



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

# **The Racial Politics of Integration in Sweden**

*A qualitative study of Gemensamma Krafter*

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## **Abstract**

**Title:** The Racial Politics of Integration in Sweden

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The objective of this paper is to analyse how integration politics affect the everyday lives of people. A specific focus is placed on the clients of Gemensamma Krafter (GK), a functional unit within the municipality of Borlänge, Sweden which is classified by the municipality as being an integrative service. GK creates an inclusive environment where people from different cultural backgrounds meet. Data was primarily collected from six individual, semi-structured interviews. The interviewees included all GK staff members as well as several clients who attend the service. Secondary documents sourced from the municipality and GK staff were also analysed to provide additional context for GK and its operation within the municipality structure. There are many reasons for social exclusion and the aspect of race is one of them. This study has a specific focus on exploring the racial politics in Sweden's integration politics. I use theories of social constructionism, post-colonialism, critical race theory and the concept of power relations to explain the operation of racial politics in the context of GK. I support the analysis by using the concepts of racialization, social inclusion and empowerment to inform the discussion. In my paper, I argue that the politics of integration creates division between people and the act of integration is what brings people together. Even though the motivation behind the municipality having a unit that is focused on integration is good, it inevitably places a distinction between the users and non-users of the service. I find that GK manages to be successful at attracting a mixed clientele to their service, and that by actively choosing to not make integration a focal point of their program, they are able to create a service where people from different cultural backgrounds feel comfortable attending.

**Total Word Count:** 31,387

## **Abbreviations used in text**

<b>GK</b>	Gemensamma Krafter
<b>IASSW</b>	International Association of Schools of Social Work
<b>IFSW</b>	International Federation of Social Workers
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>OECD</b>	Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
<b>SFI</b>	Swedish for Immigrants
<b>UNESCO LUCS</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Local UNESCO Centre for Collaboration
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

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## **1. Chapter One: Introduction**

To explore the politics of integration in Sweden, I have chosen to conduct a qualitative study focused on a municipality unit, Gemensamma Krafter (GK), which is located in the municipality of Borlänge in central Sweden. GK is charged by the municipality with providing an integrative service.

I grew up in Falun, a city located approximately 20km from Borlänge. I became aware of GK through reading local newspapers that described their work. In 2016, GK received a lot of attention in the local news as they lost their venue in which they had operated since 1999. I was interested in finding out why GK, an entity that appeared to serve a significant role for those attending, experienced such difficulty in finding a new venue. I decided that I wanted to conduct a study on the individual's attending GK. After reading about Sweden's integration politics, I became interested in finding out how individuals attending GK are affected and influenced by integration politics.

I study the impact that integration politics has on individuals, as I believe it is important to let those who are targets of governmental politics have their voice heard. Van Dijk (2005) states that it is the elite, for example politicians, journalists and researchers that set the agenda for racism in our society and therefore control the direction of society. By focusing on issues related to integration and 'the others', these discourses can produce, confirm and spread prejudices and ideologies that produce and legitimize everyday racism within the field of immigration, politics and education. Race matters because the modern state has made it matter by embodying racial conditions, which in turn has shaped the modern state. I believe it is not only morally correct, but integral to question structures in society in regard to how power relations are created and to make these structures visible. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that integration politics have their origins in ideas developed during colonialism (SOU, 2006).

As discussed by Douglas (1987), institutions themselves are influenced by the knowledge they themselves have induced. The context that GK operates within is therefore important to consider, as it provides a context through which the actions of staff who work at GK can be interpreted. The organisational structure however is not the focus of this study, rather the individual experience of staff and clients of the service is. By focusing on how each individual perceives GK, and the impact that attending the service has on their social experience, enables me to comment on whether attending the program in question is in general advantageous or disadvantageous for attendees. Taking an outcome orientated perspective, contextualised by the experiences and opinions of the service's attendees, ensures that the service users themselves are not faceless, and are given a voice.

The theoretical paradigm this study is based on is social constructionism, as this paradigm believes society is a social construction (Bryman, 2015). I will use theories of post-colonialism to understand how past ideas about colonialism continues to affect our contemporary society (Hall, 2006). Furthermore, critical race theory is used as it views the concept of race as a social construct while at the same time supports the understanding of relationships between race, racism and power. Finally, to consider power aspects, the concept of power relations will be used.

Data was collected from six semi-structured interviews which I conducted with all staff members of GK as well as four clients who regularly attend the service. The interviews were completed in the municipality of Borlänge in March 2017 and were conducted on a one-on-one basis. The aim of this research is to give GK clients a voice to understand how integration politics affects their social experience.

In my paper, I argue that the politics of integration creates division between people and the act of integration is what brings people together. I find that GK manages to be successful at attracting a mixed clientele to their service, I argue that by actively choosing to not make integration a focal point of their program, they are able to create an environment where people from different cultural backgrounds feel comfortable to attend. In addition, the fact that GK is perceived as distant from the municipality, although it is a unit within the municipality, may contribute to making the service more attractive to their clients. In line with the findings of Balgopal (2000) I argue that integration politics continues to be based on much of the same ideology that underpinned assimilation; racism and discrimination is still noticeable on an individual, structural and institutional level. Balgopal (2000) states that the original ideology behind assimilation continues to be present behind social policies and social services for immigrants as successful integration is still measured by how well immigrants conform to the majority group.

This paper contains eight chapters. This first chapter outlines the background of the study including a brief description of integration politics, key concepts that will be used in the study and presents GK and discusses the services it provides. Furthermore, this introduction outlines the aim of the study and the specified research questions. I also discuss the study's relevance for social work. The framework of the rest of this paper is discussed in section 1.6; the disposition.

### **1.1. Integration politics in Sweden**

To be able to understand the politics of integration in Sweden, how the concept of integration is perceived and acted upon in Sweden must be explored. In the Swedish context, integration is a word commonly used when discussing immigrants<sup>1</sup> and how 'they' need to be integrated into Swedish society by 'native' Swedes. Research has shown that despite efforts made by the Swedish government to create an inclusive society, Swedish society is more divided now than ever before (SOU, 2006). This division has marginalised and segregated people with an immigrant background further from the labour market, politics, education, health services and the housing market. Jönhill (2012) argues that politics towards immigrants have gone from having an assimilative approach up until 1970 to policies focused on integration post 1970. The goal of integration is to avoid the group being integrated into another group having to give up on their special traits such as culture or language.

The current aim of integration policy is to “ensure equal rights and opportunities for all, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background” (Regeringskansliet, 2017). These goals are mainly targeted towards practical issues such as providing jobs, learning the language, social benefits, housing and indicate a will to create an inclusive society. Integration politics develops goals about equal rights, duties and possibilities for everyone. At the same time, they are based upon assumptions of people's inherent

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of immigrant in the Swedish context is mainly refers to people with a non-European background



differences. This separation of the ones that should integrate, versus the ones that should be integrated creates a hierarchical order that not only affects people with a foreign background and ethnic minorities, but also the formation of what the majority of society is perceived to be. The conception of people as being 'different' naturalises unequal conditions and special measures towards those who are considered as being different (SOU, 2006).

Both national and international research demonstrates how discrimination and racism affects the welfare of people. The institutionalized and structural discrimination of people in the Swedish labour market, education system and residential areas, affects their socioeconomic status in society and assigns them a position that is subordinate to the majority of society (SOU, 2006). There are established ethnic gaps that are visible for people living in Sweden who have their background in countries outside of Europe. Neither the possession of higher education, work experience, knowledge of language or length of stay result in better living conditions for migrants on average (SOU, 2006). This further indicates that there are barriers in society that hinder integration.

Even children and adolescents born and raised in Sweden are considered to be foreign and the world immigrant has become a word that is associated with deviation and problems (SOU, 2006). Increasingly in Sweden, political parties with anti-immigrant views have received a larger amount of political power. What anti-immigration parties in Europe tend to have in common, according to Lithman (2010), is a sense of blaming the non-white immigrants. In particular those with a Muslim background are singled out for creating "parallel communities" and being a threat to western liberal values and social cohesion. It is not integration politics that have created social groups of immigrants differentiated from "Swedes", these groups existed before integration policies and programs were established. However, integration politics have contributed to the preconceived ideas and racialized opinions that exist today in Swedish society where the majority of society has certain expectations that the minority groups are expected to follow (SOU, 2006). Integrative services such as GK are a function of integration politics; the extent to which integration services reinforce distinctions between peoples or minimise them is determined by their mode of service delivery (Scuzzarello, 2008). By studying how GK operates in practice, and how individuals attending the service are impacted by attendance, I will get a first-hand insight into the manifestation of integration politics at a local level.

## **1.2. Racial politics and racialization**

Two central concepts that will be used in this study are racialization and racial politics. Race can be defined as a social construction used to structure power relations, both on a local and international level. Goldberg (1993) states that 'race' naturalises the groupings it identifies in its own name, which as a result creates social relations where individuals with little in common are brought together through race and form groups that are perceived as unchangeable and eternal. The state can be involved in managing racial distinction through economic, legal, political, cultural, social and scientific factors. Racial politics, according to Goldberg (2002), is the adoption of an exclusionary practice based on racial profiling which is instituted by social or political institutions. It is created in a certain context that creates exclusion. As argued by Goldberg (2002), the actual exclusion is often not the prime issue; it is what the exclusionary practice enables.

The concept of racialization refers to a situation where people are categorized into different groups as a social construction. According to Molina (2005), racialization is the categorization, thought patterns and associations that make ranking of people a natural part of social relations and power structures. These processes are associated with a worldview that legitimizes a social hierarchy that conceptualizes differences between people based on cultural and physical attributes. In other words, racialization is a socio-political process. Within this context, it can be understood why integration programs in Sweden tend to reproduce articulations of nation and race, emphasizing differences between immigrants and ‘Swedes’ whilst at the same time contributing to a harmonious and singular sense of the Swedish self (Scuzzarello, 2008). The extent to which GK is analogous to this depiction of integration projects in Sweden will be explored in more detail in Chapter three.

### **1.3. Social inclusion**

The use of the term integration has in some contexts begun to be replaced by alternate words. As an example, Spencer (2006) argues that social inclusion is a more appropriate word to use; in some sense, this is an action of rebranding rather than conceptual change. Integration can be conceived as a one-way assimilation process where the minority group needs to change and adapt to the majority group’s expectations and demands. Inclusion has an advantage of providing a link to mainstream policy concerns as it includes all social groups, not just migrants and inclusion therefore indicates a two-way process (OECD, 2003). Beckman (2011) acknowledges the challenge that arises when concepts have an ambiguous meaning or when words used to define concepts are ambiguous themselves. Replacing the term ‘integration’ with ‘social inclusion’ is one such example. When words that describe other words also need to be defined, it may lead to a chain of definitions without an endpoint. Beckman (2011) also suggests that social inclusion could be an alternative term for integration as it maintains the main meaning of integration. With this in mind, the concept of social inclusion will also be analysed in this study and discussed with GK staff and clients.

### **1.4. Empowerment**

The final concept used in this study is empowerment. The concept of empowerment is commonly used within social work. Although there are different arguments regarding the meaning of empowerment, the general idea is that individuals or groups should feel that they have freedom and power to control their situation. Furthermore, empowerment has a structural aspect in which focus is placed on a structural dimension that maintains injustice and power relations in society. Empowerment will be an indicator of the efficiency of GK in this study; in particular I will consider GK’s level of success in increasing the capacity of their clients to recognize their own strengths and access to resources both internal and external.

### **1.5. A study about the participants of Gemensamma Krafter**

This section will briefly introduce GK before presenting the aim and research questions of this study. Since 1999 GK has facilitated an open meeting hub. Anyone is welcome to attend these informal sessions, however, the vast majority of the attendances are women with a non-European background. GK does not describe themselves as a unit working with integration even though the municipality classes them as an integrative service. In fact, the word integration is not even mentioned in their program description. Instead, GK labels themselves as a place where people from different cultural backgrounds meet. The goal of this study is not to analyse GK’s organisational structure, but rather the experience of the people who run it and attend the service.

To understand how individuals attending GK are affected by integration politics, the overall aim of my research will first be to describe how Sweden's integration politics have played a role in the creation of organisations like GK. I will then discuss in what specific way GK staff members conduct the service so as to provide a context through which to analyse how integration politics is manifested at the client level and subsequently affects those attending the service.

### **1.5.1. Aim**

The general aim of this study is to analyse how integration politics affect the everyday lives of people. This will be achieved by studying the participants<sup>2</sup> within GK, including staff members and clients.

### **1.5.2. Research questions**

In line with the stated aims I have specified the following questions:

- 1) What services does GK provide and why?
- 2) In what way do clients understand their own participation and the question of integration?
- 3) How do the staff of GK approach integration and social inclusion?
- 4) In what way do integration politics impact the clients and the services of GK?

## **1.6. How this study is relevant for social work**

Social workers work with various people, that for different reasons need help and support in order to enjoy their full rights. Usually, social workers direct their attention to those in society who, for different reasons, do not fit into existing social norms and therefore have been placed in vulnerable positions. Immigrants are one of these groups. Immigrants tend to be overrepresented in key measures of disadvantage such as unemployment, poor health, and early school dropout. This may lead to social exclusion if not addressed.

This study is relevant for social work, as GK is a unit that brings people from different backgrounds together and creates coherence for those attending, while at the same time identifying and addressing the specific needs of each individual attending the unit. It is important to share how GK works, so that other professionals can take part in their successes and hardships and apply my findings to improve their own practice.

On a societal level, this study is relevant for social work as it is important to study a service that is the product of different policies and legislation. The Swedish state has a framework where certain social relations are embodied through different projects and services managed by the various municipalities around Sweden. GK exists, as the municipality wants to address needs they detect in the community and fulfil their obligations according to statutory legislation regarding integration politics. Therefore, it is relevant when discussing the politics of integration, to understand what service they provide for the community and the motivations of clients using the service in order to understand how integration politics affects individuals and whether they achieve their intended purpose.

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<sup>2</sup> When I talk about participants within GK, I refer to both staff members and clients. When I refer to staff members I refer to the individuals working at GK. When I refer to clients I refer to those individuals that attend GK's service.

### **1.7. Disposition**

The rest of this paper is structured as follows; chapter two explains and discusses what it means to be an immigrant in Sweden and describes the development of integration policies in Sweden. Chapter three introduces GK in the context of the municipality of Borlänge. Chapter four outlines previous research about integration and argues why the current research is needed and in which way it contributes to the research field. Chapter five presents the method and analytical tools used to collect and analyse the data. Chapter five also discusses ethical considerations encountered during the research process. Chapter six describes the theoretical framework used in the analysis. Chapter seven presents and analyses the research findings. The final chapter, chapter eight includes a summary of the results, discusses limitations of the study and proposes suggestions for future research.

## **2. Chapter Two: Background of the political and social context of integration in Sweden**

This section describes the socio-political context within which GK operates. In addition, this section explores the construction of the concepts of ‘immigrant’ and ‘female immigrant’ to provide context for later analysis and to aid understanding of the views of participants of GK as presented in the recorded interviews. These terms are defined as the majority of the clientele at GK are females with a foreign background.

### **2.1. The construction of the concept of ‘immigrant’**

In the Swedish context, the concept of an immigrant is a person that has moved from one country to another to live for a longer period of time. In Sweden, the planned duration needs to be longer than a year for an individual to be classed as an immigrant (NE, 2017). Emphasis on ethnicity and national identity is a modern phenomenon that developed as a result of the growth of the nation states during the 1900s when the modern nation state thrived by homogenizing individuals via emphasizing cultural, ethnic and national identities. Magnusson (2001) states that the concept of an immigrant is created in a social and cultural context. The Swedish authorities replaced the word ‘foreigner’ with the word immigrant during the end of the 1960s. The word immigrant was contested even back then due to its ambiguous meaning.

There are various definitions of who an immigrant is. One can consider objective criteria such as citizenship or country of origin. Or one can consider subjective criteria such as a person’s physical appearance or their level at which they speak the Swedish language (Regeringskansliet, 2000). The label of immigrant is often a permanent description that follows people through life. Second generation immigrants, who never immigrated themselves but are the children of immigrants, usually have a stronger attachment to Sweden than to any other country. Calling them immigrants can lead to social exclusion and feelings of not belonging to any country (Magnusson, 2001).

The government has established that the word immigrant is generalizing and presupposes a group with common characteristics (Regeringskansliet, 2000). Magnusson (2001) discusses how there is a recurring debate in media in regard to changing the description of a person with foreign background from immigrant to something less loaded. A more appropriate term suggested by the government is a person with foreign background (Regeringskansliet, 2000).

### **2.2. The construction of the female immigrant**

De los Reyes (2006) states that the white, heterosexual middleclass has set the agenda for how the majority of society should interpret the construction of gender and femininity. This has, within academia, been reproduced and contributed to discriminating structures in society, exclusion mechanisms and ethnocentrism in how the majority of society view equality and femininity. As the majority of society has a strong picture of what a Swedish woman is, any women who deviates from that norm, for example women with a foreign background, are categorized into a different group. Listerborn (2012) discusses the history of gender and migration as two concepts that are rarely interrelated or connected. Since the 1930s, there has been a strong tradition in Sweden to promote gender equality. However, this tradition usually excludes migrant women who have been invisible in the women’s movement. Already in 1990, Ålund and Schierup (1991) argued that the general debate regarding women with an immigrant background had a negative undertone which may have resulted in immigrant women

thinking about themselves as being vulnerable and in need of help due to their cultural background. When only focusing on negative aspects, real limitations will be less visible resulting in little focus being placed on things such as the opportunities available to an individual or an individual's level of resources. The conception of an immigrant woman in Sweden has been closely associated with an oppressive, traditional and patriarchal structure/culture. A more comprehensive analysis of their historical experience and current situation is needed instead of focusing on stereotypical and cultural explanations. Through this lens, immigrant women are depicted as a more vulnerable subset of an already vulnerable group. As GK offers a targeted support for women, and provides a childcare service which enables women who have children to attend, it is directly addressing a specific and significant need in the community.

### **2.3. Integration politics in Sweden**

To establish the context GK operates in, I will provide a brief overview of integration politics in Sweden, explain the paradox of Sweden's integration politics and finally, provide some reflections about integration politics in Sweden.

