In-betweenship:

New Swedish identities in the making?

- A qualitative study about Swedishness and being in-between

Abstract

This paper takes an approach sprung from practices where identities are formed and examines the experiences of being in the borderland of Swedishness. The research is placed in a Swedish context aiming at understanding people who has often or at times gotten their (Swedish) identity or origin questioned. By conducting interviews, testimonies from people who in various aspects navigate the space of betweenness is presented and their experiences of "Othering". Different aspects of identity and origin are brought forward and discussed. How race, ethnicity and identity is constructed and the meaning of it for those effected. The thesis is contextualized within the theoretical field of critical whiteness and race studies where concepts like race, ethnicity and whiteness are problematized. Questions about what role skin-colour and origin has in a society who claims to be post-racial is discussed.

Key words: In-Betweenship, Race, Ethnicity, Whiteness, Swedishness, Colour-blindness

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

The narrative of Sweden as a nation is produced by stories of Sweden as tolerant and separated from conflict and colonisation and further a self-image of neutrality. Sweden has also had one of the fastest transformations in the Western world from homogeneity to heterogeneity concerning the population composition, due to substantial immigration of different kind (Hübinette 2019, 16). However, Sweden also have a long history and inherit ideas of separating and classifying people into belonging to the nation or not based on skin-color, origin, ethnicity or race. An historical example of this is the institute of racial biology that was situated in Uppsala where racial biological research was conducted until around 1960 (Wasniowski, 2018).

Together with pressure from the anti-racist movement in the country, solidarity with the "third world" and a colour-blind agenda, Sweden did a complete turnaround and distanced itself from the concept of race in the 1980-1990. The concept was systematically removed from both official and legal documents and at times ethnicity used as an alternative to race. However, by officially removing the concept race and embracing a colour-blind agenda we thereby now lack a language that enables us to articulate and understand the experiences of those who are discriminated upon based on the colour of their skin. It also dismisses the stories and experiences of "new" identities and ethnicities. The motivation for starting to talk in racial terms is because physical appearance and traits does have an effect on how people are treated and approached.

Today, Sweden is a heterogeneous country inhabited by people that are "hard to define" or categorise along binary racial categories. People that most certainly can inhabit a Swedish ethnicity and nationality but by others treated and categorised as non-swedes due to bodily markers, i.e. people who are mixed race, children of immigrants (sometimes referred to as second and third generation immigrants) or transnational adoptees. This is also apparent due to a strongly accustomed idea about the correlation between Swedishness and whiteness. In public debate the conversation concerning identity and belonging are starting to take up more space but is within academia however understudied. However, opinions and new concept like betweenship, third culture, diaspora and creolization to mention a few is spreading and a questioning against the fixed, is unfolding.

In this thesis I want to analyse and shed light on the experiences of those who fall under the category of being "in-between". I also want to highlight the importance of bodies and how they operate in this context and why a discussion around race is of purpose. What are the respondent's experiences like and how do they understand and relate to concepts like Swedishness, race or ethnicity and how do they experience being in the borderland of Swedishness navigating the landscape of betweenship?

1.1 Aim and research questions

The aim of this research is to explore and describe how Swedishness is understood in relation to betweenship. In the thesis, I analyse experiences articulated by people who find themselves navigating the space of betweenship and in the concluding reflections I discuss how the colour-blind and anti-racist approach in Sweden relates to these experiences. The following questions guide the research:

- *How does persons experiencing betweenship define Swedishness?*
- *How is (Swedish) identity shaped in the spaces of betweenship?*
- *Could this identity formation contribute to an expansion of the concept Swedishness, if so, how?*

