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Racism and parenting: The experiences and resilience of Afro-origin parents raising children in Gothenburg, Sweden.

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To my children, Tanya and Anthony Mukanjari.

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Mildrate Mukanjari

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Abstract

This study investigates and develops an in-depth understanding of the racism experienced by Afro-origin parents and their children in Gothenburg, Sweden, the toll it takes on them, and their coping strategies. It is a qualitative study, based on in-depth, semi-structured, qualitative interviews with six female and three male Afro-origin parents. CRT and resilience theoretical framework were used to analyse the data and further elucidate the racism experiences of this group. The study adds to previous critical scholarship, which cautions that parents' experiences of racism impacts not just the parents themselves, but the whole family, and mainly the children. The findings show that racism in Gothenburg is experienced anywhere, both covertly and overtly and it affects the social, psychological, and economic well-being of both parents and children. In most cases, Afro-origin parenting is complicated by these challenges, the obstacles they face in trying to report racism and the Swedish parenting expectations. It is my hope that the findings from this research will help policy developers to advocate for policies that tackle the structural and institutional ways that racial discrimination and inequality operate.

Keywords: Afro-origin, parenting, racism, resilience

Abbreviations

BAME	Black Asian and Minority Ethnic
CERD	Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CV	Curriculum Vitae
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
IFSW	International Federation of Social Workers
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
OCBSS	Official Census Bureau Statistics Sweden
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNCERD	United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
USA	United States of America

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Parenting is not for the faint-hearted; it is an uphill task that requires physical and psychological well-being, as well as financial stability. On top of all that, family circumstances and physical, social and cultural environments have a profound impact on a child's development, determining who and what the child will become as an adult (Meng & Yamauchi, 2017; Arrington, 1937).

Being an immigrant parent intensifies these challenges. This I was not aware of, until I was awakened from my dream of an equal, universally fair world when my then-five-year-old daughter, who had been a few weeks in Swedish pre-school, came home crying. After a few minutes of hugging and consoling her, I had to ask what had hurt her. "Nobody likes me, nobody wants to play with me; please, mummy, can you put gold extensions on my hair?" she said. I tried to calm her down, with no success. Crying uncontrollably, she continued: "Why am I brown? No one at my school wants to play with me… Another one said, 'Your hair is black because it's dirty – don't come close to me!' I feel like an outsider, mummy…"

I was numb and dumb for some time, thinking of what to say and how to say it. I suddenly realised the increasing burden shouldered by parents who must try to shield their children from racism and other adverse consequences of migration and globalisation even in the age of human rights instruments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

The following section discusses the problem statement, rationale, and research questions, linking them to the experiences and resilience of Afro-origin parents raising children in Gothenburg, Sweden.

1.1. Background to the study

Racism is not a modern phenomenon; it is rather a continuous one with a gloomy global history, its current incarnation emanating from increasing globalisation and the migration of people. A short description of the intertwined roots of immigration and racism and their current standing in Sweden will further emphasise the relevance of this thesis.

Racism became a dominant attitude in western society when European colonisers, whose aim was mainly to seek valuable products, met 'native` people of colour. The colonisers characterised these people as inferior, because of their different cultural practices and non-white skin colour, which was associated with evil and dirtiness (Mahmud, 1998). Disdaining them enabled the maintenance of white hegemonic control of these populations and brought about the so-called 'civilisation'. Around the 19th century, racism spread worldwide, and it became the major driving force behind the Atlantic slave trade (Northrup, 1994). During this era a large part of Africa was colonised; some Africans were forced to migrate to Europe as slaves, while Europeans travelled to Africa as economic migrants (Achiume, 2019).

The current migration trend is dominated by refugees and economic migrants, of all age groups; and some come from the global South to the global North with their families. The increase in numbers of 'other' people in Europe seems to have upsurge racism (Castles, 2014). According to the migration statistics, data and report by IOM (2019), there are 272 million migrants globally, which constitutes 3.3% of the world's population. Europe hosts about 82 million of these immigrants, and 27.6 million of those are from Africa. Sweden has a long history of immigration; according to Statistics about 24% of the inhabitants have a foreign background. According to the statistics available from the OCBSS, approximately 2% of the Swedish population is of African descent (IOM 2019). This makes the Afro-origin population a minority group in Sweden, and therefore vulnerable.

The first recorded Africans in Sweden arrived in the 17th century as slaves. Among them was a boy named Badin, who was given to the royal family as a present (Mångkulturellt centrum, 2014). UNESCO (1969) points out that racial hierarchy emanates from slavery and colonial relationships and continues to motivate a political ideology in which rights and privileges are differentially distributed, based on racial categories. Understanding Sweden's colonial complicity helps us to better understand post-colonial power relations in Sweden, and how racial meanings continue to shape the lives, access to power, and strategies of the people living there (Sawyer & Habel, 2014). But Sweden has not fully admitted its participation in colonisation, though it has been connected to Africa since the 17th century, as part of the transatlantic slave trade. This part of Swedish history is highly controversial (Engerman & Sokoloff, 2013). However, we can justifiably say that whether their involvement in the slave trade was direct or indirect, all European countries benefited from the slave trade and from the suppression of people of African descent. For instance, over the centuries colonial goods (*kolonialvaror*) produced by slaves, such as sugar, cotton, spices and coffee products, were among the most common wholesale goods in Sweden (Naum & Nordin, 2013).

Before World War II it was common in Swedish culture to portray Africans, using overtly racial stereotypes, as being at a lower stage of human development: primitive, childlike, and ridiculous (McEachrane, 2001). Different positions and ranks have long existed in Sweden, even among whites. The majority ethnic Swedes were described as a 'superior' Nordic race, minority Finns were of 'inferior' East Baltic/Slavic stock; the minority Saami's in the north were the most inferior of white Europeans, whereas the Roma people in the country belonged to another (inferior) race altogether. With the aim of preventing the dilution of Swedish genes and culture, racial hygiene became a theme in Swedish politics; which led to intensive forced sterilisation programmes from the 1940s to the 1970s, mostly aimed at immigrants and other genetic undesirables (Tegel, 2011). Likewise, among the vast number of immigrants from different continents, those of African descent have much darker skin colour; and the further your skin colour is from whiteness, the closer you are to the bottom of the racial hierarchy (Song, 2004).

Despite all this, Over the years Sweden has gained an international reputation for human rights and democratic values, claiming to be a colour-blind/non-racial state with majority societal

approval of equality, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or nationality (McEachrane, 2018). Sweden's first state party report to the UNCERD in 1973 affirmed that laws against racial discrimination were unnecessary in Sweden, since such discrimination already contradicted the fundamental principles of Swedish law (McEachrane, 2018) Sweden's latest state party report to CERD (submitted January 2017) follows the same notion, seconding the exclusion of the term 'race' from Sweden's antidiscrimination law (Government of Sweden, 2017). It denies the significance of race in shaping the organisation of Swedish society. Sawyer (2002) points out that denial of racism is a common strategy to avoid confronting the perception of Sweden and Swedes as moral, united (*solidarisk*) and anti-racist,' even when reports of racism are increasing substantially. The Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund organisation states that abandonment and denial of race complicate and intensify experiences of racial discrimination for people of African origin, who are exposed to everyday racism and discrimination (Mångkulturellt centrum 2014). According to Achiume (2018), this can lead to racial aphasia, causing Afro-origin parents to feel stifled while parenting .

In 2015 Sweden reversed its welcoming immigration policy, due to the influx of migrants to Europe. This fuelled debate in Sweden on race, racial identity, and national belonging (Russo, 2017). At the same time, the Sweden Democrats political party was gaining popularity, as evidenced by their 17.5% of votes received in the 2018 elections (Tomson, 2020). Sweden Democrats members portray themselves as defenders of the 'people's home' (*folkhommet*); by 'people' they mean native Swedes, hence their support of the closing of borders. They believe that Sweden's immigration policy has been too generous, resulting in an overflow of immigrants putting huge strain on the social and economic well-being of Swedes. This intensifies different dynamics of discrimination in Sweden, as well as overt racism, and the pressure that comes with raising children in such an environment.

On a positive note, Sweden has actively supported various struggles against colonialism and apartheid; it's one of the most generous countries towards refugees, and has criticised racism and imperialism, as well as supporting the development and self-determination of third-world countries. However, Sweden hasn't prompted any kind of aggressive approach to thwarting racism against people of colour within Sweden itself (McEachrane, 2018). According to Murry et al. (2009), racism remains a major challenge and a primary source of the family stress that confronts African descendants. It can incapacitate one's social, economic, psychological and physical domains; hence the agony of parents of colour, who on top of all that must carry the heavy burden of supporting themselves, their children and their families, while more often than not they are relegated to the position of outsiders (Brody et al., 2006). This may negatively impact their parenting which influences the development of children's social and instrumental competence (Baumrind, 1975). George and Bassani (2018) note that parents' racism experiences seem to negatively affect their children's socio-emotional development. This may be attributed to family stress and attitudes, or to the incapability of the parent to provide their child with a caring environment. Bearing all this in mind, it's intriguing to investigate and develop an in-depth

understanding of the racism experiences of Afro-origin parents and their children in Gothenburg, Sweden, the toll it takes on them, and their coping strategies.

Research into Afro-origin people in Sweden has recently gained popularity; however, most of the research is in Swedish, and research that looks at racism and holistic parenting is still scarce. Hence there is a need to fill in the gaps in the research on the experiences of racism and the resilience of Afro-origin parenting in Gothenburg, Sweden, and to raise awareness on this topic. This study analyses how Afro-origin parents experience racism, the impact it has on them as individuals, their children and their parenting, and in what ways they are resilient or are adapting well in the face of racism. This study is based on the narratives and perception of Afro-origin parents, because parents are in most cases, the legal guardians, who ought to know their children's experiences, teach, understand, lead, listen and provide safety, while respecting their children (Seay et al., 2014), which makes them key players in parenting. The study will help to influence the development of better and stronger intervention and prevention policies, which could help to alleviate racism experiences and the impact they have on Afro-origin parents and enhance their resilience to racism.

1.2. Research aim and questions

The aim of this paper is to investigate and develop an in-depth understanding of the racism experiences of Afro-origin parents and their children in Gothenburg, Sweden, the toll it takes on them, and their coping strategies.

The following research questions were posed to meet this aim:

1. How do Afro- origin parents and their children experience racism in Gothenburg, Sweden?
2. What are the effects of racism on parents, children, and parenting?
3. What are the strategies parents and children employ to deal with racism and the obstacles they face?

1.3. Definitions of theoretical constructs and terms

Racism/racial discrimination

CERD defines 'racial discrimination' as any form of distinction, prejudice, exclusion or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin, with the aim of impairing the acknowledgement, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any way (UN, 1966). According to Clark et al. (2013), 'racism' is the beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation.

Parent/parenting

A 'parent' or 'legal guardian' is any person who holds primary parental responsibility, to which the law confers or imposes rights, privileges, duties, and obligations, as defined under the United

Nation children's act (Children Act, 1989). The word 'parenting' is derived from the Latin verb 'parere' to bring forth, develop or educate. Thus, parenting is concerned with the activity of developing and educating aimed at ensuring the survival of a child (Clarke-Stewart, 2006).. From the above definitions one may define 'parenting' as a process of promoting, protecting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood.

Afro-origin/black

The terms 'Afro-origin' and 'black', in reference to people or parents, are used interchangeably in this paper. They refer to people 'of African ancestry' living in Sweden.

1.4. Relevance of the study to social work and human rights

The exploration of this topic was also motivated by the interrelatedness of racism and parenting to social work and human rights. According to the global definition, social work promotes social change and development, social cohesion, empowerment and liberation of people (IFSW 2014), which I believe can be substantially achieved by exploring the concept of racism and parenting, bringing about awareness, empowerment and the possibility of social change. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Art. 1, established that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (UN 1948); and racism undermines the principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities which the social work profession aims to uphold. Social work and human rights also strive to engage people and policy structures in a bid to try to address life challenges like poverty, racism and parenting in a bid to enhance the overall wellbeing of people, in this case Afro-origin people.

1.5. Limitations to the study

All research has its limitations. Time was one of the limitations for this research paper; the process had a restrictive time limit, considering the fact that experiences change, and that the way people interpret an experience depends on their current mood and situation. Therefore, a longitudinal study following the participants over a substantial period would have enabled a better standpoint on racism experiences and their effects on Afro-origin parents, and on their resilience strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted my productivity, as I had to be home with my sick children for about two months; but I was able to ensure that adequate time was dedicated to the paper by submitting it on a later submission date. Despite my assurances of anonymity, many of the participants were sceptical about sharing sensitive personal experiences, fearing they might come to the attention of Swedish immigration officials and jeopardise their right to stay in Sweden. This may have affected their responses. Lastly, as a foreign student with very limited knowledge and understanding of the Swedish language, carrying out research in Sweden was challenging, since some of the literature that could have added great value to this paper is only available in Swedish. Ultimately, little of the Swedish-authored literature was incorporated in this paper. Despite these

limitations, the results generated from this study are still valid and can contribute to policy changes and the raising of awareness of racism and parenting issues that affect Afro-origin parents.

1.6. Disposition of the study

Chapter One is a short introduction to the study, with a brief background summary of the study highlighting the problem statement and the relevance of the topic to social work and human rights, followed by, its aim and research questions, the definition of key terms, and its limitations. The literature reviews appear in Chapter Two, while theoretical considerations are presented in Chapter Three. Chapter Four discusses methodology, reflexivity and justifies the methods, analyses and procedures utilised to meet each research objective. It also deals with ethical considerations. The presentation, discussion and analysis of results make up Chapter Five. Chapter Six summarises the main findings, contributions and recommendations, and makes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews insightful information on race, racism and parenting in relation to Afro-origin people around the globe from previous scholars. The use of previous literature is vital for acknowledgment and discussion of the viewpoints of earlier scholars, with the aim of identifying knowledge gaps that require exploration (Bryman, 2016). In other words, studying previous literature provides grounds for this current study, and validates the need to explore racism experiences and their impact on Afro-origin parents in Gothenburg. Multiple methods were used to access previous research; these included borrowing books from Gothenburg University library, searching for journals and scholarly articles using the university's online library databases, such as the sociology collection, Scopus and ProQuest, as well as open-access journals and Google Scholar. I used search terms such as 'race', 'BAME', 'race/racism experience', 'discrimination law', 'Afro-origin', 'blacks', 'parenting', 'resilience' and their synonyms as a springboard for my literature search. This was done to limit the search to only relevant literature, as online searches generate vast amounts of information that could not be exhausted in a single study.

2.1. Understanding and contextualisation of race and racism

A triangulation study in the USA by Templeton (2013) attributes difference in skin colour to environment and quantity of melanin, as all human beings are believed to have originated from a single race. According to Dominelli (2017), this root race *homo sapiens* originated in Africa. Race and racism as constructs of social actors and political forces have diversified over time, from focusing on people's physical attributes to alleged differences in intellectual capability (Clair & Denis, 2015; Dominelli, 2017). Modern variants of racism are based on perceptions on culture, mores, and character differences (Dominelli, 2017; Schaefer, 2008). Clair and Denis (2015) add that modern racism expresses context-specific moral and symbolic principles that stereotype subordinated racial groups as undeserving and incompatible, thereby justifying existing racial inequalities. Using these constructs, different races are stratified and awarded superior or inferior status, and this leads to socioeconomic discrimination, biases, attacks, isolation and other racialised privileges that imbalance racial power relations (Schaefer, 2008).

The era of colonialism and slavery was the product of the politicising of race, the powerful white Europeans mainly attacked and colonised non-white countries. Mahmud (1998), a qualitative study linking modern constructions of race to colonialism and looking specifically at British colonial rule, notes that Britain, France, Germany, and other European countries subjugated and colonised nearly every African country, assuming them to be inferior and powerless and forcing them into subservient roles. Even after decolonisation, people from former colonies are still viewed as inferior and not 'belonging' hence their continuous need to negotiate social, civil and racial boundaries (Dahlstedt et al., 2017). A qualitative study on the visual lexica of (national) belonging and non-belonging in the accounts of young Kurds in Finland confirms that there is some space to

contest racialising categorisations and to renegotiate the meanings of 'Finnishness', either through membership of the community of Finnish speakers, or through civic notions of belonging to the state (Toivanen, 2014). Toivanen (2014)'s results show that despite their place of birth, citizenship and ability to speak the language of the land, these people's position within racialising categorisations locates them outside the boundaries of 'Finnishness'.

A qualitative study by Dahlstedt et al. (2017), which highlights some of the crucial challenges regarding belonging in contemporary multi-ethnic Sweden, noted a striking similarity in how participants' claims regarding belonging are not acknowledged by others. In support, Molina (2005) says that in Sweden, some people are identified as *invandrare* or (im)migrants but the term includes people born and raised in Sweden, who are merely racialised as non-white. Black people are not really considered Swedish, many present-day studies and researchers have demonstrated that 'whiteness' and observable differences shape definitions of Swedishness and non-Swedishness (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011; Molina, 2005; Sawyer, 2002). It is usual to refer to white Swedes as 'ethnic' Swedes, which illustrates the role of whiteness in determining who is and is not Swedish (Hübinette et al., 2012).

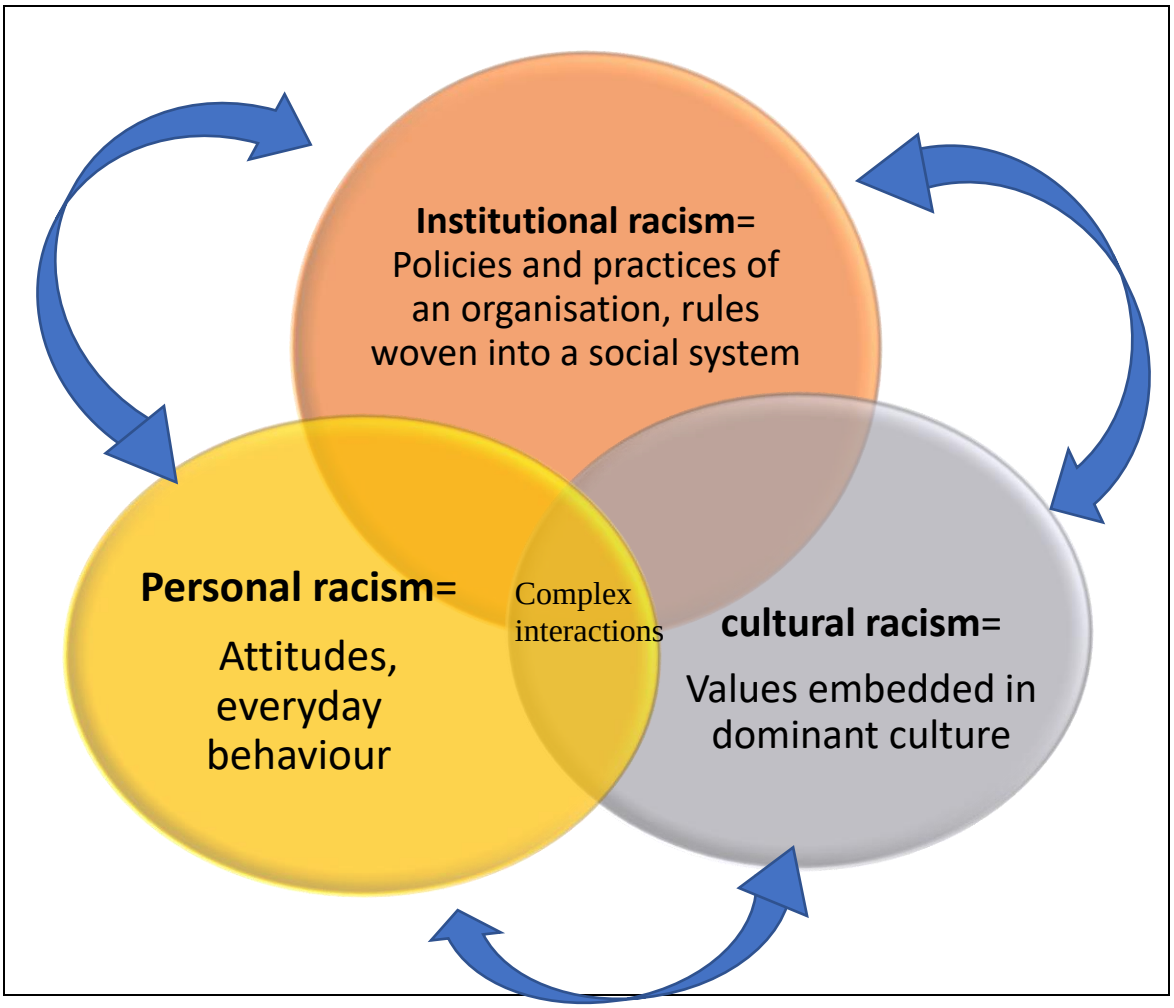
In support of this notion, Dominelli (2017) says that racism covers the space and place that configure people's belonging or acceptance in society; and this is the predicament of all immigrants. The issue of space and its ownership by the dominant group is demonstrated by Brexiters in the United Kingdom (UK) and the building of the Mexican wall by Donald Trump (Burrell et al., 2019; Garcia, 2016). This idea of space is also evident in apartheid-era South Africa, where the best areas and schools were designated for whites only (Robinson, 1996; Young, 1994). Racial separation is normalised in societies; and things perceived to be normal are rarely challenged. In South Africa, for example, the physical racialisation of space made the enforcement of racial laws much easier and enabled the simultaneous pursuit of white political supremacy and white economic prosperity. According to Dominelli (2017), racism is structured and embedded in normalised, unquestioned and continued social relations and ideologies and power, which deny other racial groups dignity, opportunities, freedoms, and rewards that are accessible to one's own group through a socially organised set of ideas, attitudes, and practices.

