (ibid: 19).⁵ Further, Fredrickson argued that racism only occurs in a setting where "*a ethnic group or a historical collective rules, exclude, or strive to extinguish another group based on differences which are believed to be congenital and unchangeable*" (ibid: 151).⁶ A certain sense of inequality and power are also central aspects of Fredrickson's definition of racism. When differences between two people are believed to be unchangeable and congenital, Fredrickson argues that a motivation will be created where exploitation of power is legitimized (ibid: 21). I would argue that Fredrickson's understanding of racism is rather narrow. While I appreciate his historical overview of occurrences of racism, I still believe that racism occurs on a broader scale that

⁵ mer än att teoretisera om skillnader mellan människor eller att tycka illa om en grupp som man inte har någon kontroll över.

⁶ en etnisk grupp eller ett historiskt kollektiv härskar över, utestänger eller strävar efter att utplåna en annan grupp på grundval av skillnader som anses medfödda och oföränderliga.

perhaps Fredrickson would agree. I also believe that in many cases, a clear distinction between discrimination or xenophobia and racism can not be made.

Robert E. Park, who is a Sociologist, presents a theory of the Other in his understanding of the nature of race relations. Park has conducted a study where he investigates the core of race problems in a modern, cosmopolitan society where diversity exists. Here he states:

The obvious source and origin of most, if not all of the cultural and racial conflicts which constitute our race problems, are [...] conflicts of the “we groups” and the “other groups,” [...] groups which are, however, integral parts of a great cosmopolitan and a free society (Park 2000: 111).

As Park mainly is concerned with cultural and racial minorities in his article, he relates racial problems to encounters between such groups (ibid). In the context of supporter environments however, where the supporters of a specific club view each other as members of the same ‘we group’, the ‘we group’ consists of a mix of supporters with diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. If we are to understand racism as an example of race problem, Park’s theory can be utilize in studying how acts of racism within the ‘we group’ is related to the group in it self.

Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw is another researcher who utilizes the theory of the Other in her interpretation of racism. Crenshaw is a Professor of Law and her main research areas are found within the field of law and race. In her article about the oppression of blacks in American History, Crenshaw describes how acts of racism were legitimized by stereotyping black people and creating “*an illusion of a white community*” (Crenshaw 2000: 550). Further, Crenshaw states that “[R]acism helps to create an illusion of unity through the *oppositional force of the symbolic ‘other’*” (ibid). The theory of Crenshaw will be relevant in the comparison of how the idea of a unity is created in relation to understanding what the racist attitudes are rooted in.

Evelyn Y. Young is a researcher who has her background in Educational Administration, Teacher Education and Psychology. Young has written an article where she

studies racism in urban schooling (Young 2011). In this article, Young argues that it is possible to distinguish between four personae of racism (ibid). One of these four personae consists of what Young has named the ‘unconscious perpetrators’. Young argues that this group consists of “*everyday people doing everyday business*” (ibid: 1445). Further, she argues that most racists are found within this group and that their actions may be recognized as hostile as they employ a language where they “*speak words of denigration*” (ibid: 1443). Young’s definition of ‘unconscious perpetrators’ can be related to a notion of those actions ascribed as everyday racism. With this I mean that the people behaving in a manner which may be understood as racist, do not necessarily adhere to an extreme ideology which they act out on or try to impose on others. This was for example possible to witness at the AIK stadium before when neo-Nazis utilized this arena as a scene to distribute their propaganda (Cederquist 2010). Young’s theory will be utilized as the acts of racism which are studied in this thesis occurs in a setting which can be related to the Young’s notion of the everyday scene.

When racism is discussed in this thesis, it is the notion of everyday racism which will be in focus as this is what I recognize to be relevant in the context of the Swedish supporter environment. My interpretation of racism can therefore be understood as broad if one is to compare it with Fredrickson for example, who only regard racism to be a collective action, rooted within a specific historical trait (Fredrickson 2003). Unlike Fredrickson, I also recognize racism to be individual actions. I regard racism to be actions where condescending, malicious, or stereotype attitudes are expressed based on ethnicity, skin color or cultural traits. I do not believe that one needs to be devoted to a racist or Nazi ideology to conduct a racist action.

3.2 The Other

In his book *Orientalism*, Edward W. Said developed the idea of the Orient in which theories of the Other has further emerged (Said 1993). Said was a researcher who became an important contributor in establishing Post-colonialism. In *Orientalism* a description is made on how the Orient became a symbol of what Europe or the Western societies understood as something different and unfamiliar (ibid: 3). Further, Said also described how the idea of the Orient was one of the “*most recurring images of the Other. In addition the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.*” (Said 2010:

47). In this thesis I will be referring to Said's notion on the Orient when discussing the idea or the theory of the Other. I have chosen to include the notion of the Other as a theory, as I find it relevant and important in its contribution to how we can understand differentiation made between people. I also find this highly relevant for conducting research on racism, where differentiation between people is a defining factor.

Several researchers have further developed definitions and interpretations of Said's work in *Orientalism*. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, who is a Social Anthropologist, can be cited as one example. Hylland Eriksen theorizes the Other in relation to two separate categorizations. He does this by distinguishing between an analog and a digital categorization of 'we' or 'us' (Hylland Eriksen 2002: 66). An analog differentiation is described to be when "*principles for exclusion and inclusion allow for differences of degree*" (ibid: 66). A digital differentiation is on the other hand defined as a "*system of classification where all outsiders are regarded as more-or-less the same*" (ibid). An analogical and digital differentiation can be especially relevant for studying how differentiation is made between members and non-members of the supporter environment. This is also relevant when conducting research on why certain people conduct racist actions. Here, a better understanding of the different comments and remarks based on racial premises can perhaps be achieved through Hylland Eriksen's notion of the Other.