#### **2.3.1. Historical context**

In the 1950s, political goals and measures for immigrants were developed. Prior to that, immigrants were supposed to take care of themselves with the help from relatives, friends or NGOs. Even though it was never directly spoken about or formulated in politics, this era had its focus on assimilation and immigrants who were planning on staying long-term in Sweden were expected to become 'Swedish' as soon as possible (Regeringskansliet, 2000). This period was primarily focused on labour migration (Segal, Elliott and Mayadas, 2009).

In the 1960s, thoughts about assimilation were contested and focus was instead on the adaptation of immigrants. In 1968, a decision was made to regulate immigration with the purpose to ensure that resources would be distributed on equal terms for both immigrants and Swedes. This decision contributed to the so-called equality goal and was supposed to be fulfilled through the general welfare politics (Regeringskansliet, 2000).

In the 1970s, focus was mainly on refugee and family reunion and a new policy approach was developed which had its focus on ethnic and cultural pluralism. Immigrants were believed to come from a cultural background that significantly differed from Swedish culture. The idea was to focus equally on equality<sup>3</sup>, freedom of choice<sup>4</sup> and partnership<sup>5</sup>. By doing this, the idea of assimilation where immigrants had to leave their own culture and language in order to become as Swedish as possible, was abandoned. There was no discussion about discrimination faced by those from an immigrant background. The view of being culturally different transferred into the concept of 'immigrant culture'<sup>6</sup>. This time period largely contributed to the construction of the concept of immigrants being a group separated from the majority of society (SOU, 2006). This policy was problematic as it divided immigrants and 'Swedes' into two separate groups where the 'Swedes' were integrated and therefore

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<sup>3</sup> Equality is a fundamental principle of the Swedish welfare system and refers to immigrants being able to enjoy the same economic and social rights as native Swedes.

<sup>4</sup> Freedom of choice refers to that immigrants themselves should be able to choose how much they want to be involved in the Swedish cultural identity.

<sup>5</sup> Partnership is the mutual respect and solidarity between immigrants and native Swedes.

<sup>6</sup> Invandrarkultur, in Swedish

not in need of integration politics. This politics focused purely on equal rights and ignored questions regarding equal opportunities. Culture became a tool to explain the differences between ‘Swedes’ and immigrants, where belonging to ‘another culture’, was the same as having a deficit that needed to be fixed in order for one to be integrated (SOU, 2006). This rational is currently occurring in the integration field when the government talks about diversity<sup>7</sup> and a multicultural society (SOU, 2006). However, the government claims diversity is a way to describe society’s cultural and ethnic diversity in a way that also includes religious and linguistic differences together with different life experiences (Regeringskansliet, 2000).

Since the 1990s, more focus has been placed on the integration of immigrants. Due to a change in the Swedish population’s ethnic composition and the increasing ethnic segregation, the Immigration and Refugee Committee (IFK) was established in 1994 with the aim to conduct a comprehensive review of Sweden’s immigration politics. In 1996, IFK proposed new goals and guidelines for the immigration- and the general welfare politics. As a result, the government proposed to change immigration politics to integration politics and the Integration Board<sup>8</sup> was established in 1998 with the purpose of monitoring integration efforts across Sweden, evaluating integration trends, combating racism, xenophobia and discrimination and to promote equal rights and opportunities (Segal, Elliott and Mayadas, 2009). The starting point for this new form of integration politics was to emphasise the cultural and ethnic diversity that is present in Swedish society. From this point forward, it was not being an immigrant per se that motivated special measures but the individual need of each person. Special measures were only supposed to be directed towards immigrants as a group when the immigrant-hood was the relevant point of departure and this was decided to only be relevant during the first period in Sweden.

Current integration politics aims to create equal rights and opportunities for all regardless of ethnic or cultural background (Regeringskansliet, 2017). Integration politics concerns the whole population and the whole of society. The state sets targets for what should be achieved in various areas of society. For example, by advocating for education and social policies to support individual's integration and provide equal opportunities. The community should support the right of an individual to be different by facilitating integration with respect for the individual. The integration process is reciprocal, meaning that everyone in the community is involved, responsible, and must contribute (Regeringskansliet, 2000).

### **2.3.2. The paradox of Sweden’s integration politics**

The aim of Swedish integration politics is that all people despite cultural and ethnic background should have the same rights, obligations and opportunities. At the same time, integration politics is focused on the idea of people’s inherent differences. A hierarchy develops when the separation of who is integrated and who is in need of becoming integrated is created. This does not only affect people and groups on an individual level but it effects the construction of society as a whole. Integration politics has a focus on an individual’s position in society as a worker, however, this does not take into account the expectation that the society is highly functional without any problems. There is an expectation that immigrants should integrate into a society where for example sexism and racism does not exist. This does not take into account the

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7 Mångfald, in Swedish

8 Integrationsverket, in Swedish

gender segregated labour market and the decreasing employment opportunities for people with an immigrant background. As a result, the problematic 'other' is constructed as a deviant feature in a normally 'harmonic' society (SOU, 2006).

### **2.3.3. Reflection on migration policies**

It has been established that people have always made a distinction between 'us' and 'them' to differentiate one's own group. This has been done to enable an understanding of people and groups and has mainly operated as a cognitive distinction. 'We' and 'them' usually have a normative value added that can be either positive or negative. Jönhill (2012) argues that it is confusing to call someone a 'Swede' as the term is not synonymous to ethnic Swedes, but refers to a sense of national belonging or identity which is a modern construction. Jönhill (2012) argues that it is evident that skin colour historically has been a marker to divide 'we' and 'them'. Hence, racism existed before politics. One short coming of integration politics is the lack of inclusion of historical processors such as colonialism, war, racism and slavery, as they have all impacted our view about 'us' and 'them'. 'We' have become an integrated group in relation to 'them' that due to their deficits, are in need of actions in order to become integrated (SOU, 2006).

To achieve equal rights for everyone in society, there needs to be a mutual understanding where different identities and ways of living are accepted and encouraged. This is in stark contrast to the assimilation perspective where focus is on immigrants adapting to the norms of the majority of society.

It is crucial that all people are given the same rights and opportunities. If this is not achieved, it is not possible to assume that certain duties and obligations can be placed on individuals. Olwig, Larsen and Rytter (2013) state that a problem with Scandinavian integration schemes is that they are primarily designed to fit the welfare system instead of the needs of immigrants. For example, immigrants are expected to learn the Swedish language, social norms and cultural traditions and values before they are qualified to work. The issue with that is that focus is placed on what immigrant's lack rather than what they can offer to society.

## **2.4. Racism and discrimination in Sweden and the creation of 'us' and 'them'**

To understand how the division between 'us' and 'them' was created in Sweden, the manner in which racism and discrimination is constructed in social and political settings and policies must be understood. On the other hand, how integration policies and programs may contribute to racism, discrimination and ethnic segregation in society must also be considered (SOU, 2006).

Through the conceptualization of 'the others', the development of the concept of 'us' begun where 'the others' are expected to mirror 'us'. The classification of 'us' and 'them' reflects an existing reality as it explains relationships between groups. This is in itself not an issue, as categorizing people helps explaining differences and relationships. The issue occurs if one group takes a superior position where it is more favourable to belong to one group who has advantages over another group. This results in 'the others' not only becoming a group that is different to 'us' but which is also regarded as less worthy. Such a situation can create racism if the inferiority of 'the others' becomes an ideology and receives a scientific explanation (SOU, 2006). Racism and discrimination in Europe, including Sweden, is widespread where the targets are 'the others' with 'the



others' typically being the non-European groups and 'ethnic minorities'. Even though official declarations regarding the inherent rights of all individuals have been signed by many European countries, these principles are constantly counteracted by the institutional and structural discrimination that occurs in everyday life (SOU, 2006).

For discrimination to appear, there needs to be a perception that people are different and have different values, this justifies their special treatment. Furthermore, discrimination can be viewed as a result of social institutions inability to manage structural inequality (SOU, 2006). The existence of GK reflects the municipality's acknowledgement of discrimination in the community.

### **2.5. The responsibility of the state versus the responsibility of the municipality**

GK is a service that operates within the municipality. Before introducing GK, I want to clarify the role of the state and municipalities in Sweden. Trydegård and Thorslund (2010) discuss that in Sweden, there is a potential tension between two main social policy principles: universalism and local autonomy where universal policies are established at the national level, but implementation of the policy is the responsibility of municipalities. Bergmark and Minas (2007) argue that there has been a shift in Sweden in power and responsibility between the state and the municipality in the past decades. A decentralization of responsibility and power has moved from the subordinated (state) to the lower levels (municipality). Municipalities are charged with providing a wide range of services including but not limited to education, social welfare, elderly care, housing and so on (Nelson, 1992).

Bergmark and Minas (2007) further state that, in comparison to other European countries, municipalities in Sweden tend to have more independence and are not as dependent on the national politics. The Swedish social organization has been compared to a time glass where the regional level, represents the waist and does not have much power. The top and bottom represents the state and the municipality who have the majority of the power. Even though the municipality has a lot of power, according to the abovementioned metaphor, the state is responsible for implementing politics and the municipality to adopt practical measures to follow the established political framework. As discussed, I am interested in studying how integration politics effects the everyday lives of people; to do this I need to focus on the service delivery which occurs at the municipality level. Focusing on GK allows me to do just this. Whilst GK is an integrative service that functions in line with national politics, it is a unit of the municipality of Borlänge. The service is delivered with great autonomy from the state with the municipality of Borlänge ultimately accountable for GK.

### 3. Chapter Three: Background of Gemensamma Krafter and the context in which they operate

The politics of integration and the idea of a nation-state consisting of a homogenous population has resulted in the need for services such as GK to exist. This chapter will first provide information about the municipality of Borlänge, before describing what ethnic segregation looks like in Borlänge. Finally, I will describe GK and its activities.

#### 3.1. The municipality of Borlänge

Borlänge is a municipality located in the centre of the county of Dalarna, approximately 200 km northwest of the capital Stockholm. In 2016, Borlänge had a population of almost 51 000 people (Borlänge Kommun, 2017). Borlänge promotes itself as being a multicultural municipality and approximately 21% of the population in Borlänge has a foreign background. The municipality of Borlänge defines a person with a foreign background as a person who is born outside of Sweden or whose parents are born outside of Sweden. At the end of 2015, 2 942 people came from Somalia, 1 598 came from Finland, 968 from Iraq, 911 from Turkey, 757 from Syria and 315 from Thailand (Borlänge Kommun, 2017)

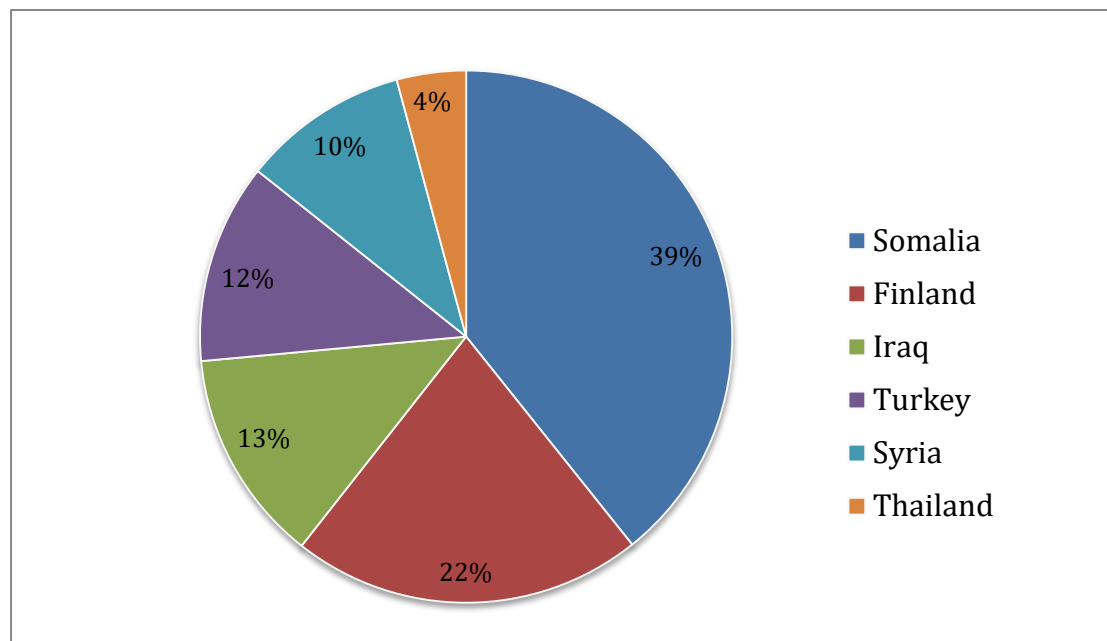


Figure 1: Distribution of people with a foreign background in Borlänge (2017)

##### 3.1.1. Ethnic segregation in the context of Borlänge

Andersson (2007) argues that residential segregation is the spatial separation of certain social groups. Segregation is a relative phenomenon, as it is rarely absolute. It is also a relational phenomenon as a city or an urban region demonstrates certain degrees of segregation between ethnic groups, young and old and rich and poor. Politicians, on the other hand, tend to talk about certain neighbourhoods as segregated, which generally hides relational aspects.

GK was first operating in the ethnic segregated neighbourhood of Jakobsgårdarna. Between 1990 to 2008 the ethnic and social economic segregation between different areas in Borlänge increased. Around year 2000, the invisible minorities in

Jakobsgårdarna<sup>9</sup> decreased and the visible minorities<sup>10</sup> increased. Jakobsgårdarna is a part of the Million Homes Program and was built in the 1970s. The layouts of these housing areas were meant to promote a sense of community and belonging. However, due to the increasing geographic concentration of immigrants moving to these areas, the result was ethnic segregation. The Million Homes Program<sup>11</sup> was at first solving issues such as housing shortages. However, today it is perceived as an action that created residential segregation. Molina (2005) argues that the exclusion of immigrants to certain geographical neighbourhoods was crucial for the introduction of the concept of racialization in the Swedish context. Racialization will be explained further in chapter six. A common conception is that immigrants themselves create segregation by moving to areas with high level of immigrants, as they are believed to be wanting to maintain their culture. This is a form of racism that romanticizes and creates a picture of ‘the other’.

Jakobsgårdarna is one of the most central areas in Borlänge, which differs from the traditional locations of apartments built as part of the Million Homes Program which are usually situated on the outskirts of cities. Jakobsgårdarna differs from many other Million Home Programs developed as the segregation commenced in 2000 whereas other areas became segregated from the start. The majority of the housing in Jakobsgårdarna are rental apartments. There are not many other areas in Borlänge one can move to as a first step of moving away from home. However, many people with an immigrant background tend to stay in the area longer than people with a non-immigrant background due to difficulties finding jobs and having a steady income. There is a risk that Jakobsgårdarna will continue to be even more socio-economically disadvantaged unless measures are taken to solve this issue (Håkansson & Trumberg, 2012). Håkansson and Trumberg (2012) suggest that programs such as GK are useful in combating ethnic segregation as they lead to social interaction between people which reduces isolation and increases participants knowledge about one another.

### **3.1.2. The municipality of Borlänge’s labour and social welfare board**

Borlänge has made efforts to curb segregation by developing policies and participating in different programs and projects. As previously mentioned, the labour and social welfare board is responsible for integration in Borlänge. In the 2017-2019 labour and social committee plan, where GK belongs under, the outlined goals are:

- Everyone has the opportunity to work/employment based on their circumstances,
- Borlänge is proactive in preventative efforts that will create social well-being, and
- Health care is of good quality, where individuals has control over their daily lives.

The Labour and Social Welfare Committee develops a quality report based on the abovementioned goals that detects areas in need of development, where the action plan is a tool developed to achieve the goals. One of the prioritized areas is the need of SFI education as there is currently a large queue of people waiting to access language education (Borlänge Kommun, 2016). This is something that GK is noticing and they have special computer programs clients use to practice Swedish. GK notice that there is a demand as they observe that the computers are usually busy.

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9 Including people from Europe, Australia, Canada and USA

10 Including people from a non-European origin, except for Canada, USA and Australia

11 The construction of one million governmental units in the late 1960s.

### **3.1.3. Integrationsutskottet in the municipality of Borlänge**

I contacted the municipality of Borlänge's local coordinator for 'safeguarding democracy against violent environments' to find out what Borlänge's prioritisation regarding integration is. The coordinator stated in an email that the long-term goal for Borlänge's work with integration is to have an intercultural approach as a separate approach to integration has proven not to be successful as there is a risk that no one takes responsibility if it is unclear who is responsible. The coordinator provided a report by the integration committee in Borlänge from 2010-2014 that concludes that focus must shift from integration and diversity via education, work and housing to reach a sustainable intercultural society. Borlänge needs to take advantage of the experience other municipalities have in the topic and involve inhabitants of Borlänge in the process and ensure there is a forum for strategic discussions. GK is mentioned under the section 'homely atmosphere'. The report states that a 'homely atmosphere' is a central concept in the work of neighbourhood development, which is achieved if people feel safe, involved and solidarity with their fellows. This will be accomplished by creating opportunities, responsibility and participation. GK is mentioned as having an important role in this process. Furthermore, Borlänge is engaging in UNESCO LUCS, which aims to work against discrimination and racism and the promotion of human rights, on a national and international level (Integrationsutskottet, 2015). Engaging in this project is a step to achieve a sustainable intercultural city.

## **3.2. A description of Gemensamma Krafter**

The following section provides a description of GK including a historical overview of how they were first developed as well as what their aims and role in the municipality looks like. The purpose of this is to gain an understanding of what GK does and where they fit within the municipality, not to focus on the organizations' internal function and construction, as the purpose of this research is to study the participants of GK.

### **3.2.1. History of GK**

GK was developed between 1997 and 1998 and launched in January 1999 with the idea that it would be a three-year project. Jakobsgårdarna was the target area as the founders of the project realised that there was a lack of collaboration between healthcare services, social services, police, Tuna Byggen<sup>12</sup> and schools which resulted in residents in the area received delayed help and social support. The school board, the social service board and the health board financed the project and Tuna Byggen provided an apartment free of charge for GK when it was first established. A control group, which consisted of representatives from the aforementioned boards and a representative from Tuna Byggen was put together. The project was so successful that GK became a permanent service in the municipality of Borlänge after the initial three-year period came to an end. (Gemensamma Krafter, 2000). During the period of 2002 and 2010 there was a lot of political reorganisation in the municipality of Borlänge and GK was during that time functioning under the education board.