1.2 Relevance to global studies

Due to globalization and migration, people more often identify and share a sense of belonging to multiple places. The recognition of peoples urge to expand the concept of identity makes this subject important. The lines between national and ethnical borders are becoming more blurred and we therefore need new concepts and explanations to understand the present. It is also of importance because we can see a wave of resistance and lack of tolerance towards multiculturalism and an aspiration to move towards something purer and more united. When boundaries are set for unifying it also excludes and the "rules" concerning who can identify as a Swede or not are set only by those that are able to "pass". In affirmation to the current field of study I also recognise a gap in the research which concerns how people who identify with the notion of *betweenship* understands and describes Swedishness. The experiences of this particular group of people who are born and/or raised in Sweden but in different ways in appearance deviates from the "Swedish norm" but that culturally and ethnically should be referred to as Swedish is understudied. This group often lodge in-between groups when a

discussion about Swedes and non-Swedes occur. A reason for this could be that in Sweden we lack a language that allows a discussion regarding Swedishness in relation to skin-colour. It is also of importance to shed light on this group´s experiences since Sweden is becoming one of the most multi-ethnic countries in the Western world.

2 Previous research

2.1 Betweenship

In Sweden, the concept of "betweenship" (mellanförskap) has been present within popular culture discourse for some time but has not been as established within academia and research. Not much research has been done on the subject from a Swedish perspective and what has been written about the notion of betweenship is either theoretical or concept explanatory and not from the subjective point of view. Voices from those experiencing operating the space that exists in-between cultures and identities is clearly understudied. The concept betweenship in Sweden has been an important tool to raise awareness concerning concepts like Swedishness, race and whiteness (Arbouz 2015, 169). Further it has also helped to reformulate and question ideas about identity and binary race categories (Ibid, 172).

Tobias Hübinette is a scholar in Sweden whose work is inspired by critical whiteness research and prevails in that area of research in a Swedish context. Hübinette has written articles and edited anthologies on the matter and in the anthology *Om ras och vithet i det samtida Sverige, 2012 (On race and whiteness in contemporary Sweden)* various authors discuss different aspects of betweenship. In the anthology the scholar Daphne Arbouz describes the space of betweenship as being culturally homeless and that the core meaning of the concept is to always be having to navigate and negotiate your origins (Arbouz 2012, 164). The concept betweenship in Sweden has also created adjacent concepts and constructivist approaches concerning identity and one example of that is the notion of *creolization* (Ibid, 170). This "new" wave of identity creation is described in the report *Kreol: ett spöke går runt i orten, (Creole: a ghost walks around in the suburb)* from 2015, which describes a vulnerability rooted in processes of racialization, racism and origin. The report explains that the concept *Creol* is used to describe a group of people in Sweden that are, in one way or another, connected to different parts of the world due to globalization and migration. The original meaning of the word has arisen from the juncture of languages and cultures and with a strong connection to colonialism (Landehag & Tasin 2015, 9). The group shares the experiences of being racialized as non-white but since they live and operate in Sweden, they also to some degree incorporate whiteness and/or Swedishness (Ibid 5). The report describes an understanding of identity as non-fixed and boundary-crossing. The report is based on fictive stories of testimonial character inspired by notes, recordings and conversations that is outplayed at the Stockholm based organization "Megafonen" (Ibid, 7).

Catrin Lundström is a scholar that has done research in relation to betweenship, origins and diaspora. In Lundströms dissertation *Svenska Latinas: ras klass och kön i svenskhetens geografi, 2007 (Swedish Latinas: race, class and gender in the geography of Swedishness)* the author has through interviews with young women with Latin American decent in Sweden investigated how mechanisms of race, class and gender operates in an intersectional manner. Lundström departs from the perspective where the interaction of race is understood in relation to other social markers like gender, sexuality and class (Lundström, 2007). Lundström discusses the different positions and how they affect one another. In the dissertation Lundström asks the question; *Who is allowed to belong to the Swedish nation and under what conditions?* (Lundström 2007, 12). Further Lundström describes how Swedishness is connected to specific racialized ideas and how some are included or excluded from that communion that is rooted in a specific kind of whiteness (Ibid, 20). The women in Lundström´s study is addressing notions of a "temporary Swedishness" where the notion of "passing" as a Swede is always fragile (Ibid, 98). The women's testimonies concerning identity also surrounds the borderland of cultural imbrication (Ibid, 95).