2.1.1. Dynamics and forms of racism

In his book *Prejudice and Racism,* in which he gave an overview of the social history of prejudice against African Americans, Jones (1997) acknowledges the existence of different forms of racism; Dominelli (2017), identified them as personal, institutional and cultural racism. Personal (or individual) racism involves both the attitudes held by an individual, and the overt behaviour prompted by those attitudes. Institutional racism refers to the failure of an organisation to provide appropriate and professional services based on people's colour, and evident in organisational policy and practice (Dominelli, 2017). Clair and Denis (2015) and Elias (2020) add that the rules, law, processes, and opportunity structures that enable socially and economically disparate impacts are what constitute institutional racism (and variants such as structural racism, systemic racism,

etc.). Cultural racism, prejudices and discrimination are based on cultural differences between ethnic or racial groups (Dominelli, 2017).

Figure 1: Dynamics of racism



Modified from Dominelli (2017)

The three dynamics of racism shown in Figure 1 above feed on each other, and build complex relations that complicate the eradication of racism dynamics and practices (Dominelli, 2017). Dominelli (2017) goes on to say that personal racism draws on institutional and cultural racism for validity; and direct personal racism promoted by inflexible individuals is what many people refer to as racism in society.

Dominelli (2017) affirms that racism continues to be an issue in society, but its expression varies according to cultural norms and historical period. According to the research done in the UK on racism and mental health by Chakraborty et al. (2013), racism can take place quietly and unnoticed but cause disruption to social order. This aversive racism is mainly modern racial bias; which is

significant, but often hard to identify. While old-fashioned racism is expressed directly and openly, aversive racism is a subtle (and in some cases, unintentional) form of bias that can be displayed by those with strong democratic values, who believe they are not prejudiced but have implicit or unconscious biases (Brah, 1996). According to Sue (2010), one way in which aversive racism manifests itself in everyday life is through racial microaggressions. She defines racial microaggressions as subtle and commonplace environmental, verbal and behavioural indignities that convey negative, hostile or derogative slights towards people of colour. It is now generally accepted that racisms must be conceptualised in the plural, since there are different forms of racism (Sue 2010).

2.1.2 Effects of racism

Racism incapacitates and destroys the humanity bestowed on the individuals and groups being racialized and discriminated against (David et al., 2019). Personal experience of racial discrimination has been linked to elevated rates of deviant peer affiliation and loss of confidence, self-doubt, violence, anger, escapism, withdrawal, frustration, avoidance, poor school performance, developmental issues in younger children, and mental health problems (Brody et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003). Sanders-Phillips (2009) says that discrimination, delinquent behaviours and a decrease in self-efficacy among African youth may relate to greater aggression, as racial discrimination is perceived as a notable threat to their control over life outcomes. In short, racism may cause hopelessness, depression, anger and externalising behaviours such as aggression in children and adults. According to Meng and Yamauchi (2017), children are the future of a society; their holistic well-being today, as a group, predicts the excellence of human capital that will be available in the future for that society.

A qualitative study by Meyer (2003) notes that minorities experience a high degree of prejudice and stigma, which causes excessive stress responses such as poor health, high blood pressure and internalised self-stigma; and psychological distress such as clinical depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD, and personality disorders. However, the mental health impact of racism is not considered or captured by traditional counselling psychology theory or assessment models (American Psychological Association, 2003). According to Weis and Toolis (2010), stress may cause difficulties with intergroup and intragroup relations among racialised minorities. Meyer (2003) identified three stressors that are central to the understanding of stress of people in minority groups: actual experiences of discrimination and violence, perceived stigma, and internalised phobia, in which they internalise negative attitudes that foster a sense of inferiority within them.

Franklin et al. (2006) point out that micro-aggressions from other racial groups can lead to invisibility syndrome, which is the feeling that people get when their abilities, personality and worth are disregarded This syndrome develops through the longterm accumulation of stress, emotional abuse and psychological trauma linked to racism. In a study on micro-aggressions, adult black participants reported adopting a level of ‘healthy paranoia’ out of necessity (Sue et al., 2008). This paranoia reflects the heightened, yet appropriate level of awareness black people have

regarding how they are perceived by others and the consequences of their actions, given their marginalised identity.

According to Mosley et al. (2017), the chronicity and degree of oppression black men face facilitates cultural mistrust. Cultural mistrust refers to the avoidance of interacting with or revealing information to others (particularly white people) due to fear of betrayal or exploitation (Terrell et al., 2009). Cultural mistrust is a key component of African-American consciousness; its roots developed during slavery, when distrust of whites became equated with survival (Terrell et al., 2009). According to Whaley (2001), cultural mistrust and its consequent vigilance have been critical to black men's survival for centuries; black masculinity is therefore largely constructed around coping with cultural mistrust.

The famous doll-test study in the US by Clark and Clark (1939) concluded that prejudice, discrimination and segregation had created a feeling of inferiority among African-American children and had damaged their self-esteem. The children learned to believe and internalise that being black was bad and made them bad people, resulting in a psychological process of self-degradation due to hegemonic whiteness (Cheng, 2000). Internalisation of negative attitudes fostered a sense of inferiority within them. David et al. (2019) define internalised racism as turning on oneself, one's family and one's people; a distressing pattern resulting from oppression by dominant society. Other previous studies have shown that there is an explicit link between experienced racism and feelings of not belonging to the society in which migrants' children have settled (Rastas, 2005; Toivanen, 2014).

According to Sanders and Mahalingam (2012), high-achieving African people often sacrifice their personal relationships and health in pursuit of their goals. In a study that followed 489 young African Americans in rural Georgia for over fifteen years, McGee and Stovall (2015) documented that a subgroup of children in their study, despite being identified as resilient, suffered from tremendous internal pressure to succeed, be the first in the family to graduate, and have a white-collar job – while daily enduring blatant racism and discrimination. They went on to say that these pressures often caused them to compromise on their sleep, exercise and other aspects of self-care, which resulted in disproportionately high rates of health problems.

2.1.3 Human rights and racism

Tackling racism continues to be a major social issue around the globe (Dominelli, 2017), even in the face of greater awareness of international human rights. In his analysis of the development of the theme of Afro-descendants in international human rights law in America, Davila (2018) highlights the development of international non-discriminatory measures. The challenge to promote and implement human rights and fundamental freedoms, without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion, was embraced by the international community in adopting the United Nations charter in 1945. However, this did not end racism and racial discrimination, even within the majority of the 51 founding member states of the United Nations. The USA, for example, continued racial segregation as state policy, under the slogan 'separate but equal' (Davila, 2018).

The UN General Assembly (1948) approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which in Art. 1 establishes that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Bradley (2019) asserts the need to acknowledge the deeper problems embedded in racism, including the use of race as a means for categorising humans, racial ideology that promotes racial supremacy, and racial bias, calling racism irrational and inhuman treatment. In 1965, the most widely ratified international human rights treaty was adopted: The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), which obligates those party to it to eliminate racial discrimination and promote understanding among all races. It also compels its members to outlaw hate speech and criminalise membership of racist organisations (UN, 1966). According to Achiume (2018), ICERD pronounces the normative and legal framework for the ambitious goal of eliminating all forms of racial discrimination. However, during ICERD's brief lifetime racial equality has seemingly drifted to the margins of the global human rights agenda, despite efforts by civil society anti-racism coalitions to highlight the historical context and structural dynamics of continuing racial inequality. In a bid to protect children, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) was proposed. Article 2 stipulates that parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children are protected against all forms of discrimination (Thornberry, 2013).

Based on the discussion above, it is fair to conclude that the impact of the international human rights law community's efforts to eliminate racial discrimination worldwide has not matched its intent. People still experience racism daily, in countries where the international non-discriminatory treaties have been ratified. Achiume (2018) points out that civil rights victories did not even reduce economic inequality between black and white in the southern states or elsewhere in the US. This in a way affirms Marx's notion that the political state enacts laws recognising rights and freedoms to protect the interests of the oppressing class by subordinating the oppressed groups (Hart, 1982). Achiume (2018) attributes the existing inequality partly to the global human rights system, for failing to raise consciousness around and commitment to racial equality. On that same note, Dominelli (2017) suggests that only blacks can put an end to racism, because expecting white people to engage in anti-racism practice and policing would mean dethroning themselves, and making them acknowledge (and possibly renounce) the privileges that come with whiteness.

2.1.4 Racism without race 'denouncing race'

In her paper – which seeks to put racial equality at the centre of the human rights agenda, looking at counties such as Austria, France, Sweden, Hungary, the US, Germany and Norway – Achiume (2018) noted that Australia, Austria, Finland, Hungary, Germany, Norway and Sweden have taken the alarming step of eliminating or considering the removal of references to race in domestic anti-discrimination law, which she says shows lack of commitment to racial equality. She linked this move to the racial demographics that characterise global human rights NGOs, and the lack of representation of people of colour, especially in decision-making roles.

In contrast to Achiume, scholars such as Miles (1989) have opposed the use of race as an analytical category, warning that it reproduces what it criticises. Hübinette and Tigervall (2009), in their

studies on non-white bodies of adoptees in Sweden and Norway, problematise the use of the term 'race' on the basis that it is an unethical social construct, not an empirical fact, and supporting its removal from their national laws. The Swedish state party argues that all people belong to the same race the human race and thus continuing to use the word 'race' might legitimise racist assumptions and confirm race as an existing category. For this reason, race was replaced by a broad definition of ethnicity (Government of Sweden, 2017). In their book *Såblev vi alla rasister* [How we all became racists], Arpi and Cwejman (2018) claim that it is racist to speak about race, since it reduces people to only their race and skin colour, not seeing them as individuals with different abilities and qualities.

CERD notes that erasing the term 'race' may cause challenges in the qualification and processing of complaints of racial discrimination, which might hinder access to justice for victims (McEachrane, 2018). Molina (2005) and Haslanger (2005) argue that 'race' is crucial to understanding power relations, and to fighting racist structures and injustice. Afrosvenskarnas Riksförbund points out that the abandonment of 'race' makes the situation worse for Afro-Swedes exposed to everyday racism and discrimination (Mångkulturellt centrum, 2014). Difficulties with using the words 'race' or 'racism' in the Swedish context result in difficulties in discussing the nuances of racism, which silently reproduce white privilege (Hübinette et al., 2012). Achiume (2018) says that intensive reflection is needed within the global human rights movement and system to understand the causes of what in other contexts has been called 'racial aphasia' – a shared inability to speak about race, an intended neglect of the past and of the structures of racism.

Achiume goes on to state that the removal of race in legislation does little to erase the social meaning invested in the concept over a very long time, and that it keeps discriminatory structures and institutions sound and flourishing (Achiume, 2018). Colonial blindness, avoidance, patronisation, denial of racism and omission allow whites to consciously feel that they are not responsible for the hardships that people of colour encounter daily, and maintain whites' power and strongholds in society while creating barriers to anti-racism approaches (Dominelli, 2017). Some theorists refer to Sweden as 'a colour-blind society', in order to explain the uneasiness to talk about how race, though unacknowledged, impacts one's opportunities in life (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014). In this study, race will serve as a tool for understanding how Afro-origin parents experience unfair treatment based on the colour of their skin, and how those experiences impact their parenting in Sweden.

2.2. Racism experiences of Afro-origin people

According to Capps et al. (2012), Afro-origin people do not constitute a homogeneous group; they are diversified by their nationality as well as their linguistic, cultural, religious and social backgrounds. Despite these differences, their history, African cultural bonds, literature, music, sports, arts, and their experience both as victims and as survivors of racism and the struggle for racial justice is a 'shared text' for them (Mangcu, 2016). In one American study, over 75% of

African-American women reported incidents of discrimination (Mustillo et al., 2004). However, male Afro-origin youth report the highest discrimination-related stress rates from racial slurs and name-calling, threats of physical harm, and exclusion from peer activities (Simons et al., 2006).

In his research theorising visibility and vulnerability in black Europe and the African diaspora, in which he focuses on twelve countries (the UK, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Portugal; Spain, Italy and Germany; and Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland), Small (2018) postulates that all over Europe, black people are over-represented and extremely visible in the lower ranks in every essential area from politics (with 0.5% black representation) to business, educational and medical occupations, in the non-profit sector and in social hierarchies. They are also over-represented in unemployment and incarceration. These conclusions are analogous to those of the 2014 report on anti-black discrimination in Sweden, which investigated, the employment situation, housing, discrimination and hate crimes in relation to Afro-origin people (Mångkulturellt centrum, 2014).

The unemployment rate for people of non-European background is about four times that of natives (McEachrane, 2018); five times, for Afro-Swedes (Aldén & Hammarstedt, 2014). Immigrants from African countries are often singled out as a particularly vulnerable group in the Swedish labour market, despite the fact that according to a recent cross-European minority and discrimination survey, sub-Saharan Africans in Sweden may be more highly educated than the general population, on average (Åslund & Rooth, 2005). Elo et al. (2015) note that migrants who self-report as being an 'other' race earn significantly more than those who self-identify as black. Despite having been born and raised in the UK and having the same or superior qualifications to non-blacks, blacks are still at a disadvantage compared to non-blacks (Small, 2018).

According to American research by Elo et al. (2015), nearly 88% of African immigrants to the US have at least a high school education, and rank among the best educated migrants to the US; yet some are still underpaid and overqualified for the jobs they do. Small (2018) says most of the African diaspora receive wages rather than salaries, and do part-time and menial jobs not by choice, despite their civil boundary. This impacts the number of hours they work and the jobs they must take to ensure adequate support for their families (Elo et al., 2015). The predominant political and public explanation for racial inequality in nations across Europe is that black people are immigrants from underdeveloped nations, undergoing the processes of assimilation into European life, politics and culture (Goodhart, 2013). When it is pointed out that millions of black people have been in Europe for generations, the explanation cites alleged deficiencies in work, education and motivation; and for women, the pronounced cultural patriarchy of black men (Goodhart, 2013). Goodhart goes on to say that the evidence for institutional racism as an explanation for inequality is typically dismissed; and if racism is mentioned, it is ignored, denied or represented as the work of individuals. This triggers black mistrust of the system.

In a report portraying structural racism in the Swedish judicial system, Lappalainen (2005) shows that people with foreign backgrounds are at more risk of being stopped by the police, searched, arrested, detained and sentenced to prison than native Swedes in a similar situation. The report

also shows that people with roots outside Europe have less confidence in the police and in courts than native Swedes. There is also a gender dimension to different types of experiences of harassment and racism. One tendency is for boys and young men to be suspected of criminal, dangerous or violent behaviour, while girls are regarded as sexually available, with no right to refuse sexual invitations (Kalonaityté et al., 2007).

A study of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) performed at Harvard University on white Europeans between 2002 and 2015 found that Sweden had quite low mean IAT scores, compared to Italy, Portugal, Bulgaria and the Czech Republic (Banaji & Greenwald, 2016). In isolation, this measure would appear to confirm Swedes as relatively open and non-prejudicial. However, this is only one measure of racism, and is also controversial, since implicit racial bias scores may not always be associated with people's behaviours. These results also contradict a study by the AfroSvenskarnas Riksförbund reporting the existence of racism at individual, structural and cultural level in Sweden (Mångkulturellt centrum, 2014). The controversial incident of the Swedish Minister of Culture cutting a talking cake designed like an African tribal woman further affirms that racism in Sweden is often ignored and denied mostly by whites; yet the population discriminated against acknowledges it (Karlsson, 2012).

A 2015 report from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention shows that black people are the most frequent targets of hate crimes in Sweden; a 31% increase in such crimes since 2010 was noted by Djärv, Westerberg and Frenzel (2015), cited in Skinner (2019). In Sweden, immigrants from Africa and the Middle East tend to live in segregated low-income neighbourhoods with other immigrants (McEachrane, 2018), which then increases social stigma, social unrest and school segregation, as primary school learners are placed in schools within their own neighbourhoods. The national plan against racism and the state party report to CERD both acknowledge the housing problem, but never mention the segregation between white and non-whites people (Government of Sweden, 2017).

Despite Sweden being referred to as a 'colour-blind' society, and its astounding international reputation for human rights and democratic values, Afrophobia is increasingly visible in Sweden. As in many other European countries, racism in Sweden is noted in different structures and day-to-day interactions between people of colour and white people (Skinner, 2019); and as Mulinari and Neergaard (2017) point out, you never know how near you are to a racist comment.

2.3. Raising children in Sweden

Sweden is a family- and child-oriented state, which through its policies promotes gender equality and encourages shared responsibility in childcare and household duties (Cameron & Freymond, 2006; Esping-Andersen, 1990; Wells & Bergnehr, 2014). Swedish men have become more progressive regarding child care compared to previous years; however, women are still key players in children's care, growth and development (Thorslund et al., 2014).

In a qualitative research study of 32 parents in Sweden, Halldén (1991) notes that parenting in Sweden is centred around availability and guaranteeing morally and socially accepted behaviour, mainly through role-modelling, guidance, support of children as individuals, and mutual understanding between child and parent, for parents cannot dictate to their children. According to Holosko et al. (2009), the State has a leading and fundamental role in guiding, informing and educating parents on the best parenting approaches. Children in Sweden spend limited time at home, as they start day care in their second year of life. Childcare research asserts that early high-quality care and education can make a significant positive impact on child development, in both the short and the long term (Clarke-Stewart et al., 2005); likewise, poor care quality, discrimination and racialisation can have a detrimental, negative short- and long-term impact on child development. According to Doucet et al. (2018), early schooling limits the time parents spend with their child, limiting their influence on the child's development and overall well-being from a tender age. In a way, this disadvantages Afro-origin parents (and therefore their children), who have the unavoidable role of teaching their children ways to navigate a racialised environment.

In Sweden the well-being of the child is also regulated by the Act on the Children and Parents Code (SFS 1949), which states that the guardian of a child must fulfil specific obligations with respect to the child (Johansson, 2013). Sweden even signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (UN, 1989), In accordance with the UNCRC, any person under the age of 18 is considered a child in Sweden, and should not be discriminated against (UN, 1989). The notion of treating children as equals was already fundamental in the early 20th century, when Key, one of Sweden's most famous pedagogues, wrote a book about children's rights, and further advocated for non-discriminatory schools in 1900 (Sorbring & Gurdal, 2011). Despite all this, racism is flourishing in Sweden. The Swedish national agency for education stated that "Bullying, racism and violence are still a dark side of the Swedish educational system" (Skolverket, 2002). All this could cause one to question the adequacy and implementation of non-discriminatory policies in Sweden.

Discrimination is also observed in out-of-home care statistics. In a study conducted in Sweden on the multicultural paradox, Johansson (2011) noted that children of foreign backgrounds are overrepresented in out-of-home care. However, Vinnerljung and Sallnäs (2008) link this overrepresentation to social socio-economic factors. Johansson (2011) also highlighted the lack of trust between child protection workers and family members.

2.4. Parenting and resilience: the complexity of Afro-origin parenting

Parenting has a pervasive impact on children's development and how they adjust to social and psychological issues (Collins et al., 2000). This is why Santrock (2008) says that parenting requires complex and indispensable fundamentals, such as (a) knowledge and understanding emanating from parents' beliefs and socialisation; (b) motivation this concerns parent's wishes and commitment to do whatever is necessary to maintain or improve their children's state of being; (c)

resource provision, such as finance and psychological and social competencies; and (d) opportunity and qualities such as warmth, intelligence, stability and communicative ability, as well as freedom from serious physical and mental health problems. According to Krause and Dailey (2009), parenting has become one of the most challenging tasks in recent times, considering the emergence of different family structures stemming from socio-economic and cultural changes.

A study by Renzaho and Vignjevic (2011), which sought to assess the impact of parenting interventions in Australia by reviewing parenting programmes for African migrants and refugee families, suggests that African immigrant families require culturally appropriate parenting interventions to overcome parenting challenges in individualistic cultures. In support of this, Yovsi (2014) says the preservation of culture is prevalent and valued in African parenting literature from both ancient and modern times, and this attitude is passed to the next generation. The division of parenting roles is quite distinct from how children are raised in western civilisation. Fathers are viewed as instillers of discipline in children, and mothers as their comforters (Babatunde & Setiloane, 2014). Entwislea and Astone (1994) point out that among African-origin parents, parenting behaviour and roles also differ, as a function of a multifaceted variable that reflects the family's financial capital (for example, income and material resources), human capital (such as parental education and knowledge of child development) and social capital.