GK is today a support service that operates under Mottagningsenheten, a reception unit for newly arrived immigrants offering social support, Swedish lessons and financial assistance. GK is situated under the municipality's 'Immigration and Integration' umbrella. Mottagningsenheten was established in 2010 as part of the establishment reform, which outlines that Sweden's public employment service is responsible for the integration of immigrants. The purpose of Mottagningsenheten is to develop and

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12 The tenancy compound in the municipality of Borlänge

coordinate functions in the municipality to improve the integration of immigrants (Borlänge Kommun, 2017). Politically, Mottagningsenheten is under the labour and social welfare board who is responsible for integration in Borlänge. The board structure<sup>13</sup> sourced from the labour and social board in Borlänge and dated October 2016, outlines that the municipality has the utmost responsibility for the residents of Borlänge and the purpose of the committee is to coordinate the efforts and services based on every individual's level of need for support (Arbetsmarknads- och socialnämnden, 2016).

In late 2015, the apartment block where GK had their activities was demolished, as the structure of the house was unsafe. This was something GK was aware was happening, however, Tuna Byggen and the municipality were not able to immediately provide a new permanent venue in Jakobsgårdarna, or anywhere else in Borlänge. As a consequence, GK was forced to move around to different venues for almost a year in order to continue with their activities. This disrupted their operation. As of December 2016, GK was provided a new venue in a different, non-residential area of Borlänge. The distance between the old and new venue is approximately 500 meters, which is not a huge distance. However, the context in which their new venue is in differs a lot as companies, shops and municipality units now surround them, including Mottagningsenheten. This in comparison to before when they operated in a residential area.

### **3.2.2. Services provided by GK**

GK aims towards creating a meeting point for people from various backgrounds including parents, children and other adults. However, the vast majority of the attendees are women with an immigrant background. GK is not using the word integration in their project description and promote themselves as being a preventative service that creates a space where people from different cultural backgrounds can meet. Yet, Borlänge municipality labels them under the 'Immigration and integration' umbrella and some of the services GK provide, for example support with learning the Swedish language and providing information regarding how to navigate oneself in Swedish society, are directly interweaved with integration. GK has three main tasks; to conduct preventative social work; to create a safe and open space where people from all backgrounds can attend; and to collaborate and network with other organisations and authorities (Gemensamma Krafter, 2015). As GK operates under Mottagningsenheten, their budget is allocated from them. GK has two full-time staff members who have professional backgrounds in early childhood teaching social pedagogic. Both staff members are employed on equal terms with the same responsibilities. The social pedagogue focuses more on getting clients out in jobs and education while the pre-school teacher focuses more on the children and parental support. GK has one part-time staff member that attends the open service some days and supports clients who want to sew clothing for their children at a cost price. GK is currently hiring another full-time staff member who will start later this year (Gemensamma Krafter, 2015).

GK consist of two parts, the GK network and the open activity centre, also referred to as the 'baby café'. The network has its main focus on preventative work. The purpose with the network is to collaborate and operate as an information and competence forum and to provide an avenue to observe potential needs in the community. The network

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<sup>13</sup> Nämndplan, in Swedish

has meetings once a month to discuss needs in the community and how they can collaborate in order to reach the best outcomes (Gemensamma Krafter, 2015).

GK provide their open activities Mondays to Thursdays between 9.00-12.00. Anyone is welcome to attend these sessions<sup>14</sup>. Around 12 to 25 clients attend each session. Some attend on a daily basis, some fortnightly and some monthly. Roughly, the attendees are 1/3 Kurds, 1/3 Somalis and 1/3 Swedish. To keep a formal track of statistics GK counts clients twice a year in order to find out how many children and adults that attend. As GK recently moved to a new venue there is a plan to conduct more statistics when they have been up and running for a while so as to measure if people continue to attend despite the new location and who is attending. Depending on the result, GK will adopt measures so that there is a mix of people attending. In the future, the plan is to have different groups in the afternoons, depending on the needs of the clients; for example, baby massage or groups for young mothers.

Clients are informed about GK from various sources. The early childhood nurse employed by the county often shares information about the service with their patients; clients find out about the service via word of mouth from friends and family or simply come in off the street to inquire (Gemensamma Krafter, 2015). GK can be described as a voluntary open unit and emphasizes that those who attend GK come because they want to be there. In the past, GK had a collaboration with the social services that referred a group of women to the project, however, those women did not end up continuing attending, perhaps because it was a compulsory element that an authority asked them to attend.

GK is a service that is open to anyone regardless of gender or cultural background, however the majority of the clients attending are females. GK has in the past tried to have 'daddy cafés', however, not many men came. GK noticed that there is a greater need for women to attend their service, and therefore prioritises supporting those who come rather than to use their resources to recruit groups that do not attend. GK differs from other open pre-school services as their main focus is on the clients and creating networks and discussions across cultures, instead of mainly focusing on children. (Gemensamma Krafter, 2015).

GK has been described as a service that is similar to a family centre however a family centre in Sweden also needs to consist of a maternity clinic, a child health centre and the social services. There is a current discussion about planning for a family centre in Borlänge which GK would be a part of. However, as mentioned, GK differs from the traditional open preschool as they focus on the clients, as the majority of the clients attending are adults without children, which is something that needs to be taken into consideration when planning for such a family centre (Gemensamma Krafter, 2015).

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<sup>14</sup> Except for Tuesdays when GK has a woman only exercise session at Friskis and Svettis, a Swedish sport organisations run largely by volunteers

## **4. Chapter Four: Literature review**

The following chapter introduces previous research conducted in the field of integration. Olwig, Larsen and Rytter (2013) argue that studies about integration in Scandinavian countries show that integration is more than just an analytic term for measuring employment, education and housing. It measures the ability to adapt to social norms and cultural values of the majority of society. Sweden has an international reputation for having a good human rights record, however, racism and xenophobia is still present in society. For example, Hällgren's (2009) study on the perception of young men and women from ethnic backgrounds shows that they feel they need to work much harder to be perceived as full members of society. Hällgren (2009) argues that actions need to be undertaken to counteract and challenge this issue, particularly in the school system. Hübinette and Tigervall (2009) studied the experience of racialization, ethnic identifications and coping strategies of coloured adoptees and found that their non-white bodies were of a constant significance in their everyday lives in their interaction with the white majority of society. This was expressed either through curious questions about their ethnic origin or as direct aggressive racialization. Osman (2006) describes how integration projects often become an avenue for normalization and regimentation for people with foreign background due to practitioners view and treat participants in a way that that contribute to their subordination. Individuals are expected to change their behaviour without changing the order of cohesion of society. This result in people with foreign backgrounds being ascribed a specific social competence that reproduces the current social order and power relations that are created through control, disciplinarian actions and monitoring that is intended to form subjects that are subordinated.

The Swedish government aims to have a country free of racism and hate crime. To combat these issues, they produce an annual action plan that identifies issues regarding racism, hate crimes and other animosities to prevent and counteract racism and polarization in society and create a society for everyone (Regeringen, 2016). The action plan for 2017 highlights that racism is present in society in various ways and towards various groups of people. To combat this, the government has identified five areas that needs to be addressed including, more knowledge, education and research, improved coordination and follow-up, increased support and dialogue in the civil society, reinforced preventive work online and a more active judiciary (Regeringen, 2016).

### **4.1. Studies about integration projects**

Scuzzareollo (2008) focused on identifying how racial politics is manifested through integration projects, with a focus on highlighting the tension between security and care as the basis of integration politics. Scuzzareollo's (2008) states that integration projects tend to maintain ideas of immigrants being inherently different. Scuzzareollo (2008) analysed three different integration programs in Sweden's third largest city Malmö by interviewing those responsible for organizations and implementation of projects. Scuzzareollo (2008) states that integration policies and programs have a tendency to institutionalize culturist narratives as they often single out one master narrative that is considered being more significant than others when constructing collective identities. As a result, hierarchal social structures position immigrants and the majority of society in a different way as the narratives contain different form of devaluation. 'The others' are portrayed as unintelligent, lazy, dishonest, morally bad and threatening. Immigrant women are often depicted as racialized, infantilized and sexually objectified. This depiction positions immigrants as different from the majority of society due to assumptions about immigrant's culture, religion and nationality and as a result deprives

immigrants of both self-esteem and real agency. Scuzzareollo 's (2008) study concludes that people working with integration projects in Sweden are motivated to support immigrants to integrate into Swedish society. However, practices of multiculturalism tend to reproduce narratives that portray immigrants as inherently different from the host country and therefore a threat.

In contrast, Scuzzareollo (2008), Cvetkovic's (2009) used interviews with both actors in the municipality of Strömsund and immigrants moving there to assess the operational effectiveness of the integration project in question. Cvetkovic's (2009) study focuses on the assets of immigrants and how their strengths can benefit both themselves and society. Cvetkovic (2009) conducted a case study that examined the integration process of an integration and voluntary re-settlement project. The project used existing resources in the municipality to attract people with an immigrant background to move from segregated urban areas to a rural municipality and as result be provided with things that they could not get in the ethnic segregated areas in Sweden's larger cities. Many integration services are of a problem-solving nature where focus has been on problems associated with immigration instead of focusing on viewing immigrants as a resource to society. This project views immigrants as a benefit for the municipality as new habitants. Interviews were undertaken with both immigrant families and people who worked in the organization. Cvetkovic (2009) concludes that the new families have been integrated to the community to the extent that was promised by local authority. Immigrants participating in the project were motivated to move as they wanted a new lifestyle and the community was motivated to provide support for the immigrants due to an awareness of the demographic crisis that the community was facing due to depopulation. This study is contextually different to the current research in as much that the municipality sought out the immigrants rather than immigrants being placed in the municipality. In contrast to Scuzzareollo's (2008) study, the immigrants in Cvetkovic's (2009) research were viewed as a resource for the municipality rather than as individuals that required investment in the form of municipal resources. In Cvetkovic's (2009) study the immigrants were empowered indirectly by being sought out as a resource for the community, GK aims to achieve a similar outcome by motivating and supporting clients by focusing on their strengths and empowering them to real agency; to make them realise their own value. This fulfils the municipality's goal of making those who utilise the service contributing members of the community.

The previous research discussed places less emphasis on the perspective of immigrants themselves and how they view integration projects or services, but focusses more on the mechanics of service delivery, the construction of political frameworks and the evaluation of projects. Clarke's (2009) seeks to bridge this gap in the literature regarding giving voice to the immigrant experience in the Scandinavian context. Clarke's (2009) states that some of the issues with integration projects is that they do not consider the structures of systems that exists in society which supports the privileged. Clarke (2009) explored integration in the human services in Finland by analysing two migrant community research projects that were produced by migrants themselves. The data was obtained from two projects. Clarke (2009) discusses how integration programs have been adopted in many European countries in order to define social measures for national belonging, social cohesion and entitlement. Some of the issues with these integration measures is that they do not consider the structures of systems existing in society which support privileged groups and therefore misses out on considering specific barriers faced by immigrants such as racism, discrimination and



social power. Clarke (2009) concludes it is relevant to use community research methods to discover the complexity of migrant communities' needs.

#### **4.2. Integration and collaboration**

Collaboration was identified as a relevant concept in previous studies about integration. Both Schneeweis (2013) and Ewert, Liedholm and Lindberg's (2006) study focus on the importance of communication and collaborations in order to carry out a successful integration project. As the aim of the GK network is to increase collaboration between different actors in the municipality of Borlänge, I will include previous research regarding collaboration to highlight the importance of partnership.

Schneeweis (2013) conducted a case study in England about two NGOs that improved their communication efforts to improve collaboration between government, politicians and international organizations. The setup described is similar to the construction of the GK network as GK works with individuals but wants to create a space of collaboration between different actors including politicians in order to improve the outcomes of the individuals attending their service. Although this article focuses on the Roma population, the findings could be applied to immigrants as they are both groups that are considered to differ from the majority of society and as a result, policies aimed towards these two groups have been developed as an attempt to better integrate them into the majority of society. Schneeweis (2013) concludes that Roma rights need clearer organizational and political mobilization.

Ewert, Liedholm and Lindberg (2006) evaluated different integration projects in the third largest city in Sweden, Malmö, where the main focus was on the link work model, a model that describes the connections between people of different levels and from different networks. They conclude that the most important factor for a project to succeed is how well the link work is set up and executed; a finding that is relevant to the GK network which struggles to get input from all intended actors. Important factors that make a good link worker include mutual respect, personal communication and a mandate that allows the link worker to make decisions and fulfil them.

#### **4.3. Social inclusion**

The concept of social inclusion was frequently mentioned in previous studies about integration. As mentioned in chapter one, social inclusion is often used as an alternative word to integration. Msengi, Arthur-Okor, Killion and Schoer's (2015) studied a multicultural women's support program based on observations, evaluations forms and focus group discussions. Findings indicated immigrant women benefit from support groups as it empowers women and increase their sense of wellbeing. Lew-Wiesel and Kaufman's (2004) study reached a similar conclusion using a self-report questionnaire. The results indicate that a person's access to resources predicts the level of anxiety among immigrants and social support groups are recommended to extend one's social network, support with finding jobs and coping with other uncertainties in their new cultural context. Guruge, Thomson, George and Chaze's (2015) study further emphasize the importance of social support groups and social networks for immigrant women to prevent depression and other mental health issues and psychological distress. The aforementioned studies emphasise the importance of immigrant women having access to social networks and having avenues to meet in order to improve their wellbeing. GK is offering such a service by inviting people from all different

backgrounds to attend and offering them a place where they can meet and access support.

#### **4.3.1. Contribution of this research**

Studies related to integration politics in the Swedish context tend to place focus on how racial politics is manifested through integration projects <sup>15</sup> without focusing on the experience of individuals impacted by integration politics. The current research aims to fill this gap in the literature and to provide insight into how integration politics impacts upon individual attendees in the context of GK. As discussed by Clarke (2009) there is a lack of studies which employ a participatory approach to service use; those who speak from the margins are often erased from policy discussions. To the author's best knowledge there are no studies that provides the perspective of both service attendees and staff members in the context of racial politics. Furthermore, power aspects between different groups are rarely touched upon in research about integration (SOU, 2006), which is a gap this study will fill. This study will contribute to the existing research, as it will analyse how a focus on integration in Sweden has provided a framework for organisations like GK to develop using theories including racial politics and racialization with focus placed on the individual experience of staff and clients.

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<sup>15</sup>For example. Scuzzareollo's (2008) study

## **5. Chapter Five: Method**

As previously discussed, I grew up and lived in Falun, a nearby city of Borlänge, for most of my life. GK's work was regularly featured in local newspapers over the years; it was through reading the news that I became aware and interested in the work that GK conducts. GK received significant attention in the media in 2016, when they lost their venue in which they had operated in since 1999. I was interested to find out why GK, a service that appeared to play an important role for those attending, experienced such difficulty finding a new venue. I decided that I wanted to conduct a study on the individuals attending GK. This study focuses on how individuals attending GK are affected or influenced by integration politics.

I carry out a qualitative study based on interviews with participants in GK, including staff members and clients. Data was collected from six semi-structured interviews with the full staff crew of GK and four clients who regularly attend GK. The interviews were completed in the municipality of Borlänge in March 2017 and were conducted on a one-on-one basis. In addition, I analysed some secondary documents related to GK's work. All this collected data enables me to establish an understanding on how individuals attending GK are affected or influenced by integration politics. The following chapter will describe qualitative research as a method and how it is relevant for this study. Furthermore, I will describe the interview method, the interview process and how I collected my sample. Finally, the chapter will discuss validity, generalizability and reliability as well as the ethical considerations that were taken.

### **5.1. Qualitative research**

Qualitative research is the usage of the spoken or written word (Backman, 2008). This type of research is important to understand aspects in society of our understanding of what is going on that is unresolved (Bryman, 2015). Yin (2013) argues that qualitative studies allow in-depth studies on a broad spectrum of subjects. As such this approach is well suited to my study as I am interested in gaining an understanding of the perspectives of the people involved in GK. Furthermore, qualitative research is more flexible in terms of what subject to study as other subjects are sometimes limited by the need of finding correlations (for example studies using experiments), receive enough respondents to make the result valid (for example survey studies) or a lack of enough variables (for example economic studies). Criticism against using qualitative research includes that qualitative research can be subjective, difficult to replicate, there can be issues with generalising findings (Bryman, 2015). However, as I will be discussing more under section 5.5, ethical concerns have been considered and addressed in this study as I have followed the guidelines from the Swedish Science Council, a statutory body that supports and promotes research within all science fields (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

### **5.2. Interviews**

I use interviews as the primary method of collecting data. As discussed by Bryman (2015), interviews are typically the most common method used in qualitative studies. Bryman (2015) believes interviews are so popular as they are a flexible way of collecting data. Conducting interviews provides me an opportunity to understand the world from the interviewee's point of view and to develop a meaning and understanding from their experiences and knowledge. Important to note is that this knowledge and understanding is constructed in the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewed (Bjorndal, 2005). By interviewing participants, it makes it possible for me

to clarify misunderstandings and to ensure that I grasp what the interviewees have said. In general, an interview is built upon the interviewer's ability to create an environment where the interviewees feel safe enough to talk freely, open and honestly about the topic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). I therefore had a lot of responsibility in extracting valuable information, while at the same time ethically respecting the interviewee's integrity. Bjorndal (2005) mentions some disadvantages with interviews such as that they require preparation, implementation and processing. To have a constant theme throughout the collected data, I decided to have an interview guide with themes and questions that I wanted to address during the interviews. The interview guide was meant to work as a support tool as my approach was to conduct semi-structured interviews, as that would allow more flexibility and to guide focus onto whatever topics or areas that were raised during the interviews. The interview was conducted after gaining permission from the interviewees. It was recorded then later transcribed. Recording data makes it possible for other people to access the data for public scrutiny, which provides credibility as other researchers can evaluate the analysis. The interviewees verbally approved that I recorded the interviews after I informed them that the recording only would be available for me and in this study only.

The interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis as I foresaw issues with conducting interviews with more than one participant at a time regarding the possibility that participants would either become influenced by each other's answers or that one participant would be dominant over others. The interviews with the staff members lasted between one hour and thirty-four minutes and one hour and forty-one minutes. In total, four interviews were conducted with clients from GK. The clients were between twenty-eight to thirty-four years old and came from various backgrounds including Sweden, Somalia and Turkey. They were all married and lived with their husband and children at different locations in Borlänge. They had participated in GK between seven to fourteen years. The client interviews lasted between fifty-one minutes to one hour and ten minutes. I also had an informal conversation with a bureaucrat in a managerial position from the municipality of Borlänge about GK. This conversation was not recorded. Given challenges around the municipality's requirements for review of the research material before publication if on the record statements were to be used, the source is not quoted directly in text. Nonetheless, the conversation allowed clarification around GKs operation within the municipality as presented in this paper.

### **5.3. Sample**

I used purposive sampling to gather my data. According to Bryman (2015) purposive sampling is a non-probability form of sampling where participants are strategically chosen to be relevant to the research question. I emailed GK in June 2016 and asked if I could conduct a study about them. GK immediately replied and stated they were interested. In February 2017, I visited GK for two days to participate and observe in their open activities. The purpose of these visits was to gain a better understanding of the work GK conducts, which in turn would help inform the formulation of research questions. I decided to interview both staff members and participants to receive information from two different perspectives. One staff member has a preschool degree and the other has a social pedagogue background. They both identified themselves as belonging to the majority of society in Sweden. They have been involved in GK on a part-time basis since 2002, and full-time since 2010 respectively 2012.

Staff from GK suggested what they believed were appropriate candidates for me to interview. When the researcher gets in contact with participants of a study through a third party, Bryman (2015) names it a chain sample. It was difficult for me, as a new person without any relationship to the clients of GK, to organise interviews by myself. I was therefore dependent on staff members to suggest appropriate candidates. The positive thing is that they provided candidates they believed were suitable for my study. However, there is a risk that the proposed candidates were chosen as they had a positive attachment with GK and therefore might not be as objective. I had no preference regarding what gender the interviewees had, however, as the vast majority of the clients at GK are females, it was expected that most, is not all, clients that would be proposed to me would be female. The criteria for the interviewees included the ability to communicate in Swedish, they had to have participated in GK when GK was located at Jakobsgårdarna and they would ideally be from different cultural backgrounds. Interviews were held at GK's venue and at a café, as one of the clients was only able to meet after business hours due to work. I asked two of the clients during my visits in February if they were interested in participating in an interview, which they stated they were. GK organised the time and date, and the interviews took place at GK's venue. I met the third client in March at GK's venue and agreed upon conducting a meeting with her the following day. GK provided the phone number to the fourth client and I contacted her and met her at a café in Borlänge as, due to work commitments, she was unable to meet at GK's venue during the day. I gave her the opportunity to choose where she wanted to meet and she chose a café.

#### **5.4. Validity, reliability and generalizability**

The question of reliability and validity is often raised in qualitative studies as something that can be difficult to attain. This will be discussed further in this section. I am aware of the difficulties of reproducing a qualitative study like mine, for the reason that Bryman (2011) points out; social contexts change over time. However, as Yin (2013) argues, it is important to make qualitative research reliable and credible and this can be achieved through being transparent and by documenting the research method so other researchers can understand the procedure that was taken and review the material. Furthermore, it is important to adopt a methodological approach and ensure that there is enough evidence that supports the conclusion.

According to Bryman (2011), validity presumes reliability. Broadly speaking, internal validity refers to what extent that there is congruence between data and theories, and external validity refers to what degree the result can be generalized to other situations and environments.

To the best of my ability, my research has been carried out in a in a systematic and fair way. As my study methodology is consistent with several other qualitative studies in the field of integration<sup>16</sup> including my use of interviews and how I present and processed the data, I have achieved a level of external reliability; my methodology is well documented and can be replicated. The material is available for scrutiny which adds reliability as others can review the way I performed my study. However, external reliability is difficult to achieve when conducting qualitative research as social contexts change over time thus impacting on results. The intention of this study is to analyse the individual experience of the participants at GK, the focus is not on achieving external

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<sup>16</sup> Both Scuzzareollo (2008) and Clarke (2009) employ interviews as the main source of data for analysis

validity and on generalizing the results. Rather my aim is to analyse a contextualised program within a known setting that can be used to inform practice and add knowledge to the field of integration politics. As mentioned, the aim of this study is to analyse how integration politics affects the everyday lives of people at GK and the focus is on how individuals attending GK are affected or influenced by integration politics.

Internal reliability refers to the interpretation of the data by a researcher; when there is more than one researcher, internal reliability is higher as the research team must agree on interpretations; decisions by an individual researcher based on thematic choice or interpretation can be considered arbitrary. To overcome this limitation, I discussed my thematic choice and interpretation of the data with my supervisor, Adrian Groglopo.

### **5.5. Method of analysis**

This section will describe the thematic analysis method that I use to analyse my material. I use thematic analysis, as it is a method that offers flexibility as well as accessibility. The aim of thematic analysis is to summarize the collected data and identify key features in the data that can be used to answer the research question. By using thematic analysis, I can identify what participants think, do and feel as well as exploring participant's views, experiences and behaviours. Thematic analysis offers a systematic and accessible way of providing codes and themes from qualitative data. According to Braun and Clarke (2016), thematic analysis is a method used for analysing, identifying and interpreting so called 'themes' or patterns of meaning within qualitative data. A code is a small unit of analysis that is found in the data and is of interest for the research question. Several codes create a theme, or a pattern of meaning. The theme is supported by a concept or a shared idea. After conducting the interviews and transcribing the collected data word by word I began to read the material several times to detect repeated words, sentences, ideas and concepts. After doing that, I grouped the material into different themes. I detected the following themes and sub-themes that have been categorized under my four research questions:

1. What services does Gemensamma Krafter provide and why?
  - 1.1. Gemensamma Krafter's documented purpose
  - 1.2. Gemensamma Krafter as a need-based service
  - 1.3. The need for collaboration
  
2. In what way do Gemensamma Krafter's clients understand their own participation and the question of integration?
  - 2.1.1. Gemensamma Krafter provides a sense of social belonging
  - 2.1.2. The key factors of receiving support and information
  - 2.1.3. Social support as a significant factor of attendance
  - 2.1.4. A service where the attendees are mostly female
  - 2.1.5. Integration as 'mixing' people
  
3. How do the staff of Gemensamma Krafter approach integration and social inclusion?
  - 3.1.1. Integration or assimilation?
  - 3.1.2. Gemensamma Krafter as a 'Functional integration' service
  - 3.1.3. Staff member's perception on social inclusion
  - 3.1.4. The risk of creating an excluding practice

4. In what way do integration politics impact the clients and the service of Gemensamma Krafter?
  - 4.1.1. Racism and discrimination as a common phenomenon
  - 4.1.2. Loss of venue

I had my research questions in mind when searching for themes; hence the themes are adjusted to my research question. I detected other areas than those mentioned above, but I only thematized the areas I deemed most relevant for the research questions. The theme 'Gemensamma Krafter's documented purpose' contains a summary of some documents related to GK's service that I received from GK and Mottagningsenheten. The themes 'Gemensamma Krafter as a need-based service' and 'The need for collaboration' were detected when I asked questions regarding why participants attend GK and how it is to work at GK. For example, 'What type of support can you get from GK?' and 'What challenges do you encounter in your role at GK?'.

The themes under question two, including; 'Gemensamma Krafter provides a sense of social belonging', 'The key factors of receiving support and information', 'Social support as a significant factor of attendance', 'A service where the attendees are mostly female' and 'Integration as 'mixing' people?' were obtained when I asked questions about GK as an organization and the concept of integration. For example, 'What is positive with GK?', 'What can GK improve?', 'Why do you think the majority of participants at GK are women?' and 'What does the concept of integration mean for you?'.

The third research question, which focuses on the staff of GK's approach to integration and social inclusion detect the following themes 'Integration or assimilation?', 'Gemensamma Krafter as a 'Functional integration' service', 'Staff member's perception on social inclusion and 'The risk of creating an excluding practice', were detected when I asked questions about integration in the context of GK, for example; 'Is integration related to GK's work?' and 'What does the concept of integration mean for you?'

The themes detected under racial politics and GK include 'Racism and discrimination as a common phenomenon' and 'Loss of venue'. They were detected in conversations around discrimination, racism and experiences of when GK lost their venue at Jakobsgårdarna when I asked the following questions 'How were you affected by the loss of venue in 2016?' and 'does GK have a focus on discrimination?'. The interview guides which I used in my interviews with both staff and clients can be found in appendices 1 and 2.

## **5.6. Ethical considerations on an individual and societal level**

The following section discusses the ethical considerations I consider when conducting this study. According to the Swedish Science Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002), there are four categories that need to be adhered to when undertaking research; the

information requirement<sup>17</sup>, the consent requirement<sup>18</sup>, the confidentiality requirement<sup>19</sup> and the user requirement<sup>20</sup>. Prior to the interviews GK received a letter outlining information about the research project including purpose of the research, instructions on where the finalized report will be published, information regarding that the collected data would only be used for research purposes. This information was again repeated verbally before the interviews begun. The participants were also informed that their participation was voluntarily and that they at any time could cancel their participation without providing a reason. Worth mentioning is the argument by Homan (1992), who states that consent is a procedure that protects the researchers, not the participants, from moral responsibility as adverse consequences are passed on from the researcher to the respondents.

The participants in this study will not be mentioned by name to ensure anonymity. However, there is an issue in this case as there are only two staff members working at GK, meaning it is obvious that one of them provided the information. This issue was discussed with both staff members prior to the interviews and they both stated they were aware of this issue and willing to continue with their participation. I am the only one that has had access to the collected data. The majority of the interviews were undertaken at GK's venue where staff of GK were close by should the clients feel they wanted to speak to staff members after their interview. During the whole interview process, I was mindful of the power differential that might appear between me and the participants as I come from outside GK without any previous relationship with the interviewees. As such, asking questions that might be considered intimate as well as recording the interviews could create an unwanted power dynamic. The interviews were recorded on my phone with the participant's approval. I destroyed all recordings after transcription. No one except for myself listened to or had access to the recorded material. All research participants were willing to participate, are included anonymously, agreed to the interviews being recorded, and agreed to have their responses included in the research material. I agreed to send my finalised paper to GK once my study had been finalized and published online.

According to Sweden's national encyclopedia, ethics are defined as the theoretical reflection of morality and its reason. Morality is defined as a person's practical values and actions (NE, 2017). In Sweden, it is politically correct to talk about ethnicity instead of race. However, the concept of race is used to structure power relations and by using ethnicity instead of race, power relations that are vital in the concept of race are not addressed. I believe it is important to disclose and raise awareness of the politics of integration so the individual, institutional and structural racism and discrimination that occurs in Sweden will be recognized as an issue that needs to be tackled. Not disclosing inequality is also a moral action that results in the structures in society that enable inequality being maintained. Many social workers represent the state and consequently its values. An awareness about how colonialism and power relations effect integration policies needs to be brought to the surface as a real issue that effects people's everyday life. Another aspect worth mentioning is that I am a white middleclass woman without

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<sup>17</sup> The researcher needs to inform participants about the purpose of the research.

<sup>18</sup> A participant in a research study has the right to decide about their participation including at any time be able to cancel their participation and interview without having to provide a reason.

<sup>19</sup> Participants should be given the highest level of confidentiality and the personal details of the participants should be kept in a way unauthorized people cannot access them.

<sup>20</sup> The collected information is only allowed to be used for research purposes.



any disability. This is something I reflected on when conducting this study. Although my gender is a cause of discriminating actions, I still belong to the majority group in society. This requires extra consideration and delicacy when touching on a subject like race and politics where I am not subject of discrimination due to my skin colour.

### **5.7. Reflection on research methodology**

As I had previous knowledge about GK, it has been important for me to be mindful of keeping an objective approach and not to affect the research material. I did not personally know the current staff members nor the clients prior to contacting GK.

All the participants were open and willing to talk to me, which made it easy for me to use interviews to collect data. All the clients were positive towards GK, which was expected as it is a voluntary service and it is unlikely that people would attend if they were not happy with GK. All the interviews, except for one, were conducted at GK's venue, which might have contributed to clients feeling comfortable and relaxed as they were in an environment known to them. The interview that was conducted outside of GK was undertaken at a café of the client's choice. It was undertaken in the late afternoon at a café without many guests, which contributed to a calm and comfortable environment.

It would have been beneficial to meet a second time in order to follow up on questions that came up in the transcribed material that I was unable to pick up on during the interview to further expand and receive a deeper understanding of the participants and staff members opinions. However, due to time limitations and geographical distance, this was not possible. The first and third interview with participants were interrupted due to that they both had children with them. Although staff at GK looked after them for most of the interview the children came a couple of times which was disrupting as the conversation died out and was not picked up where it ended. This would have been hard to avoid, as their children were not at pre-school that day. It would not have been appropriate for me to say that the children could not come over.

I have been conducting this study by myself, which can be positive as I have been planning, conducting and been in charge of the whole study. This study could potentially have benefited from involvement of another person, in particular in the analysing part, with a second opinion on the analysis building robustness regarding my interpretation of the collected material. Having another person participating in the interviews could also have potentially been uncomfortable for the participants. The outcome of my interviews might have been different if a random selection procedure was done, where staff members would not have recommended certain individuals they deemed suitable for me to interview. This might have meant that I got a group of people where answers and experiences could have differed more.

A final potential limitation that needs to be mentioned is that there is a possibility that information and nuances have been missed when I translated the interviews from Swedish to English. Partly because English is not my mother tongue but also because there sometimes are no words in English that accurately translates into the appropriate Swedish words and vice versa.

## **6. Chapter Six: Theoretical framework and theories**

I use theories of social constructionism, post-colonialism, critical race theory and power relations to analyse the role of racial politics in Sweden's integration politics. Furthermore, I use theories of social inclusion, racism and racialization, racial politics and empowerment when analysing the data collected from GK. I take a critical perspective as it questions the current order and the way things are perceived while it at the same time means that constructions are dependent on time and space. Each theory will be described further in the following chapter before the results are presented in chapter seven.

### **6.1. Theoretical framework**

Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge, is a branch of philosophy that studies fundamental questions about sources, objects and the nature of the knowledge using questions such as 'what is knowledge?' (Bryman, 2015). I have chosen to use the constructionist perspective as a point of departure for this study. The constructionist perspective purports that reality, or part of reality, is socially constructed and a product of human interaction and collective actions. The reason why I choose this perspective is because it is a critical perspective that questions social phenomena's naturalization and inevitability. The constructionist approach questions and reflects on the indeterminacy of our knowledge of the social world (Bryman, 2015). As mentioned in previous chapters, the categorization of immigrants and Swedes is something that is noticeable in the Swedish integration politics. Social constructionism believes categories used to understand the natural, social world are social products. This means that the meaning of categories is constructed in and through interactions and therefore can vary from time and place.

In addition to the constructivist's perspective, I use theories of post-colonialism, CRT and power relations. Post colonialism is a research field that problematizes the western knowledge tradition and its establishment in global relations of subordination. Post colonialism emphasizes colonialism's vital significance in the development of ideas of civilization, modernity and humanism. The Jamaican sociologist Hall (1996) coined the expression "the West and the Rest". This expression places the western culture at the top of the hierarchy. This framework aims to expose the historical connection between colonialism and present forms of racism and ethnic segregation.

The constructionist perspective is supported by CRT as CRT specifically focuses on race as being a social construction. CRT studies the relationship between racism, race and power and places this in a broader perspective including history, economics and so on. CRT understands race as a social construction that promotes the interests of the white population that created it. CRT argues that inequality arises from the economic, social and legal differences that are created by white people between races with the aim of maintaining white people's interest in the labour market and politics. This may consequently result in criminality and poverty in minority communities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

The final theory of power and power relationships will also be included in the discussion as it is important and relevant to discuss who is in possession of power in the relationships that occur in our society. The French philosopher Foucault (1982) described power relations as the different patterns of resistance and domination in different social settings. Foucault (1982) states that all communicative and social

relations have power relations, as societies cannot exist without power relations. Another aspect of power relations is the relationship between subordination and dominance that exists between different groups. This can be directly linked with Hall's (2006) concept of "the West and the Rest", where West has a subordinated power relationship to the Rest. These theories complement each other by viewing the social world as something that is constructed (constructivism) while at the same time offering an explanation as to why the world is viewed in the way it is (post colonialism). These theories also offer a perspective on the power relationship between race, racism and power (CRT and theory of power relations). These perspectives will be useful when interpreting and analysing my collected data in order to understand integration and racial politics in the Swedish context.

## **6.2. The definition of politics and the political**

To understand racial politics, we must first understand politics. In her book, 'On the political', Mouffe (translated by Södergren 2008) states that politics is agonistic. Mouffe (2008) differentiates between *the political* and *politics*. The political is described as a dimension of antagonism, or opposition, that is fundamental in human societies. It is an area of struggle where contesting groups with opposite interests compete for hegemony. The political aim is to make the establishment of social relations visible. Politics is described as the set of practitioners and institutions that creates order and the coexistence between people is organized in the conflict characteristics of the political. It contains a battle where the recognizable 'we' battles with the distinguishable 'they'. Mouffe (2008) states that all social orders have a hegemonic nature, just as all societies are a product of practitioners attempting to establish an order in conditions that are contingent. The creation of an identity requires the establishment of a difference that often is created from a hierarchy. Collective identities create an 'us' that would not exist without a defined 'them'. This does not per se mean that the relation between 'us' and 'them' has to have an antagonistic character, however, it can develop in to that. The challenge of modern democracy is to try to keep the antagonism away in an alternative way that limits oppositions in society. Mouffe (2008) argues that antagonism needs to change to agonism, where 'us' and 'them' should recognize each other as legitimate opponents instead of having a friend/enemy relationship. Antagonistic tendencies can be maintained through institutions that promote an agonistic approach. Mouffe (2008) states that the likelihood that antagonistic conflicts appear are small if there are agonistic and political channels available for deviant voices. So how does racism fit in with politics? Mouffe's (2009) definition of politics and the political suggests that politics creates different groups. This is not per se an issue, but becomes an issue if an exclusionary practice based on racial profiling is established, that is racial politics. The section below will define the concept of racism, before an explanation of racial politics is provided.

## **6.3. The concept of racism**

Goldberg (1990) defines racism as an ideology that is based on the following five presumptions:

1. The idea that it is reasonable to divide people into different race categories based on external traits
2. The assumptions that there is a correlation between external traits and inherent intellectual and mental predispositions, behaviour and moral character

3. The assumptions that these inherent traits are the same for all members in respective race
4. The belief that race is classified in a hierarchy dependent on the quality of the inherent traits
5. The assumption that this hierarchy justifies member that are supposedly superior to exploit, dominate and even extinguish members that are supposedly inferior.