2.2 Critical whiteness studies

Critical whiteness theories and concepts concerning race and whiteness has been developed in the United States and the Anglo-Saxon part of the world. The basis of the field derives from a cultural and historical analysis of the construction of race, whiteness and privilege. Predecessors within the field like Ruth Frankenberg and Peggy McIntosh both discusses the importance of unpacking and making white privilege visible. They also challenge the idea that racism and discrimination is an issue that white people has no part in and an issue that non-white people ought to deal with themselves (McIntosh 1988, Frankenberg 1993).

Another purpose of Frankenberg's work within critical whiteness studies, specifically with the work *White women race matter: a social construction of race*, *1993* was to make whiteness visible in order to make it easier to see and understand the effects of racialization (Frankenberg 1993, 11). By including whiteness into the process of racialization removes the idea that ethnicity and race is something that only non-white people possess (Ibid, 18). In the study, Frankenberg interviews white women about their conceptions about race and how they analyse constructions of race out of their position. Unlike other scholars within the same field of study, Frankenberg conducts the research out of the position of whiteness and privilege and

not the usual other way around. From this Frankenberg unpacks ideas about the construction of whiteness and how what is considered "Western" is produced (Ibid, 16). Frankenberg further draws parallels to the construct of gender and reflects upon the idea that like all are gendered we are also all racialized.

The purpose with the field of study is accordingly to note that the category white has a history of being socially invented/constructed and also volatile, meaning that the demarcation for the category is unclear and always changing. However, ideas about whiteness is evidently consolidated within our societies (Mattson 2005, 142). The field of critical whiteness studies aims at critically address how forms of discrimination and power imbalances circles around a created normative category of whiteness (Ibid 142). Since the category *white* is something that has been historically created and shaped it is also inconstant which is important to acknowledge while conducting research within this field (Ibid, 143).

The concepts concerning ideas about betweenship and identity is often discussed in relation to critical whiteness theories. Critical whiteness studies and race studies as research area in Sweden is starting to become more established but is still hard to place into a specific discipline, comparing to other parts of the world (Hübinette 2017, 10). The reason for that has according to scholar Tobias Hübinette to do with the Swedish aversion towards using the term race and the insistence about Sweden being a colour-blind anti-racist nation (Ibid, 11). The term race is also very politically charged and connected to a historical heritage that incites strong emotions (Hübinette 2017, 247) and in 1998 the Swedish government recommended that the word race preferably was to be removed from all legal and official documents (Brännström 2018, 21). Therefore, to be able to apply the concepts and theories of the field of critical whiteness studies into a Swedish contexts one need to understand the historical differences and distant connection to colonialization as well the strong connection between Swedishness and whiteness and further the emergence of that in relation to the nation and its formation (Mattson 2005, 144).

There is however a consensus among scholars within the field of research that concepts like whiteness and race are useful and applicable also within a Swedish context (Hübinette 2017, 12). The field of research also agrees upon the importance to study the logic of whiteness, due to the intimate relationship between whiteness and Swedishness (Jonsson Malm & Osanami Törngren, 2018). This becomes clear in Sayaka Osanami Törngrens dissertation *Love ain´t*

got no color, *2011* where the author discusses the dynamics of interracial relationships and how a majority of Swedes view them. Through surveys and interviews the scholar discusses how race is perceived and understood in relation to interracial marriages. The result showed that despite that the majority of those included in the study was in favour of entering an interracial relationship there was a clear preference on what specific origin and skin-color the person should have (Osanami Törngren, 2011).

There have been other studies done in Sweden where normative Swedishness has been analysed and often in contrast to the group "immigrants" (often referred to as a homogenous group). However not many scholars use concepts like race or whiteness but prefer using words like racism, ethnicity or background. Nor has there been many studies on people who exist in the grey areas, outside the binary categories. In the article *Does race matter in Sweden, 2015* Sayaka Osanami Törngren confirms the image of Sweden's difficulties in talking about racial differences and that it is rooted in the notion of colour-blindness and ideas concerning equality (Osanami Törngren 2015, 127). In the article the author demonstrates how the term ethnicity and culture in many ways have replaced the notion of race and is commonly used when reasons for discrimination is analysed (Ibid, 127). Also, in the report *Bortom vi och dem, 2005 (Beyond us and them)* Katarina Mattson stresses the difficulties with definitive definitions when it comes to race and Swedishness. Positions like skin-colour and nationality are constantly changing and is most often defined by those highest in the hierarchy (Mattson 2005, 148).