In *Orientalism*, Said presents a theory on how Western societies defined who they were by contrasting themselves to the Orient in those aspects where they could not recognize themselves (Said 1993). Several researchers who have studied other processes of self-identification have further elaborated this theory. Stuart Hall, a Sociologist and a researcher within Cultural Theory, has conducted this type of research. He argues that the discourses on the Other or the self, are often "*grounded in the logic of identity*" (Hall 2000: 145). The identification of the Other is also described by Hall as a necessary process in defining a self-identity (ibid: 147). While Said's discussion on self-identity takes more of a cultural stand, as the Orient represents an unknown Other in a unfamiliar location, Hall's notion can be interpreted as concerning identity on a individual level. This can for example be seen in Hall's description of the Other as "*the self inscribed in the gaze of the other*" (ibid). While the discussion of Said can be utilized to for example understand xenophobia and racism, Hall's interpretation of how self-identity is created in relation to the Other offers a tool to further comprehend why this occurs.

David Theo Goldberg, who has written important contributions within the field of race and racism, states that the practice of identifying and naming the Other “*deny all autonomy to those so named and imagined, extending power, control, authority and domination over them*” (Goldberg 2000: 155). This quotation suggests that the process of Othering, which is the categorization of peoples as not being ‘one of us’, implies a certain degree of deliberate intent. I make this interpretation as exercising power, control and domination over someone is not a random outcome from differentiating oneself from Others. These are actions that require a clear motivation amongst the actors in question. This is something that I have recognized in the context of Swedish football, where supporters distinguish themselves from the Others in an attempt to gain an advantage and denigrate the other supporters and their football teams. Goldberg’s interpretation of the Other can also be understood as a power-tool which is achieved in the subordination of the Other. Following this definition further, I would argue that an ethnic and cultural trait becomes subordinated in this particular context, as this has nothing to do with race or ethnicity per se. Supporters gather under the symbol of a particular football club. They ‘are’ AIK, Djurgården or Hammarby and this is the identity they are protecting and empowering. This will be further elaborated in part four. As the aim of this thesis is to understand how supporters experience acts of racism conducted by some individuals, it is important to distinguish between the supporters that will pose as a representative of the supporter environment and the individual supporters conducting such actions.

3.3 Imagined Community

Benedict Anderson, who is a known researcher within Social Anthropology and Political Science, developed the concept of imagined community. The idea of imagined communities was developed by Anderson’s theorization of nations. Anderson argues that nations are imagined because the members of a nation “*will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion*” (Anderson 1991: 6). Anderson has developed this idea further in a local context, as he claims that all communities where its members do not all interact on a face-to-face basis are in fact imagined (ibid). I want to utilize the theory of imagined communities to study the fellowship existing between supporters of the same club.

Gerry P.T. Finn is a researcher with a background in Social and Developmental Psychology. In an article he has written on football violence, Finn argues that an imagined community is created amongst football supporters as they create an identification with the local club they are supporting (Finn 1994: 101). Further, Finn argues that this identification is enforced through a symbolic meaning connected to a club. A visual symbolic meaning can perhaps be found in the clothes supporters wear with the logo of their specific club. Banners, which are used in live matches, can also exemplify a form for visual symbol. In this thesis I will utilize Finn's theory on symbolic meanings which enforce imagined communities to investigate how supporters create a unity amongst themselves. I believe that in locating these symbolic meanings, I will have a better opportunity in reaching my aim to investigate if racist actions do in fact affect the fellowship amongst supporters.

Gary Crawford is a Sociologist who has conducted vast research on sports fans. Crawford has published a book where he presents a new understanding of this group. Crawford opposes a traditional viewpoint on consumers of cultural products as the "*end-point*" or a "*by-product*" of the processes where cultural products are produced (Crawford 2004: 3). Instead, he offers an understanding of sport consumers as playing an important role both in the production and in the constitutions of these cultural products (ibid). In line with Finn, Crawford also argues that an important part of being a sports fan is connected to a "*sense of belonging and community*" (ibid: 52). However, he continues to argue that this specific community is an open environment which everyone can take part of. This will be especially interesting to investigate in relation to those supporters conducting racist actions.

Under the subtitle of previous research in this thesis, I wrote a short presentation of Schoug's work on local patriotism in sports. In the very same book he also presents a theory on the intimate fellowship. This is described as a specific type of logic or a technique:

The community presupposes a certain degree of small scale to maintain its intimate character and needs therefore distinctive boundaries to exist. If the

community is too inclusive the feeling of proximity will drown in an experience of anonymity and irrationality (Schoug 1997: 65).⁷

Here it is possible to recognize a use of both the theory of Othering as well as imagined communities in a description of the supporter community. In drawing an imaginary boundary towards the Others, which in this case would be non-members of the supporter community, the link to the community is enforced. Schoug offers an interesting approach, which I find relevant for this thesis as it demonstrates the balance between the creation of the Other in relation to a connection to the supporter community. I also believe that this theory will be especially useful in the investigation of how supporters relate themselves to those who has committed racist actions.