It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that the assumption that there are superior and inferior races developed and was viewed as a 'truth' by evolutionary theorists. Racial theories and the way the concept of race is interpreted has changed over time. However, the colonial ideas about categorizing people and dividing them into a hierarchal order can still be detected in our society. When these ideas translate into specific policies that are made with a specific racial distinction, that is racial politics (Goldberg, 1990).

#### **6.4. The politicizing of race into racial politics**

The meaning of race has changed over time. The term itself has been adopted by different actors at different times for their own needs whether that be to define social classes, to describe different populations or as a definition used in more scientific endeavours such as the classification of gene pools. The prevailing meaning of the term is as such a function of time and place. Golberg (2002) argues that race 'creation' results from the action of real social actors, and real interactions. Whilst at times the application of race appears arbitrary, its invocation is often differentially applied for exclusionary ends. Race, with its link to social hierarchies and individual identity, means that struggles around race are inextricably linked to discussions of the governing political constitution. The politicizing of race is the adoption of an exclusionary practice based on racial profiling which social or political institutions institute. As argued by Goldberg (2002), the actual exclusion is often not the prime issue; it is what the exclusionary practice enables for example the justification of abhorrent actions such as racist lynching.

Mouffe's (2008) definition of politics is congruent with Goldberg's (2002) theory of racial politics. Race, as discussed by Goldberg (2002), has been a fundamental aspect in the development of the nation state as it is a marker that creates distinctions between minority groups and the majority of society. This results in racialization where people are divided into categories based on racial criteria. In some cases, this has resulted in racial politics where racial profiling is used by social and political institutions to enforce exclusionary practices. When social or political institutions use defined groups of 'us' and 'them' based on collective (racial) identities to enact and justify exclusionary practice, racial politics is occurring. Racialization is a concept that has been developed to structure and determines people into racialized forms. The section below will further describe the concept of racialization.

#### **6.5. Racialization**

Molina (1997) argues that race is a social construction as there is no evidence of any physical or genetic differences between human beings that can explain cultural differences. Race has been used to structure power relations, both on a local and international level. Racialization is, according to Molina (2005), the categorization, thought patterns and associations that makes ranking of people into a natural part of

social relations and power structures. Racialization, together with racism and racial ideologies, is present in the organization of Swedish society, even though there is a lot of denial that these concepts actually exist. These ideas originated from dominating ontologies that legitimized domestic and colonial exploitation of class, gender, ethnicity and race. These processes are associated with a worldview that legitimize the social hierarchy based on a conception of human being's differences based on cultural and physical attributions. Racialization is both an ideological construction and a concrete result of organizations, markets and institutions that govern the relations of production, distribution and consumption.

### **6.6. Social inclusion in the context of integration**

Some researchers (for example Beckman, 2011) believe that social inclusion is a more appropriate word to use than the term integration. Social inclusion is related to society in whole, including its functions, such as education, politics, and economics and the specific roles we are assigned to. To understand inclusion and exclusion and its problems and relationships, the social context needs to be taken into consideration. Jönhill (2012) describes social inclusion and exclusion as belonging or not belonging to society. Human beings need to be included in certain social contexts, for example family or work, to survive. We are all excluded from numerous organizations, which does not necessarily lead to social problems. Problems might even be created if people are forced to be included in groups they do not want to belong to. This distinction cannot be generalized as it is related to individuals and as it is not possible to make an easy division into who is included or excluded in all social contexts.

An inclusive society needs to respect human rights and freedoms, social justice, democratic participation, cultural and religious diversity, domestic and international law as well as special needs of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. There needs to be social policies that aim to reduce inequality to create a society people feel they are a part of. Another important factor is that people feel they are listened to (United Nations, 2009)

### **6.7. Empowerment**

Finally, I have chosen to include the concept of empowerment in this study to investigate if GK is empowering or disempowering the people attending their service. Askheim (2003) states it is difficult to provide a short and clear definition of empowerment. A reason for this is the present popularity of frequently using empowerment in welfare policy. Most definitions agree empowerment is about power being given back to those who are disempowered.

Askheim (2003) states that empowerment often tends to have a positive approach regarding individuals partaking in decision-making and actions pertaining to their own life. Individuals are viewed as an expert of their own life and therefore have the ability and competence to know what is best for them. Empowerment both has an individual and a structural level. The individual level focuses on equipping individuals with self-confidence, improved perception of themselves, increased knowledge and skills to increase their control over their life. If this is achieved, individuals will better be able to identify potential barriers and feel more in control. The structural dimension focuses on social structures, power relations and barriers that maintain injustice and differences and affects personal ability to take control.

## **7. Chapter Seven: Empirical Analysis**

In chapter seven I explore and answer the four specified research questions using data collected from interviews and some secondary documents. I analyse the data using the previously presented theories of racial politics, racialization, social inclusion and empowerment. Each research question is addressed separately with a discussion of the findings presented at the end of each question.

### **7.1. Question one: What services does Gemensamma Krafter provide and why?**

#### **7.1.1. Gemensamma Krafter's documented purpose**

I received the quality report for Mottagningsenheten for 2016 from the Manager of the unit. The report outlines the work of Mottagningsenheten and how it fits within the municipality structure. However, the section about GK was not completed and only contained an outline of the information that needed to be included in the report. Points that were intended to be included under Gemensamma Krafter include; analysis about development and trends; steering; management and accountability and resources.

On the municipality of Borlänge's website, GK is listed under the section 'Care and support' and under 'Immigration and integration'. GK is described as a meeting hub for people from different cultures to meet. The open service is directed to children, parents and other adults who want to come and thrive in a context. Activities that are listed include having a cup of coffee, participating in discussions about life, family, future and parenting and partaking in an exercise session one day a week. It is also mentioned that there is an opportunity to practice Swedish. Finally, it is mentioned that there is a possibility to meet an early childhood nurse and family therapist. Nowhere is 'integration' mentioned in the description of GK. Instead, the information is directed towards allowing anyone to attend. The mentioning of the possibility of being able to practice Swedish, which is an integrative activity, indicates that everyone, no matter what background you are from is encouraged to attend GK

I asked staff members for documents that describes GK's service and was provided two documents which included a service outline from July 2000 along with a power point presentation (PPT) from March 2015. The service outline is targeted towards potential new partners of the network and provides a description of the development phase of the project, a description of GK during the project phase, practical advice for potential collaborating partners and stories from people in the network regarding the impact GK has had on them. The second document, a PPT presentation, describes the history of GK, the area where GK operates, aim, theoretical framework, operating hours, work method, network, traditions and groups. It is a traditional PPT presentation in the sense that key words are written out on the slides which provides limited in-depth information about GK. One of the staff members stated during the interview that the program description of GK has changed since it was last developed. In the past, there was more focus on children whereas now it is understood that children belong in a context that they are also affected by. As a result, a staff member was employed to focus on the adults and their specific needs. One of the aims of the project is that GK should work towards creating a safer residential area. This aim was created when GK had their venue in Jakobsgårdarna. As they no longer operate in Jakobsgårdarna that aim is no longer relevant. GK would benefit from producing a new up-to-date description of their service. This would be beneficial as it would provide an opportunity for staff to analyse

and reflect on their service and what has changed since it was first developed. It will also be useful to provide a new version to their collaborative partners so that everyone involved in the network is aware of the updated aim, purpose and goals.

### **7.1.2. Gemensamma Krafter as a need-based service**

During my interviews, it became clear that GK are exercising a need-based approach as they adjust their focus depending on the needs that they detect among the clients that attend. This offers flexibility, but places responsibility on the staff to adapt the service to meet the changing needs of the clients. The structure of GK is twofold; on an individual level, they have open activities four days a week where anyone who would like to meet and belong in a context is welcome. On a structural level, they have the GK network where professionals in different fields gather together once a month to discuss needs that are identified in the community and actions on how to address those needs. Apart from these permanent activities, GK plan activities depending on needs they identify in the open service and during the network meetings. When I asked one of the staff members what role she has at GK she described how she sees herself as ‘a spider in the web’:

SM1: Like the spider in the web, to be there, to be available and to make things possible for people. It's a lot about being one step ahead and to detect needs and wishes and try to make them possible

She describes how her work is of a coordinating character where the main objectives are to detect needs and wishes of participants and ways to achieve these needs. It is the staff members at GK that decide what areas to focus their work on. I asked how they detect and choose focus areas and one of the staff members provided an example of an area they identified was in need of attention:

SM2: There are many young mums that perhaps are in need of extra support, and we can be involved with that. So then we think how we can support them, cause it can be a bit scary to enter an already established group that this is. Many of the ones attending have many children and to then come as a very, very young mum is not obvious, and then we want to be there and create an arena for that

This quote demonstrates the course of action used by GK when detecting an area that needs extra focus or support. The concern is that young mothers are less likely to attend GK as most participants at GK have been attending for many years and are an established group. To reach out to this group GK are taking measures targeting this group and to facilitate an arena for them to meet, which hopefully will contribute them attending the larger group in the future. In a conversation with one of the participants, the issue of being new in a group was brought up as well as she remembered that it was hard for her to come as a new person to GK:

Client 1: If a new mum or dad comes I don't think it's enough to only come once. You need to go a couple of times to get a feeling for what it is.

Sofie: What do you think is the reason for that?

Client 1: Many of the people here have been going to GK for many years, and I can imagine it might be a bit difficult to come as a new person. And I try to invite the new people to join the discussion, but it can be hard, especially if the old people talk about things that happened in the past, but I am trying [...] I remember how it was for me, I was once new and didn't know anyone and that was a little hard. I was a bit shy but then staff helped me to feel welcome

This participant remembers how it was for her to be new and therefore tries to invite new people in conversation so they feel welcome and want to come back. Furthermore, this quote demonstrates that the actions of staff were important for participants to feel welcome and wanting to continue to attend GK as staff made her feel comfortable.

### **7.1.3. The need for collaboration**

Staff members expressed concerns related to the lack of collaboration that takes place between GK and the rest of the municipality to the extent to which one staff member described GK as a self-propelled independent service. On the one hand, the staff members value the freedom GK has and the possibility they have to develop a well-visited service that provides valuable support to their clientele. On the other hand, there is a wish for more collaboration with politicians and officials higher up in the municipality. The staff members described the situation as follows:

SM 2: Since I've been employed GK has been this self-propelled and independent service that hasn't been governed anywhere, but we have developed GK from the best of our ability and I think we have done it in a good way. I think we do a really good job. We have requested earlier when we had a steering committee that consisted of officials and politicians from the municipality that in those avenues be able to request the needs that we detect and ask if the committee could be a part of working with those needs. But it has never worked like that. Instead it has continued, as a place we report to what we have done, now we have done this and this and this, like a lasso. I think in the best of worlds, the steering committee would come to us and say, 'we can see these needs' and we could respond 'we can see these needs, how can we work together with this?' or 'what can you do with this who have power and what can we do that meet the people?'. But I do not have that experience that it has ever been like that, that we have been directed and I do not even know what expectations there are of our service.

The staff member expressed how she would like there to be a platform used for exchanging ideas and needs which could be achieved through improving collaboration between GK, decision-makers and politicians. GK who works with individuals, are able to communicate the needs that they see in their service and officials could express needs that they identify in the community that they think GK could address.

As mentioned in chapter four, previous studies emphasize the importance of collaboration to improve outcomes (Schneeweis, 2013; Ewert, Liedholm and Lindberg, 2006). Schneeweis in particular, focuses on how important communication efforts are to improve collaboration between politicians, government and NGOs. The level of communication between GK and decision-makers in the municipality appears to be limited. As a result, staff at GK are frustrated that the service is not utilized as effectively as it could be, and that they are not more aware of the municipality's expectations of them. It appears to be a goal of the municipality to build networks and to improve the way the municipality works with integration (Borlänge, 2016; Borlänge, 2017). In 2015, Borlänge municipality established that there was a need for different collaborative services after analysing the operation of different units within the municipality; this finding led to the establishment of Mottagningsenheten (Integrationsutskottet, 2015). Interestingly, despite the ambition by the integration committee in Borlänge to increase collaboration, GK received limited information that they would in fact be operating under Mottagningsenheten after the restructuring.

Although this study does not focus on GK's internal function but rather on how politics affect people within the organisation, Lipsky's (1969) concept of 'street-level bureaucrats' does aid understanding of staff member's perception of their role at GK.



Lipsky's (1969) theory provides an additional facet to the analysis. Under Lipsky's (1969) framework, the staff at GK could be described as 'street-level bureaucrats'. Lipsky (1969) argues that it is street-level bureaucrats who form the link between the people and the government, or in the context of GK, the municipality of Borlänge and those attending the unit of GK. This classification of the staff at GK fits as they have regular contact with their clients, have a significant degree of autonomy in their decision-making and play a significant role in the lives of those attending GK. The application of Lipsky's (1969) framework provides insights into the challenges faced by staff and the operational context within which they work. However, I hypothesise that it is precisely the fact that the service is perceived as distant from the municipality, although it is a unit within the municipality, that makes the service successful and more accessible to their clients. To clarify, the staff are in effect street-level bureaucrats, linking the municipality to the public and functioning to enact the municipality's political agenda in the physical world. However, the fact that they are not (overly) perceived as such contributes to their success. Whilst Lipsky's (1969) theory provides an explanation of the experience of staff attending the service, the application of the theory also has its short comings in this context. Evans (2011) argues that whilst social workers are classic street-level bureaucrats, the nature of their discretion in practice is not simply a function of the practical limitations associated with managerial oversight as discussed by Lipsky. Their level of discretion is also impacted by other factors such as their level of professionalism and the commitments that entails; a perspective not considered by Lipsky.

#### **7.1.4. Question one: Discussion of findings**

GK provides a need-based service meaning that the service is shaped depending on what needs are detected by staff members among the visitors that attend their service. The reason why they do this is so that clients attending can receive individual support for their individual situation. Staff members at GK state that they have a lot of freedom and are not directly controlled by anyone and express how they do not know exactly what expectations there are of them despite the fact that they are a service provided by the municipality. At the same time this offers GK a lot of freedom, as they can run a service they feel is relevant for their clientele without encountering difficulties in implementing new ideas and projects.

GK has in the past had the social services refer clients to them, however, those clients only attended as long as they had to and never returned. This indicates that GK's success is built on voluntary participation. The social services are often associated with stigmatization; the same is not true for GK. GK can work as a bridge between clients and social services as they detect the needs of their clients and can invite professionals in their network to address concerns if GK sees that some of their clients would benefit from such a contact. The meeting would then occur under less stigmatized conditions. However, for such a collaboration to occur it is key that collaboration between GK and the municipality is working and communication channels are open, in contrast to the current situation where staff do not feel the municipality use their service effectively. Interestingly I noted after reading documents produced by the municipality of Borlänge regarding integration, collaboration appears to be an important factor in the work the municipality conducts. However, this does not appear to be transferred down to GK. It might be the case that the municipality trust that GK are doing a good job as they have been around for a long time, however, the risk of not making collaboration into an

active action instead of something that is written in documents, might result in ‘conflicts’ or ‘distrust’ between GK and the municipality.

GK, as ‘street-level bureaucrats’ are the ones that meet the people and form relationships. Not using this service fully is a waste, as GK has first-hand experience dealing with many people in Borlänge; they form the link between the municipality of Borlänge and clients attending the unit of GK. As GK is perceived as distant from the municipality, even though GK is a unit within the municipality, may contribute to their success by making them more accessible and less threatening to their clients. There is a strong wish from GK for a stronger level of collaboration when deciding what needs to address in the community and how this should be achieved. Section 7.2 will explore the motivations for people to attend GK.

## **7.2. Question two: In what way do Gemensamma Krafter’s clients understand their own participation and the question of integration?**

In my interviews with GK’s clients, all of the motivations expressed for attending GK had social aspects including making friendships, receiving information about social services and gaining support from both other clients as well as staff members. Through my interviews, I observed that attending GK creates a form of social belonging and a feeling of being included for GK’s clients. Jönhill (2012) argues that people are usually social, as they need to feel included in society in order to survive. Social problems are usually detected among those who feel excluded and GK therefore becomes an important avenue through which people can come and feel included in a context where staff members can detect issues and attend to them as they arise. Expanding on Jönhill’s (2012) definition of social inclusion, Fredrichs and Jagodzinski (1999) describe social inclusion as when a person has social contacts, social networks, friendships, social support, political participation, national identification and joint activities.

### **7.2.1. Gemensamma Krafter provides a sense of social belonging**

Belonging in a social context was something that was raised among all clients when speaking about GK. Gregory and Geoffrey (2007) state it is a basic human desire to feel that they belong in a social context. Social belonging can also be described as being socially connected. Furthermore, Gregory and Geoffrey (2007) argue that people belonging to socially stigmatized groups are more uncertain of their social bonds and as a result more sensitive to issues regarding social belonging and may feel a *belonging uncertainty*, which may contribute to racial disparities. I asked one of the clients to talk generally about her thoughts about GK. She described how attending GK became one of her daily routines:

Client 4: When I did not have a job or school, I usually went every day; it was kind of my occupation. Sometimes when I was at home and didn’t have a job sometimes I woke up and I had not slept [...] and I was really tired in the morning and then I left the kids at school, I thought shall I sleep or go to the baby café, and then I went there, even though I was tired, as it was kind of like the start of my day. Otherwise it felt like I missed something [...] It feels like a second home [...] if I don’t have a job, if I don’t have anyone, I want to be there, I want to spend my time there, where I meet people, we talk about everything, we laugh, we help each other, I learn new things I do not know, you get tips about things, it’s good, it’s a warm feeling

This participant describes how GK is so important to her that she rather sacrifices sleep then to miss the open service activities. GK is a part of her normal routines, in particular if she is not working. If she does not go she feels as if the day is not complete. The

social aspects are touched upon as she attends GK to socialize with other participants in an environment she experienced as homely and safe. Social belonging is directly linked with the concept of social inclusion. I was interested to know what the concept of social inclusion meant for the clients, one client stated:

Sofie: What is social inclusion?

Client 2: To be included in society

Sofie: Does GK work with social inclusion?

Client 2: Yes, that is the main thing they do

Sofie: In what way?