Deriving from the field of race studies in the Anglo-Saxon part of the world Tony Sandset has explored the notion of mixed-race identities, race and ethnicity in a Scandinavian/Norwegian context. Sandset bases his analysis on official textual documents and interviews with people of mixed-race backgrounds in Norway (Sandset, 2019). Sandset claims that despite (or due to) a widespread colour-blind discourse in the Scandinavian region, phenotypical appearance like skin-color and other physical traits still does matter (Sandset 2019, 3). Categories of mixed race and hybrid identities are understudied according to the author, whereas his aim is to move beyond binary race categories and shed light on identities that fall outside or in-between the borders of purity (Ibid, 7,19). Sandset continues by unpacking the concepts of race and ethnicity and problematises the distinct shift from race (biology) to ethnicity (culture) in public discourse and official documents. The author claims that the concepts should instead be analysed as dynamically interlinked (Ibid, 128) and that the two concepts often fail to

explain identities that are mixed and/or that it latches people to specific subjectivities. The concept hybridity is explained by the author as an active process of cultures merging and mixing (Ibid, 20) and that it can also be used as an analytical lens to understand the mixed-race identities and its creation (Ibid, 7). The author gives examples to why the colour-blind agenda, which is a widespread idea in the Scandinavian region, is not valid. Despite that the concept of race have been officially eliminated, other words that has clear racial abbreviations like ethnicity, racialization and non-western are still being used (Ibid, 135). In the racialization process the reading of the body in relation to skin-color is a self-evident part of it. As a part of this process your skin-color becomes the narrator of your cultural and ethnical belonging and identity which is often connected to a stereotypical image that determines a person margin. Despite the reluctance to speak in terms of race the book highlights that colour (race) still matters when it comes to how one is perceived and treated (Ibid, 2019).

Postcolonial studies and critical whiteness theories and its adjacent concepts like race, ethnicity and racialization enables putting words on experiences that previously have been silenced or even deemed unauthentic. The theories sheds light on the position of betweenship and the concepts that forms and resonates with this position. These concepts are visualised and established in relation to people's experiences of betweenship, concepts that in a sense are invisible to others outside this position.

3 Theoretical framework and concepts

In the thesis I draw upon the approach in the theoretical framework that frames concepts as social constructions, meaning that the following theories and concepts are non-fixed, inconsistent and socially and historically created, dependable of the given context. The following rather extensive presentation has two reasons. One is to establish a conceptual and theoretical framework of the thesis to guide the analysis. The second is to make the reader familiar with the position of betweenship and make it visible.

3.1 The postcolonial field of study

Debates concerning Swedish values, national identity and what being a swede really is, has minted public debate in Sweden for some time now and these concepts are frequently debated, contested and revised. Sweden is today a diverse country inhabited by people with backgrounds from all corners of the world. Thus, it is not uncommon to find people with fluid racial identities. Postcolonialism can be descried as a critical perspective that challenges dominant historical ideas and perspectives of identity, humankind and historical events. Scholars within postcolonial theory does not only have a critical approach to knowledge as we know it but also how knowledge is produced and by whom.

The postcolonial research field is characterised by ideas of "the Other" and the construction of identity. However, the field of postcolonialism is wide and it is therefore important to understand that the postcolonial experience and expression is also dependent on various social structures and geographical contexts. Postcolonialism should therefore not be seen as something static but rather be used as a tool to view the world. Alternatively, as a process towards an emancipation from colonial discourse (Loomba 2015, 38). The perspective of postcolonialism also aims at understanding and explaining how and why stereotypes are created and enforced and how identity can be shaped in a more global world (Eriksson, Eriksson Baaz & Thörn, 1999). The actual word postcolonialism does indicate that there is now a *post/past* colonialism, however the perspective aims at describing how societies has been and still are affected and shaped by past colonial rule and discourse (Ibid, 16).