4. Understanding racism amongst Swedish football supporters

4.1 Racism in Swedish football

When I asked my informants how they perceived the current situation in Swedish football regarding occurrences of racism, the majority of them answered by making an historical comparison to how the situation used to be in the supporter environment. They all expressed that the situation is better today compared to how the environment was some decades ago, confirming Cederquist's analysis of the historical development within Stockholm football clubs (Cederquist 2010). Those of my informants which are supporters of AIK all recognizes a decrease in racist activities, as the supporter environment within AIK has transformed from having neo-Nazi influences to being a diverse supporter group consisting of various immigrants. One of my informants argued that while those supporters who where neo-Nazi activist were not a big group amongst the supporters, they where very visible. A reason for why supporters argue they do not see any traits of racist activities can be due to the fact that neo-Nazi activities is no longer visible.

Several of my informants also compared Sweden to countries like France, Italy and Spain, concluding that the Swedish football does not have a problem with racism in

⁷ Gemenskapen förutsätter en viss grad av småskalighet för att kunna behålla sin intima karaktär och kan därför inte existera utan särskiljande gränsdragningar. Om alla är med druknar närhetskänslan i upplevelser av anonymitet och oöverskådlighet.

comparison to these countries. Frequent occurrences of supporters making monkey noises or throwing bananas toward colored players was brought forward as examples of activities seen in countries where racism is a problem within the football. When comparing the Swedish supporter environment with rather extreme causes of racism seen in other countries, it seems like occurrences in a Swedish context are not regarded in the same manner. The level of racism in Swedish football is perhaps regarded as being at a lower scale. A certain aspect of Crenshaw's theory on racism can be useful in this context. Crenshaw argues that through acts of racism, a group is reinforced as they distinguish themselves from a symbolic Other. This theory is relevant as my informants had a clear image of how a racist supporter act, namely a person who is capable of throwing these bananas and making certain sounds against colored players. Such actions were nothing my informants recognized from the Swedish supporter environment and by separating themselves from this behavior, the image of what it entails to be a racist supporters is reinforced. Back et al. recognized a similar attitude in the English football environment. They argue that there seems to exist two separate categories when discussing the issues of racism in the football clubs, either the club is "*designated as being entirely and thoroughly racist*" or racism is regarded being nonexistent within the club (Back et al. 2001: 7). Back et al. relate this to the culture of football, which they argue is constructed on the creation of the Other. When some clubs are regarded as having a problem of racism, the club is assigned a label which other supporters distance themselves from. Back et al. argue that this creates a "*false comfort*" as racism is disregarded as a legitimate problem (ibid).

When my informant Steven argued why he does not believe that racism exist in Swedish football he motivated his reasoning with the fact that football is not grand here in Sweden if we are to compare it with for example other European countries. While acknowledging the existence of supporters with ideologies that may be understood as racist, Steven specified that this was only a minor group within the environment. Steven also emphasized the ethnic diversity amongst the supporters to be a reason for why he does not regard racism to exist. Steven explained how an existing fellowship, which is independent from age and social class, is one of the aspects he values the most within the supportmentship:

Everyone are different. All the different classes of the society are represented under the same roof. There is never any trouble caused on the basis of that. Everyone is there to watch football.⁸

In a discussion on the occurrence of certain racist comments, my informant Torsten argued that this seldom occurs in a Swedish context. He stated that he never has experienced chants with racist contents being expressed in the current supporter environment. He did, however, admit that random comments could still be heard in the stands. *“Fucking negro, why don’t you pass it to him”*,⁹ was presented as an example. When I asked Torsten what reactions he has observed in the stands when comments like these are expressed, he answered that usually there are some people, and especially those with other ethnic backgrounds who reacts. Torsten explained how usually some verbal confrontations might occur, but that it usually passes quickly. Torsten does not see comments like these as being racist. This was described as something which slips out. I interpreted this as Torsten was separating between two different categories. In one category you make a comment with the intention to denigrate or discriminate another human being. In the other category those comments do not have this deliberate intention. I got the impression that behavior like this, independent from what motive lies behind, does not have an impact on the atmosphere in general. It seems like the positive experiences of being a part of a fellowship is more significant than such incidents. When Finn is arguing for what he defines as quasi-violence within the culture of football, which is an acceptance of aggression and violence, he states the following:

The socialization of the football fan leads individuals to adopt a cultural framework that stresses different values from those normally proclaimed appropriate for everyday social life (Finn 1994: 102-103).

Although Finn is focusing on actions of violence when discussing football culture, I argue that this quote can still be relevant to understand actions of racism as I argue that expressions of

⁸ Alla är olika. Alla olika samhällsklasser finns ju representerad under ett och samma tak. Det är aldrig nått bråk utifrån det. Alla är ju där för att kolla på fotboll.

⁹ Jävla neger, varför passar du inte till honom för?

racism can be understood as a verbal act of violence. Finn claims that quasi–violence creates a blurred line where football supporters can not make a clear distinction between “*the acceptable and unacceptable social practices of being a fan*” (ibid: 113). Although I do not find this statement to be correct in relation to those I interviewed, I do recognize how different sets of norms seems to be applied within the context of football. It seems like the supporters operate with two sets of norms in their individual life; one that is valid when they are at the stadium as a supporter and another set which is accustomed to the daily life. Several of my informants stated that if they were to hear some of the comments or expressions made at the stadium outside the setting of a football match, they would react immediately. Crawford refers to Matt Hills, who is a Professor in Film and TV Studies and his definition of a fan as a performance and an identity (Crawford 2004: 20). Further, when Crawford is discussing the moralities of sports fan he claims that this often involves “*changes in the individual’s own identity as a supporter, and significantly how they categories and judge their own and other’s behaviour*” (ibid: 42). This was something I recognized in the manner my informants expressed what was ascribed as acceptable or non-acceptable behavior. This seemed to vary in relation to whether or not they were situated at the football stadium.