Client 2: They want to have as many people as possible, especially when we go on trips and as an example they try to mix different groups together, and that's really good.

The client stated that social inclusion is to be included in society, which is in line with Jönhill's (2012) definition. Furthermore, the client believes GK works with social inclusion as they 'mix different groups together'. To sum up, social inclusion from this perspective is the attempt to blend different people, or create a heterogeneous group. GK is filling a function in creating a service that is inclusive which previous studies emphasize as being important for immigrant women as social support groups and social networks are needed to empower them and provide them with tools as well showing them how to access care and services, adjust to their new country and prevent depression and other mental health issues and psychological distress (Guruge, Thomson, George & Chaze's, 2015; Msengi, Arthur-Okor, Killion & Schoer's, 2015; Lew-Wiesel & Kaufman's, 2004).

#### **7.2.2. The key factors of receiving support and information**

As mentioned in the previous section, social support is also related to the concept of social inclusion (Fredrichs & Jagodzinski, 1999). During interviews with clients I attempted to find out what made them attend GK and the aspect of social support was raised in all the interviews in relation to both support provided by other clients and support provided by staff members. All the clients mentioned that the support they receive at GK is as much from other clients they meet when attending GK as from staff members. However, it appears the more practical support such as finding jobs come from staff whereas emotional support and tips on social and emotional issues comes from both staff and other clients. All the clients describe how GK provides different forms of information to them. This is important not only for the ones with a foreign background but also to those with a Swedish background. One of the clients described how hard it was for her to move to Sweden as she felt there was high expectation on teaching herself how society works. She stated GK was a big support for her:

Client 4: The staff members feel like my family, it feels like I know them. They are nice, kind, they are fantastic. They have helped me so much. I don't know what I would do without them. GK is like Google, if you have any thoughts about anything you can ask them and you will get advice, they are like an information desk, but there is also a lot of warmth [...] GK is the key to Borlänge, or not only Borlänge, to Sweden without them I would be confused and not know so much about society and my rights

This quote demonstrates how important GK has been in her life in terms of the social support and information she has received from staff members, information she struggles to find elsewhere in society. This has resulted in her feeling more included, not only in Borlänge but in Sweden, as GK has provided her with information about society and what rights she has as a citizen and member of the community.

### 7.2.3. Staff support as a significant factor of attendance

Staff members at GK appear popular and have competence and long-term experience in the field they operate within. Clients find their approach to be helpful, both with creating a safe and including space where one can talk about various topics but also in providing information about understanding Swedish society. Interviews with staff members demonstrate their analytic ability and attempts to create an inclusive environment where the aim is to create an 'us', and not a division of 'us' and 'them'.

Having access to power and resources is key when it comes to integration as the structural and institutionalised discrimination is reproduced as privileged groups are in charge of power positions that reproduce their superior positions. Having power and access to resources in society is a must for individuals to be able to make free choices (SOU, 2006). Scuzzareollo's (2008) study concludes that people working with integration are motivated to support immigrants with integration, which is in line with the work that GK conducts. Support provided by staff was a recurrent topic amongst the clients that were brought up during the interviews. One staff member describes how GK direct information depending on client's needs and interests:

SM 2: It's more the way out from GK into society I'm looking at, which is my focus, and I look at what classes and training opportunities that are available that matches the people who come here [...] The people who come to us have a lot of experience and strengths and they don't feel they have anything. And we always try to take advantage of this. If there is someone that is very good at cooking, for example, then we see if perhaps 'yes but you may want to start a cooking circle' [...] and through that you get to add experience to your CV [...] to build upon what you're good at and have power over yourself and your situation and feel that you can affect your own situation

This demonstrates how staff are looking for strengths in participants and attempt to transform those strengths into something practical that can be useful for them, for example finding a job. Scuzzareollo's (2008) study argues that immigrants in integration projects are portrayed as different and a threat to the majority of society, as integration projects tend to reproduce these narratives. However, staff members at GK spoke generally about clients and did not differentiate clients with a foreign background as one group, for example by categorizing clients into 'the immigrants' or 'immigrant women'. Female immigrants were not distinct in a devaluating manner as Scuzzareollo's (2008) study suggests occurred in Malmö. Instead GK speaks generally of all clients from a strength based perspective, similarly to Cvetkovic (2009) study, that demonstrates how clients are viewed as a resource and not as a burden on society. GK has a strong focus on the empowerment perspective by focusing on strengths of clients and motivating them to engage in activities that will provide them with further confidence. This in turn results in that clients feel they have freedom and power to control their life. Empowerment also has a structural aspect in which the focus is on structural dimension that maintains injustice and power relations in society (Askheim, 2003). GK is working with empowerment on a structural level through advocacy and through collaboration within the GK network. The empowerment framework focuses on increasing individual's personal and political power with goals of enabling full and active participation in all aspects of societal life including decision-making. Individuals are viewed as an expert of their own life and therefore have the abilities and competence to know what is best for them (Askheim, 2003). I asked participants to talk about positive aspects of GK. When staff were mentioned I asked the client to elaborate why she believes the staff are good the conversation as recorded is included overleaf.

Client 4: They strengthen me as a person as well, and that I should dare to do things, for example, say 2-3 years ago I would not dare to go bowling with my children. I have always wanted to do it but I've always thought 'no'. GK told me 'why not?' Always when I'm unsure of something I think it's because I have a different background, but they encourage me and say 'why not? Of course, you should do it' [...] Now I feel that I dare because I know there are different people and I have the same rights as everyone

As Ålund and Schierup (1991) argue, the debate around immigrant women has had a negative tone, which may have contributed to that this client felt less worthy of attending different activities with her children. The client expresses that the staff support and motivate her to get out of her comfort zone, try new things and inform about her rights. This approach is strongly related to the empowerment perspective as staff are motivating the client to do things outside of her comfort zone. This resulted in the client daring to do things she would not normally do.

#### **7.2.4. A service where the attendants are mostly female**

Even though some men attend GK, most of the clients are female. I was interested to find out where the men were, since all the clients I interviewed stated they were married to men. I asked two of the clients if their husbands ever came with them and I also asked them why they thought the majority of the clients at GK are women:

Client 1: I like it a lot here, it is almost like my second home. Sometimes my husband complains and says, 'you're never home, you are always going to the baby café'.

Sofie: Does he ever come with you?

Client 1: No, that's what a bit different, him and I are different like that because he is not as social as I am. He likes to be home and spend time with those around him. But he accepts that I want to be here, but sometimes he says that I should be home sometimes

Sofie: Why do you think the majority people here are women?

Client 1: I don't know, maybe cause not that many dads take parental leave. When I was home with my younger child there were maybe four dads here but it has decreased over the years. It's Swedish dads that I have seen here. I have never seen a Somali or Kurdish dad, I don't know why that is but what I've heard from some women here are that their husbands say that this is not a baby-café but a women's café. So maybe that's why they don't come.

This client's husband does not attend because of social aspects. She views herself as social and this aspect gets accommodated when she attends GK. She believes that it is mostly women who take parental leave and that is the explanation why most participants are female. Her observations are that the men who attend have a Swedish background and have heard from other participants that their husbands do not come because they think GK is a service for women. Another client explained the high female participation as:

Sofie: Does your husband come with you to GK?

Client 2: Yes he has been here once but he thinks it's a bit embarrassing cause its only women here, so they want to check him out, they laugh, he is from Somalia so he doesn't mix much with women, but he is open, he has been here, but he also works so he can't come then.

Sofie: Why do you think the majority here are women?

Client 2: It is mainly directed towards women

Sofie: In what way is it directed to women?

Client 2: Well, baby café, it's usually for mums, single parents, when you are home with your kids or when you are on parental leave you can come and then it's often mums who comes with their babies because it is not often the dad is on parental leave when it's a new born baby so then it has automatically become like this. Men are welcome; there is no discussion about it.

This client's husband has been to GK once but found it uncomfortable, as it was only women there. He is also working which is another aspect why he does not attend as GK operates during daytime. This client also believes the reason why the majority are women is due to that mothers usually take parental leave. Both clients indicate that GK is viewed as a service for women and parental leave is associated with something women more commonly take than males which results in females being more likely to initially visit the service. However, the majority of the clients attending come without children, which was not acknowledged by the clients. I was interested to hear staff members view about female participation and received the following answer:

Sofie: Why do you think there are so many women attending?

SM 1: That we have thought about a lot, and I can imagine it's because men have different avenues. They meet at cafes, at Kupolen, many work, some study. Women struggle more to enter society because they are home and take care of children, you stay home, maybe start with SFI. Some people that come and have been here for 8-10 years say they have only been to SFI for 3-4 months, that's the time they had between kids, and therefore it can be difficult to enter society, and there we are.

Sofie: Would you like more men attending? Is that a goal?

SM 1: We always say that everyone is welcome. And sometimes men come but then it is often a man with Swedish origin on parental leave that attends maybe 4 months and then he goes back to work again and disappears

The staff member believes GK is offering a meeting point that does not exist for women in Borlänge. Men already having other avenues to meet was given as a reason for them not attending. The staff member further reiterates that men who come usually are from a Swedish background. De los Reyes (2006) argues, it is the white middleclass that has decided how the majority community should interpret the construction of femininity and gender. This has in turn contributed to exclusionary mechanisms and practice for those who deviates from the norm of what a Swedish woman is<sup>21</sup>. Their interests are prioritized in contrast to immigrant women whose experiences are sometimes marginalized or ignored. There has been a strong tradition in Sweden to promote gender equality. However, this tradition usually excludes migrant women who have been invisible in the women movement (Listerborn, 2012). In studies with migrant women, focus has been on negative aspects, which may result in real limitations being less visible leading to little focus being placed on the opportunities and the resources that they have. Although GK does not explicitly direct their service to migrant women, most clients have a foreign background. GK plays an important role; it empowers clients, who are mainly immigrant women, and motivates them to find a calling. If a person feels socially included, that means they also feel part of society and they have equal opportunities to achieve what they want to achieve and will therefore be more likely to feel obliged to adhere to their obligations as residents; thus, GK is in turn accomplishing the very outcomes related to integration they have been charged with achieving by the municipality.

### **7.2.5. Integration as 'mixing' people**

I was interested to hear what the word integration meant for the clients of GK. One of the clients had never heard the word integration before. The other three clients related GK as a service that works with integration. Integration for them meant to be included in society, to mix and spend time with new people.

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<sup>21</sup> The Swedish norm of a woman is a Swedish born, white, heterosexual, well-educated middleclass women.

One of the clients described integration as follows:

Sofie: What does integration mean for you?

Client 1: Integration, I think it is to mix, it shouldn't be to many of a group, it should be mixed, for example, the school at Jacobsgårdarna has many foreign children and very few Swedish children and it's not good either. I think it should be half-half, if one can say so, I think it will be better. There are many Swedish children in Skräddarbacken, but almost all classes have two children from Somalia. I haven't seen any Kurdish children in Skräddarbacken which is a shame, but many Somalian children live in Skräddarbacken and it's around two per class and I think that's really good, that they will get into society.

In other words, 'mixing people' can also be viewed as combating ethnic segregation as 'mixing' indicates that immigrants and Swedes attend the same schools. According to this quote, this is not the case in Jakobsgårdarna, an area with a high level of immigrants. This participant argues that integration is a two-way process, similarly to OECD's (2005) explanation of social inclusion, meaning that it is not good if a school class only contains of Swedish children or only children with a foreign background. Another participant related the importance that GK play in providing an integrative service to her own experiences of being new in Sweden as:

Sofie: Is GK working with integration?

Client 4: Yes

Sofie: In what way?

Client 4: I don't know, by helping those with a different background to enter society. It is really important for people who are new in Sweden, they need a place like GK, to get into society

Sofie: What do you mean with get into society?

Client 4: In the Swedish society. When you come and are new in Sweden you won't get in to Swedish society if you are isolated, you will not progress in life, it is hard to get into the labor market, you have to come into society in order to live and function, that's the type of things GK can help you with

This participant believes GK is conducting an integrative service as they support people of different backgrounds to enter society. This is something she had experience of, as she was once new in Sweden and found that there were a lot of expectations on her to find out about things by herself. She experienced that GK provided her with support, which prevented her from being isolated.

#### **7.2.6. Question two: Discussion of findings**

The social aspect of attending GK appears to be the main reason why participants attend; this includes receiving social support from participants and staff members as well as receiving societal information. All the participants mention the staff and how they play a big part in creating GK and making them want to attend the service. Important to note is that both staff members are females from a white Swedish background. Studies conducted by Thomson, in De los Reyes (2006) found that organisations for women with an immigrant background are mostly run by white middle class women. This is not to say that staff members at GK are not competent, but it is important to raise and discuss the reason for this. One aspect is that GK is operating in Sweden where the majority have a Swedish background. Just as it is expected that staff members would be local staff should GK for example operate in Ghana. In GK's most recent recruitment advertisement it is noted that the municipality values ethnic and cultural diversity and encouraged applicants from diverse backgrounds to apply. I do not know if people with a foreign background applied, and just coming from a foreign

background is not enough as one needs to have sufficient experiences to bring to the workplace.

As most of the clients at GK are women, the gender dynamic at GK was discussed in order to explore the cause of the high level of female attendance. The views of staff and clients related to the gender imbalance differed. Clients explained that women are more likely than men to take parental leave and therefore visit the service. One staff member believes it has to do with there being areas in Borlänge where men can meet, which women do not have access to. The reason why these views may differ may have to do with staff members being included in the Swedish norm of what a woman is meant to be (De los Reyes, 2006) whereas clients attending GK deviate from this norm for reasons such a low level of education, race and so on. Although staff members are reflective of the service they provide they operate in a certain context where they have access to things such as information that the clients may lack. Another aspect is the cultural difference, which one of the clients and the staff member touches upon when they mentioned that the men who occasionally attend GK have Swedish origin. As mentioned by a client, in some cultures it is not considered a norm to spend time in context with mixed gender which may also be a reason why less men attend. Furthermore, in some cultures it is the women who are responsible for child rearing and as GK mainly receives their clientele from women and women with children this may signal to men of a foreign culture that it is a service directed to 'women'. In Sweden, it is a lot more acceptable for males to take parental leave which shows as then men who occasionally attend GK are Swedish men on parental leave. Staff members stated that they do not actively seek to recruit more men to attend. If they intended to do so, it would be advisable if they consulted immigrant women at the service as a higher level of men attending might result in less women attending which would be bad as GK is offering a venue for marginalised women to attend and there is no other service in Borlänge that accommodates that need.

I was not able to receive any lengthy elaborations on the concept of integration and one of the participants had never heard the word before. The other three clients related GK as a service that works with integration and defined it as to be included in society, to mix and spend time with new people. The fact that GK does not mention integration in their goals or aims, might be a reason why the participants did not elaborate more when asked to define integration in the context of GK. Over the course of the interviews, I found it was easier to extract meanings of integration rather than to talk about the concept directly. Nonetheless, as I was interested to know what the participant's understanding of the actual concept of integration was, I asked the question during all client interviews. The next section will answer how staff members approach integration and social inclusion.

### **7.3. Question three: How do the staff of GK approach integration and social inclusion?**

When exploring the concept of integration with staff members they immediately appeared hesitant to use the word as they both associated integration with the concept of assimilation which they claimed they do not want to be perceived as being involved with. Likewise, some researchers argue that the concept of integration it is just another word for assimilation (SOU, 2005). According to Sweden's national encyclopedia, assimilation is the process undertaken by a minority group, for example immigrants in Swedish society, where this group abandons their own culture so that all cultural



differences disappear. It is a mutual process where circumstances vary between different cultures (NE, 2017). Dahlström's (2015) dissertation states that since 1997, when the concept of integration was officially introduced, no new programs directed towards immigrants have either been developed nor closed down, despite the fact that the whole immigration politics has changed. This demonstrates that the political programs are based upon the same principles as when it started.

### **7.3.1. Integration or assimilation?**

I asked both staff members to tell me what the word integration meant for them, and the following answer was provided:

SM 1: I can often feel that when talk about integration we really talk about assimilation, to be assimilated, that 'they' should be like 'us', and I don't think that's really integration [...] We want to work with integration and not assimilation, people are supposed to be who they are, regardless of what it's about, if you come from a different culture or if you just have a different sexual orientation [...] this meeting area should be OK for anyone to attend and that makes it integration on different levels, it is not only cultural, it's age, different background, different jobs, we try to work for the so called 'good mix'

What is interesting to mention in this specific quote is the description "good mix". One of the participants also described integration as mixing people together, however in this context mix is mentioned with the word good in front of it. As Mouffe (2008) argue, the creation of an identity requires the establishment of a difference that often is created from a hierarchy. Collective identities create an 'us' that would not exist without a defined 'them'. It would have been interesting to elaborate more on what a good mix is because if there is a "good mix", there would also be a "bad mix", and in that case, what does that look like.

Södergran (2010) and Scuzzarello (2008) both state that integration in Sweden mainly is referred towards practical and individual measures that aims to make immigrants less deviant, such as learning the Swedish language and entering the labour market, instead of changing structural relations. None of the studies that I have looked at consider integration to include other aspects than race such as age, gender or sexual orientation, which the staff member is acknowledging should be considered when talking about integration. Heinö (2011) argues that integration in Sweden should be viewed as assimilation as assimilation continues to exist within the political debate. For example, in the immigration debate people that need to be integrated really need to become "Swedish" as they are lacking 'Swedishness'. This is further supported in a report by the government's official investigator Kamali (2002), who states that integration politics has changed from having an aim to redistribute resources to create social coercion to becoming a politics for 'the others'. This is a threat to integration as integration politics reproduces differences by prioritizing and institutionalizing their work based on differences. The other staff member describes integration as:

SM 2: The meaning of words change, and right now, I feel that integration is similar to what we in the past meant when we spoke about assimilation, integration has had their go as a word as integration is talking about 'us' and 'them' in some way [...] I think that integration is about someone who is coming, or who is outside and needs to come in. And that's nice [...] but it still involves that one need to fit into the norm. And I think integration or diversity doesn't need to be that you come from another country, but it could also be to have a different sexual orientation, it could be so much and that you can have multiple pieces of it that makes you don't belong as that is what it is all about, to belong

As the interview evolved, the staff member stated she felt more comfortable with using the word diversity than integration. When I asked her what the concept of diversity meant for her she stated:

SM 2: That we are equal, that everyone is equal and should have access to the same things and the same opportunities. We have different abilities and different presumptions; not everyone can be a doctor, but the possibility that everyone should have the same rights no matter who you are or where you come from should be there. I think there's diversity here among our visitors. There are representatives from many different aspects and that's what we're working for, because we work for the people that come here and for the group that is created here, but we also work for the society and we are working for the group that is here and we are working with advocacy in society

The world diversity, or mångfald in Swedish, is argued by some researchers to be the same thing as integration, it is just a different name with the same meaning (SOU, 2002). The concept of integration has begun to be replaced by other words, for example Spencer (2006) argues that social inclusion is a more appropriate word to use as integration is sometimes conceived as a one-way assimilation process whereas inclusion indicates a two-way process (OECD, 2003). Beckman (2011) acknowledges the challenge that arises when concepts have an ambiguous meaning and when words used to define concepts are ambiguous themselves, for example when integration is defined as social inclusion even though social inclusion can have an ambiguous meaning.