Critical whiteness and race studies are sprung out of the postcolonial discourse and aims at analysing how ideas about whiteness are created, constructed and enforced. The field of research expanded in the 1980 in the United States and is concerned with and critically reflects on what it means to be a part of the white majority population (Hübinette et al 2012, 16). Through this, it is studied how different races positions themselves in relation to each other (Ibid, 16). Whiteness cannot only be analysed in relation to bodily markers but should also be seen as different social practices and identity construction i.e. there is a way to incorporate and embody whiteness without necessarily objectively pass as white.

Like the postcolonial discipline critical whiteness and race studies are critical of old colonial ideas about groups or cultures and how people are depicted in both media and popular culture. Antiquated ideas about different minorities are consolidated through these channels and are then associated with various attributes. Further it is about that certain groups are explicitly associated to a specific notion due to that only a few very specific stories dominate when that specific group is brought up (Hübinette 2012, 26). This leads to a very narrow image of how certain groups are understood and interpreted which has real societal effects (Ibid, 26-27).

3.1.2 Whiteness

Often when the concept race is discussed it is more common to talk about non-white bodies, as if white people do not have a race/colour and exists as the invisible norm (Osanami Törngren 2015, 128). This intimate relationship has roots in the postcolonial history of racial categorisation in for example Sweden (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 3) and the construction of Swedes as belonging to a higher ranked race.

In Ruth Frankenbergs work *White women, race matters: the social construction of whiteness, 1993* the author aims at making whiteness visible. Instead of researching and problematising *people of colour* in relation to race Frankenberg aims at analysing whiteness as a political and economic category of privilege (Frankenberg 1993, 18). If one claims that white bodies likewise are racialized it is also easier to see that racism is reproduced in relation to whiteness and not as something external that by chance happens to people of colour (Ibid, 6). Whiteness therefore needs to be recognised as being historically reproduced in relation to domination, which is also a reason for its unmarked status. By unfolding the discourse on whiteness and by using and naming concepts like *whiteness*, shifts the focus and forces people to see their own position (Ibid, 6).

Sarah Ahmed also discusses the impacts of making whiteness visible by challenging its invisibility without falling into the trap of reproducing the notion of whiteness as an essential category (Ahmed 2007, 149). By unfolding the position of whiteness is meant that whiteness is also an effect of racialization and thereby embodies is given position. Ahmed refers to the category white as "worldly" and says that bodies are created in histories of colonialism and therefore non-white bodies become deviant (Ibid, 153). Some bodies also become deviant because of whiteness unmarked invisible status (Ibid, 157) However, Ahmed emphasises that whiteness is only invisible for those who embody it and rather an obvious privilege for non-white people (Ahmed 2011, 202). Further Ahmed is critical towards the notion within whiteness studies claiming that white is a colour like every other colour. Because with that explanation, that white people are to be included in the spectrum of "all colours," claims that also white people are prone to be exposed to discrimination based on their colour (Ibid, 222). Therefore, it is of importance that the dimension of power and historical processes that has led to today's climate is considered.

However, all racial categories are not static and change over time and are dependent on the context. Some bodies that are racialized as white in one part of the world might not be in a Swedish context. Also, some bodies can more efficiently incorporate whiteness and in extension into Swedishness. Further, some groups (for example, Finnish and travellers but also Southern and Eastern Europeans) that during the 20th century were considered racially deviant are today very much incorporated into Swedishness. This shows that the Swedish racial discourse was not solely based on skin-colour but also on differences when it came to class, religion and language (Hübinette 2019, 69). Another factor was also that despite that members of these groups had the "right" skin-colour, and self-identified as white, they failed to attain the specific "Swedish whiteness" which pinpoints the intimate relationship between Swedishness and whiteness (Ibid, 61).