Few of my informants acknowledge that they had interfered in events where something had happened which they necessarily did not support. Some had however observed other supporters interfere by for example commenting or by verbally confronting those conducting the unaccepted behavior. Olle, one of my informants, had experienced an event where a person, an adult man in his 40-50s, had screamed out a racist remark in the stadium. This created reactions around him where people were telling him to stop. Olle connected this behavior to being part of the older generation where this language and behavior was more accepted. While arguing that this type of behavior was not acceptable, Olle also expressed how he found it difficult to label someone as a racist. It seemed like he did not want to take the risk of misjudging someone as he expressed that it may have significant consequences once such a label is assigned. Not judging or categorizing a person based on certain actions seemed to be a common notion amongst several of my informants. The man who had screamed out a racist remark was for example not necessarily regarded as a racist. The identity of being a supporter of a specific club seemed to be more important than who a person is outside the stadium. Steven argued that a football match offers a context where supporters can behave in a manner they would not normally behave. Shouting out certain

comments was brought forward as one example of such behavior. A comment with racist content was however expressed as not being an acceptable behavior.

Torsten argued that he can not see any link between specific supporters making racist comments and the supporter community in general. He argued that it is rather a matter of individual attitudes. Further, Torsten also believes that these attitudes become less significant in relation to maintaining a membership within the fellowship existing amongst the supporters. Olle also reflected over how being part of this fellowship could be prioritized over certain individual values and ideologies. In the work of Merkel, which I presented under section '1,4 Delimitations', he makes the following statement in a discussion on collectivity within the football: "*The voluntary uniformity of these fans contribute significantly to their solidarity and to strong peer pressures that often lead to forms of collective behavior*" (Merkel 1999: 57). While I did not experience the existence of a peer pressure within the Swedish supporter environment, Merkel's statement is relevant as a strong solidarity and a will to be a part of the fellowship is recognizable.

Several of my informants expressed a certain sentiment of being judged by people outside the supporter environment. Media was considered as a main contributor for misrepresentations of the supporters, causing these judgments. They felt, for example, that the media is too concerned with the negative occurrences within the supporter environment. Steven argued that this is especially relevant for the media covering the football scene in Stockholm. When discussing experiences of judgments from people outside the supporter environment, the relation between supporters and the police was also a common factor. I would argue that this sentiment, of being misrepresented, enforces both the existing fellowship within the group as well as the 'us' against 'them' sentiment where they distinguish themselves from supporters from other clubs or people outside the football environment. When discussing the occurrence of misrepresentations of supporters, Torsten, stated that his reaction to this was to laugh of these people expressing certain judgments as he stated that "*usually I tell them not to talk about something they do not understand*".¹⁰

A certain aspect of privacy and respect towards the other supporters was also brought forward when discussing the different environments within the same supporter club. This can be connected to the boundary existing between the insiders and outsider of the supporter environment as a sense of protection can be recognized. I would argue that this also raises the

¹⁰ Jag brukar säga att dom inte ska prata om nått dom inte förstår sig på.

level of acceptance and tolerance amongst the supporters. When discussing the relationship between political values and interests with football, my informant Marie stated that *“their interest is something they can have on the side, which they can engage in there”*.¹¹ I would argue that this is a good representation of the relative high tolerance which is found within the supporter environment. Torsten expressed a similar meaning when he talked about certain risk supporters he had come across in his social network:

I know who are involved with these risk supporters amongst those I interact with, but this is not something we discuss. His supporter culture concerns me as little as mine concerns him. So that limit between me as a supporter and risk supporters, there are no boundary there in between. We are friends, but they do their things that way, I do mine that way.¹²

Personal interests and values, which are not related to football, are perhaps seen as an individual matter you do not engage in. Marie related the existing tolerance for each other with the common sentiment they share for the team, namely the love for their club.

4.2 The meaning of fellowship

I find the fellowship and the community existing amongst football supporters to be a unique phenomenon as it creates social relations between unknown members within the same group. My informants all describe the supporter environment to be an open and inclusive space, which they all seemed to especially appreciate. All of my informants had in common that they began supporting their club from an early age due to influences from their immediate family members. Torsten argues that the love and the commitment for the club and the team, existing amongst the most dedicated supporters, create a bond comparable with the ones established between family members. The experience of this fellowship is also something that Torsten argue is a key factor for why supporters go to see a live match. He stated, for example, that

¹¹ Det kan man ha på sin andra sida, sina intressen, det kan dom hålla på med där.