### **7.3.2. GK as a 'Functional integration' service**

'Functional integration' is a concept that refers to adaptation to norms, institutions and culture of the majority of society to the degree "necessary for the group's members to function in the society while at the same time keeping intact its own ethnic identity" (Ålund & Schierup, 1991 p 14). GK could be viewed as a service that works with 'Functional integration' as GK values the backgrounds of all people and attempts to create an inclusive environment where people feel they belong. As an example, during the daily singing session with children GK staff will sing children's songs in multiple languages which indicates that all languages are important and valued, not just the Swedish language. This form of integration is practiced with the aim to make immigrants and 'Swedes' live and function together in society.

### **7.3.3. Staff member's perception on social inclusion**

I was also curious to hear the staff member's view of social inclusion. One staff member spoke about social inclusion in the following way:

Sofie: What does social inclusion mean for you?

SM 1: I think it is to have an opportunity to participate in the community on equal terms, to be included regardless of who you are, and I believe we work in that area. We sometimes say there is a life beyond Kupolen<sup>22</sup>. Many who live at Jakobsgårdarna and Tjärna Ängar<sup>23</sup> do not move beyond Kupolen or Willys<sup>24</sup>. They don't have the opportunity to take part of society in the same way as a normal 'Svensson'<sup>25</sup> that lives in Romme<sup>26</sup> or Domnarvet<sup>27</sup> and that is something that is very present. How can one feel included and needed and heard? That is something we try to support with in different way

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22 A shopping mall in Borlänge

23 An ethnic segregated suburb in Borlänge

24 A grocery store

25 A typical Swedish surname

26 A suburb in Borlänge

27 A suburb in Borlänge

The staff member describes how GK is supporting participants to be included in society and have the same opportunities as everyone else. For example, the physical mobility of participants is an area that is detected, as some participant's only moves in certain areas, which do not include racialized 'white', neighbourhoods. This is something GK can be involved with supporting and motivate with, so that all people have the same opportunities. It is not easy to divide people into being included or excluded, however, within the social sciences that is exactly what has been done regarding the usage of the term integration where it has been assumed that everyone must be integrated to be a member of the majority of society, for society to work and for individuals to live under good circumstances (SOU, 2006). A similar division can also be noticed in the definition of politics, which according to Mouffe (2008) is a concept that creates polarization, as the collective identity of 'us' would not exist without a defined 'them', which does not mean the relationship is of an antagonistic character. However, it can develop into one. The relationship between Swedes and immigrants has evolved such that immigrants are in a subordinated position (SOU, 2006). Goldberg (2002) describes how the modern state is not only created on exclusions but also on the internalization of exclusions. Those who are included, those favoured by and of the state, receive their advantages in virtue of the ones who are excluded; therefore, exclusions become internal to the possibility of inclusions. The state system inserts social exclusion into the social fabric and as a result, immigrants become naturalized as a result of being normalized.

#### **7.3.4. The risk of creating an excluding practice**

GK has a role to play in creating an inclusionary society as clients attending become included in a specific social context. However, GK is just one avenue or one context of many in a society where a person can belong which was a point raised as a dilemma by one of the staff members. On the one hand, they want people to attend GK to prevent their clients from feeling socially excluded, however, attending GK may lead to exclusions in other areas of the client's life if the person does not seek out other opportunities. I asked how GK would address a situation where a person attended the service every day and did not attempt to apply for jobs; the following answer was provided:

Sofie: When you talk about creating a sense of coherence, how can that be transferred to GK, how can you make people feel part of a context?

SM 2: GK shall not be so nice and so cozy that this becomes a person's context because there is something else that is called life. You can have one context here but you also need to get out in another context.

Sofie: What do you do if a person attends day after day?

SM 2: Yes, what do we do? It's really hard, and it is hard because many who come here, don't feel comfortable to get out in the world [...] And we've got a few that I can feel, would need to take the next step and then, I talk a lot about studies and jobs, and ask 'what do you think you should do now?'. Sometimes I think that if we hadn't existed, then maybe this woman wouldn't have five children, because she can go here and be in a context, otherwise she would have been at home and then maybe she would have perhaps dared to take that step forward earlier

A dilemma is raised in this quote regarding if GK is actually contributing to some of the participants exclusion in the rest of society as some participants attend GK instead of applying for jobs, working or studying. People are excluded from almost all organizations in the world, except from the ones they are included in (Jönhill, 2012). As GK exists and welcome everyone, it does create an opportunity to come and feel, included, to be social and meet new people, which is a form of activity, just as working.

Exclusion is always about being excluded from specific relations or systems and it is not possible to generalize. This perspective allows discrimination of people with an immigrant background understandable in a more complex matter (Jönhill 2012). The modern state system incorporates various forms of social exclusion into the social structure, which in turn normalizes social exclusion. Many participants deviate from the norm of the majority population and are therefore considered excluded. The risk of not having any avenue at all for the participants is that they risk having less contact in society and as a result feel less included. The staff member's point is valid, however, GK offers a service that benefits people attending by empowering them which may result in the clients applying for jobs/education. If GK did not exist, how would people in excluded positions otherwise receive the information and support that GK provides? One of the staff member stated GK has a role in creating an inclusive society:

SM 2: I think it is part of my role to invite people to new networks, and speak positively about people, if you have said positive things about a person enough time then someone would have heard it and realizes 'now we have this job, do you think it is suitable for?' [...] People who are excluded in our society also have a lot to contribute, it is so easy to place guilt, and I know that youths have a self-image that is not positive because of where they live [...] someone spoke with youth at Tjärna Ängar in regard to why the police were there 'Why do you think the police is here?' 'It is because so many Somalis live here' and then you are included in that if you belong to that origin. [...] what adolescents in Tjärna Ängar view themselves as working with when they grow up, doctor of lawyer, 'what do you think you become?', 'I think I will be a pizza baker or a taxi driver'

This quote highlights the effect ethnic segregation can have on people's understanding of themselves. If society has a certain view and expectation of certain neighbourhoods, this can result in self-fulfilling prophecies where individual's expectations of life differs depending on where they are from. Such a racialized reality occurs as a result of various discriminating mechanisms by different actors that are operating on different levels of society. Magnusson (2011) describes racialization in the city as a process where some ethnic groups, mainly non-European but not all, are significantly segregated.

### **7.3.5. Question three: Discussion of findings**

GK staff do not want to label GK as a service working with integration as they associate the concept of integration with assimilation and the division of people. At the same time, they acknowledge that integration is essentially what they do. The conclusion of this is that the politics of integration is associated with the separation of people but the act of integration is what brings people together.

GK actively chooses not to make integration a focal point of their program and they do not use integration to describe their work. Nonetheless, they can create an environment where people from different cultural backgrounds attend, in turn creating a social support network for participants. GK supports participants by identifying areas of participant need and addressing them. Perhaps, there would not be that many Swedish people attending if GK labelled themselves as a service working with integration, as they would then niche themselves into a field where people with a Swedish background would not feel the need to attend as they already belong to the majority of society and are considered integrated. Integration practice is under constant change on a political level and there are conflicting ideas regarding how to work with integration and what to even name it. Maybe that is also why GK has created a successful service; because they have not used the word integration but have instead focused on the empowerment perspective and focused on empowering people to find strength within themselves. This

in contrast to integration, which is perceived by some as having negative undertones, in particular for those categorized into the non-integrative category.

Staff members want to broaden the definition of integration to not only include immigrants but also other aspects that may be the cause of marginalisation such as sexual orientation, gender, disabilities and so on. I associate this description with social inclusion, as social inclusion does not single out but rather embodies the idea of inclusion for all. One staff member also spoke about social inclusion as being able to have an opportunity to participate in the community on equal terms, which is how the state describes integration. However, an issue of not considering the different contexts of every marginalisation may result in certain factors that lead to exclusion becoming invisible, for example race and the specific difficulties that racial exclusion contains. A related aspect is the dilemma that was raised regarding whether GK, instead of creating an inclusive service, was actually contributing to client's social stagnation and exclusion.

Participant's cultural differences appear to be respected at GK even though GK is carrying out a service, which is classed as an integrative service by the municipality. I believe functional integration could be a concept to use when describing GK as GK is supporting clients to fit into society while still valuing their identity and cultural traits. The final section will answer how racial politics impacts upon the need for integrative services and shapes their method of execution in practice.

#### **7.4. Question four: In what way do integration politics impact the clients and the services of GK?**

The concept of racial politics is rarely used in the public debate surrounding integration politics in Sweden. Swedish state politics do not mention the concept of racial politics. Nevertheless, I argue that the current integration politics are based upon the idea that certain people need services in order to fit into society. The concept of racial politics is therefore an applicable lens through which to analyse Sweden's integration policy, as it is present in the current politics and can be used to explain why discrimination and racism occurs departing from a race perspective. Racial politics provides an important perspective that is required to understand the impact that race continues to have when forming actions and policies directed towards immigrants.

Classical liberalism contributed to the promotion of racial aspects as a central concept of common socio-political and moral sensibilities. Consequently, racial exclusions and racial dynamics were an element that became naturalized and normalized; this is the central tenet that post-colonial theorists depart from (Hall, 2006). Goldberg (2002) argues that past ideas of slavery, segregation, immigration policy and policies regarding colonial rule have contributed to the current political structure. According to Goldberg (2002), racial politics is something that is created in a certain context that creates exclusion based on racial characters, similarly to how the concept of gender in certain contexts creates exclusions on the basis of a person's sex. Goldberg (2002) further states that racial states are states of whiteness and the aim of white states are to "(re)produce, manage, and sustain overall the conditions and structures across all dimensions of social, political, economic, legal, and cultural life of the relative power, privilege, and properties of whites" (p 196). A state without racism can only be achieved through the withdrawal of whiteness, which is upholding profit, privilege and power of the ones upholding the structural social positions in a hierarchal racial society.

GK invited Viktoria Kawesa<sup>28</sup> to one of their network meetings to have a lecture about the whiteness norm. This demonstrates that GK is interested in acknowledging that the whiteness norm exists and a willingness to incorporate the concept into the work they are doing. Race matters because the modern state has made it matter by embodying racial conditions, an action which in turn has shaped the modern state. The racial state is everywhere, yet it is invisible in the way it is operating with defining relationships and shaping interactions. Its mission is to manage threats, the unknown and heterogeneity through control and by pretending to know and create their ‘true’ conditions.

#### **7.4.1. Racism and discrimination as a common phenomenon**

I found that racism and discrimination was a current issue for many of the clients at GK. Two of the clients stated they are regularly exposed to discrimination whereas the other two clients I interviewed acknowledged that discrimination and racism frequently occurs in Borlänge, however, is not something that they are directly exposed to. Jönhill (2012) claims that the concept of racism does not clarify the cause of social processes; conflicts and power relations that are causing discriminating actions but instead disguise complex causalities by simplifying them as being racist. Therefore, theories such as CRT and theories of power relations are relevant theories to incorporate when discussing the concept of racism to get the perspective of how race promotes the interest of white people (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012) and how society would not exist without power relations (Foucault, 1982). When I asked one of the clients of her experience of racism and discrimination in Borlänge, the following conversation occurred:

Sofie: Do you experience that there is racism and discrimination in Borlänge?

Client 4: It is almost every day for me, it is normal

Sofie: Can you give an example?

Client 4: The most common that happens every day is stupid comments, looks, but sometimes there are big things too

Sofie: From where do these looks and comments come from?

Client 4: From Swedes

Sofie: What type of comments do you hear?

Client 4: ‘Go back’, ‘Now they’re here again’, ‘These idiots are here again’, and looks, sometimes looks say more than words [...]

Sofie: What are you referring to when big things happen?

Client 4: A couple of times I have been spat on and called terrible things by people I don’t know [...] I have been chased by a car [...] the worst thing is when someone says something stupid in front of my children, then I must take it cause I need to show my children that I can’t say anything bad back even I get called something bad, it is really hard

De los Reyes (2006) describe how racism comes in many different forms. Racism can be brutal and a direct action for example through public violence and attacks. It can also be expressed in a so-called “hidden grammar”, meaning that text, symbols and the general language affects our thinking about immigrants and people that are different. Disguised forms of racism are more difficult to detect, access and combat than direct actions. If this is not brought to the surface instead of dismissed and minimized, conditions allowing legitimation of cultural subordination and superordination will continue. This quote shown above is an example of how this participant is racialized judged on her external attributes by society or parts of society (Hubinette, 2012). Categorizing her in a certain category legitimates certain discriminatory actions due to a conception that it is okay as she is considered less worthy due to the race she has been

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<sup>28</sup> Viktoria Kawesa was voted in as the first black female party leader in Sweden to the feministic party Feministiskt Initiativ in 2017.

categorized into. This divides people and the perceived difference intensifies and legitimizes actions towards certain people and not others (Molina, 2005). This is further related to Hübnette and Tigervall's (2009) study that describes how coloured adoptees experienced that their non-white bodies were of a constant significance in their everyday lives in their interaction with the white majority of society.

All bodies are racialized, the difference is that non-white bodies are highlighted and are the focus of racism (Molina, 2005). Racialization needs to be understood in its specific context. There are two different, closely related understandings of racialization; the first one is racialization as a social constituent process or system, meaning that society is racialized and divided into layers that are organized hierarchically based on notions of racial differences, for example ethnic segregated areas as mentioned in chapter two. The second one is a process where people become racialized, which for example has happened to migrants in Sweden, as racialization occurs when they enter Sweden and get categorized into a group they are assigned to due to external traits. These two understandings can also complement each other as representing two dimensions of the same process (Molina, 2005). Another example of how racialization takes form when adding a visible attribute is demonstrated in the following quote, where a client stated she was never exposed to racism until she converted to Islam and begun wearing a hijab:

Sofie: Are there many discussions about racism and discrimination?

Client 2: Yes, because we are exposed to it all the time

Sofie: What does that look like for you?

Client 2: Well especially those who wears a scarf are exposed [...] I never experienced it before I became a Muslim

Sofie: Do you think it is because you are wearing a hijab?

Client 2: Yes, my friends that don't wear, black friends, they say, 'We never hear anything except for when you stand next to us'

Sofie: What do you think is the reason you get exposed to this because you are wearing a headscarf?

Client 2: I guess it's racism. I remember a woman coming up to me when I was eating and questioned me and my headscarf and asked, 'Why do mothers force their girls to wear a headscarf?' [...] People have asked me 'did your husband force you to become a Muslim when you got married?' and I said, 'I met my husband after I became a Muslim' and they say 'what, why? Why would you choose that? Its stuff like that all the time

The client discloses how society questioned her decision to convert and draw conclusions that she was forced to make the decision as she married a Muslim man as it seemed unlikely that she would have made that choice herself. Racism is about power and control as the superior group obtains power and socioeconomic resources through control that puts them in a power position. An ethnic hierarchy is created where a group gets more power and influence the closer they are positioned to the majority of society. For example, in Sweden, Arabs and Turks are in a subordinated position to eastern Europeans, who in turn are subordinated to western Europeans. This hierarchy is reproduced through institutional actions (SOU, 2006). Some researchers, for example Adorno and Lipset, cited in a Swedish investigation about power, integration and structural discrimination (2006), believe racism is a result of incorrect assumptions, which results in prejudices against groups that are considered different. This view focuses on racism as an individual problem that can be solved through actions targeted towards the individual. Thus, there is no discussion about institutional and structural discrimination. Different power centres have created a powerful system of discrimination towards 'the others', which is maintained by preconceived ideas and

stereotypes and based upon scientific, racial ideology (SOU, 2006). A major issue is that groups in power positions many times reject structural and institutional discrimination. By doing this, discrimination actions are reproduced and carried out by routine until it becomes a part of everyday life. Important to note is that the action of discrimination does not necessary have to be intentional but an unintentional consequence of the majority community's normal and institutionalized actions (SOU, 2006).

So how is this issue of racism and discrimination addressed by GK? Clients explained that GK addresses racism and discrimination by having conversations about it, by signing petitions about different issues, by contacting stores that have been discriminating and by starting a theatre where women wearing hijabs talk about their experiences. When having discussion about racism and discrimination one of the staff members describes her observations of participants as:

SM 2: I think it's cool cause you can see a sort of solidarity among our visitors depending on which cultural background you have. One time, someone had been exposed at Kupolen and IKEA and then you can see how you hold each other's children. If a person with Swedish origin sits there she will take a child with a Somalian origin in a different way than you do normally, and I think, for me that is that you want to show empathy

The children are in this context used as a bridge between participants when participants want to show empathy, support, understanding and perhaps identification.

#### **7.4.2. Loss of venue**

In 2016 GK had a challenging year as they lost the venue they had operated in since they were first established and a new venue was not found until almost a year later. As a result, GK was forced to move around to different venues, which disrupted the operation. All the interviewed clients stated they continued to attend GK during 2016 when there was no permanent venue available. Staff members stated that the municipality had referred them to the current venue and it is not designed for GK's needs as it lacks a full-equipped kitchen and appropriate space. One of the staff members is concerned how the new location will affect GK, stating:

Sofie: How was GK affected by the loss of venue in 2016?