3.1.3 Colour-blindness

Another notion that is important in the discourse on race, ethnicity and identity in Sweden is colour-blindness. Tobias Hübinette describes the Swedish colour-blindness as very specific for Sweden. The reason for that is rooted in the way that Sweden has handled the notion on race on most levels (officially, culturally, publicly and academically) which is very specific

for Sweden (Hübinette 2019, 64). The emphasis in the Swedish debate on race since the 1990-2000 has been on that race does not matter as much in Sweden as in other Western countries and that it is a stale concept that should be erased both officially and publicly (Ibid, 64). However, scholars within critical whiteness studies makes distinctions between *anti-racialism* and *anti-racism* where anti-racialism aims at removing and erasing a disturbing concept and parlance and all in all reject any form of racial categorisation. What that approach often misses is getting to the root cause of racism and discrimination whilst anti-racism aims at abolishing racial discrimination whilst maintaining a critical stance towards the concept race (Ibid 65). Hübinette says that the colour-blind agenda in Sweden goes in line with the first mentioned notion of anti-racialism (Ibid, 65). By clearly proclaiming that "in Sweden we are anti-racist" does not mean that the country is free from racist structures and can instead by statements like that preserve racism and its systems rather than abolishing them (Ahmed 2011, 215).

However, colour-blindness has become a more common stance in the Western world due to a more individualistic and ahistorical stance where the understanding of power structures is decreasing and discriminatory events people face is therefore brushed of as individual problems (Hübinette 2019, 66). In relation to this, achievements of non-white people are often brought forward as positive examples, showing that diversity in our societies has erased white privilege and racism has been overcome (Ahmed 2007, 164). To see beyond race before racism is gone is according to Sara Ahmed a big mistake and based on a utopic image of the world. Further Ahmed claims that if the anti-racist movement cannot make their manifestation evolve into real action and change, then it might be too early to claim that we have moved beyond race and skin-colour (Ahmed 2011, 226).

3.1.4 Race and ethnicity
Race as a concept is contested and cautiously used, especially within the field of research in Sweden. The word is often used within quotation marks or sometimes replaced by the adjective's; racism or racist (Hübinette 2019, 54). There is also great variation on how the concept is used and understood depending on region and context. Despite the general opinion about race not having any essential value but that it is solely based on ideas and attributes that is socially constructed (Molina 2005, 95) the word is still connected to a stigma and the need to distant oneself from the word is strong (Sandset 2019, 130). The concept race in this thesis will emanate from the postcolonial understanding of the concept and it will be used unmarked

throughout the thesis. This is to emphasise that race is a category that still matters and have real effects on people's lives. However, it is also important to reflect upon the meaning of the concept and what it might imply.

At times the concept race is replaced with closely linked concepts that are considered more neutral and less charged like; religion, origin, culture or ethnicity. However, some scholars within the field implies that those concepts are minted by shortcoming. Race as concept has been used to divide humans into certain categories. Sprung out of the colonial history of division where the white man was considered to be above all other humans based on the ability to conquest and on various technological solutions. Ideas about the differences between people was then connected to bodily differences resulting in that certain qualities connected to certain bodies were essentialised. A consequence of this conception is that people act the way they do because of their racial belonging which are ideas that one can see signs and consequences of up until this day (Azar 2001, 62). However, over time the concept has had different ambiguous meanings that has shifted from having biological scientific (essentialist) value to a concept that most scholars agree on being socially and culturally constructed (Hylland Eriksen 2002, 5). As mentioned previously many scholars within the field of postcolonial and critical race theory research suggest that it is of importance to start talking about race to for instance be able to make racist discrimination visible (Hübinette et al 2012, 17).

In the book *Color that Matters, 2019,* Tony Sandset argues that despite that the debate about ethnicity has been about "cultural stuff" within ethnic groups is not solely about that. The scholar claims that ethnicity also has corporal aspects that needs to be considered and that we cannot see a clear shift from the concept of race *to* ethnicity. Instead the two concepts should be viewed as part of the same coin and as a continuum of each other (Sandset 2019, 128-129). The concept ethnicity has also been used (sometimes degradingly) to describe "the Other". Since the concept started gaining ground it has often been associated with ethnocentrism, which means putting one's own "culture" as a premise. This has resulted in an image that white or Western people or cultures are the norm and does not have an ethnicity, which on the other hand is something that people of colour are ascribed to (Wikström 2009, 26).