¹² Jag vet ju vilka av oss som ingår bland dom här risksupporterna som jag umgås med, men det är ju ingenting som vi pratar om. Hans supporterkultur angår inte mig, lika lite som min angår honom. Den gränsen där mellan mig som supportar och risksupportrar, det finns liksom ingen gräns där i mellan. Vi är kompisar, men dom gör sitt på det hållet, jag gör mitt på det hållet.

the standing area where 'klacken' is found is not a place to stand if you actually want to watch 90 minutes of football. This is because the engagement of the supporters standing here which is expressed by jumping up and down or for example waving flags and banner above their heads. I found this to be particularly interesting in relation to the meaning of this fellowship and considering they only meet at live football matches. Schoug makes the following statement which addresses the ideal of collectivity within Swedish sports:

In the universe of sports, where the competitive notion is aimed for competition, hierarchy, ranking and therefore unevenness, the individuality on the explicit level has a tendency to subordinate it self to the collectivity (Schoug 1997: 84).¹³

This statement enhances the power that may be found in the fellowship amongst the supporters. I would argue that it also exists a form of intimacy in the fellowship within the Swedish supporter environment. Andersons's theory on imagined community can be utilized to understand how a fellowship amongst supporters is created (Anderson 1991). All my informants stated that one of the most positive aspects of being a supporter of their specific club was to be a part of this fellowship. This was something they all seemed to appreciate and value highly.

If we are to follow Finn's theory on the power of symbolic meaning, that symbols reinforce the imagined community, it is possible to recognize how the supporters within the same club can be understood as a community. The symbolism is found in the club's logo, for example, and a shared passion for the club creates a bond between them (Finn 1994). The setting for where the fellowship is created is often connected to the stadium. When supporters are sitting in the stands cheering for their team, a strong sense of fellowship is enforced. The majority of the members have no connection or relation to each other beside the context of football. However, I would still argue that an authentic sentiment of being part of a fellowship does also exist amongst the supporters outside the stadiums. The notion of being 'AIK', 'Djurgården' or 'Hammarby' is an identity which also is relevant when the supporters are not

¹³ I sportens universum, där ju tävlingsverksamheten i sig syftar till konkurrens, hierarki, rangordning och därmed ojämlikhet, har det individuella dock på det explicita planet en benägenhet att underordnas kollektiviteten.

in the stands. While this is perhaps not acted upon outside, it is a strong sentiment that I believe provide meaning for many of the supporters. Some social networks are also established through face-to-face interaction and groupings are created on the base of shared interests.

Crawford argued that the supporters are attracted by the possibility to be a part of a fellowship due to the instability of the modern society (Crawford 2004: 59). In this argument Crawford utilizes Zygmunt Bauman's theory on liquid modernity. Bauman, who is a Sociologist, developed the theory of liquid modernity in his book *Liquid Fear* (Bauman 2006). In the modern, global society, as Bauman argues, humans have adapted to living in a world full of fear (ibid: 6). Liquid modernity is therefore defined as "*attempting to make life with fear liveable*" (ibid). Crawford refers to this theory to demonstrate the need of searching after stability and safety as "*the social frameworks of everyday life become fragile, temporary and fluid*" (ibid: 58). To connect the idea of this liquid modernity to the community found within sports, Crawford quotes Tim Delaney, a Sociologist who has conducted various studies on sports:

[i]ndividuals want to experience a sense of unity with their fellows. They become unique persons within the group and at the same time the group provides them with a distinctive identity because of their membership (Delaney in Crawford 2004: 59).

This quotation offer a different understanding from those I have presented from for example Finn and Schoug (Finn 1994; Schough 1997). While Finn and Schoug offers theories where the community between the supporters is understood in relation to individual subordination, the quote taken from Delenay offers a theory where the supporters are portrayed as more empowered. Delenay presents a theory where the supporters have chosen to be part of the supporter environment as this membership offers something they are searching for, a sense of unity. While issues concerning personal fulfillments and reflections over how the instability of the society affect supporters are not part of this thesis, I do appreciate the notion of how supporters are part of this fellowship because it brings a positive experience they have chosen to have in their lives.

While the fellowship between the supporters was a subject which all of my informants emphasized when talking about their supportmentship, they also expressed how it is possible to identify groupings within environment. Schoug claims that all people are part of these processes where you are placed within or outside a specific group depending on different social circumstances (Schoug 1997: 66). In this manner everyone will have several groupings of 'us' or 'them' which they are part of at all time (ibid). What I find especially interesting in the context of football supporters is that while you can find these groupings within the supporter environment, there seems to exist a group solidarity which at any time becomes more important than these smaller groupings. For example when the team scores a goal and everyone celebrate together. One of my informants, who is a supporter of Djurgården, described how all supporters of Djurgården gathers together to reach certain goals that will benefit the club, independent from the internal groupings. This was expressed in the following manner: *"Everyone want to create a good mood and a good atmosphere as well as to help Djurgården to the possible extent"*.¹⁴ Olle described a similar experience as he stated that it is possible to witness a fellowship between the supporters, independent from the different groupings located witin the stadium.

While arguing that the supporter environment is an open space where everyone are welcomed, Torsten also described how different groupings within the environment create certain preconceptions against each other. Chants expressing hatred and in general an intense atmosphere are examples of how Torsten believes certain supporters perceive 'klacken' as an unapproachable space where they can not enter. He argued that such preconceptions could have an impact on where supporters choose to locate themselves in the stadium. Torsten also argued that within these different groupings, conflicts are avoided as the groupings with contradicting interests place themselves in separate areas.

They do not interfere with each other if it is unnecessary. You stand within your own group and perhaps carefully choose where to stand. They do not want to create unnecessary problems.¹⁵

¹⁴ Alla vill skapa ett bra drag och en stämning och sen hjälpa Djurgården i den mån det går.