Most parenting theories are based on a westernised conception of individualism, in contrast with collective patterns. Even the CRC seems to support westernised parenting, as it proclaims in its preamble that the child should be fully prepared to live an individual life in society (Raffaetà, 2015). This conceptualisation of westernised ways as the universalistic nature and norms of raising children undermines the cultural relativism of groups attached to their own traditions and beliefs (Dyson et al., 2013). Negotiations engaged in to fit the universally accepted norms of child rearing may lead to divergences and power frictions in culturally oriented immigrant families. Halpenny et al. (2010) argue that there is no unique model for effective parenting that can be generalised in all societies; parenting dynamics differ.

Lalonde et al. (2008) note that black parenting is unique, because it involves layers of challenges exacerbated by the daily racism and classism that target black families. An American study on parenting while powerless by Whitaker and Snell (2016) points out that African-American parents have always struggled to negotiate the tensions related to raising their children in a racially hostile society. For generations they have consistently worked to ensure that each succeeding generation will experience less racial aggression, exclusion and violence than the previous one (Collins et al., 2014). The most obvious unstated concern is that African American children face different consequences to white children for the same behaviour. African-American parents have an implicit yet excruciating fear that they may not have the ability or the power to protect their children from discriminatory consequences (Amber, 2013), though they keep attempting the nearly impossible task of raising empowered children who have self-esteem, children who are free to explore and express themselves, while concurrently keeping a lasso on their children in a bid to protect them from racism and harsh societal judgements (O'Neal, 2015). O'Neal goes on to say

that unknowingly, the parents join the agency of oppression; for they tell their children that they are unequal and inferior, and that they are not guaranteed full protection of the law.

In a longitudinal study, Boyraz et al. (2016) suggested a number of coping mechanisms that can be utilised in dealing with stressful situations some of which are avoidance, approach and problem-focused coping. Avoidance coping requires the individual to divert attention from the threat and from the negative feelings associated with the distress. Approach coping requires one to confront the problem, and attempt to deal with one's feelings regarding the distress as well as focusing on the threat (Boyraz et al., 2016). Problem-focused coping means defining the problem and attempting to change the stressor. The feasibility of each strategy and the impact it might have on one's social and psychological well-being, and one's parenting, determines which if any of these strategies should be employed.

2.4.1. Afro-origin parenting and racial conscientising

Hughes et al. (2006) and Lesane-Brown (2006) suggest that a critical component of African-origin parenting is to make one's children aware of racism and of how to deal with its manifestations, and to prepare them to navigate an unfair and potentially deadly racial environment. This preparation is known as ´racial socialisation', or preparing for bias; a combination of conversations and practices that parents hope will prepare their children for living in unreceptive environments where they will seldom be cherished (Peck et al., 2014; Thomas & Blackmon, 2015). Parental racial socialisation can include hypervigilant parenting, excessive discipline, and conversations about racial pride, self-respect, and threats about racial discrimination in society (Burt et al., 2012; Cooper et al., 2015).

In a society where blackness is constantly portrayed as bad, it is essential for black parents to socialise their children to positively impact their development and psychological well-being (Mullings, 2012). Hughes et al. (2006) linked racial socialisation messages emphasising racial, heritage and cultural pride to positive academic outcomes. Racial socialisation has been linked to higher self-esteem, fewer depressive symptoms, and other positive outcomes (Hughes & Chen, 1999). Thornton et al. (1990) point out that through socialisation, individuals acquire an understanding of recognised roles, statuses, and prescribed behaviours, and locate themselves and others in a social structure. They go on to say that effective parenting and racial socialisation provide children with the necessary self-esteem, self-love and skills to function in society. Scholars argue that unexpected discrimination is more stressful than what you already know (Cooper et al., 2015).

Effective family communication enables coping with challenges encountered (Walsh, 2002). The findings of an American study by Doucet et al. (2018), which investigated the ways black American parents talk to their young children about race, concur with Edwards and Few-Demo (2016) that the class, experiences and age of the children determine how their parents socialise them. Parents adjust racial socialisation to their children's age and cognitive capacities; the older the children, the more racial socialisation they receive (Peters, 2002). There is a support system that offers a helping hand to these parents. Afro-origin parents have indigenous forms of support:

the family is the core support system, then the extended family, the community, churches, and the adoption of fictive kin individuals who are not related to the family but who play a role in the raising of children (Brown, 2008). Traditional African values enforce shared parental responsibility across the community, and shared responsibility among the family, with older siblings looking out for younger siblings (Guerin & Guerin, 2002). In other words, the Afro-origin society oversees the grooming of children into acceptable, resilient members in its social milieu. Though racial socialisation has a lot of positives, it has also been associated with negative outcomes, such as lower academic performance, increased felt stigmatisation, and increased fighting frequency (Tang et al., 2016).

2.5. Conclusion

This review of the existing literature provides plentiful evidence that racism is socially constructed and pertinently associated with power, oppression, and the vested interest of white people in maintaining the status quo. Afro-origin people around the globe experience both subtle and direct racism in their day-to-day interactions, on a personal, institutional and cultural level; and this has detrimental effects on their social, psychological and physical well-being and on their parenting. Despite the availability of international human rights laws which aim to curb the perpetuation of racism globally, racism is still a global problem Some theories blame the International Human Rights Forum (IHRF) for its lack of black representation, and a lack of grounded and unwavering commitment to equality and to eradicating the power dynamics which preserve racism. The literature identified Afro-origin people as the most racialised group in developed countries and this incapacitates them economically, despite their vigorous efforts, in the form of education, to rise from the bottom of the social-economic hierarchy. This hierarchy is also evident in parenting strategies: westernised parenting has set the universal standards for good parenting, while African parenting is questioned and demonised. In a bid to be resilient to racism, different strategies such as racial socialisation, collective social structure and avoidance coping have been employed. In this review, resilience and critical race theory (CRT) were identified as suitable and logical for providing a theoretical grounding for this study. CRT can analyse Afro-origin society and its parenting in relation to race and racism, and to other connecting categories such as power and human rights; while resilience describes how Afro-origin parents in Sweden adapt in the face of racism.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

There is a surfeit of theoretical perspectives that could be used to analyse and comprehend the realities of the lived experiences of Afro-origin parents living in a racialised society; but only two main theories are sufficiently complementary and suitable for providing a sound theoretical standpoint for this study. These are critical race theory (CRT) and resilience theory. Three key CRT concepts were utilised in theorising critical race parenting: racial realism, the centrality of experiential knowledge, and intersectionality. The two theories were selected for their ability to capture elements of social interaction, which when combined can offer a rigorous explanation for how racism is created, how it impacts parenting, and how it can be dealt with. My choice of theories was motivated by previous researchers who mentioned and emphasised the ability of these theories to provide a robust theoretical analysis in a study of this nature.

3.1. Critical race theory (CRT)

In this paper, CRT is used to understand and conceptualise the racism experiences of Afro-origin parents, reveal the racist acts that people of colour face daily, and describe the ideologies and systems which preserve racism, while challenging the beliefs held by the majority with the use of counter stories. It is also used to analyse how race intersects with other characteristics such as gender and class and with power dynamics, and to analyse how these interactions affect and complicate people's experiences. Racialism is used to analyse the effects of racism on Afro-origin parents mainly the economic impact of racism on their well-being and parenting. CRT is also used to analyse how the law can be an uneasy, oppressing force in dealing with racism.

Taylor et al. (2009) define CRT as a resistance to the unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, cultural, economic, racial and gendered lines, which perpetuates the established social-power relations legitimised by the legal system. CRT was initiated by Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman in the 1970s; it adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawn from feminism, Marxism and postmodernism, to mention only a few (Stefancic, 2012). Solórzano and Yosso (2002a), Taylor et al. (2009) and Watkins Liu (2018) concur on the defining tenets that form the basic assumptions of CRT on racism and parenting: (a) the notion that racism and race are socially constructed, as are the invention, reinforcement and perpetuation of racial structures; (b) that racism is complex, subtle and flexible, and manifests differently in dissimilar contexts, and that minoritised groups are subject to a range of stereotypes; and (c) that CRT aims to unravel the social construction of whiteness and belonging and their link to power, as well as criticising social injustice through counter stories. These assumptions provide a framework for the problematisation of seemingly neutral or natural systems (Arrington, 1937). In trying to understand the racial

experiences and resilience of Afro-origin parents raising children in Gothenburg, all the aspects of CRT highlighted above will be addressed.

3.1.1. Racial realism

Racial realism is connected to the elements of CRT highlighted above. Alemán and Alemán (2010) and Crenshaw et al. (1993) concur that in CRT, racial realism is needed to focus on the socio-economic aspects of race and analyse the role of race and racism in perpetuating social and economic disparities between dominant and marginalised racial groups. Matias and Cheryl (2016) suggest that in battling racism, less discussion of ethics and more discussion of economics is needed. They go on to say that ideals must not be allowed to obscure black people's real position in the socioeconomic realm, which is the real indicator of power. When assessing the situations of Afro-origin parents, one must look into their employment and education levels, for these indicate the level of power they have. Racial realism takes the viewpoint that the effects of racial identity on economic outcomes will always be visible as long as racism still exists and are unlikely to disappear soon.

Skrentny (2015) discusses racial realism in white-collar and professional jobs, government employment, advertising and low-skilled employment. Some of his participants' justifications for using race in hiring include racial matching, better outcomes and broader appeal (Lang, 2015). Historically, slave owners claimed that blacks were more able to endure the heat of the sun, and many employers in the low-skill labour market believe that blacks are willing to work longer and harder (Skrentny, 2015). Often, racial hiring increases diversity and benefits the disadvantaged groups; though racial characteristics may affect them unfavourably. Skrentny (2015) goes on to emphasise that racial hiring discredits and makes people question the ability of experienced and qualified minority people in higher positions.

Racial realism critiques civil rights efforts to attain racial equality, noting how the regime of white supremacy and its relegation of people of colour to second-class status was created, maintained and produced through the law (Crenshaw et al., 1995). According to Bell (1995) the outmoded belief in the legal process as being fair, neutral, and a mechanism through which rights will be achieved has failed to attain the racial equity it promised. The failure of civil rights and law to combat racism and white supremacy shows that legal advancement sometimes does not lead to lived equity, but often to more refined forms of racism and discrimination, resilient to the best attempts to eliminate them (Bell, 1995).

When analysing the experience of Afro-origin parents in Gothenburg, one must note whether racism in Sweden has changed over time. In support of Bell's notion above, Harris (1995) says that whiteness is resilient and adaptive to new conditions, allowing institutionalised privileges, societal norms and racialised hierarchies to proliferate as normative and naturalised. For instance, claims that we must defend the rights of Nazis to free speech, while continuing to threaten and silence those voices speaking out for racial justice, is protecting white supremacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2018). Racial realism recognises and acknowledges the deeply rooted nature of racism and white

supremacy without accepting that it must continue to be this way; oppressed groups can share their counter stories.

3.1.2. Counter stories

Solórzano and Yosso (2002b) describe counter stories as storytelling monologues used as a device for conveying personal racial experiences that reveal and challenge the majoritarian stories of steady civil rights advancement, unbiased law, and other racial privileges. CRT values the knowledge gained through experiences of people of colour, for it is regarded as an important and legitimate means of gaining awareness of lived veracities and racial inequities (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). As such, counter stories are a great way to discard majoritarian ideologies that assume that parents of colour do not know how to care for their children. Gillborn (2010) corroborates this, pointing out that counter stories shade new light on old assumptions. Through counter storytelling, highlighting the lived reality of Afro-origin parents in Sweden, I will explore the issue of racism and how it impacts them and their parenting. Broader adoption of counter stories in CRT may help overcome what Mueller (2017) calls 'racial ignorance' an epistemological position that seeks to deny the importance of racialised structures, despite strong empirical evidence that they continue to exist.

3.1.3 CRT – intersectionality

In CRT, intersectionality connects the complexities of race with the constructed and individual nature of other forms of oppression, without making race superior in a hierarchy of oppressions (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Collins, 2002; Gillborn, 2015). Intersectionality demonstrations how one's social and political identities aspects such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, language, citizenship and religion might combine to create unique modes of discrimination, based on the people's opinions of themselves and others (De Reus et al., 2005). It has become the main way of conceptualising the relationship between overlapping and lived oppression systems that construct our diverse identities and our social positions in hierarchies of power and privilege (Carastathis, 2014).

In this paper I will focus on power orders such as gender, looking at disparities between male and female experiences, then at married and single parents, economic status, level of education and occupational prestige. Social class may be defined as "a dimension of the self that is rooted in objective material resources" (McGinn & Oh, 2017); these researchers go on to define gender as meanings and associated expectations "that individuals and societies ascribe to males and females". Hankivsky and Christoffersen (2008) say that intersectionality shows how interlocking systems of power affect those who are most marginalised in society, such as Afro-origin parents in comparison to other races, females compared to males, and single parents in comparison to married parents. This makes them vulnerable to various forms of bias; yet because they are simultaneously members of many other groups such as gender, marital status and social class their complex identities can shape the specific way in which each experience that bias.

Using this approach will help us better understand the nature of intertwined structural oppression, social inequities, and the processes that create and sustain them. Mulinari and Neergaard (2017)

note that intersectionality can be used to study the complex ways racialisation creates hierarchies that regulate state institutions' interpretation of what a 'good family' is, which often demonise and criminalise migrant families and neglect the strength and resilience of the relegated population. Delgado (2010) states that intersectionality can be taken to such extremes that the constant subdivision of experience can eventually shatter any sense of coherence.

Despite the prominence of critical race theory, and its usefulness in analysing different topics, it is important to note that CRT is still not fully taken seriously. CRT has also been criticised as being separatist, as well as insufficiently prescriptive in how it offers solutions to structural problems (Capers, 2014; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Capers, (2014) went on to point out CRT's disregard for and failure to highlight race-based discrimination, to which both poor whites and people of colour have been subjected in capitalist societies.

3.2 Resilience

Resilience and its different forms are used to analyse and clarify how Afro-origin parents deal with racism. It is a theory that has gained traction in various different fields, such as social science, medicine, psychology, theology and psychoneuroimmunology (Richardson, 2002). The theory is rooted in the study of adversity; it argues that it is not the nature of adversity that is most important, but how we deal with it. It is a useful framework for understanding behaviour patterns and adaptive processes. In this study, resilience theory can help analyse how Afro-origin parents adapt to racism.

According to Ungar (2004), resilience research involves three connected components, namely adversity, outcomes and mediating factors. These central constructs are conceptualised as temporally related interactive counterparts of a larger, multifaceted process model (Bolton et al., 2017). In this paper, the process definition of resilience is favoured over the outcome definition, since the outcome definition of resilience merely declares the observation of positive outcomes in the face of adversity, without explaining them conceptually. Resilience, according to Bolton et al. (2017) and the American Psychological Association (2014), can be defined as the ability to bend but not break, bounce back, and perhaps even grow and strengthen in the face of adverse life experiences or substantial sources of stress.

The American Psychological Association (2014) notes that there are biological, psychological, social and cultural factors that interact with one another to determine how one responds to stressful experiences. Due to the paramount influence of social and cultural factors on the biological and psychological factors, this study focuses mainly on the social and cultural factors, but without totally ignoring the biological and psychological factors.

Resilience theory has been developed over three consecutive waves of review (Richardson, 2002). As part of the first wave, the early studies of resilience began by focusing on things that have been identified as risk factors. According to Cerin (2002) and Bolton et al. (2017), risk factors are adverse circumstances or events that increase one's vulnerability, such as racism or violence. Researchers soon noticed that the relationship between vulnerability and negative outcomes was

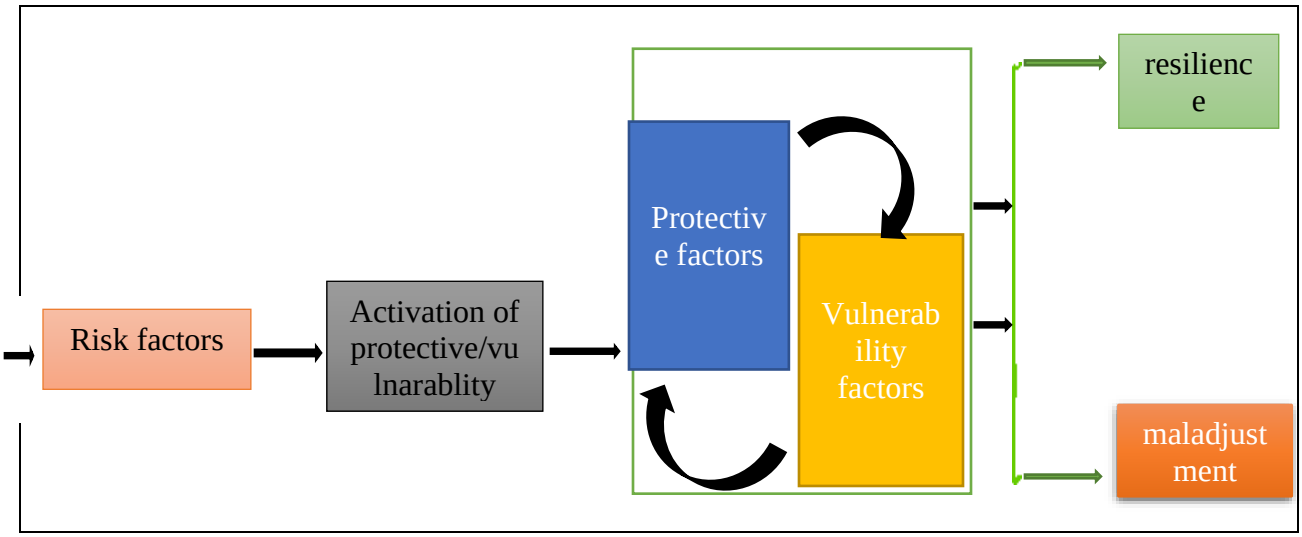
not universal; though many people have negative outcomes in response to vulnerability, not everyone does others show little or no decline in functioning, and others seem to attain higher levels of adaptation than they had before (Masten, 2011). Confronted with these differences in outcomes in the face of adversity, researchers started to ask the 'why' question, to understand what distinguishes those with better outcomes from those with poorer outcomes (Van Breda, 2001). They had recognized that there are other processes that mediate adversity and negative outcomes. Factors were explored that involved positive strategies to overcome these deficits, and the notion of protective factors arose (Bolton et al., 2017). Exposure to risk factors varies across population age and life stage and is thought to initiate the activation of protective and vulnerability factors.

Protective factors can lead to resilience, and vulnerability factors to maladjustment; and these two factors are categorised in terms of community (e.g. supportive community or racist community), family (available parents or unhealthy parents) and individual influences (high or low level of self-efficiency, self-esteem and autonomy; different personality traits) (Alperstein & Raman, 2003; Werner, 2005). These three categories should encompass protective factors such as caring and support, high expectations, and opportunity (Brown et al., 2001). Strengths such as gratitude, kindness, hope and bravery have been shown to act as protective factors against life's hardships, helping with positive adaptation and coping with problems such as physical and mental illness (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013; Martínez-Martí & Ruch, 2017). In short, protective factors work to help lessen the possibility that a disorder will develop, by acting as an emotional protector as well as a 'tank' of resources for dealing with stress efficiently (Alperstein & Raman, 2003). Researchers commonly report protective factors, as they relate to resilience more than vulnerability factors do (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). Figure 2 below shows four distinct phases, in a linear process model: confrontation with risk factors, activation of protective/vulnerability factors, interaction of protective/vulnerability factors, and possible outcomes (Werner & Smith, 1992).

The third wave of resilience theory research has been to identify and comprehend the source of and motivation for resilience in individuals, to explain why and how individuals reintegrate resilience, despite adversity. Conclusions in this area point to environmental sources that allow resilience to be reintegrated, while at the same time, energy, spirituality and faith are behind an individual's ability to reach self-actualisation rather than just surviving (Richardson, 2002).

Despite all the positive advancement, Michael Garrett (2016) criticises the way resilience in societal and political contexts is regarded as a personal responsibility. If the individual is responsible for their own well-being, the state can disregard hostile social systems and dynamics, such as poverty, racism, lack of access to resources, and poor-quality education. Individuals are made responsible for dealing with collective challenges that should be dealt with by the state at structural level. A lack of consensus in terms of language and definition has persisted across and within varying disciplines (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000). For example, the term 'vulnerability' can also refer to characteristics or traits of individuals lacking resilient outcomes and is occasionally used interchangeably with risk factors.

Figure 2*. Process model of resilience*



3.3. Conclusion

CRT and resilience theory were useful for analysing the racism experience and resilience of Afro-origins parents; they enabled a robust analysis of the topic. CRT enabled parents to share their racism experiences, as Afro-origin parents and members of a specific class, gender, nation and marital status, and analyse how this intersectionality complicates their parenting. The use of this theory enabled a clear analysis and overview of the effects of racism experiences on the parents, their children and their relationship with their children. Together with resilience theory, CRT was used to examine and attempt to understand the socio-cultural forces that shape Afro-origin parents' perceptions and experiences, and the effects of and their responses to racism. Resilience theory, as a strength-based paradigm, was more useful in analysing how Afro-origin parents deal with racism in ways that help them to bounce back and assume their parenting roles and responsibilities.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a detailed description of my positionality as a researcher, my research design, the philosophical considerations made, and the processes undertaken to gather and analyse the data. It also justifies my choice of methods and highlights the strengths and limitations of the data source and methodology to facilitate a rigorous understanding of the results and conclusions. The research credibility and ethical integrity are critically examined. This is in line with Cypress (2017), and Noble and Smith (2015), who say that qualitative research methodology is an epistemic enterprise whereby the researcher elucidates the meaning of data based on what is observed and how it was observed, enriched by personal reflection and social world experiences relative to what is being studied.