SM 2: I think we dropped a lot of people, even though a lot of people continue to come, many of those who came during 2016 were those who have been attending GK for many years. I think it was good that we were located at Jacobsgårdarna, it is really important to have a local connection. I can notice that when we are at Jacobsgårdarna, that we knew everyone, and I think that will eventually change, and I think that we know everyone and everyone knows us creates a 'trust capital' and there is a risk that dilutes because we are no longer there. I think that we during our time at Jacobsgårdarna received a form of 'trust capital' that we are still living on, people recommended us to their friends. I think that it will be affected as it is so much about availability and to be able to pop by and I think that it is even more important if you encounter difficulties. If you are not feeling well you might not come here because then it's too far. I think there is a big point to be where people are, this is not a residential area, and you can see that in other cases, for example in Tjärna Ängar projects are planned to be in the neighborhood [...] I can also feel that there is a lack of trust on decision-makers for me as there was an intention from the beginning that many of us would be a part of the process, which we haven't been

The staff member is concerned that GK will be affected by no longer being located in Jakobsgårdarna. The staff member believes there is a reason why GK worked so well in Jakobsgårdarna; it was easy for clients to drop by, even those who were not feeling



well. The staff member believes that the relationship GK built with residents in Jakobsgårdarna contributed to high participation rates. The staff member believes that projects in other parts of Borlänge are prioritized to be located in residential areas so as to locate those services close to residents. The value of locating services close to residents is something that is emphasized by Håkansson and Trumberg (2012). Håkansson and Trumberg (2012) argue that programs like GK are useful in combating ethnic segregation as they lead to social interaction between people in the area, which reduces isolation and in turn increases participant's knowledge about one another.

So why was GK not provided a venue earlier? And why did staff feel they were not included in the process of finding a new venue? GK was established by the municipality as a service that would unite the people living in one of the ethnic segregated areas in Borlänge. As discussed by Lipsky (1969), the work experience of street-level bureaucrats is impacted by the availability of resources, the existence of physical and/or psychological threat and the existence of ambiguous or unattainable goals. These three determinants of staff experience have significant impact on the staff at GK, and therefore the operation of the service.

Staff members at GK have had issues with resources; especially regarding access to an appropriate locale to conduct their service. However, after speaking to a decision maker in the municipality<sup>29</sup> it appears that GK is a prioritised entity, and issues related to access to resources were more a function of circumstance than a result of the municipality deprioritising the service. The reason provided for GK being without venue was due to a venue and housing shortage in Borlänge. GK is perceived as an important unit in the municipality and are highly respected for the work that they conduct which also is a reason why they have so much freedom in framing their service. I was curious to hear the clients' views about the new location. There were mixed opinions regarding if the new venue would have negative effects on GK. One of the clients stated:

Sofie: Do you think the new venue will affect GK as they are no longer in Jakobsgårdarna?

Client 4: No, I don't think so, it's not too far from Jakobsgårdarna, not still, no

Sofie: So people will continue to come?

Client 4: Yes exactly, but maybe it was good that they started up at Jakobsgårdarna but I still think that people always will go to GK; it is not about where they are and their premises is but what they have created

Whilst this client does not believe GK's new location will have an impact on the service she still states that it was good that GK was established at Jakobsgårdarna, perhaps as they were able to reach out to people. She then stated GK is not dependent on the location but on the service they have created. One of the client's noted that less people attend in comparison to when the service was located at Jakobsgårdarna.

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<sup>29</sup> This information was not recorded and was provided off the record

The same client states that it is not the same as it used to be when GK was located in Jakobsgårdarna when she could just drop in after leaving her children at kinder garden:

Sofie: How has GK been affected when it's no longer located at Jakobsgårdarna?

Client 2: Not even half of the people attend. There are so few people in comparison to before. When I went to Kindergarten I went past GK and when I went home, I could always drop in. It was so fun to cook food together and try new food together, Thai food, Philippine food, Somalia food, everything.

Sofie: What do you think is the reason people from different backgrounds attend?

Client 2: I think it's because GK used to be in a residential area where people live and walked pass on the way to kindergarten, GK was so central to the home, I think that's why. If GK would have been here from the beginning, who would attend? No one would come if they didn't know about GK from the beginning.

The client stated she heard other clients thinking it is frustrating that the venue is further away, however, it does not bother her, as she always had to travel to GK. The final two clients did not think that the new venue would affect people attending the service. All the clients are grateful that there is a new permanent venue to meet at, however, the fact that there is no working kitchen is something that everyone mentioned as a negative aspect as GK in the past used to organize cooking workshops where clients took turns in cooking food from different parts of the world. This was something that was appreciated and united people. For example, one of the clients stated:

Sofie: Is there something that GK should improve?

Client 3: The venue is so small. We had this cooking activity before, we cooked food on Thursdays, staff came, directors from the municipality came, but there is no kitchen here and the kitchen brought many people who didn't know Swedish together, a Kurd and a Somali, none of them can speak Swedish, but the kitchen they knew, so cooking brought people together.

The kitchen became an area where people from different backgrounds could meet and be able to communicate without necessarily using a language. The kitchen enabled people to meet in a space where many participants felt comfortable in. During these sessions those who did not speak the Swedish language were able to practice the language during the kitchen activities, which potentially puts a person less out there in comparison to if one sit around a table with a group of people.

#### **7.4.3. Question four: Discussion of findings**

Integration politics affect the clients of GK and the service the unit provides as GK is charged with carrying out an integrative function for the municipality. GK therefore belongs under the integration umbrella and consequently its politics and has certain requirements it must fulfil.

Integration politics are aimed at certain groups in society which in turn divides society, the immigrants that needs to change and the 'Swedes', that are already considered to be integrated and therefore are considered to be the norm. It is not integration policies that have created social groups of immigrants and 'Swedes', these groups existed before integration policies and programs were established. However, integration politics have contributed to the preconceived ideas and racialized opinions that exist in our society where the majority of society has certain expectations that the minority groups need to follow (SOU, 2006). GK however, does not appear to create a division, rather they are a service that unites people. Possibly because they do not label themselves as an

integrative service; such a label may discourage Swedes from attending and therefore reduce the effectiveness of the service.

In the Swedish context, the politicizing of race has changed over time and is different in different parts of Sweden. Populist parties in Sweden are growing stronger and as a result, ideas about people being different are spread to the general population. The politicizing of race is the adoption of an exclusionary practice based on racial profiling which social or political institutions institute. As argued by Goldberg (2002), the actual exclusion is often not the prime issue; it is what the exclusionary practice enables; for example, the justification of abhorrent actions such as racist lynching or as in the Swedish context, asylum centres being set on fire (Dahlstedt, Eliassi & Salmonsson, 2017). This politicising of race is mirrored in the experience of some of GK's clients who have been subjected to discriminatory and racist actions based on their racialized external attributes. Douglas (2003) states that the act of classification of individuals as being different, abnormal or marginalised, often works to maintain difference as opposed to facilitating communal aggregation. Douglas (2003) discusses the difficulties social workers experience resettling and reintegrating ex-prisoners into society. Their persistent labelling as an ex-convict and the connotations that that entails, for example unreliability, unteachability and so on, means that efforts to demarginalize these individuals are often thwarted by their persistent categorization and the social expectations that that entails. The issue of path-dependency is similarly relevant for immigrants in the context of the current research. Social attitudes towards immigrants and the resulting expectations of immigrants are reinforced and confirmed by integration politics and the identification of 'us' and 'them'. The classification of immigrants as separate and different creates a persistent identity both in regard to how immigrants see themselves and how others see them, thus impacting upon their ability to move from their socially/politically assigned marginalised state.

GK has an important role for clients attending in supporting those affected by racism and discrimination by taking actions when such events occur, but also in advocating for their clients and ensuring their voices are heard by sharing their individual experience to other groups in society, for example, the GK network and other parts of the municipality.

## 8. Chapter Eight: Summary and Conclusion

The general aim of this study is to analyse how integration politics affects the everyday lives of people by focusing on how individuals attending GK are affected or influenced by integration politics. As pointed out by social constructionism, my contribution to the social world is considered a construction; this study is one version of social reality and not something definitive (Bryman, 2015).

GK offers sanctuary for people who are excluded for one or another reason. People generally want to fit in and belong to groups as it makes individuals feel included and fit into a context. People who attend services like GK do so because something is lacking for them, whether that be social contacts, information, or just a need for a social activity to attend during the day. By attending GK these needs are met. For marginalised people to be included in the majority of society there needs to be acknowledgement that racial politics is a phenomenon that exists everywhere. Appropriate measures need to be taken that allow everyone to be able to take part in Swedish society. It is not easy to divide people into being included or excluded, however, within the social sciences, that is exactly what has been done regarding the usage of the concept of integration where it has been assumed that everyone must be integrated to be a member of society for society to work and for individuals to survive and live under good circumstances (SOU, 2006).

What Sweden needs is a system that aims to create equal opportunities and results for everyone regardless of gender, class, ethnicity and other differences; this goal is confounded by integration politics. As Mouffe (2008) states, the creation of an identity requires the establishment of a difference. Antagonism needs to be changed to agonism, 'us' and 'them' need to recognize each other as genuine opponents instead of having a friend/enemy or immigrant/Swedes relationship. To do that, there need to be an acknowledgement of how post-colonial ideas continue to impact on contemporary society in order to combat these misinformed ideas that create the base for unequal treatment due to race<sup>30</sup>. As explained by critical race theory, the structures in society that maintain white people's superiority must also be acknowledged (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This is something Goldberg (2002) discusses as well in his ideas about nation states being white states created to uphold white supremacy. Past policies targeted towards specific groups have divided society and strengthened past conceptions that derived from colonialism about non-Europeans being different and inferior to Westerners. It is also therefore important to have Foucault's (1982) views in mind regarding power relations as power relations are the relationship between subordination and dominance that exist between different groups, for example immigrants and Swedes. The power dynamic that is created by the creation of 'the others' is significant. The group "us" has access to power and other socioeconomic resources and therefore receives a superior position to 'the others'. Interestingly, power aspects between different groups are rarely touched upon in research about integration. Having access to power and resources is key when it comes to integration as the structural and institutionalised discrimination is reproduced as privileged groups are in positions of power and are able to reproduce their superior position. Having power and access to resources in society is a must for individuals to be able to make free choices. Power is more than just having a job; it is also the availability of resources, on an equal basis, in society. If resources and accessibility are distributed in an unequal way it

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<sup>30</sup> For example, the idea about 'the West and the Rest' (Hall, 2006)

creates inequality (SOU, 2006). To achieve the government's goals in regard to integration, there needs to be joint measures taken from different elements of society. In the Swedish context, this will include challenging the white majority of society and require the redefinition of the current social hierarchy. This poses a big question; will people in power positions want to give up on their privileged positions?

Path dependency and the persistence of ideas, concepts and social constructs impacts upon the ability for institutions to change, and to foster new ideas with orientation towards historically entrenched concepts often prioritised over the adoption of new approaches (Krucken 2003). This phenomenon is not limited to political institutions. Krucken's (2003) study provides insight into how entities which are embedded in larger institutional structures often only symbolically adopt to new challenges which are exogenous to them, without transforming these new expectations into institutional change. From this standpoint, the promotion of integration politics at the state or municipality level can be seen as a response to new challenges and social expectations, demographic and otherwise, but at the same time an extension of historic and cultural attitudes and approaches towards the 'other' which previously underpinned assimilation policy. Even though the state and municipality's intentions are good by focusing on integration a distinction is created between the constituents of the municipality and the municipality and a division is created between 'us' and 'them'. As mentioned, integration politics creates distinctions between people but the act of integration brings people together. As Beckman (2012) states, more focus should be placed on what society should counteract instead of what it should achieve. By doing this, there will be less blaming for those who do not achieve the goals. It is also more positive and empowering for both individuals and society to work against something we do not want, for example exclusion, than towards something we want to have but is hard to define, for example inclusion or integration.

### **8.1. Potential Limitations and Suggestions for future research**

This study explored how the politics of integration affect the everyday lives of people. The study focused on analysing the views of participants of GK, a unit operating under the municipality of Borlänge. All staff-members were interviewed as well as four clients attending GK. More interviews could have provided more information and different views that could have been useful in the data analysis. However, this was not possible given time and geographical restrictions. However, it is not the quantities of interviews that are important but the information that one receives from every individual case. I met both staff members and clients prior to commencing the interview and hence I was a familiar face to the participants, however, a long-term relationship, which includes trust and comfort, was not established. This could have affected the level of openness in the answers provided to me.

Findings related to how GK functions within the integration framework may be transferable to what effect integration politics has on other services working in the field. However, formal generalization for policies is not the aim of this study, but rather the aim is to provide a portrayal of a single setting that can be used to inform practice and add knowledge to the topic. Future studies could aim to provide a comparative context for my research by analysing programs which operate in a similar setting and comparing results.

This study has emphasized the racial aspects that result in exclusion and exclusionary practice. Social exclusion can take many forms; race is just one form that may be used as an excluding mechanism. It would be interesting to explore integration politics in Sweden in the context of other factors that contribute to exclusionary practice, such as gender, disability or class as race only provides one aspect.

This study focuses on the politics that creates organizations, not on the functionality of GK within its contextual setting. Another potential extension of this work would be to apply different organizational theories. This would constitute a complementary focus that has a functionally different aim than that outlined in this study. However, focusing more on organisational theory would be an interesting avenue for exploration of integration politics in Sweden.

## **8.2. Final words**

Clarke (2009) argues that most scientific work that defines the politics of difference are written by funded mainstream researchers, which results in the subjects becoming marginalised in the production of knowledge. The global definition of social work that was adopted by the IFSW and IASSW 2014 states

“Social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing. The above definition may be amplified at national and/or regional levels” (Akademikerförbundet SSR, 2014).

This study has a bottom-up perspective by hearing the people involved in GK instead of utilizing a top-down expertise perspective. This study is therefore relevant and important to social work as it promotes social change by giving the people who are affected by the politics developed by the state a voice.

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## Appendix 1

### Intervju guide - Medarbetare

#### **Information om:**

Studiens syfte

Anonymitet, namn kommer inte nämnas

Frivilligt deltagande, därav kan man närsomhelst avbryta deltagande utan motivation

Behöver ej svara på frågor om du inte vill

Material kommer endast användas som forskningsmaterial i denna studie

Samtycke till att intervjun kommer spelas in

#### **Bakgrund:**

Utbildning?

Kulturell bakgrund?

Hur länge har du jobbat för Gemensamma Krafter?

Vad är din roll?

Har du arbetat i en liknande roll/verksamhet innan GK?

#### **Integration:**

Vad tänker du när du hör ordet integration?

Hur förhåller sig GK till integration?

Anser du att integration är relaterat till det arbete som GK utövar?

Varför används integration inte i GKs programbeskrivning?

Har kommunen alltid gjort reklam om GK som en integrerande verksamhet?

Anser du att den supporten som GK utövar är integrerande även fast integration inte beskrivs i program beskrivningen?

Hur diskuteras GK med kommunala aktörer?

Har GK fokus på rasism, diskriminering i verksamheten? Om ja, på vilket sätt?

#### **Social inkludering:**

Vad tänker du när du hör ordet social inkludering?

Vad tänker du när du hör ordet social exkludering?

Jobbar GK med social inkludering? Om ja, på vilket sätt?

Har GK en roll i att skapa ett inkluderande samhälle och motverka social exkludering?

#### **Arbetet på Gemensamma Krafter**

Vilka utmaningar möter du i din roll på GK?

Vem bestämmer hur verksamheten ska styras?

Hur mycket makt känner du att du har att genomföra nya aktiviteter?

Hur mycket inflytande har du i ditt arbete?

Hur involverade är kommunen i GKs aktiviteter?

Rådfrågar ni deltagarna när ni planerar aktiviteter? Om ja, hur? Om nej, varför inte?

Hur kommer det sig att majoriteten av deltagarna är kvinnor?

Vilken support kan du erbjuda deltagarna?

Vilken support får du som personal?

Samarbetar ni med andra organisationer? Hur ser detta samarbetet ut?

Hur använder du de teoretiska ramarna KASAM och Empowerment i ditt arbete?  
Hur fungerar GK relation med kommunen? Har det skett några förändringar då GK numera är helt finansierat med kommunala medel?

### **Mötesplats**

Hur påverkades GK när ni blev av med lokalen 2016?

Vilka åtgärder gjordes för att mildra påverkan på detta?

Tror du att programmet kommer att påverkas av lokalen är flyttad och inte längre finns i Jakobsgårdarna?

Vem var ansvarig att hitta en ny lokal?

Varför tog det så lång tid?

Påverkades antalet deltagare under 2016 när GK inte hade en permanent lokal?

Etnisk segregation i Borlänge, kommer ni kunna fortsätta arbeta med detta trots lokalbyte?

## Appendix 2

### Intervju guide - Deltagare

#### **Information om:**

Studiens syfte

Anonymitet, namn kommer inte nämnas

Frivilligt deltagande, därav kan man närsomhelst avbryta deltagande utan motivation

Behöver ej svara på frågor om du inte vill

Material kommer endast användas som forskningsmaterial i denna studie

Samtycke till att intervjun kommer spelas in

#### **Bakgrund**

Ålder?

Bostadsområde?

Sysselsättning?

Utbildning?

Antal barn?

Kulturell bakgrund?

Hur länge har du deltagit i Gemensamma Krafter?

Hur ofta kommer du?

#### **Integration**

Vad tänker du när du hör ordet integration?

Hur förhåller sig GK till integration?

Anser du att integration är relaterat till det arbete som GK utövar?

Har GK fokus på rasism, diskriminering i verksamheten? Om ja, på vilket sätt?

#### **Social inkludering**

Vad tänker du när du hör ordet social inkludering?

Vad tänker du när du hör ordet social exkludering?

Jobbar GK med social inkludering? Om ja, på vilket sätt?

Har GK en roll i att skapa ett inkluderande samhälle och motverka social exkludering?

#### **Gemensamma Krafter**

Hur gick du reda på GK?

Vad betyder GK för dig?

Vad är bra med GK?

Vad är mindre bra med GK?

Vad skulle kunna förbättras?

Varför besöker du GK?

Besöker du andra liknande verksamheter?

Vilken support kan du erbjudas av GK?

Är du tillfrågad över vilka aktiviteter som genomförs på GK? Om ja, hur? Om nej, varför inte?

Varför tror du att majoriteten av deltagarna är kvinnor?

**Mötesplats**

Hur påverkades GK när ni blev av med lokalen 2016?

Vilka åtgärder gjordes för att mildra påverkan på detta?

Tror du att programmet kommer att påverkas av lokalen är flyttad och inte längre finns i Jakobsgårdarna?

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