¹⁵ Dom blandar sig inte i onödan. Sen står ni i er grupp och väljer kanske med omsorg vart ni vill stå. Dom vill inte dra i gång någonting i onödan.

Several of my informants stated that in those cases where the supporter environment was portrayed in a negative manner, this was often due to the actions of a minor group within the community. This was also portrayed as something that occur within the specific supporter clubs. Here actions of violence was brought forward as an example. Firman boys, who are known hooligans within AIK, are an example of such a group. In their homepage it is possible to read the following description of its group members:

Our boys are today adult men and Alpha men in the age span 20-45 years. [...] There are Nazis and communists. There are those who are black and those who are white, there are Swedes and there are immigrants (Sverige Scenen 2011).¹⁶

What I find particularly interesting in this quote is how Firman boys claim to have both people with a Nazi background as well as people with colored skin and people with an immigrant background. From this statement it is possible to recognize how the dynamics within this particularly secluded group has a rather conflicting fundament. In the supporter community there are conflicting opinions on what constitutes appropriate behavior (Kuick 2013: 192). Kuick describes how a certain 'us' and 'them' sentiment is created within the community of Hammarby as certain sub-groups distances themselves from the other supporters (Kuick 2013: 144). Hooligans are a rather extreme grouping found within the supporter environment, independent from which local club they are members of. While groups like Firman boys state that they do in fact have Nazis within their group, it seems like this is nothing that is visible or which affects the larger supporter community of this club. While the supporters I interviewed who are AIK supporters did admit that Firman boys as a group is quite visible within the community, they have not experience acts of racism from this group.

¹⁶ Våra grabbar är idag vuxna män och alfahannar i åldersspannet 20-45 år. [...] Det finns nazister och kommunister. Det finns dom som är svarta och dom som är vita, det finns svenskar och invandrare.

4.3 Rivalry

All my informants mentioned the importance of the existence of rivalry. When discussing the existence of rivalry between the clubs, it became evident that this was an important factor as it enhanced the experience of a unity. The existence of a ‘we’ group requires an opposite pole which the ‘we’ group can distance themselves from and create their own identity from (Said 2010). Hylland Eriksen’s theory on a digital classification is relevant in this context as the construction of the Other seems to be all other supporters who are not a member of the same club (Hylland Eriksen 2002: 66).

Hall discusses the importance of the creation of the Other in relation to the development of a self-identification (Hall 2000). What is interesting in the context of the supporter environment is that it seems like the creation of an Other reinforces a group identity and the unity existing within this group. In the setting I have studied, I therefore do not believe that the creating of an ‘us’ and a ‘them’ effects the self-identification of the individual supporter. I did not see that any of the supporters I interviewed defined themselves in relation to the Other in a football setting, however it did have an important influence on the larger group they were a part of.

Schoug argues for an existence of what he defines as an ‘intimate fellowship’, which he considers to be a mode of dissociating oneself from another group (Schoug 1997: 65). When this occurs, Schoug argues that a tool is created for conceptualizing rivalry (ibid). The rivalry existing between the different football clubs enhances the identification supporters create with the particular club they are members of (Hognestad 2012; Kuick 2013). In her book, Kuick describes how the word hate is used in this context to describe the relationship between the rival teams. Hate is also often heard in many of the chants amongst supporters. When I conducted my empirical observation, I found myself sitting in a bus with 50 AIK supporters screaming out “*hate, hate, hate Gothenburg*”¹⁷ at the top of their lungs. My reaction to this experience was that while a certain jocular undertone could be recognized, the word hate was given such a strong and powerful meaning.

Steven argued that a certain preconception also exists amongst supporters of the same club against supporters of the other Stockholm clubs. For example did one of the supporters I interviewed, who is a member of AIK, describe how AIK supporters in general where

¹⁷ Hata, hata, hata Göteborg.

regarded as extreme and violent supporters. It seems however that an awareness of these preconceptions had formed a certain attitude within the club. The football club AIK has had some campaigns where they express a visible 'us' against 'them'. Some examples are the campaigns of this year, 2014, where they state the following messages: 'We are not you'¹⁸ and 'AIK vs not AIK'.¹⁹ The hatred was something which several of my informants, independent from which club they were supporting, expressed as an important part of the supportmanship. Rivalry between the Stockholm clubs is also a part of this, particularly expressed and acted out during a match. Here it is possible to recognize how Schoug's idea of the 'intimate fellowship' is in fact enforced through these campaigns or the chants where rivalry is expressed through the term 'hate'.

Steven also argued that this rivalry existing in Sweden, or particularly in Stockholm, is something he regards as a special phenomenon compared to other European or international football environments. Olle argued that rivalry between the clubs is something he finds being an important part of the supporter culture, enforcing the passion that is felt for one's club. My other informants also expressed a similar sentiment. When discussing the use of the word hate amongst supporters, Kuick points out that a distinction must be made between language and action (Kuick 2013: 50). I would argue that a community where this form of language is incorporated and where this specific language is utilized to trigger rivalry, a high tolerance is created for accepted behavior.

4.4 What defines a person as a racist?

Kuick presents one possible approach of how certain expressions and attitudes, which might be understood as racist, can be interpreted. Kuick argues that a certain vocabulary, used particularly by the older generation, has changed from having a neutral meaning to being socially unacceptable (Kuick 2013: 426). The Swedish term 'neger', which can be translated to negro, is utilized as an example. Kuick claims that the content of this word, simply used to be a reference to a person with dark skin color. This word had no racist connotation according to Kuick. She therefore argues that people who use such a vocabulary in the today's environment do still have this mentality. I experience that several of my informants shared this perception, which also demonstrates an example of a high tolerance of accepted behavior

¹⁸ Vi är inte ni.