4.1. Self-reflection and Reflexivity

The underlying assumption of qualitative research is that reality and truth are constructed and shaped through interaction between people and the environment in which they live (Silverman, 2000); and how well the researcher relates to the topic can have a profound effect on the research outcome. In this regard, this section seeks to ascertain my positionality as a researcher, in relation to the social context of the study and the Afro-origin population in Gothenburg, Sweden.

I was born and raised in Zimbabwe, and well versed in colonial history, through my country's educational system as well as from my father's narratives, as someone who witnessed the colonial era. When I was growing up, white people were the minority in Zimbabwe, though mostly privileged, and over-represented in low-density suburbs, expensive private hospitals and the best schools. Despite this context, as a black person I never felt or was made to feel inferior to whites in any way; anyone could use the services the white people used without any discrimination or prejudice, as long as one could afford to do so. After moving to Cape Town, South Africa, in my early twenties, I saw racism quite clearly, especially in the workplace: less qualified and less experienced white people would have more senior and better-paid positions than their black co-workers. In schools, a less competent white student would be chosen over a black student; in the social media, newspapers and television racism was published almost daily. All this was attributed to South African apartheid. It worried me to see such injustice, but not that much; I was just a young woman without children to parent.

My personal motivation to analyse the experiences of Afro-origin immigrant parents in Sweden was triggered by the fact that now I am a parent; of colour, imbued with a lot of racialised experiences of my own, combined with glimpses of the experiences of other racialised black people. Researching this topic helped me to understand myself better, and to present (and encourage understanding of) Afro-origin experiences to a wider public, Since people of African

origin are a minority group in Sweden, advocacy and social justice on their behalf are important to me.

Coming from southern Africa; in 2014, I found myself in Sweden. It took me only a few days to note that Sweden's international reputation for fairness and non-discriminatory policies is not as exhilarating as it sounds. I was staying in the Johanneberg section of Gothenburg, an area with a relatively small number of people of colour, for the immigrant population is concentrated in fairly poor areas such as Angered and Bergsjön. Happy as I was to be in Europe for the first time, I felt lonely as never before. Since language was my major obstacle, the only place my (then) two-year-old daughter and I could meet people during her six months preschool waiting period was the park. However, in the recreational parks it seemed that people often distanced themselves from us, they would vacate the playground once we got there. Sometimes, people would pull their children away from my own. In some cases, people would try to talk to my child or to me in Swedish; the moment I responded in English, they would just move away without saying anything, or sometimes just say, "Never mind". Yes, it bothered me. But I just assumed that perhaps it was because I couldn't speak Swedish; or maybe, just maybe, they couldn't speak English. Eventually my daughter was placed at a preschool close to where we stayed. After a few months in school, everything seemed to be falling into place for my daughter, at least, as she could soon speak Swedish; and we did not need to go to the park so often, since she also had a new younger brother.

But we went back to South Africa for family support, and only returned to Sweden when my daughter was five years old and my son was three. A few weeks after resuming school in the Swedish day care, my daughter started to ask for golden extensions and colour in her hair, calling herself ugly, crying a lot; and then she told me how she was being treated at school. How other children had told her that 'black' means 'dirty', so her hair was dirty; that darker skin means 'ugly', and that they didn't want a brown skin close to them. "I am feeling like an outsider, mummy," she said. I spoke to the teacher, whose first response was, "Is that true? But when…?" As if that was not enough, one day social services called me for an urgent meeting the school had called them, suspecting child abuse, and had made unfounded accusations that I had beaten my child, threatened to send her back to Zimbabwe, pulled her hair. After a series of investigative meetings, we were told it had been a misunderstanding; my child was not in danger in any way. But we had to do our own investigations. What about the psychological torture I went through during this whole process? My time? The fear of losing my child, my parenting capabilities doubted, all because I was of a race stereotyped as that sort of person. Nobody cared.

And as if that was not enough, my son was put in class with children who were between a few months and two and a half years old, although he was over three. His development deteriorated seriously; he started to speak and act like a baby, urinating and defecating in his pants. I had several meetings with the teachers, and asked why they had to keep him there, even though there were children of his age, and some even younger than him, in the next (and more appropriate) group. I was told it was because he had arrived last; they prioritise the children who were there first, and they promised he would be moved as soon as the first opening became available. Within two

months there were two vacancies and two white children, the same age as my son, came and filled the places. I questioned this, and I was told, "We have responsibility for other children; it's not all about your son." I asked my Swedish peers who gave me information on where I could get help. I called the office that helps with racism in schools. They transferred me from one person to another, and finally I was told that it takes months or even years before they are able to start an investigation. Given this information, I had to abandon my attempts. I tried to get help from his nurse, who had also noted his developmental decline. All she could do was refer him to a logopedic, who could only fit him in after six months. It seemed that nobody could see the urgency of the situation; and every time I tried to suggest a simple solution such as moving him, I would be told that this is not Africa, this is how we do it here in Sweden. I saw my child isolated, with no friends. Some of the teachers told me constantly that he was naughty, that he didn't listen on a daily basis, in front of him. When I asked him, he said that he did that because the teacher did not listen to him but to the other children. One cold day I got to his school earlier than usual, only to see him sitting naked on the toilet floor he told me the teacher had left him there…

In Sweden, as a black woman and mother, it was inevitable that I would also experience racism – in looking for a job, in day-to-day interactions. Even at university, the academic space, among people with vast knowledge and exposure to diversity, I constantly have to ignore, fight or tolerate racism. Am I the only black parent experiencing this? Am I dealing with these situations well? How do other parents deal with such issues? Are people out there, human rights defenders, aware of these things? What about the policymakers and authorities do they know about the racism experiences of Afro-origin immigrant parents, and how those experiences impact their parenting? I always wonder. So, I found it necessary to explore the experiences of other Afro-origin immigrant parents and their children, how they experience racism, and how they deal with it. In this I am supported by DePouw and Matias (2016), who say that in a time when one's darkened pigment is used as justification for violence to one's rights, the need to address how parents deal with racism is not only relevant; it can be lifesaving.

Being an insider in this research made it easy for me to negotiate entry and persuade suitable people to agree to participate in the research process. Keikelame and Swartz (2019) note that when indigenous people become researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, ranking of priorities differs, so is the defining of problems and people participate on different terms (Smith, 2013). In alignment with this notion I could agree to have interviews at participants' houses, which was more comfortable for them and meant I could understand certain cultural norms, such as never refusing food or drink as a visitor. The framing of the questions was also made easier by the fact that I was an insider. with personal experience of the researched phenomenon.

In his explanation of autoethnography as an approach, Holt (2003) stresses that being an insider researcher defuses the issue of power between the researcher and the participants, and enhances authenticity; though it does constrain detachment. Being a (mainly English-speaking) Afro-origin parent, female, of the same age group as the participants, helped to neutralise the power relation

between me and the participants, as we all appeared to fall into the same category. In short, being an insider gave me an advantage: I had shared experiences, easy access, shared cultural interpretation and understanding of the stories, with a higher level of validity than someone with no (or less informed) pre-understanding of the issues. Despite this, being an insider researcher has its own disadvantages. The pitfalls of being an insider researcher are highlighted in the section of this study on ethical considerations.

4.2. Research design

An exploratory qualitative study was considered for this study, enabling capturing of the deeper meanings, understanding and individual stories of the experiences of the participants (Bryman, 2016). According to De Vos and Fouché (2005), qualitative research is concerned with words rather than numbers, and elicits participant experiences, perceptions of the social processes, institutions, social relationships, and the significance of the meanings they generate. Carpenter and Suto (2008) further postulate that qualitative research seeks to understand and reflect the insider's perspective, which is the point of view of the group or individual who has lived the interpreted experience, or ongoing experience. In line with this view of qualitative research, I conducted a qualitative study into the racism experiences of Afro-origin parents, parenting in Gothenburg, in a bid to obtain a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences and coping strategies, as well as to produce data that is explorative and descriptive in nature.

4.3 Philosophical considerations

This section presents the philosophical stance that guided this study. According to Bryman (2016), ontology and epistemological positions depict what is known and how it is known. They are the engine that powers the whole idea of the research. The study assumed a critical postmodernist position, and of course, took an inductive approach.

4.3.1 Critical postmodernism

Critical postmodernism is a mixture of two rather different worldviews: critical theory and postmodern scholarship. According to Boje (2001), a critical postmodern theory engages in ongoing struggle with the powers of oppression, reclaiming public and democratic discourse from its corporate colonisation. A related task of critical postmodern philosophy is to critique public administration's complicity by exposing hidden economic, cultural, political and gender politics and oppressive administrative practices, while opening up spaces for a new democratic discourse to emerge (Boje, 2001). These oppressive administrative practices constrain Afro-origin parents to change their social and economic circumstances. Giving these Afro-origin parents a platform to partake in this research and share their racism experiences and resilience strategies is in line with the goal of critical postmodernism, which is social change, eradicating existing structures of power

and domination by initiateopportunities for social participation among persons previously excluded and dominated.

4.3.2 Inductive and deductive reasoning

The aim of inductive reasoning is to develop a theory, while deductive reasoning aims at testing an existing theory. Inductive reasoning moves from specific observations to broad generalisations, and deductive reasoning from general to specific. A postmodern study adopts an inductive approach (Merriam, 1998). Unlike in deductive research, where a hypothesis is needed, in inductive research a research question is normally used to narrow the scope of the study. An inductive data analysis is used in this study to provide better understanding of the interactions of and to explicate the interacting realities and experiences of the researcher and the participants (Hyde, 2000). First, observations were made of the racism experiences of Afro-origin parents, and then the study moved to a more general set of propositions about those experiences thus moving from data to theory, or from the specific to the general.

4.4. Data-collection methods

4.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews using questions were used to gather and explore knowledge, views, interpretations, experiences, challenges, perceptions and coping strategies that are meaningful properties of the participants' social reality. According to Babbie and Mouton (2005), a semi-structured qualitative interview allows interaction between the interviewer and the respondent, in which the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry. The use of both open- and closed-ended questions included in an interview guide enabled the provision of short and in-depth responses. Follow-up questions were asked when more clarity was required, as explained by Bryman (2016). T semi-structured interview format was chosen because it encourages two-way communication, allows respondents time to open up about sensitive issues, and provides an opportunity for interviewers to ascertain both answers and the reasons behind the answers.

A pilot study was done initially, which helped me identify and deal with preconceived expectations based on my experiences, which could potentially have influenced respondents. The results were analysed, and the interview guide edited, before the conducting of nine (26-60 minutes) interviews within a four-week period. Six interviews were face-to-face, and three via Skype video call due to the coronavirus, this did not have any noticeable impact on the results of the study.. The face-to-face interview format was chosen due to the sensitivity of the topic; and observing the body language and facial expressions of the respondents was vital in assessing their state of being and making sure that no harm was done to them. For the same reasons, a follow-up call was made the day after each interview; during these calls, some participants would volunteer information they had not given before, and these responses were included in this research.

For interviews, Jacob and Furgerson (2012) recommend semi-private places that are quiet and non-threatening, both for the comfort of the informant and to guarantee the quality of the recording. A

comfortable and conducive atmosphere was created, enabling the interviewees to feel safe and relaxed. This was done by asking the interviewees for their preferences regarding where they would like the interview to take place; for the Skype interviews I asked interviewees if they had access to a quiet room. Some of the interviewees opted to have the interviews at their homes, some in library rooms that I suggested. This made them feel calm enough to talk about the topic with ease.

All interviews were digitally recorded, using my cellular phone, laptop and sometimes a borrowed recorder. After nine interviews the data was considered saturated; according to Sim et al. (2018), when no new information or themes are revealed by the data, it should signify the end of data collection and the commencement of the analysing process.

I transcribed the interviews using intelligent verbatim translation, which allows some light editing to correct grammar and eliminate irrelevant words or sentences. In the transcriptions, participant names were replaced by the codes P1 to P9, to ensure the anonymity of the participants; this is in line with Miles and Huberman (1994).

4.5 The sample, and sampling techniques

4.5.1 Research population and sample criteria

'Population' is defined as the total set from which the individuals or units of the study are chosen, or as a set of entities in which all the measurements of interest to the researcher are represented (De Vos et al., 2011). Babbie (2015) defines 'population' as the aggregation of elements from which the sample is selected. In other words, and in my understanding, the research population is a group of people who share certain characteristics, from which group the researcher chooses a substantial number of participants (the sample). The data informing this paper was generated from a small sample of nine Afro-origin parents, originally from seven different African countries (presented in code form in Figure 3 below), raising their children in Sweden (excluding those in the pilot study). The participants were six females and three males, ranging from 28 to 50 years old. All participants were either black or of mixed race; some of the latter might be considered white in some African countries but are excluded from the white privilege seen in Sweden, experiencing a degree of racialisation that marks them ethnically as subaltern (Hesse & Sayyid, 2006). This paper will refer to all participants as 'black'; however, this apparent focus on blacks does not in any way suggest that people of African ancestry are the only people racialised in Sweden. Figure 3 below shows more details about the study sample. The following criteria was drawn up to select the participants, and only participants who met these criteria were included in the sample: participants were required to be of African descent and have migrated to Sweden, or been born to parents who migrated (first and second generation immigrants); all the participants had to have resided in Gothenburg, Sweden, and have lived in Sweden for at least six months; and they were required to be currently parenting in Sweden and able to speak English.

Figure 3. *Socio-demographic standing of the participants*

Participant	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
Country of origin	z-1	U	s	k	C	g	c	u	z-2
Gender & status	F-married	M-single	F-single	F-Single	F-single	F-married	M-married*	M-married	F-married*
Education and work	PH-SW-home care.	delivering newspapers & another day job (Not specified)	PH-student-home care worker	PH-Care worker	PH- waitress-housekeeping	PH-student	PH-Student and cleaning company owner.	PH-engineer	PH-manager
Number of years in Sweden	4+	12+	24+	10+	24+	10+	5+	10+	3+
Number of children	3	4	2	1	2	2	2	1	2
Age and gender of children	f-10 m-7 &4	m-17 f-13,15 and 21	f-10&7	m-7	F- 8 M-7	m-14& 4	M-8 F-3	f-2	M-6 F-2

PH = post-high school

4.5.2 Purposive and snowball sampling

The recruitment strategy was purposive, snowballing and ongoing. Purposive or judgement sampling is when the researcher uses his or her own judgement and hand-picks participants from the target population for inclusion in the study based on certain criteria for inclusion. In addition, the researcher actively seeks and selects participants who are informed and possess first-hand experience of the phenomenon under study (Babbie, 2015). Bryman (2016) states that in purposive sampling, the researcher does not seek to sample research participants randomly; the main goal of purposive sampling is to sample participants in a strategic way, to enable those sampled to be relevant to the research questions to be asked. The flexibility of purposive sampling allows researchers to save time; however, it can be less effective with a larger population. My aim was to find and hear the racism experiences of Afro-origin parents and how they deal with racism. Participants were first identified from different organisations, including the local university, and international churches. I visited those organisations and verbally informed the potential participants of my intention; they then gave me their contact details if they were willing to take part or knew of someone who might be interested. I avoided organised collectives directly involved in racial equity or social justice work, in a bid to hear fresh new stories not directly influenced by these collectives.

Snowballing was used to access more participants. According to Bryman and Becker (2012), this method is a non-probability sampling technique which makes use of a few identified participants to help the researcher meet participants who she could not easily have accessed without their help. When the first few participants were interviewed, they were encouraged to forward the recruitment email with the invitation letter to others who might qualify for the study. This method is supported by Atkinson and Hammersley (2007), who argue that negotiating access requires a balance between ethical and strategic considerations in accordance with the research purpose, time frame, and existing circumstances. Once a participant had responded to recruitment efforts by email or phone, inclusion criteria were verified; and for those who met the criteria, interview sessions were scheduled, starting with highlighting the ethical issues. None of those who met the criteria and responded before the deadline were excluded. This helped to strengthen the validity of this small sample, and to incorporate as many perspectives as possible. Though this method enabled me to source an adequate number of participants, there was a risk that some might not be willing to participate but feel obliged to do so just to support the fellow Afro-origin people who recommended them.

4.6. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used in this study; this is a common qualitative research method, useful in identifying, analysing, organising, describing and reporting patterns (codes and themes) within data (Creswell, 2013; Braun et al., 2016). The analysis was inductive, and codes were picked from the data in an open coding process. This method was chosen for its suitability and competence in

trying to find out about people's views, opinions, knowledge, experiences or values from a set of qualitative data such as interviews and focus groups in this case, the experiences of Afro-origin parents in Gothenburg. While thematic analysis is also flexible, this flexibility can lead to inconsistency and lack of coherence when developing themes and presenting data derived from the research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). It can also be subjective, since researchers use their own judgement to find themes; however, the use of direct quotation can help to deal with subjectivity. To ensure a robust thematic analysis, NVivo software and manual analysis were used together. The NVivo qualitative data analysis computer software package was used to manage the empirical data, make sense of the data, and give structure to the analysis stage. Manual analysis requires the physical picking of codes and themes, using pens, scissors, highlighter and transcript (Bryman, 2016).

The data analysis was done in line with Bryman (2016). I began by familiarising myself with the data collected, listening to the audio recordings repeatedly and reading the interview transcripts several times. According to Bennett et al. (2019), this process can sometimes be referred to as immersion. From the transcripts, I began coding by selecting a chunk of data and assigning descriptive or interpretive codes relevant to answering the research questions. I highlighted the codes and made comments linked to each code in the page margins, to make sense of the data. Codes were then organised into meaningful groups or themes. Themes are generally ideas repeated throughout the text that can be easily analysed (Bryman, 2016). I used different colours to categorise codes into possible different themes and sub-themes and gave the themes temporary names.

I then uploaded the interview guides on NVivo, and formulated and organised codes into broader themes using the program. Possible themes thus assembled were reviewed to see if there were any contradictions or overlaps, within NVivo or between NVivo and the manual analysis. This was done to ensure coherence, and meaningful and full coverage of the data, and is supported by Braun and Clarke (2006), who stated that themes should adhere together meaningfully, while there should be a clear and identifiable distinction between them. The themes were then defined and renamed with more descriptive and engaging names. Lastly, a report was produced from the data collected. While writing the report I found that some themes and sub-themes overlapped, and some did not have much effect on the attaining of the set aims; this resulted in me excluding themes or sub-themes such as demography, defining and understanding racism, children and racism, and addressing racism. Parents' childhood experiences were an interesting theme which could have been explored if it were not for the word limit for this report. This theme could have made the discussion more interesting, though admittedly it had limited impact on attaining set aims. After removing these themes, four themes and 14 sub-themes were left, see Figure 4.

4.7. Research evaluation – quality assessment

When assessing the credibility of study findings, one must make judgements about the soundness of the research in relation to the application and appropriateness of the methods undertaken and the integrity of the final conclusions (Baillie, 2015). The terms 'validity', 'reliability' and 'generalisability' are appropriate when evaluating mainly quantitative research; however, there is debate over whether these terms are appropriate for evaluating qualitative research (Rolfe, 2006). Long and Johnson (2000) argue that if qualitative methods are fundamentally different from quantitative methods in terms of philosophical position and purpose, then alternative frameworks are required for establishing rigour and credibility in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) offer alternative terminology for demonstrating rigour within qualitative research, namely 'truth', 'value', 'consistency', 'neutrality' and 'applicability', while Krefting (1991) and Creswell (1997) proposed 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'confirmability'. Based on this discussion, there seems to be no universally accepted terminology or criteria for assessing the credibility of qualitative research; however, for the purpose of this paper, 'credibility', 'transferability', 'dependability' and 'confirmability' were used to show the rigour of this study finding.

4.7.1 Confirmability

Confirmability means one should establish the degree to which the findings of an inquiry are not a function of biases, but solely of the subjects and inquiry process and conditions. Confirmability underpins rigour and authenticity in the qualitative research process, and the relevance of and confidence in the research outcome (Baillie, 2015; Cypress, 2017). Confirmability was established by writing a self-reflection showing my relatedness to the topic and highlighting the benefits and pitfalls which come with being an insider researcher. I also pointed out my biases and how they were dealt with. Peer and supervisor debriefing were used to assist me in uncovering taken-for-granted biases or assumptions.

4.7.2 Dependability

Dependability requires the demonstration of transference in the research process. Dependability is essential for establishing rigour in qualitative research, and requires the application of a systematic procedure for collecting, analysing and interpreting data (Johnson et al., 2020). It also entails detailed description of the processes and decision-making throughout the study. To ensure audibility, the entire process of how the research was undertaken was described, from selection of participants and data collection to data analysis. Transcriptions and interview audios were kept. To strengthen the audibility of the study, records of all procedures undertaken during the study appear in the appendix, including the consent letter, information sheet and interview questions.

4.7.3 Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which the research represents the actual meanings of the research participants' responses, or an approximation of the truth of inference (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It's similar to the concept of internal validity in quantitative research methods. In qualitative research

evaluating, credibility stems from the intended research purposes, and credible research decisions are those that are consistent with the researchers' purpose (Leung, 2015).

Several debriefing lunches with small groups of my peers were held, and numerous meetings to discuss ideas, process and progress with my supervisor provided additional perspective on analysis and interpretation. I also returned findings to participants to ensure the findings reflected their experiences. I listened repeatedly to the interview recordings and reread the transcriptions before, during and after the data analysis. Verbatim quotes were used, as another way of establishing the degree of credibility in my research findings. This is in line with Noble and Smith (2015), who point out that it is crucial for all qualitative researchers to include strategies to enhance the credibility of a study during research design and implementation. The research period was short; credibility would have been enhanced by a more prolonged and varied engagement with the research setting (Forero et al., 2018).

4.7.4 Transferability

Transferability in qualitative research means that findings from one study can be applied to other settings or groups of people (Houghton et al., 2013). It is congruent to the concept of reliability in a quantitative methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However, in distinction to the quantitative epistemology, transferability does not advocate for general ability; instead, it suggests that findings in a particular context can offer valuable lessons for other, similar settings (Smith & McGannon, 2018). I attempted to ensure transferability, by collecting data till the data was saturated; however, I believe the racism experiences uncovered in this study may not be the same for all Afro-origin parents in other contexts. Nonetheless, they point to a general pattern for problems confronting Afro-origin immigrant parents in different contexts or settings.

4.8 Ethical considerations

Good ethical conduct is critical to ensuring fruitful research. Bryman (2016) suggests that no harm to participants, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality are some of the ethics to uphold in research work. The following four ethical issues relate to this study and were explicitly included and explained in the invitation letter and at the beginning of each interview session.

4.8.1. Do not harm the participants

In research, participants can be physically or emotionally harmed; it is the duty of the researcher to ensure that does not happen, or at least to minimise it (Liamputtong, 2009). The topic for this study was quite a sensitive one; understandably, sometimes strong emotions were elicited as parents shared their racism experiences and how they had been affected by them. Talking about traumatic experiences risks re-traumatising the respondents, and thus can be emotionally harmful. The participants were informed in the invitation letters and before the interview about their right not to give any information they were unwilling or uncomfortable sharing. Two of the participants shed tears during the interview; I had to stop the process, talk to them, and eventually continue when they said they were ready to continue. Three of the participants were referred to Pratamera,

a free online-chat counselling service, and the Samaritans, an international organisation which offers free online counselling.

4.8.2. Confidentiality and invasion of privacy

The social work research ethical principle requires not disclosing information about a participant without their consent. This information includes their identity, content of overt verbalisations, and material from records (Peled & Leichtentritt, 2002). I made sure that the privacy of the respondents was not invaded by hiding their identities, I did this by using codes instead of their real names in the study, thus upholding the principle of confidentiality. I also made sure that their counter-stories and audios were not read or listened to by anyone besides myself and my supervisor. Invasion of privacy was avoided by ensuring that meetings with participants were by appointment, with date, time and place set and agreed upon far in advance.

4.8.3 Informed consent and autonomy

Participants should be fully informed about the procedures and risk involved in research, be willing to give their consent to participating, and be free to withdraw at any time they feel that they are at risk (Bryman, 2016). The participants in this study were asked to give their consent to participating and signed a consent form; this was done after the research purpose and process were explained to them in a way that they understood. To avoid deceiving the participants, full information was given regarding the topic of study and questions to be asked. I also verified and confirmed with respondents that the information given was what they meant or intended to share this was done by probing and reflecting during the interviews, and after the interviews, an email including the transcribed interview was sent to each participant. The participants were informed about their right to opt out of the research study at any time or stage without explanation. This was done before each interview and also appeared in the invitation letter.

4.8.4. Bias

I tried to maintain objectivity when designing, collecting data and interpreting this research. My acute awareness of my own identity as an Afro-origin parent, the same group that I was studying was vital, Labaree (2002) calls this mapping boundaries. Despite these measures, the participants' narratives, especially those which were like mine, re-traumatised me to an extent, and could have affected my objectivity and led to bias. To avoid bias I had to leave the research and only resume once I felt better and had read a lot of literature about the topic under study. According to Atkinson and Hammersley (2007), being acquainted with a wide variety of texts will encourage an appreciation of how to create novel and insightful texts of one's own. I also checked for alternative explanations, and reviewed findings with peers and supervisors through peer-research lunch debriefings and supervision sessions. It was important for me not to influence the process of the interviews overtly. I had to negotiate the way that I was seen and understood by the participants. I did this by explaining that I am a student researcher and a parent'; however, I made sure not to tell the participants any of my personal experiences until the end of the research. I tried my best to counter bias; but it is impossible, in qualitative research, for the researcher to completely remove herself from the research process and the final product.

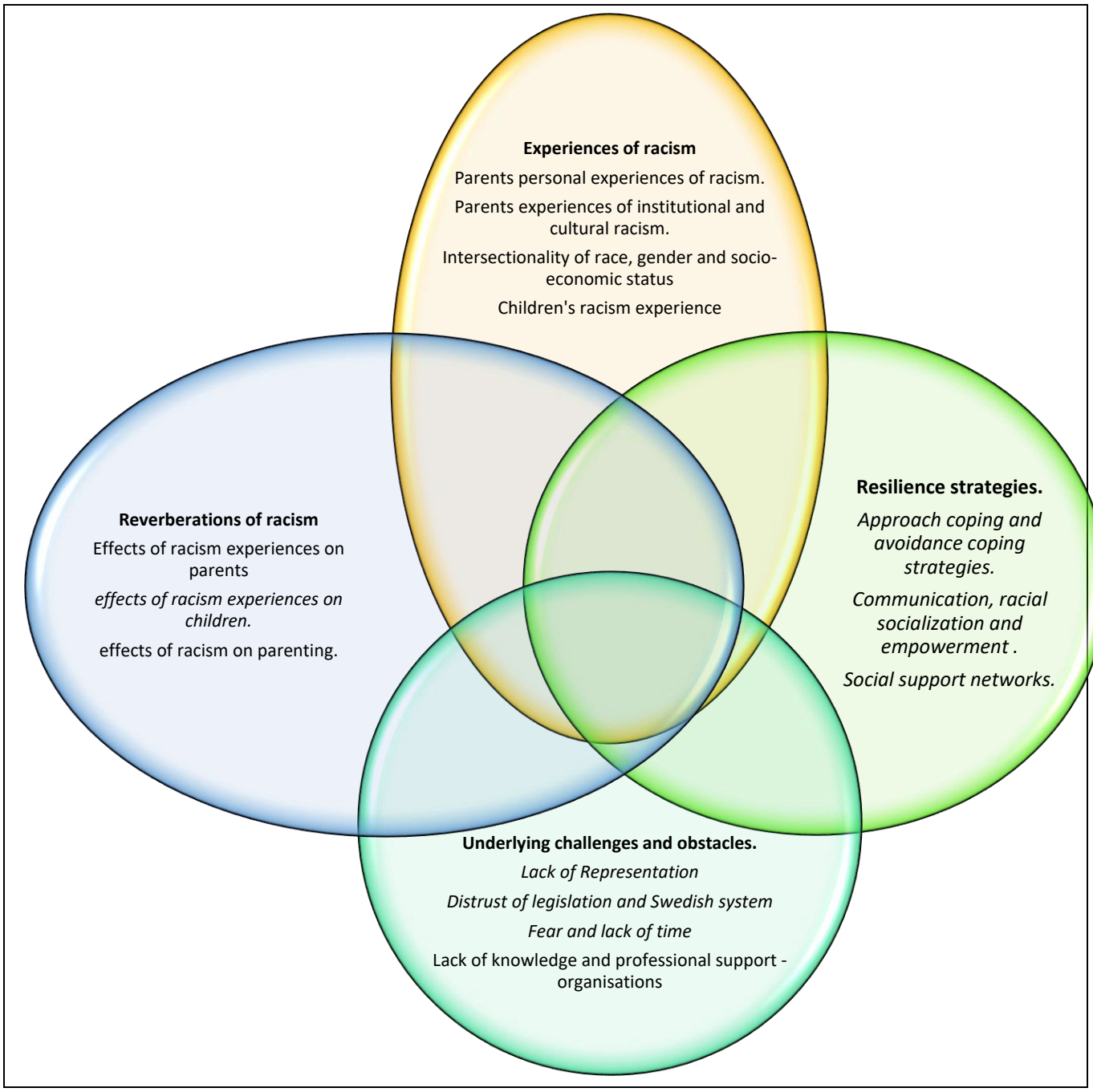
4.9. Reflections on the methodology

The qualitative approach chosen for this study was appropriate and gave me the opportunity to hear the lived experiences of Afro-origin parents in Gothenburg. Their verbal and non-verbal communication helped me gain deeper understanding of their experiences and of the different strategies they use to deal and cope with racism in Gothenburg; however, a quantitative study would have generated more statistical results for different racism experiences, impacts and resilience strategies. Semi-structured interviews were the best way to collect the research data, though some proved difficult because of the coronavirus. At first, I insisted on face-to-face interviews; when circumstances changed later, I used Skype, which made the later participants a bit uncomfortable, despite my assurances of anonymity. They were scared that I would record the video interview, I explained to them that I needed to see their facial expressions and showed them my recorder, and they agreed to proceed. Despite the challenges and reflections, the methodology employed for this paper added substantial value to it

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The results obtained and an analysis of the findings of this study are presented in this chapter. The findings are presented in relation to the four themes and 14 sub-themes (see figure 4 below) that emerged from the data, making reference to the participants' exact words while connecting them to the literature and theories with a deeper discussion.

Figure 4. *Division of themes and sub themes for analysis*



5.1. Experiences of racism

In the colloquies with the participants, experiences of racism were common. In their counter-stories, all the participants affirmed that they had experienced racism in Sweden from individuals,

at institutional and cultural level, in their day-to-day interactions with white people and other racial groups. Four sub-themes emerged under the heading 'experiences of racism' (see Figure 4 above); these are discussed below.

5.1.1 Parents' personal racism experiences

The participants recounted that they had seen and experienced overt behaviour from individuals which they feel might have been prompted by these people's racial attitudes; according to Dominelli (2017), this is classed as 'personal' or 'individual' racism. They stated that the racism they experience in Sweden is sometimes overt, and mostly evasive, and manifests through racial microaggressions. A typical comment was:

… I get lots of clients who agree to work with my company, over the phone, before they see me, but after meeting with them once, maybe because they see that I am black then they will show no interest at all… It's hard to say its racism or not. I feel like these are my perceptions, which may be wrong or right, though it affects and hurts me badly sometimes. (P7)

This shows that subtle racism is difficult to discern. This is in line with CRT, which recognises racism as flexible, complex, subtle, and situated such that it differs based on context; and racialisation of groups may also shift or change in relation to context, dominant interests, or historical moment (Taylor et al., 2009; Watkins Liu, 2018).The actions in question can easily be justified as being from other causes; which makes it tough to talk about it, for one's experiences and beliefs determine one's perceptions. Hence, what is perceived by Afro-origin parents to be subtle racism in this case may not be perceived as such by other racial groups with higher group status. That is why CRT encourages oppressed groups to share their counter-stories; this enables their lived veracities and stories of racial inequity to be expressed and heard through their lenses (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994). The data shows that subtle racism can be seen and experienced in public spaces. P5 narrated her experiences:

My friend and I took our sons to the playground, we are both from Ghana, and our kids are of the same age. So, at the playground, there was some other woman with her two kids there, and she left the playground when we got there. It was weird; because when we were leaving the playground, she came back with the kids.

The majority of the participants shared similar sentiments when it came to the feeling of being isolated which is difficult to pinpoint as racism, since it is subtle; but they all felt discriminated against, for instant the isolation in public transport.

It's rare for white people to sit close to me in the tram; they [would] rather stand. Sometimes, if you sit close to them, they stand up. (P3)

The data shows that subtle racism is woven into Gothenburg, Swedish society and is most often covert. The fact that it is based on personal judgement means it is always difficult for the recipient to prove that it is really racism, or even to talk about it. This 'racial aphasia' can be attributed in part to the exclusion of the term 'race' from Swedish law (in itself a form of institutional racism), and the failure of international human rights bodies to produce an explicit definition and

description of racism (Achiume, 2018), which in a way reinforces racism. Mångkulturellt centrum (2014) notes that abandonment of the concept of race makes life difficult for non-white people who are exposed to everyday racism and discrimination. In line with CRT, Crenshaw et al. (1995) say this shows how the regime of white supremacy and its relegation of people of colour was created, maintained and produced through the law.

Contrary to the 1973 UNCERD report which claimed that the majority of the Swedish population approve of equal treatment for everyone, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity or nationality (McEachrane, 2018), the data shows that there seems to be a dwelling place for both direct racism and micro-aggression everywhere in Sweden. Which makes racism unpredictable; as Mulinari and Neergaard (2017) say, you never know how near you are to a racist comment. Public transport is one situation in which participants said they always experience racism.

The other day I was in the tram with my cousin, and the other white lady shouted 'Invandrar!' at us, which means 'immigrant'...I don't know maybe it is because we are black, or we were wearing hijabs (P3)

The participants seem to highlight the intersectionality of their blackness and religion in intensifying their racial experiences and identity. In support of this De Reus et al., (2005) says the combination of aspects like religion, race and gender might combine to create unique modes of discrimination, based on the people's opinion of self and others. Even though some of the study participants are Swedish citizens, their blackness places them outside the 'Swedishness' category of whiteness. Observable differences shape the definition of 'Swedishness'. Molina (2005) points out that racialised societies have hierarchical structures and groupings; for example, together with actual immigrants, all people born and raised in Sweden who are merely racialised as non-white are identified as '*invandrare,'* immigrants, which makes them of lower rank than white people in Sweden. In support of this idea, CRT asserts that the social construction of whiteness and belonging is linked to power (Watkins Liu, 2018). This makes those who follow a white-superiority ideology feel that they have power over all black people and can control them.

It happens unexpectedly, sometimes. I remember some incident when the kids were talking, and another man was, like, "Oh, can you just make the kids shut up? Why don't you just walk home?" We're on a public bus, people are tired… "Yeah. but they're kids, you know?" I responded, angrily. he said, "Oh, this fucking black woman, she cannot take care of her kids…" I wish I could have closed my children's eyes and ears for that moment, so that they would not grow up with such pictures in their heads. (P5)

The issue of belonging and outsiders enables those of a higher power order (in this case, other races different from Afro-origin people) to use oppressive power at the expense of Afro-origin people. It's even harder for Afro-origin parents to try and protect their children, due to the unpredictable nature of racism. Parents often experience racism in the presence of their children. According to Amber (2013), the most crucial yet unspoken fear of African-origin parents is that they may not have the ability or the power to protect their children from these experiences of racism and their consequences. When sharing her racism experiences, P9 said:

When I was still staying in Kortedala… I had just picked [up] my kids from school and got onto the tram, and then this very mature Swedish lady gave us that stare, continuously, and said, "You just came here, and you get everything for free, and we take care of you, and you cannot even pay for your ride." So, the first time she said it, I ignored it. Then she moved from the seat [where] she was sitting and came close to me, and started to make cursing sounds, and she said, "You did not even pay", and I asked her if she was talking to me. And she said, "Yes, because you are the only one who just got in here." She said, "I swear, I can bet you with my last dollar that you don't even have the tram card with you," … I had just swiped from the previous tram, and I was within the same region … When I was close to my destination, I just swiped my card.

All the participants echoed the same sentiment – that they are often denigrated and seen as deviant, just because of their skin colour. The racism seems to be also driven by a stereotype: that all blacks are struggling and try as much as possible to cheat the system. McEachrane (2018) noted the segregation and stratification of residential areas in Sweden, with the majority of non-Swedish-origin people staying in places such as Angered and Bergsjön, doing menial jobs, and living on very low wage. By association, everyone living in those areas is assumed to be struggling. According to Brannon (2004), many of the stereotypes traditionally associated with being black are also associated with being poor. This shows how the intersectionality of race and social class affects stereotypes, categorisation and segregation, impressions, prejudice and discrimination. In Sweden, housing segregation influences school segregation: kindergarten and primary school enrolment is based on how close a school is to one's residential area. This allows institutionalised privileges, societal norms and racialised hierarchies to proliferate as normative and naturalised (Harris, 1995). Looking at all this one may say Individual racism in Sweden is to some degree extended to the societal system that may be favourable to such behaviour.

5.1.2 Parents' experiences of institutional and cultural racism

All the participants aired a similar view that though racism in Sweden is often portrayed as individual prejudice, it is also systemic, existing in the advantages and disadvantages built in to cultural and ideological discourse. In support of that, Dominelli (2017) says that personal, institutional and cultural racism feed on each other, and build complex relations that are difficult to break. Institutional racism and individual biases are sometimes difficult to separate, if the biases are displayed by an authority figure in an institution or organisation as experienced by P4:

We went to the police to make a statement, and the police wearing police uniforms said, "You think, because you have Swedish passports, you are Swedish?" Not from [just] anyone, but the police! in a police station. I was so shocked, …

On reflection, there is no doubt that their blackness implied non-belongingness, overpowering their citizenship of Sweden, which then guaranteed unequal treatment and powerlessness, one way or another. According to Gillborn (2015), this is one defining element of CRT, which views whiteness and belonging as a socially constructed and malleable identity connected to power. Racist utterances by individual authority figures make Afro-origin people fear interacting with officials or disclosing information, for fear of biased outcomes, resulting in enhanced cultural mistrust.

Supporting this, Mosley et al. (2017) say the chronicity and degree of oppression and discrimination that black people face facilitates cultural mistrust. In addition, in this study the data showed that people of colour are not taken seriously when they report their racism and other derogatory experiences to the authorities. P5 said:

I also experienced sexism at the university. I reported the case to the lecturer I was told to report to; she asked me to send all the emails which were sent to me. I did, but the case kept on being dragged [out] and later on I was told, 'you don't have a case', I felt like if I was white, the results could have been different.

These findings echo those of Kalonaityté et al. (2007), that Afro-origin women are regarded as sexually available, with no right to refuse sexual invitations. The unfairness and indolence in the handling of racism and sexism cases relating to Afro-origin people is notable in Swedish systems. This leads to injustice and doubting the system especially for black women, who have to deal with multiple oppressions. According to Crenshaw (1989), black women are discriminated against in ways that often do not fit perfectly within the legal categories of either racism or sexism, but are a combination of both, which work together in producing injustice. That is a complexity of the intersectionality of race and gender, according to CRT (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017).

Though the dynamics of racism are intertwined and difficult to separate, some of the participants' experiences can be seen as cultural racism, which Dominelli (2017) defines as prejudices and discrimination based on cultural differences between ethnic or racial groups. The participants asserted that in Sweden, there is a tendency to ridicule other cultures and glorify the uniqueness and superiority of the Swedish culture. In support of this, SOU (2005) notes that cultural racism is the most common form of discrimination in Sweden. One mother (P4) shared her experience, which happened just after losing her husband.

I had a disagreement with my son, he was three and a half, you know how kids are. I raised my voice a bit, for him to see that mummy is serious, just to make him listen; then one lady came to me, and said, "Why are you doing that to the child? What more do you do at home? I can interpret this as abuse." I was so angry – I exchanged words with that woman, asking her if she had children of her own, because surely I always see Swedish parents fighting with their children, in shops when they want to pick up everything, kids screaming – but nobody cares. The lady then called the police; the police came, detained me while taking off my child's clothes, they were looking for marks or bruises or any sign of abuse, and they found none. They asked me how old my child is, I told them three, they didn't believe me, they thought he was five. They had to make some calls for someone to check, then they said, "We are only allowing you to go with your child because he is still too young; but you have to come and report to the police and social services, first thing in the morning." The case was later dismissed, after investigating with the school, and home visits.

Such experiences affirm the statement made by Lalonde et al. (2008), that black parenting is unique because it involves layers of challenges triggered or exacerbated by daily racism. The interpretation of what it means to be a good mother can differ greatly between the Swedish and African contexts. Due to the racial hierarchical structures pointed out by (Song, 2004),' Afro-

origin parents are often stereotyped as bad, abusive parents with questionable or barbaric parenting styles; thus, their issues are never analysed holistically. In support of this notion, Garcia (2016) submits that the concept of acceptable and good parenting is viewed from a Eurocentric perspective. But this conceptualisation of Western ways as the universal nature and norms of raising children may undermine the cultural relativism of other groups, attached to their own traditions and beliefs (Dyson et al., 2013). It also puts Afro-origin parents in the spotlight, regarding them as culprits or people who need 'parental civilisation', and they risk losing their children to social services. Such misconceptions as this could explain Johansson (2011)'s submission that in Scandinavia, children from foreign backgrounds are over-represented in out-of-home care. This is further elaborated on by Mulinari and Neergaard (2017), who argue that intersectionality can be used to study the complex ways in which racialisation creates hierarchies that regulate state institutions' interpretation of what a 'good family' is, which often pathologises migrant families and neglects their intertwined challenges. Intersectionality enables us to recognise that perceived group membership can make people vulnerable to various forms of bias (Gillborn, 2015), which can inadvertently affect their parenting skills. In P4's case, she is a grieving widow with a menial job and a son to take care of single-handedly. The intersectionality of gender, social and economic status and well-being, with racism and parenting, complicates her experiences.