¹⁹ AIK vs inte AIK.

amongst certain supporters. Expressions containing such language were by some of my informants attributed as a part of this ‘old fashioned mentality’. Long and Spracklen has conducted a research where they gathered information on how sports people tackled racism. They state that this category of people is “*more forgiving if they attributed it to something forged ‘in the heat of the moment’*. This was excused on the basis of being ‘not what they are really like’” (Long and Spracklen 2011: 6). Torsten explained how certain comments like “*what are you doing negro*”,²⁰ can be heard at the stadium from one time to another. This was not something that he necessarily regarded as a racist act. He argued that this only occurs occasionally in the heat of the moment and that it is not intentional. There is no underlying meaning believed to lay behind such comments.

This can be related to Long and Spracklen’s argument for the need of focusing on “*the everyday experiences of people through which racism becomes normalised*” (Long and Spracklen 2011: 6). In my interview with my informant Anna, she talked about how her many years within the supporter community perhaps had made her more tolerant for certain behavior. She expressed this by stating that she perhaps had been accustomed to the language used around her. Anna also talked about how a certain behavior, which might be tolerated within the supporter environment, would provoke an immediate reaction if it were to occur outside this context. Here I am not arguing that acts of racism has become normalized within the community, it is rather the rough language that is used. If we relate this to the theory of Crawford, on how the consumers of cultural products are contributors in its constitution, it is possible to recognize how all members do have an impact in creating the norms in the community (Crawford 2003). While the larger community does not regard the behavior of certain supporters as acceptable, it is still possible to recognize how their actions and behavior also do in fact influence the environment.

In my interview with Torsten, he argued that the existing diversity within the Swedish football environment is one of the main reasons for why comments with a racist content is not regarded as acceptable amongst supporters. Several of my informants referred to diversity as an important contributing factor for why they regarded racism to be non-existent in Swedish football. While talking about how one can define a person as a racist or not, Steven and Olle expressed the difficulty in defining or pointing out a person from the supporter environment as a racist. In a discussion I had with Olle on how he regarded certain comments with racist

²⁰ *Vad gör du din neger?*

content, he expressed that in defining something as racist or not is dependent on the receiver and how the receiver experience what has been said. Long and Spracklen argue that the relation between understanding the receiver and the messenger needs to be analyzed from a realist positioning when discussing racism (Long and Spracklen 2011: 6).

People may experience racism without there necessarily being any intent, but we do not find it tenable to argue either that a behavior is racist simply because someone perceives it to be so, or that people have not been subjected to racism just because they have been unaware of it (Long and Spracklen 2011: 6).

A Realistic notion on what is defined as a racist act is however not applicable in a social context where the members take part in creating the social reality and the norms valid within the community. Like I have previously argued, rivalry and a rather rough language amongst the supporters has created a high tolerance of a certain behavior, which they perhaps would not tolerate outside this specific context (Diez et al. 2010). While acts of racism, like throwing bananas or holding a banner with a racist message are not regarded as acceptable, comments like ‘fucking negro’ are not necessarily regarded as racism.

When defining if a person is racist or not, one needs to know the motivation which lies behind. Long and Spracklen argues that within the sports environment, people may turn to abuse with a motivation of hurting and excluding others or also to gain an advantage. Some of my informants revealed that different chants or comments are in fact used as a method for pushing the players of the opposite team off their balance through this form of psychological pressure (Long and Spracklen 2011: 13). Hylland Eriksen’s theory of how a digital classification regards all members within the same category to be essentially the same is relevant here (Hylland Eriksen 2002: 66). If certain comments and remarks are believed to be intended as a means of creating unbalance, the message is aimed against the Others as a group and not a specific individual. This also enforces the belief in why certain comments may not be understood as racist.

Goldberg argues that the creation of an Other can be related to the aim of gaining advantage over the other group (Goldberg 2000). This theorization of the Other is written in connection to theories of race and racism. While the motivation for constructing the Other in a

supporter environment is not grounded in race or racism, it is applicable in this context as it can be understood as a mode of enforcing a unity between members of the same club. One of my informants who support AIK expressed how certain aspect of AIK's previous reputation connected to the history of neo-Nazi activity still lives on amongst the Stockholm clubs. This informant also argued that it is possible to recognize how a small group within the AIK supporter environment tries to live up to this reputation when confronted with it. My informant connected this to the existence of a macho culture within the environment, where some supporters feel the need to maintain a certain facade. I would argue that it is also possible to interpret this in line with the theory Goldberg proposes, as maintaining this reputation seems to be a tool for achieving an acknowledgement of power from the other supporter communities. What I find interesting in this context is how some supporters are acting out on a former reputation which was based on the racist ideology of Nazism. However, in maintaining this facade however, there does not seem to be any relevance to this racist ideology as gaining power and acknowledgment from the other supporters is the central aim.