The data also shows that the Swedish language is used as an instrument for discriminating against people born or raised outside Sweden. To get a job in Sweden without being able to speak Swedish is next to impossible, despite the fact that the majority of people in Sweden speak English fluently. Though the Swedish government attempts integration strategies such as *Svenska för Invandrar* (SFI), educated Afro-origin parents do not benefit much from such initiatives due to the racial discrimination underpinning the system.

I took an industrial course at work. I was doing well, and enjoying it; then suddenly, I was told I could not continue, while others continued. I was performing well, even in practicals, but they told me my Swedish was not perfect. (P2)

If people are not discriminated against based on their inadequacy in understanding the Swedish language, then their fluency or accent are seen as stumbling blocks. This can be seen as a way of favouring native (white) Swedes over other ethnicities when filling available vacancies, thus maintaining the status quo. With this in mind, CRT analyses and highlights the role of race and racism in perpetuating social and economic disparities such as these between dominant and marginalised racial groups (Matias & Cheryl, 2016).

The counter-stories shared above contradict the view of Sweden as a non-discriminatory, multicultural country. Solórzano and Yosso (2002b) describe counter-stories as tools for revealing, analysing and challenging the majoritarian stories of steady civil rights advancement and so-called unbiased law and equality.

5.1.3 Intersectionality of race, gender and socio-economic status

In most societies, social class, race and gender are key determinants of people's opportunities in life (Newman, 2020). Sweden is no exception, which is a predicament for Afro-origin parents; the

overlapping of these aspects can determine the gravity of one's racial discrimination experiences. All the study participants expressed similar sentiments: finding a job as a person of African origin is an uphill struggle; despite having high academic qualifications, the majority end up settling for jobs for which they are overqualified.

I was looking for a job. The recruiting company told me, "You did exceptionally well in all the interviews and exams", and even the manager of the company said they had never had anyone who scored 90% pass in any of their interviews before ,their best ever was 80%. I waited and waited, and never got the job. Not to mention a lot of job applications I submitted, but never got any response. (P8)

Under normal circumstances, socio-economic factors such as academic performance and level should determine one's economic status in society (Elo et al., 2015), but this is not the case with the majority of Afro-origin parents in Sweden; and for them, racism is the stumbling block. Participant P8 stated that his high academic achievements did not give him an upper hand in the labour market; he felt that his blackness overpowered his qualifications. In a way, this encourages racial economic stratification and dominant groups reinforce such stratification to maintain their own high status in society (Moore-Berg & Karpinski, 2019). Similarly, P4 described how for her, getting interviews was not a problem; but the moment the agent or employer realised she was of African origin, her prospects of a fair chance in the labour market diminished:

I was called for an interview, a very nice job which I qualified for. When I got there, they asked me if – they *had called* me *for the interview – they asked me my name; I told them, and they said, "Um, when we saw your name, we thought you were Italian", and that was it – I knew right away that I was not going to get the job, because of my race.* (P4)

To ascertain the impact of identity on the opportunities one can get, participant P2 explained that after applying for a lot of jobs without any job offers or interviews, he decided to change his name on his job application documents:

I decided to change my name on my CV; then I started to get a lot of interviews, but once they see me everything changes, and I never get the job still. I struggle and end up working these hard jobs which do not need any qualification, yet I am educated.

The data suggests that the fact of Afro-origin parents' racial identity thwarts any free and fair chance of success in the Swedish labour market. Some even struggle to get interviews, whilst those with Swedish-like names usually don't go beyond the interview stage. Because of this they stay unemployed for some time, hoping to find jobs which match their qualifications, but eventually end up settling for menial jobs such as cleaning and delivering, since they need to fulfil their parental obligations and provide for their families. Though there are no clear disparities between males and females when it comes to challenges in looking for a job, the single parents seem to be more frustrated by these experiences, as they are the only source of income in the family. (This demonstrates the intersectionality of race, marital and economic status).

Similarly, a 2014 report on anti-black discrimination in Sweden reported that people of African origin are over-represented in low-income jobs, and those with university degrees are generally overqualified for their jobs (Mångkulturellt centrum, 2014). This can be interpreted as creating cheap labour through racialisation, while maintaining good, well-paying jobs for the other races. This reinforces one of the postulates of CRT: white supremacy restructures itself to protect the rights, privileges, preferences and enjoyment of those seen as more valuable in society (Watkins Liu, 2018). Bearing all this in mind, CRT stresses the need to analyse and challenge the role of race and racism in perpetuating social and economic disparities between dominant and marginalised racial groups (Crenshaw et al., 1993).

When I asked P2, the holder of an honours degree, to tell me about himself, he said:

I deliver newspapers at night, and I also have another part-time day job.

Similarly, the data in Figure 3 above shows that most of the participants are currently working in positions in which their qualifications are underutilised; they all have post-high-school qualifications, yet mainly perform menial jobs. This correlates with the findings of an American study by Elo et al. (2015), which showed that African immigrants rank among the best-educated migrants, with nearly 88% having at least a high-school education; yet they are still underpaid and overqualified for the jobs they do. The small percentage of Afro-origin professionals who do work in jobs they are qualified for are merely a window-dressing statistic for racial equality in the workplace. Matias and Cheryl (2016) note that one's position in the socioeconomic realm is the real indicator of power. Extrapolating from Matias and Cheryl it is safe to say that denying Afro-origin people the opportunities to do the well-paying jobs for which they are qualified can be seen as an indirect way of economically paralysing them, and ensuring that they remain in the bottom position on the hierarchy while whites people remain superior. CRT sees racial characteristics as one reason many employers in the low-skill labour market want to hire black people; they believe that blacks are willing to work longer and harder (Lang, 2015). This notion has a historical echo – slave owners claimed that blacks were strong, and more able to endure the heat of the sun.

Racism, number of children, marital status, education, gender and type of employment all intertwine to complicate the experiences of Afro-origin parents. Participants P2 and P5 each stated that they have to juggle two jobs with their parental responsibilities, since they are single parents; they must make sure that they meet all their costs and parental responsibilities single-handedly. For P5, being a woman comes with some expectations which stress her:

I am often so stressed about having dinner ready, or taking them to different practices, cleaning, and washing the dishes.

From the other side of the gender divide, for participant P2, as a man, having four children (the majority of whom are girls) to parent single-handedly complicates his experiences, since he has to fill in the gap of the missing mother while providing effectively and being there physically and emotionally for the children. Though households with married couples usually earn a substantial income, they also have their own interlocking categories of experiences that affect them. For

instance, P3 and P7 switch between being students, employees, and parents. All this shows the relationship between overlapping and lived oppression systems which construct our diverse identities and our social positions in hierarchies of power and privilege (Carastathis, 2014).

According to Skrentny (2015), diversity interactions among a racially varied group lead to better outcomes, as diversity fosters creativity; however, institutional racism can hamper and derail these advantages. The participants shared that racism in the workplace seems to be more visible when an Afro-origin person holds a higher position in a work situation dominated by whites, or he or she is in a white-dominated university class. One participant said:

One of my colleagues, of Asian origin, is known for being racist – she shows this indirect racism, and she doesn't like people of African origin. So, when I started working in the office, I was the only African at management level, so she tried as much as possible to intimidate me and make me feel inferior. You could tell by the way she talked to me, [she] always tried to micromanage me, it was just a lot… I am not the type of person who usually pulls out my qualifications to show how many qualifications and how much experience I have, but with her, I had to do that, because it was too much. I had to show her that for me to be in that job is because of my experience and qualifications, and it does not have anything to do with favours or privilege – it was based on merit. (P9)

Women's experiences at work are shaped by social class, gender and race for relatively upper-class women (McGinn & Oh, 2017). Being a middle-class black woman holding a management post puts the participant in almost similar level with other racial groups, hence threatening their superiority positions and cause them to question the capability of Afro-origin people in the organisation. Irrespective of the higher qualifications and experience participants felt that their capabilities were always undervalued and questioned. This justifies Skrentny's (2015) critique of the use of race in hiring; talking about CRT and racial realism, Skrentny says racial hiring discredits and makes people question the ability of experienced and well-qualified minority people in higher positions.

Similarly, P3 also felt undermined in her university class interactions:

At the university, the other students – white students – don't think that I am [as] educated and knowledgeable as they are, especially in group work, and always make comments like "You speak good English".

This means that being black in Sweden is still associated with a lack of eloquence in 'international' languages, and poor intellectual capabilities, making black people undeserving of the positions they hold and incompatible with the other races, and thereby justifying existing racial inequalities. This, according to Clair and Denis (2015), is modern racism. The study data above brings forth counter-stories of covert and overt racism experienced by Afro-origin parents, together with the intersectionality of gender, class and socio-economic status; these counters the universality, race-neutrality and meritocracy fairy tales of the Swedish system.

5.1.4 Children experience racism

Despite, Sweden's ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, which in Article 2 emphasises the need to protect children against all forms of discrimination (CRC 1989), the participants in this study reflected that non-white children (such as their Afro-origin children in Sweden) still face substantial discrimination. Skolverket (2002) concurs, reporting that there is a huge number of young people living in Sweden today whose lives have been fractured by experiences of racism, xenophobia, bullying, labelling and violence, and this remains a dark side of the Swedish education system. Sharing some of his children's experiences of racism, P2 said:

At my son's school, other kids used to call him 'nigger'.

Participants noted that Afro-origin children experience racism and borderline negligence most often at school; sadly, their peers are among the perpetrators. This makes life complicated for these children, especially considering that younger children in Sweden (ought to) spend most of their time in schools and day care facilities. According to Newman (2020), it is in school that many children are first exposed to the fact that people and groups are ranked in society, and soon they get a sense of their own standing in the social hierarchy. 'Nigger' is a term Swedes used to refer to African slaves, making it a discourteous term now; though to some, it is an innocent word for 'black' (Skinner, 2019). Calling someone a derogatory term such as 'nigger', or other terms such as 'stupid', is a way of trying to degrade that person and make them feel inferior. Undermining black children makes them hate being in school, thus reinforcing the notion of white superiority (Matias & Cheryl, 2016).

My son complains that some white kids always call him 'stupid', and they don't want to play with him. (P7)

This correlates with the findings of Simons et al. (2006), that Afro-origin male youth reported racial slurs and name-calling, threats of physical harm, and exclusion from peer activities. The data in this study show a gender dimension to different types of experiences of harassment and racism. Boys seem to be victims of name-calling more often, while girls are touched inappropriately and have their beauty undermined. The participants affirmed this:

She always complains of people touching her hair. Some even always want to touch her skin. That makes her feel so uncomfortable; and if she stops them, then they all say they won't play with her anymore. (P1)

Similarly, P3 said:

The other day my 10-year-old daughter was playing with her friends, and one of the white girls said to her, "Your skin colour is too dark – it's, like, dirty." She was so sad when she came home and told me.

Teachers were identified as sometimes being the culprits in perpetuating racist tendencies when dealing with Afro-origin children. This is shown in instances of not treating all the children equally when it comes to disciplining them and cautioning against bad behaviour:

I feel like the teachers at my kids' school treat my children unequally sometimes… My son's teacher told me to caution, my son for his bad behaviour towards another kid. I spoke with my son and he said the boy constantly told him, "I hate you, go away from me, I don't like your brown colour…" and pushed him, but the teacher does not do anything. I went back to the teacher and asked her what she did to, or told the other boy – she said, "Nothing." (P4)

P5 shared the same sentiment:

My 14-year-old son came from Africa, where he was going to a private school and he was doing computer science; and when he got here, he wanted to go into the gymnasium last year that specializes in it [computer science]. But when I sent him to register at the school, he later came back with a form, with certain options; and it was more like a painter, and a bricklayer, and all sorts of other menial professions. And then I'm like, "What? Where did you get this from?" And then he said, "My teacher gave it to me, and she said because I don't have education from here [Sweden], it would be faster and easier if I take this path. I didn't want that, though." And I'm like, "You are just 14 years [old], and you can do anything that you want. Other people come here, even at 18, and they were able to choose the new paths they wanted to take – but you already did something in it, and you just want to continue in it, so what's the big deal?" (P5)

Here, the participants shared how racial bias causes a variety of problems that work to diminish the rights and powers of Afro-origin people. The lack of fairness in the system and in the application of rules is often unspoken, but largely recognised by Afro-origin people, who are just trying (with much difficulty) to empower and protect their children. As O'Neal (2015) says, Afro-origin parents regularly attempt the nearly impossible task of raising empowered children who are free to explore the world around them, while simultaneously keeping a leash on them to try and protect them, as they are judged harder by society and expected to achieve less. Meng and Yamauchi (2017) say that children are the future of a society, and how they are doing today as a group predicts the excellence of human capital available in the future for that society. Disadvantaging and discriminating against Afro-origin children limits their chances to excel in their education, resulting in them retaining the bottom position on the socio-economic ladder; thus, racism serves to benefit whites, by maintaining their hegemony of power and privilege.

Two of the parents said they had never witnessed any racism directed at their children; however, they pointed out that this might be because racism in Sweden is sometimes hidden. They also felt that even if their children do experience racism, they might not be able to explain it, since they are unable to fully express themselves yet.

My daughter is too small to know that, or maybe [to] report it to us if it happens. (P7)

All the parents concurred that although racism in Sweden can be experienced anywhere, schools are major hotspots. Children start school as early as one year old in Sweden, which implies that

they may start to experience racism at that tender age, and parents would not easily notice it. The data in the study showed that children who are older had many racism experiences, which they shared with their parents, while younger children were not able to fully express their experiences. As argued previously, racism in Sweden is concealed, which makes it even harder for parents to notice. Childcare research seems to assert that early high-quality care and education can make a significant positive impact on child development, in both the short and the long term (Clarke-Stewart et al., 2005), while poor care quality, discrimination and racialisation can have a detrimental short- and long-term impact on children's development and well-being (Simons et al., 2006). All the participants understand that supportive parenting decreases the chances of anger and hostility in victims of discrimination. Bearing all this in mind, the parents try to be supportive and 'there' for their children.

5.2. Reverberations of racism

Reverberations of racism is a recurring theme with three sub-themes, which will be discussed in this section.

5.2.1. Effects of racism experiences on parents

Considering the hurdles and discrimination experiences Afro-origin parents face in Sweden, that racism will affect them is inevitable. Racism has been proved to be a life stressor that has profound psychological, physical and social impacts on the victim. It further incapacitates and destroys the humanity of the individuals or groups being racialised and discriminated against (David et al., 2019; Brody et al., 2006; Wong et al., 2003). The participants acknowledged and emphasised the significant toll that racist experiences and injustices have had on them. Some of the effects are seen in how they work: considering the difficulties Afro-origin parents face while job hunting, once they get the job, they feel obliged to go the extra mile to please their employers. These were two comments on this topic:

At work, it makes me feel like there is no room for mistakes; because if you do anything or miss anything, then it will be linked to you, and then they will say, 'Oh these Africans, they don't know anything.' (P9)

I always fear to be late by even a minute, so I now had a problem: even when I was not working that night, I would find myself up, bathing or dressed up, and sometimes realise when I am by the door, or out, or sometimes the kids would have to remind me that I am not working. and also, my healthy is just not so good anymore (P2)

This shows that Afro-origin parents have a dire need to maintain a good reputation and secure their jobs for the job market is not favourable to them while balancing this with the responsibility of parenting children who are also victims of racial discrimination. Even those with menial jobs, which in most cases they are overqualified for, choose to work extremely hard (and work extra hours without questioning the conditions, or underpayment) in a bid to secure a permanent position, this however negatively affects their wellbeing. Likewise, those who have managed to

secure employment which matches their qualifications said they have to work extra hard to keep their job, and to prove that they can do better than anyone else in that same position. This position is affirmed by Sanders and Mahalingam (2012), who posit that high achieving African people often sacrifice their personal relationships and health to pursue their goals, with a tenacity that can be physically and mentally deleterious. According to the participants, if they are average performers they can easily be replaced, in most cases by someone from another racial group. The fear of losing their jobs, and the need to put in extra hours and work harder than anyone else who could hold that position, puts a lot of strain on their physical, social and psychological well-being (Sanders & Mahalingam, 2012). Some of the participants reported that because of racism and parenting pressure, they constantly have feelings of fear or apprehension about what is to come (anxiety) and feel depressed.

The experiences of racism, the fear and anticipation, also get me more depressed… I get social-phobic, and I get a lot of anxiety in general. (P5)

Continual experiences of racism (together with the pressure of parenting) make them live a life of fear and worry, which triggers and exacerbates physical and psychological problems. Meyer (2003) says people from minority groups experience a high degree of prejudice, which causes stress responses such as high blood pressure, depression and anxiety, to mention only a few. According to George and Bassani (2018), racial discrimination is linked to a number of psychological distress outcomes in parents, which could potentially affect the mental health and socio-emotional development of their children. Potentially contrary to these findings, other theorists state that it is not clear whether particular encounters with racism contribute to psychological distress; the mental health impact of racism is not considered or captured by traditional counselling psychology or by psychiatric theory or assessment models (American Psychological Association, 2003).

The data showed that the participants felt incapacitated, disappointed, demoralised and hopeless in the face of racism and white supremacy, and this made them speculate about their future and that of their children. P4 said:

They demoralise you; they kill your ambitions, you denounce yourself and your education, it kills your ambitions.

This shows that racism renders Afro-origin people powerless and hopeless; they feel that they do not have power or control over their lives and their circumstances, for their education does not guarantee them a better future in the face of racism. In some cases, they even have to renounce their professions, their culture and who they are overall, to try and fit in. This fosters a sense of inferiority, which may eventually be internalised (Meyer, 2003). When asked how their racism experiences affect them, participants said:

It makes me feel like I am unequal. It makes me feel like no matter how hard I work; chances are I might not have the same opportunities. (P6)

It gives me a negative feeling about where I am. It makes me feel I am less among equals, and not valuable. It makes me thin, and [makes me] miss my country more, but due to [my] circumstances I have to be here. I degrade my level already to be a mere cleaner, despite my level of education; but still it's hard to be accepted, even at that level. (P7)

Research has established that there is an explicit link between racist experiences, and feelings of not belonging (Rastas, 2005; Toivanen, 2014). To Afro-origin parents, Sweden does not feel like home; despite their dire need to build a future for themselves and their children here, they often feel relegated to a lower status, and looked down on. All their experiences of racism constantly remind them that they don't belong. The feeling of not belonging is painful to them, since they feel they have sacrificed even their academic career prospects in favour of menial jobs in a bid to make a living in Sweden, and make a home – which feels far away from home to them.

5.2.2. Effects of racism experiences on children

The effects of racism on the children in this study were dynamic in nature. According to the participants, racist experiences affected their children's social, psychological and emotional well-being, which may negatively affect their development and could have a substantial impact on their future prospects. Parents have seen their children demoralised, getting into physical fights, losing their self-worth, self-love and enthusiasm about their future, and internalising the stereotypes. Narrating their children's ordeals, participants said:

She said, "Mama, I want to be white – is there a way I can change to be white?" (P1)

She washed her skin more often. Nowadays, it's much better. [But] there was a point where she would scrub her whole body so hard, she stayed in the shower for so long, hoping she would become lighter. It's hard, you know. (P3)

The parents with younger female children noted that their children had developed a dire need to change their skin colour; this is because they had acquired the 'Black is bad, white is good', discriminatory notion that aims to make black people feel inferior to white people. That is internalising racism, which is characterised by self-hate. Internalised racism can also be shown through rejection of one's own cultural practices, or ethnic or racial group (David et al., 2019). The children learned to believe and internalise that being black is bad; and by virtue of being black themselves, they then believe they are bad too. Just like the children in Clark and Clark's (1939) study, the data showed that some of the children in this study associated blackness with ugliness. In explanation of this, Clark and Clark (1939) state that constant exposure to prejudice, discrimination and segregation creates a feeling of inferiority among African children and damages their self-esteem. The oppression of the dominant society can destroy children's self-esteem and increase their self-doubt, which can make them fail to believe even in their parents or other Afro-origin people around them. When participant P6 was asked how the racism experiences she had described had affected her son, she said:

At first, he felt hurt, and his intellectual capabilities underrated… it made him feel inferior. And then later on, he thought maybe I am misleading him, or pushing too hard. He thought maybe they were right; he is not good enough.

The internalisation of racism by racial populations relegated to a lower status may make them end up accepting the negative societal beliefs and stereotypes about themselves, either knowingly or sometimes unknowingly (David et al., 2019). Internalisation is not only turning on oneself, but also on one's family and people. This was exactly what had happened with P6's 14-year-old son, as she described above.

The participants reported that the experiences of racial discrimination had instilled a sense of hopelessness in their children, and they showed externalising symptoms such as aggression:

My son used to fight a lot at school. (P2)

His teacher told me that he beat up another child. I asked my son why he was doing that; he told me, the other child called him ridicule names, but the teacher did nothing about it… (P4)

The need to protect themselves from continuing racism, be heard and take back their power seem to trigger the aggression behaviour in this case. Realising that only males were reported to be involved in physical fights one may say, these young boys' masculine gender and their role as African male figures made them feel they should take back control from the perpetrators and defend their dignity; hence, they fought. Regarding experiences of discrimination and delinquent behaviours in African youth, Sanders-Phillips (2009) speculates that decreased self-efficacy may be related to greater aggression in youth, because racial discrimination is perceived as a significant threat to their control over life outcomes. Higher levels of aggression may also be related to perceptions of injustice. The participants pointed out that a lot of unfairness at school makes their children lose trust in the teachers and in the system's ability to defend and protect them, leading to cultural mistrust. According to Whaley (2001), cultural mistrust and the vigilance it encourages have been critical to black men's survival for centuries; black masculinity is therefore largely constructed around coping with cultural mistrust.

Living in Sweden, the participants yearn to 'belong', and to make their children feel fulfilled here; however, the feeling of non-belonging seems to be intergenerational in the Afro-origin community. The majority of the children of the participants were born in Sweden and can speak Swedish fluently; but Swedishness supersedes that. Recent studies have demonstrated how whiteness and observable differences shape the definition of Swedishness and non-Swedishness (Hübinette & Lundström, 2011). When asked about the effect of racist experiences on her children, participant P3 said:

It's hard that if they go to Somalia now, they won't fit in, since they grew up here and can't speak Somali well; and here, they can't fit in because of racism, and they are black – they feel like they are in limbo, without an identity, you know?

The fact that Afro-origin children don't have an explicit bond with their ancestral land makes them feel that they don't belong anywhere. It is a dilemma, since they are not accepted and do not fit in the country, they have known all their lives. Previous studies have also shown that there is an explicit link between racism experienced and feelings of not belonging to the society in which migrants' children have settled (Rastas, 2005; Toivanen, 2014). Their racism experiences and feeling of non-belonging make these children want to isolate themselves as much as possible. One of the participants concurred with this notion, saying:

The most visible consequence, for now, is that he does not like school anymore, he prefers to be at home than to be at school. (P7)

P5 said that her child has been discriminated against ever since he started preschool; and because he feels that people can be mean to him because of his skin colour, he chooses to isolate himself. She went on:

But he's not a loner by choice. It's just that he protects himself. (P5)

Constant experiences of racism can make children hyper-conscious of their surroundings, and they will try to avoid people by being alone as much as possible. According to Meyer (2003), this is because they develop a high degree of vigilant expectation of rejection, discrimination and violence in their every interaction with dominant group members. Though the participants did notice some avoidance strategies that their children had adopted, they seemed to acknowledge that some of the consequences of racism on children are not that easy to pick up.

The data in this study showed that most of the female children of single parents were not affected by racism as much as the male children or they dealt with it on their own without involving their parents. This might be ascribed to the fact that they see all the stress and pressure which their parents already have and feel obliged to protect their parents from hurt or more stress. According to Werner (2005), environmental attributes such as home, or attributes of individuals themselves, such as personality traits, self-esteem and autonomy, can ensure resilient tendencies such as these.

I think she is okay, she said she dealt with it on her own; she realised that I was very sad. (P5)

The data shows that the girls display emotional maturity at a tender age and try to relieve the pressure on their parents as much as possible by being independent, even in dealing with racism. This is contrary to the results of Rawat and Singh's (2017) study on the paradox of gender difference regarding the emotional maturity of adolescents, which proposed that females have a lack of capacity to deal with problems and avoid irritability, and need constant help with their day-to-day work and their vulnerability. Though emotional maturity is good, it may put too much pressure on these young girls, hindering them in enjoying their childhood.

Similarly to the results of Brody et al. (2006) and Wong et al. (2003, this study notes that children's personal experience with racial discrimination can be linked to elevated rates of loss of confidence, self-doubt, violence, anger, poor school performance, developmental issues in younger children, and internalisation of stereotypes. However, it is important to note that the relationship between

racial vulnerability and negative outcomes is not universal; when asked about the effects of racism on her children, participant P5 said:

With my daughter I never noticed any; but my son was really affected…

Participants P8 and P9 also noticed no effects of this nature. In explaining the resilience theory, Masten (2011) emphasises that despite the fact that many people have negative outcomes in response to vulnerability, some others show high, little or no deterioration in functioning; and yet others appear to have higher levels of adaptation than they had before. The intersectionality of a family's social and economic situations can also determine how one is affected by racism; the children of married parents seem to be generally less affected.

5.2.3. Effects of racism on parenting

All the parents in the study concurred that to them, parenting is all about protecting, providing, and being there for their children every step of the way, actively influencing their choices for the future. Though they try to be very warm, supportive and sensitive, and show responsiveness to their children's racism experiences, all the parents shared the fear that they might not have the ability or the power to protect their children from the consequences of racism. Some of the parents said they constantly worry about experiencing racism; they expect rejection, and they are constantly paranoid and disquieted.

Yes, I am more protective; and when I am outside, I don't really feel comfortable, because I feel like people are watching me. Because here in Sweden, people like to call social services on social minorities, especially blacks. I must act in a certain way… if I raise my voice to them, then someone may call social services on me, and my kids will be taken away. My kids are my world I can't let that happen. So, I fear going out with my children. (P3)

So, as a parent, I am always conscious of how my children act, what they talk about. And in contact with other people, I also have to always and quickly check if my kids are okay. I have to let the school know immediately, if I notice something amiss, so that they know I noticed and it's not from home but school, then they can address it. If I don't do that, it will happen again; or I can be implicated, and they say, this happened at home, or [the] children have been neglected at home. I don't want to wake up one day and have a case of negligence or something, because I am a parent of African origin. (P9)

Meyer (2003) attributes these feelings to high levels of perceived stigma; and further explains that this can lead minority group members to maintain a high degree of vigilant expectation of rejection, discrimination, and violence.in reaction to that. Sue et al. (2008) call it adopting a level of "healthy paranoia" out of necessity. This paranoia signifies the heightened yet appropriate level of awareness that blacks have regarding how they are perceived by others, and the consequences of their actions, given their marginalised identity. In view of these submissions, it is plausible to say that by virtue of being of Afro-origin, parents lose the right to parent their children freely, in their own unique way, passed down to them from generation to generation – a clear sign of cultural assimilation influenced by racism. In every space, be it in school or in public, the participants feel

that their parenting is constantly questioned, undermined, and often demonised; and most likely, reported to the social services for no explicit offence. The fear of having people watching their parenting – even ordinary people, in the public space – gives these parents a phobia about going out with their children, or letting their children go out by themselves.

I cannot just let my children go out there, because you never know what they will face. So, racism has made me, like, really anxious – sometimes depressed; and too involved in my children's day-to-day life. (P1)

A lot of anxiety, in general; and at the same time, I have to be a parent for kids who want to explore, to have an open mind. And you're like, okay… this is hard! (P5)

Based on the above data, it is undeniable that racist experiences affect the quality and quantity of the outdoor time the parents spend with their children. This hypervigilant parenting, according to Burt et al. (2012), is a form of resilience. One parent stated that she would love to go out with her children, but the fear of facing racism in front of her children makes her want to stay indoors only. However, this limits the children, who would want to go out, explore, and have fun. In addition to the anxiety and paranoia that makes the Afro-origin parent feel unsafe, judged and undermined, they find themselves in the inevitable dilemma of wanting to keep their children safe, happy and provided for, and not have them taken away by social services. Living through these experiences makes maintaining their own physical and psychological sanity a great challenge, as they are more prone to conditions such as anxiety and depression.

After the incident I told you about, I was too scared to stay with him. Scared that he might be taken away. I began to doubt myself, as a mother. Being a single mother, I also thought, maybe if I sent him back to Cameroon for a while, it would be better. (P4)

Experiences of racism, and possible biased interventions by the Swedish system in handling issues of presumed child abuse and negligence among the Afro-origin parents, makes the parents feel inadequate, and consider alternative parenting schemes, e.g. transnational parenting. Such drastic actions are perceived to be better than losing their children to social services. This is because – as many theorists, including Johansson (2011), have noted – in Scandinavia, children with foreign backgrounds are overrepresented in out-of-home care. This is grounded on the stereotype that Afro-origin parents are abusive, uncivilised, and unable to raise children well.

The participants in this study try to ensure self-development, provide for the family, and meet parental needs. However, they seem to struggle to find the balance. Gene et al. (2006) say that in a bid to succeed, Afro-origin people put themselves under tremendous internal pressure while trying to endure day-to-day racism, thereby compromising other aspects of self- and family care.

It's hard – ever since I started studying, I have not been spending time with my kids, except maybe weekends. It's hard to juggle the time, trying to be on top of my game at work, and study. (P7)

On top of the racism problem, with other parents the participants share the same pressure of being young parents in an individualistic, career-focused society. In most cases, they end up less involved

in family time and their children's leisure time. By Swedish standards, they are lacking in their parental role; according to Halldén (1991), Swedish parenting is centred around availability. In African cultures, fathering standards are centred on providing for the family. P7 and other participants find themselves at a crossroads: they fear losing their children to social services, yet they are doing their best to ensure a secure future for their family and building a racial resilience strategy through educational and career development.

The data indicates that parents of Afro-origin try to push their children to better themselves, in order to escape racism. They believe that to access equal opportunities in Sweden, you have to have extremely good results. P6 said she even offered extra classes so her children would do exceptionally well in school; though this increases the pressure on her, as a working and studying parent.

I fear that if my children are ordinary, then they won't have any chance for better opportunities. Maybe if they are exceptional, then it will be difficult for the Swedish system to deny them opportunities. (P6)

Listening to the voices of these parents, one could deduce that by virtue of being born black, children of African origin lose their liberty to choose and be whatever they want; because of racism and other discrimination, the world is not a level playing field. The parents' perceptions are influenced by their experiences of racism. They are now aware that their children are judged more harshly by society, compared to people of other racial groups; hence, for black children, finding jobs or having the prospect of a better future is highly dependent on how exceptional they are compared to all their peers of other races. After the discussion above, one would concur with Lalonde et al. (2008), who posit that, black parenting involves layers of challenges, triggered or exacerbated by daily racism and classism that target black families. The participating parents felt that racism and discrimination put excess pressure on them, and that in the midst of all these challenges, they have to try to be perfect parents.

5.3. Resilience strategies

In trying to ascertain how parents of African origin deal with the challenges posed by parenting and experiences of racism, it was noted that their power and strength as parents lies in their ability to bounce back from daily racism experiences and assume their parental roles adequately; that is, resilience. Their bouncing back is facilitated by different resilience strategies, and these are discussed next.

5.3.1. Approach coping and avoidance coping strategies

The issue of whether to ignore or voice one's opinion in the face of racism was a controversial one for the participants; though the majority said they often try to deny or ignore racism, which is an example of avoidance coping.

I ignore and be quiet, just behave in a very sober and cool manner, that's the best way. People get worried, and they keep wondering why I am not responding. (P7)

You know what? If there are people who [are] racist and bad, ignore them. And always be optimistic, and good; there are nice white people out there, good people. (P1)

Brown et al. (2001) and Martínez-Martí and Ruch (2017) concur that the ability to use approach coping and avoidance coping strategies to overcome the effects of racism is attributable to protective personal factors such as hope and bravery, as well as family and community protective factors. However, the data in this study showed that some of the participants choose to ignore or be silent about racism not because they want to, or hope things will get better, but because of the unjustness in the system. They are afraid of ending up in a more complicated situation, such as having a criminal record, or losing their job. All the participants acknowledged the existence and the intense nature of racism in Sweden. However, they also appreciated other, more positive aspects in the Swedish system and society, for instance there are also nice people in Sweden; hence they choose to ignore the bad and be kind to everyone, focusing on the good. This is in line with Boyraz et al. (2016), who say that avoidance coping requires one to divert attention from the threat, and from the negative feeling associated with the distress.

According to Boyraz et al., (2016) approach coping requires one to confront the problem and attempt to deal with one's feelings regarding the distress as well as to focus on the threat.The participants agreed that approach coping in the face of racism is likely to lead them into much more trouble, because society inflicts much harsher judgement on Afro-origin people (O'Neal, 2015). The majority of the participants said ignoring racism makes them feel better, and they even forget about it by the end of the day. But for some, speaking out makes them feel better than bottling up all their anger. However, it must be done in a very diplomatic way, so people realise that they are crossing a line.

5.3.2. Communication, racial socialisation and empowerment

All participants acknowledged that vibrant communication is essential for sound parenting and family resilience. According to Walsh (2002), lucidity and congruence in messaging help effective family functioning. Parent/child communication was notable for the ability of the children to share their unique racism experiences with their parents (see Section 5.1.2 above, for children's experiences of racism), and for the ability of the parents to empathise with their children and emphasise free communication, as some of the participants attested.

They should always freely tell me what happens – that's why I keep an open relationship with them. (P3)

Positive interactions and feelings of connectedness provide strength for coping and enable brainstorming to find potential ways of approaching a problem and socialisation. The majority of the participants are active participants in the racial socialisation process; they feel that teaching and preparing their children to navigate an unfair racial environment from a tender age is their parental obligation. This preparation, according to Peck et al. (2014) and Thomas and Blackmon (2015), is known as racial socialisation. It is a combination of conversations and practices that parents hope will prepare their children to live in environments where they will be discriminated against. When asked how they would help their children deal with racism, participant P1 said:

I always tell her, it's not your fault – it's their fault that they don't know what beauty is. I also try to tell her to accept and appreciate who she is. I sometimes watch movies and cartoons with black characters, just to be smart about it, so that she won't be unhappy that she is black.

The participants adjust their racial socialisation to their children's ages and cognitive capacities. To socialise older children, the parents have intense conversations with them, pointing out the racism in society; while with younger children, they watch movies in which black people are heroes, or prosper. They watch cartoons such as *Moana* (about a Polynesian girl), and identify prominent black people such as Barack Obama, Oprah Winfrey and Zozibini Tunzi, the newly crowned (2020) Miss Universe, to mention a few. This is all done in an effort to empower the children, and instil racial and cultural pride and awareness, confidence, and self-love. According to Mullings (2012), such an approach can help children retain their self-esteem, and can be enhanced by other teachings. Some of the participants said:

We plan and manage our household finances together, and they do most of the house chores. (P2)

I also tell my kids to work hard in school, and to be good friends; and to treat others how they want to be treated. (P5)

The participants agreed that teaching their children to be accountable, to work hard in school and at home, to embrace good moral attributes such as kindness, to deal with emotions and to behave acceptably, can be very helpful. According to Corcoran and Nichols-Casebolt (2004), these are internal protectors that can help one be resilient to racism.

Besides empowering their children with social skills, and making sure they get a good education, the data shows that teaching children self-identity and more about their origins can help them to be resilient. One participant said:

I always speak Swahili with my children when we are at home. I teach them about our culture. (P1)

To Afro-origin people, culture and heritage are what define them, and awareness of them enables self-pride. Bearing this in mind, the parents teach their children about their heritage, language, culture, and about powerful celebrity role models from Afro-origin communities. Though racial socialisation can facilitate resilience, it can also impact Afro-origin people negatively; hence, some participants condone it. Participant P6 said:

I don't do anything. I don't talk to them about racism, because I want them to be free, and [to] make their choices without fear of racism.

The knowledge that 'I am different from this person', or 'I might be treated differently', may cause hypersensitivity to racism. It can block children from being themselves, and from exploring whatever they dare to explore in life. In support of this, O'Neal (2015) suggests that racially socializing children is like telling them that something is wrong with their role in society, that they have an inferior and unequal position; this makes the parents agents of oppression. Biased preparation has also been linked to negative outcomes such as lower academic performance and

increased felt stigmatisation (Tang et al., 2016). In other words, racial socialisation may make the discriminated group too sensitive, linking everything to racism even when it is not the case. One might say that racial socialisation can create and broaden a big gap, an invisible but impermeable wall, between black children and white children. There is a need for Afro-origin people to be integrated, not further alienated, or to alienate themselves. Unfortunately, it seems the fear of the unknown or partially known others will feed the perception of each racial group and enable the survival of stereotypes and racism.

5.3.3. Social support networks

Afro-origin people believe in collectivism and *Ubuntu* (I am, because we are) as central to the African community, which makes them rely on their social circles for many forms of support, including parenting. To them, 'it takes a whole village to raise a child'; which is why they institute indigenous forms of support, such as religious, communal and fictive kinship bonds (Brown, 2008). This sense of collectivism is part of the multidimensional social support strategy African families use to raise children, and to deal with adversity in stressful situations such as racism. Some of the participants are members of a union with others from the same country; they meet (physically or virtually) twice a month and share a meal while chatting. In such a union, they teach, listen to and support each other, and this gives them a sense of belonging.

We have a Ghanaian union... we also play self-esteem games with the children, when we have our unions. (P6)

I like my social circles small; but I have a friend from Zimbabwe who is now more like a sister – we talk about anything and everything, and our families support each other. (P9)

The social networks and fictive kinships are important stress buffers, and also help with the sharing of skills, knowledge, challenges and solutions, thereby enhancing well-being and coping skills, and improving the quality of parenting. Strong ethnic identification is associated with a more active strategy for coping with discrimination. According to the resilience theory, protective factors such as a supportive community and family can lead to resilience (Werner, 2005). Brown et al. (2001) add personality traits such as self-esteem and autonomy as attributes of an environment that enables one to be resilient (Brown et al., 2001). Religious beliefs and religious congregations also help Afro-origin parents to cope with racism.

For us as a family, we are Christians; so, we always use the Bible – we just tell them that they need to do good. (P1)

Before corona, we also used to go out to church during weekends, get support, mix and mingle with other people. (P9)

From these participants' inferences, one can say that religion and belief are strong social and moral guides, as well as vital communal support structures. Religious books and commandments condemn inhuman behaviour, and guide children in the right way, which the parents so desire. This lessens the burden on parents and helps raise children who are not defined or morally affected by their racist experiences. Belief systems allow participants to make sense of the discrimination

and normalise their experiences, making them manageable; people also use belief systems to strengthen themselves.

The participants utilise different resilience strategies to try and gain a sense of control, feel more positive in general, and enhance life satisfaction. This is vital, because parents' responses to discrimination experiences are likely to influence their subsequent parenting behaviour and the messages they transmit to their children regarding the successful negotiation of racial discrimination (Sanders-Phillips, 2009). Nonetheless, these Afro-origin parents still face a lot of stumbling blocks, which are discussed below.

5.4. structural challenges and obstacles

The participants acknowledged a number of underlying challenges and obstacles to protecting their children and dealing with racism. Four sub-themes were identified.

5.4.1. Lack of representation

The participants emphasised that for change to happen, the disadvantaged groups need to be part of the institution that needs change. Lack of representation of people of colour, especially in decision-making roles, is part of the reason there is lack of commitment to racial equality (Achiume, 2018). When asked about the challenges they face in protecting their children against racism, the participants highlighted inadequate help from those who should be helping, and lack of representation of people of colour:

It is difficult to talk about racism when you're talking to a person who can potentially be racist to you too… I think this system here is meant for Swedish people; it's not friendly to non-Swedes. (P1)

This means Afro-origin people feel uncomfortable talking to some white officials, because they think the officials might still be biased, and have limited understanding of their experiences. Social constructions of race and its link to colonisation also complicate the power dynamics between people of different races. They make it difficult to trust and fully understand the other race, let alone believe that they will handle cases of racism fairly. According to Skrentny (2015), this can be solved by racial-matching hiring. Lack of representation leads to social mistrust and uneven representation of the Afro-origin constituent in organisations.

In a nutshell, the collected data shows that the government, social services and other departments are dominated by whites, with little or no black representation. Dominelli (2017) suggests that only blacks can put an end to racism, because expecting white people to engage in anti-racism practices means dethroning them and making them acknowledge and possibly denounce their white privilege. Given this, the lack of Afro-origin representation in decision-making positions means racism will continue to be a nuisance, in Sweden and globally, for some time.

5.4.2. Distrust of the legislation and the Swedish system

The data collected indicated that parents of African origin have developed a distrust of the Swedish legislative system, because they feel the system is rigid, unfair and discriminatory. Participants expressed a sense of vulnerability in relation to institutions they perceived as lacking concern for their well-being. Art. 1 of the UDHR established that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights (UN General Assembly, 1948). Sweden ratified ICERD in 1966; yet up to the present day, racism is still experienced and not taken seriously by the Swedish government; this has caused the discriminated-against population to lose faith in the government. One of the participants said:

Some people would think that we are being overprotective. 'There's nothing in the system to be afraid of, the system is free, if you deserve something, you'll be given it'… but it's not like that. The system is not fair. (P5)

Unfairness and difficulties are encountered by Afro-origin parents in trying to get basic services that every other race gets easily such as social services and police protection, to mention only two. This makes them doubt the system and feel strongly that services and rights are not freely given, but often have to be claimed and fought for, unlike for other races. From their experiences, participants shared how the cases they report are not taken seriously or pursued, which frustrates them. This shows that their outmoded belief in the legal process as fair, neutral, and as a mechanism through which rights will be achieved, has failed to attain the promised racial equity (Bell, 1995). Achiume (2018) attributes this partly to the global human rights system, for failing to raise consciousness around and commitment to racial equality which in Sweden is evidenced by the replacing of 'race' with 'ethnicity' in domestic anti-discrimination law, which disadvantages the racialised groups even more. Achiume (2018) further explains that this can intensify racial aphasia and the spread of racism; the participants affirm that talking about racism in Sweden is not easy, and if you do, people's faces turn red. There is a tendency in Sweden to only recognise racism in its extreme forms (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017). This creates a loophole in how racism is handled and perceived in the Swedish system. Most parents concurred that reporting racism does not work in Sweden; this is because the nature of most racism experienced in Sweden is subtle, which makes it difficult to report and to have clear evidence of; also, the way the legislation handles reported cases affects the parents and their children negatively, due to the time it takes to get any form of help.