When I asked my informants how they would define a person who is a racist, these were some of the answers I received: A person who is not well educated; someone who is against immigration; or supporters making monkey sounds toward colored players. In general I felt that I received some vague answers when I asked my informants to define a racist person. When discussing concrete examples of racist actions and behavior, however, there seemed to exist a clear image of what this implies. Propaganda or banners with a clear racist statement or symbol was brought forward as examples here. In a discussion I had with Olle on certain chants or comments being shouted out in the stadium, he mentioned something I found particularly interesting. Olle was sitting at a pub watching a football match when he suddenly caught himself shouting out a profanity of a certain character. Olle described how surprised he became over himself, as profanities of this character are something that he would not shout out in any other social context. He explained it as a result of being inside some sort of bubble. I asked Olle if he thought that other supporters who may scream out certain comments of racist character reflected over what they had said afterwards. He answered that while some people may have do some reflection, this is not always the case. In a similar discussion I had with Marie, she expressed that many of the supporters who screams certain comments or profanities are often under influences of alcohol. Anna and Torsten also

mentioned this in their interviews. A behavior that is not seen as appropriate is therefore not necessarily linked to the character of the person in question.

5. Concluding remarks

Like I have stated in the introduction of this thesis, it is possible to recognize how the Swedish supporter community has transformed over the last decades. As several researchers and my informants have emphasized, racism and extreme Right movements were visible in the Swedish stadiums during the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s (Bairner 2001; Cederquist 2010). This is however argued to be a problem of the past, as actions for eliminating racism has been taken within the local clubs as well as diversity within the environment has increased. Kuick locates the problem of racism to be within the larger Swedish society. While Kuick do recognize that some racist expressions may still be heard in the stadiums, she does not regard this to be a problem of the supporter environment per se. This is due to the fact that the supporter environment in itself is a part of the Swedish society (Kuick 2013: 427). This understanding was also shared amongst some of my informants. In part four I demonstrated how the supporters I have interviewed do experience that comment with racist contents can still be heard at the stadiums. This is however not always recognized as racism. The existence of anti-racist campaigns, like ‘Show Racism the Red Card’, and different campaigns arranged by the local football clubs, can be interpreted as a manner of tackling what seems to be a real problem in Swedish football. In AIK for example, they have something called ‘AIK-stilen’, meaning the style of AIK where they distance themselves from any activity or behavior of discrimination in relation to their club (AIK Fotboll). Racism is explicitly enhanced as an unacceptable behavior. I regard these forms of activities to imply that a problem with racism is in fact found within the Swedish football.

In the quotation by Long and Spracklen, which I presented in the section of previous research, they argue that there seems to exist awareness that expressions and comments with racist connotations are not accepted in today’s society. Further, they argued that this does not imply that certain beliefs or mentalities lying being such actions has changed (Long and Spracklen 2011). They also imply that the existence of such mentalities creates a challenge regardless of if they are expressed or not (ibid). This embraces some of the reflections I had when my informants where discussing the notion of racism and racist actions in the stands. As I demonstrated in part four, when a person makes a comment or a remark in the stand,

utilizing for example the term ‘negro’,²¹ the condescending and negative aspect of this term is not always acknowledged. Such occurrences seems to often be dismissed as either being said in the heat of the moment, under the influences of alcohol or something which more or less slips out of the person without any reflection or an deliberate intent. The norm for how to behave in the stands as a supporter seems to be somewhat ambivalent. While it was clearly stated by all of my informants that racist behavior is not accepted, I experienced that there seems to exist a divide between this ideal as a norm and the actual implementation of it. As I also have demonstrated previously, the fellowship existing between the supporters seems to be highly valued by all of my informants. When I analyzed the material I have collected through the interviews, I recognized what can be understood as an unwritten rule. One does not pass judgment on the other supporters within the same club that one is supporting. This protective attitude can be seen in relation to the experience of being misinterpreted and misjudged by people who are not part of the same environment. It can also be understood as a notion of not allowing the acts of one person to present the club in a negative light. This can be understood as reason for why supporters do not regard racism to be a problem in Swedish football. With the existing protective attitude, non-members of the community are ascribed as the Other, enforcing the unity within the community. It is also possible to recognize how the enforcement of a fellowship and a unity elevates the level of acceptance and tolerance.

I argue that to comprehend racism amongst Swedish football supporters, it is therefore necessary to study the interaction between the fellowship and the creation of the Other, which are enforced through rivalry. Park’s definition of race problems, as a conflict between a ‘us’ group and the Other, can be utilized here if one is to define racism as a race problem. In the context of Swedish football, the conflicts and rivalry existing between local clubs are not grounded in race or racism. While diversity is found within all the supporter environments, the rivalry existing between the clubs is grounded in club affiliation. It is grounded on the notion of ‘being’ AIK, Djurgården or Hammarby, regardless of ethnic or cultural background. I have demonstrated how some individuals seem to utilize verbal attacks against the Others as a tool to gain advantage over the opposite team and its supporters. These individual actions can therefore be understood as actions conducted on the behalf of the other members within the same club, despite their unawareness or their disapproval. This explains how racist acts can be expressed within a supporter environment which is diverse and multi-ethnic. It is regarded as a method of enforcing the group as a whole. An intent of subordination is here

²¹ Neger.

recognizable, as it is within act of racism. It does not however, explain why the individual actor turns to racism to gain advantage or demonstrate power over the Other.

In this thesis I have studied the mere surface of understanding racism amongst Swedish football supporters. It has been an extremely interesting and educating process. The material I have gathered in addition to the findings I have presented has room for further investigation on a deeper level, which the limited space of this thesis did not allow me to conduct. The study of racism from the perspective of the supporters is lacking in the field of similar research. There exists therefore a need for further investigations.

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