I feel like the process is so long, it's too much of a hassle. And I also think, I don't want it to affect my children much, I don't want to put them under the spotlight, you know? And the longer the case drags on, the more the negative impact it has on my kids. (P3)

The participants echoed each other's disappointment in the Swedish legislative system, particularly when it comes to handling reported cases of racism. For some, the length of time cases drags on causes frustration and discourages them and other people from reporting racial discrimination. This is in line with Lappalainen's (2008) report, which exposed the structural racism in the Swedish judicial system, and its unfairness in handling cases of people of different

origin. The report showed that people with roots outside Europe had less confidence in the police and courts than native Swedes. The confidence of people in a system is determined by how the services are delivered (Hart, 1982).

5.4.3. Fear and lack of time

The data shows that racism has instilled a lot of fear in Afro-origin parents. Some of the participants stated that they don't report or deal with racism in the way they deem necessary, due to fear of being blacklisted and complicating the experiences of their children even more.

I kind of find myself in between wanting to protect my child, and not wanting to put my children in the spotlight. (P1)

Besides the fear of challenging racism, time seems to be a scarce resource for these parents, since most of them must juggle physically demanding jobs, parenting and studying. According to Hankivsky and Christoffersen (2008), this shows how interlocking systems of power affect those who are most marginalised in society – and in this case, hinder Afro-origin parents from dealing with or finding ways to alleviate racism.

I have a lot on my plate, and I must focus on my kids and work. If I focus on that, then I will miss work, or miss picking up my kids. It's tough. (P2)

Given their time constraints, participants felt, there is a need to prioritise; hence, they don't have time to deal with racism. The fact that children spend most of their time in school affords parents only limited time with them; they feel they would rather use their time to socialise with their children than try to fight what seems to be a losing battle.

5.4.4. Lack of knowledge and professional support - organisations

The data shows that identifying and dealing with racism has brought ambivalence on Afro-origin parents and their parenting, since they are never sure whether or not they are dealing with it the right way. The majority of the participants agreed that they don't have adequate knowledge – for example, of what the appropriate age is to start talking about racism with their children, and how to do it without over-sensitising them; and where to go, who to contact, and what professional support is available.

There is no formal support for people, for immigrants – mainly blacks; yet we are expected to be perfect parents. How can that be doable, when we feel blindfolded and handcuffed? (P6)

The lack of availability of race discrimination information to the general public makes it difficult for Afro-origin parents to understand the nature of racism, how it is characterised, what motivates perpetrators, and how to deal with it. To them, this is like parenting while blindfolded. One might say that because most people in Sweden are white, they have limited need of knowledge about racism and racism-related services; the authorities see no need to establish organisations, or a knowledge base, to deal with racism. In support of this idea, CRT points out that the political state enacts laws and policies recognising rights and freedoms to protect the interests of the oppressing class by subordinating the oppressed groups (Hart, 1982).

5.6. Conclusion

Drawing out and analysing the racism experiences of Afro-origin people raising children in Sweden – the devastation caused, and its reverberations, their different resilience strategies and obstacles and challenges – puts into perspective their gripes and problems relating to racism and parenting. The findings discussed above are summarised in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

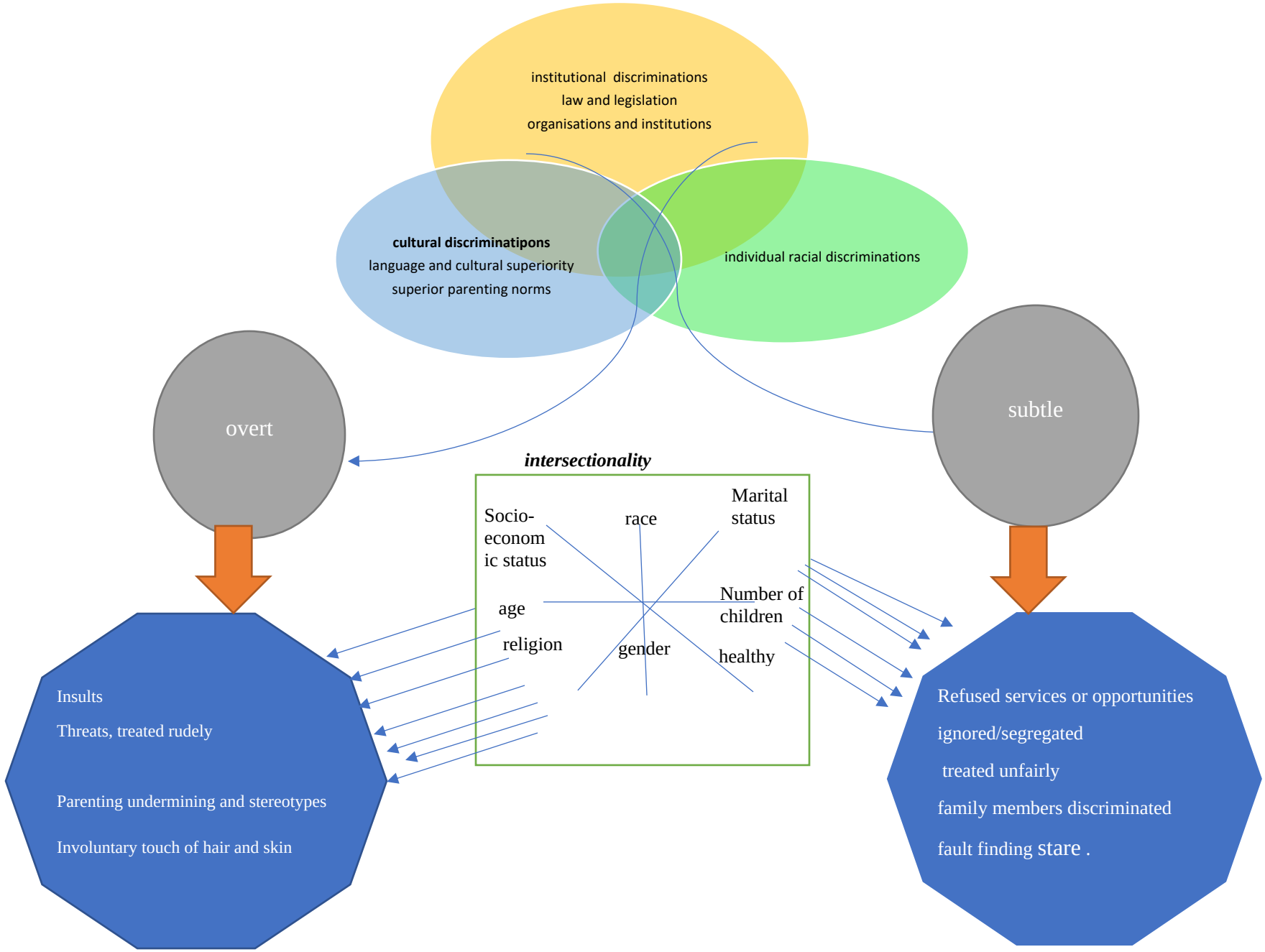
The aim of this study was to investigate and develop an in-depth understanding of racism experiences and their impact on Afro-origin parents and their children as well as establish how they develop resilience against racism or contend with it. This chapter summarises the findings of this study, highlights the contribution this study makes, and offers recommendations and suggestions for further research.

6.1. Summary of findings

The study was undertaken and explored in such a way that it tries to answer the three research questions which shaped this research. The first research question is *How do Afro-origin parents and their children experience racism in Sweden?* The results show that racism in Sweden is experienced in different domains and settings, and cuts across the boundaries of age, gender, marital status, class and socioeconomic status. However, the intersectionality of these combined social and political identities creates intense yet unique modes of discrimination for Afro-origin parents. This study shows that the participants' experiences of subtle racism are minimal, as racism is becoming more overt, in public spaces even in institutions such as the police and universities. In other words, this shows the intertwining of the individual, institutional and cultural dynamics of racism experienced by Afro-origin parents. The research shows that career-wise, racism stamps the participants, hence thwarting their growth. This is evident in the job-seeking discrimination struggles they experience, which have been proven to be linked to their identity. As reported in numerous previous studies, irrespective of their high academic qualifications' Afro-origin parents end up in menial jobs and must take more than one job or juggle a job with further studies in a bid to improve their status in society. The data shows that the Swedish language is also used as an agent of racial discrimination; the participants are said to be not sufficiently acquainted with Swedish, or not eloquent enough.

Most Afro-origin children raised in Sweden, on the other hand, experience racism at school, from their peers and even from teachers. A gender dimension has been noted in different types of experiences of harassment and racism; young girls are racialised according to their looks and beauty, while for boys it mainly takes the form of name-calling. All of this is derogatory. Though the study was gender diverse, the females reported more (and more intense) racism experiences than the males; this might be attributed to the level of involvement in parenting, time spent, and emotional attachment that mothers have with their children compared to fathers. The study came to the conclusion that Afro-origin parents in Gothenburg are mostly stereotyped as bad and abusive parents, resulting in social services and ordinary community members scrutinising them closely, questioning their parenting, and reporting them even when they have innocent interactions with their children which if done by other racial groups would be seen as acceptable.

Figure 5: Mapping Afro-origin parents and children's experiences of racism in Gothenburg Sweden



The second research question explored was *What are the effects of racism on parents, children and parenting?* The research showed that as with the effects of racism experiences, stereotypes and fear of discrimination differed among the participants and so did the gravity of these effects. Most often, the effects on individuals were identified as feelings of hurt, hopelessness, powerlessness, self-doubt and demoralisation, relegation to lower status, being regarded as unequal to others, and non-belonging; all of which heighten the challenges of parenting. The effects listed above seem to affect both parents and their children. The research revealed that young boys show anger, with externalising symptoms such as aggression, and end up involved in physical fights with perpetrators of racism. This can be linked to masculinity and gender issues. The parents with young female children noted that their children have developed a dire need to change their skin colour, as they have accepted and internalised the 'Black is bad, white is good' discriminatory notion that aims to make black people feel inferior to white people. The research shows that racism makes Afro-origin parents in Gothenburg and their children feel like they are in limbo; they cannot fit well into Swedish society due to their blackness, and they do not fit in their African countries of origin, because the children don't share the experiences and culture and have never lived in those countries; even the parents have lost touch, since they don't go there often.

Constant racism experiences cause a high degree of hypervigilant, expectations of rejection and discrimination, leading to self-isolation among the participants. They develop enormous stress and anxiety regarding their children's present and future life prospects, which makes them overprotective of their children and likely to be perceived as stern and inflexible parents. Female children of single parents feel obliged to help and protect their parents from hurt and stress; hence, they deal with their own racism experiences, and have to fill the void left in the family when the parents feel incapacitated by racism experiences and the consequences of racism.

Racism causes participants to work too hard, trying to express how exceptional and hardworking they are and 'please the boss' as well as enhance their prospects of a better job or position.

Parents' intense fear of racism and losing their children to social services exacerbate their stress, causing overprotective parenting, and in some cases, transnational parenting. The research shows that the negative effects of racism are not universal, for some subjects never showed any signs of effects of racism experiences; this was attributed to early recognition of racial experiences and prompt racial socialisation. Based on this data analysis, it is clear that experiences of racial discrimination vary from one person to another

The third question was *What are Afro-origin parents' strategies for and challenges of trying to deal with racism?* The research discovered that transferring resilience strategies is an indispensable responsibility of Afro-origin parenting in Sweden. To help themselves and their children to bounce back in the face of racism, parents use different resilience strategies, such as approach/avoidance coping, communication, racial socialisation and empowerment, and social support networks. Though racial socialisation was found to be useful for instilling confidence and self-pride, the research also established that it might defeat its purpose, by further alienating Afro-origin people and broadening the impermeable wall between white Swedes and Afro-origin people in Sweden

which prevents both from learning, understanding and appreciating each other's ways of life, reducing stereotyping, and possibly reducing discrimination. Socialisation helps Afro-origin people to know what to expect and to appreciate who they are; however, it can also lead to over-sensitisation, which then intensifies the fear of taking up opportunities and interacting with other races.

How parents try to help their children bounce back in the face of racism differs; it is just trial and error for them, since they don't have adequate knowledge of the nature of racism and of how and when to have racial talks with their children. There are also insufficient organisations to support these parents. The lack of representation for the discriminated-against population in big decision-making roles and positions perpetuates all forms of racism, especially systemic racism. The prevalence of systemic racism in Sweden, which feeds the personal and cultural racism, complicates the eradication of racism dynamics and practices. Teachers, police and other government officials are seen as accomplices to exacerbating racism in Gothenburg. This was deduced from the way they utter racist statements, ignore racism, defend the perpetrators of racism and doubt the victims, thereby not giving racism cases fair attention. The removal of the term 'race' from Swedish legislation makes it difficult to report racism and to talk about it. All this leads to social mistrust of the legislation and of the Swedish system. The investigation provides new insight into the complexities of black parenting and the forces that hinder it.

6.2 Contribution of the study

Beyond its contribution to the larger research literature, this study has the potential to inform and influence the development of comprehensive anti-racism measures for legislation, companies, organisations and individuals. Maya Angelou said, 'There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you'. This study gives a voice to the voiceless; it gave the Afro-origin parents of Gothenburg a platform to tell their untold racism stories, which are most often ignored, dismissed or overlooked. The sharing of their counter-stories was in some ways therapeutic for these parents. It is my hope that the research will reduce racial ignorance and create awareness for some white people of how racism sometimes unknowingly uttered or shown can dehumanise and affect the well-being of other racial groups. The research should also change the mindset and strategies that child protection organisations have been using when dealing with Afro-origin parents, bearing in mind the struggles they have and the inherited parenting skills that can be enhanced and moulded, but should not be demonised. All this will reduce the challenges of Afro-origin parents raising children in Sweden and enhance their socio-psychological as well as economic well-being and the quality of their parenting overall. It is my hope that this work will challenge scholars to continue to explore and explicate the factors that promote the successful navigation of this difficult but important process.

6.3 Recommendations

There is a great need for diversity in different decision-making and legislative positions that correlates with the overall population, at international as well as national level; for example, the two per cent of Afro-origin people in Sweden should have two per cent representation in Parliament. This will ensure that the voices of discriminated-against people are heard and taken into account, in both policy- and law-making.

Policymakers should pay more attention to the structural and institutional ways that racial discrimination and inequality operate, and tackle racism from that angle.

Representation of Afro-origin people in all professions, particularly social services, and adopting a holistic approach and understanding of their backgrounds, may restore trust in public office and the liberty to freely use those services without fear.

Professionals need to be taught about racial bias, and about how to handle racial conflict, for example at schools.

There is great need for social services organisations in Sweden that deal with racism to offer counselling services to the victims of racism, to help with legal advice and reporting racism experiences, to teach parents how to instil resilience without instilling hatred for other races in their children, to offer free services, and spaces where children can just be children and have fun, to ease the burden on single parents and on their children. Also, to teach white people what and how one can be, to avoid being racist.

Though the Swedish government is doing a great job with integration programmes, there is a need to extend this to parenting not focusing on immigrants only, but on all parents which will increase mingling of parents and small children, the appreciation of different parenting styles and cultures, and encouraging learning from each other rather than only stepping in when so-called bad parenting is suspected. This will help penetrate the visible but impermeable wall between blacks and whites, and possibly reduce stereotypes.

As suggested by Renzaho and Vignjevic (2011), Afro-origin parents require culturally appropriate parenting skills from interventions to overcome parenting challenges in individualistic cultures.

6.4 Suggestions for future research

Bearing in mind that most of the racism experiences of the children in this study happen in schools, it would be interesting to look at how educators can use educational tools such as pedagogics and praxis in a bid to start the deconstruction of race and racism. This is in line with Freire (2000), who says that education can be a liberator tool that can transform oppressive social structures.

Borderline negligence in Swedish preschools in relation to their Afro-origin children could be investigated. A number of participants in this study highlighted some form of negligence occurring, though it is unclear whether these are instances of racism or just negligence.

Since the study shows that Afro-origin people are either overqualified for their jobs, unemployed for some time or have part-time jobs, which affects benefits, pensions and social capital, it would be interesting to study accumulative transgenerational poverty, looking at the impact of racism on the socio-economic well-being of Afro-origin people and generations to come.

Racism and professionalism could be investigated, looking at the professionals who work with children and families, e.g. nurses, logopedic, social services and teachers.

Some of the parents in the study pointed out that the media is instrumental as a tool in black parenting; for example, the way the Black Lives Matter movement spread around the globe like a veld fire. It would be interesting to research vicarious racism and parenting in Sweden.

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APPENDIX 1. INFORMATION SHEET

Invitation to participate in the research project titled- Racism and parenting- looking at the experiences and resilience of Afro-origin immigrant parents raising children in Gothenburg

04/ 02/ 2020

Dear research participant.

This letter serves to kindly requesting your participation in the research project which is a part of the education in the International Master's program in Social Work at the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. This research aims at investigating and develop an in-depth understanding of Afro-origin immigrants parents experiences of racism towards themselves and their children in Sweden and how they deal with it.

The reason for undertaking this research project is because so little is known about the topic. Since you have personal experience about this subject, I regard you as an expert who can provide me with valuable information about it. Should you agree to participate in this research project, I would like to have one (1) interview with you, at a time and place that would suit you. This interview will most likely be between 45 to 90 minutes. If necessary, arrangements will be made with you for follow-up interviews. During the interview(s) you will be asked Biographical questions and other questions related to racism and parenting (see sample questions attached)

In order to ensure that our project meets the ethical requirements for a good research we promise to adhere to the following principles:

•Interviewees in the project will be given information about the purpose of the project.

•Participation is voluntary, if you agree to take part, you still have the right to change your mind at any time during the study and withdraw from the study, you also have the right to decline answering questions you are not comfortable to answer

•The collected data will be handled confidentially and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it. In analysing some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized. After finishing the project, the data will be destroyed. The data we collect will only be used in this project.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for us to document what is said during the interview and also helps us in the continuing work with the project

If I see that the shared information has left you feeling emotionally upset, or anxious, I am required to refer you to a counsellor for debriefing or counselling (if you agree).

You have the right to ask questions about the study at any time. If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you are welcome to contact me or my supervisor (e-mail addresses below).

Student Mildrate Mukanjari Supervisor- Karin berg

gusmukami@student.gu.se karin.berg.3@socwork.gu.se

If you do agree to participate in this study, I would like you to sign the consent form that follows.

Yours sincerely Mildrate Mukanjari

Student Researcher

APPENDIX 2. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, ----------, agree of my free will to participate in this research topic, which focuses on the experiences of racism and resilience of Afro-origin immigrant parents, raising children in Gothenburg, Sweden.

I understand that the information that I will share will be used for research purposes only and that my identity will not be made known in any research report or publication. I am also aware of the fact that I can withdraw at any time during the study without incurring any penalty

□I am available on ----------

□Call me on …… or □ email me to schedule the interview.

_____ Signature of research participant Date: / / ----------

APPENDIX 3. INTERVIEW GUIDE

Demographics

1. Can you tell me about yourself?
2. What gender do you identify as?

a. □ Female

b. □ Male

c. □ Other

3. Can you tell me about your family background?
4. How old are your children? Can you tell me a bit about them?
5. How long have you been in Sweden/ Gothenburg? (as a parent)

Parents experiences

6. What is racism to you?
7. Have you ever experienced racism in Gothenburg? If yes, please give examples and details (where, from who? - what did you do/How was it dealt with?)
8. In what ways does your racism experience affect you?

Child/children experiences

9. Have your child/children ever experienced any racism in Gothenburg? If yes, please give examples and details (where, from who? - what did you do/How was it dealt with? How do you feel about the way it was dealt with?
10. In what ways do you think this has/ might affect your child/children?

Parenting

11. Can you describe the relationship you have with your children?

12. how have you or would protect your children against racism?

13. have you ever talked about the issue of racism to your child? if yes

- how?
- what triggered the topic?
- at what age?
- how helpful was it?

- If not, when do you plan to talk to them about it, why?

14. What the ideal model behaviour you would want your children to exhibit, when dealing with racism?
15. In what ways are you influencing how your children become.
16. in what ways does racism affect your parenting style here in Gothenburg.

How to deal with racism

17. How have you reacted to racism (not only directed towards you/black people)? Did you for example stay quiet, discuss or notify the university?
18. What do you do to ensure that you protect your children from racism and discrimination?
19. Are you able to influence how other people see and deal with racism? Is your voice heard?

Challenges

20. What are the challenges you face in protecting children against racism?
21. How do you deal with challenges that come with black parenting in Sweden?
22. What hinders your will, to fully thwart or deal with racism?

Reflections

23. Based on your experiences what do you think should be done to help Afro-origin immigrants-parents or any parent who faces racism? by who?
24. What do you think should be done to reduce racism and its impact in Gothenburg or Sweden as a whole?