What race and ethnicity has in common is that both concepts are used to divide and categorise people (Wikström 2009, 25) which only becomes essential when put in relation to something else. The division and categorisation between groups and people also tend to get different meaning depending on context and can vary in being racial, ethnic or national. Those

meanings are also dependent on if they are subjectively formulated or objectively imposed and described (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992, 4-5). A divergence between race and ethnicity is that race is seen as a more static objective phenomena and something that others ascribe on you whilst ethnicity aims at cultural communion and self-identification (Wikström 2009, 41). Although both concepts are connected to possible and sometimes specific assumptions and stereotypes about persons and group and it is therefore that the postcolonial perspective considers and focuses on the outcomes/results of racial and ethnic categorisation (Wikström 2009, 41).

When it comes to race it is not merely divided into binary categories, like other identity markers like (man/woman, homosexual/heterosexual, working class/middle class etc) but rather one person can have "non-compatible" racial and ethnic belongings (Hübinette et al 2012, 21). One's race can also be reinforced or diminish depending on other identity categories like gender or class. Race is also something that is "done" or performed through different channels like language, popular culture or in media (Ibid, 22-25).

3.1.5 Racialization

To be able to understand the impact that racial categories can have on people's life it is vital to analyse the process of racialization. The word *racialized ("*Rasifierad" in Swedish) is often passed down by word of mouth and used as a synonym with being discriminated on based on skin-colour or the same as a non-white/person of colour. It is important to note that there is a difference between the word *racialized* (rasifierad) and *racialization* which refers to the external process where one is ascribed to a certain racial category. Despite the fact that white people go through processes of racialization but would maybe not be referred to as racialized, which (in contexts of popular culture) equals being racialized as non-white.

However, there are different opinions concerning the implication and the inflection of the concept, but the primal meaning of the concept aims at understanding the process of categorisation based on associations, essential traits and ideas ascribed to people and groups (Molina 2005, 95). The concept of racialization can be seen as a result of the elimination of the word *race* and the shift to today's more common words like ethnicity, non-Western, culture or skin-colour (Hübinette 2019, 54). When talking about people that are racialized and only referring to non-white people can also be explained by the neutrality, invisibility and superiority of whiteness. The concept racialized/racialization can also be seen as an example of a shift in language.

The concept of racialization enables and opens up for a conversation about racial discrimination (Molina 2005, 96) in a context that is characterised by colour-blindness and a prevailing assumption of racist structures (Hübinette, 2019) where conversations about race are difficult. Scholar Irene Molina says that the process of racialization should be viewed as two intertwined processes that enables each other. One that refers to the racialization of people and one of societies, systems and structures (Molina 2015, 97). Nations in Europe, Sweden included, has a long history of ingrained racialization within society. In Sweden, race and the construction of it needs to be viewed with an historical lens and is highly associated with creating and shaping the nation state where some races were considered superior and ought to be preserved (Ibid, 99-100).

Despite that the general position is that race is a social construction and that there are no genetical differences between people that can explain cultural differences, racial differences and racism are very much ingrained in public and social institutions. Race has the therefore in many contexts been replaced with ethnicity which has led to a diminishing racial structure and its impacts in society (Molina 2015, 103-104). The concept of race is therefore needed to understand and to make power relations visible. Further, to be able to analyse to what extent the underlying and unconscious racism effects people and societies, theories on race are inevitable (Ibid, 104).

One sector where racialization of systems and societies are clear is within the housing segregation in Sweden, which is one of the most expansive among the OECD countries. Different social political practices have resulted in a racially marked segregation in Sweden (Molina 2015, 106). Similar racialized practices are found in many other public spaces and markets in Sweden like in the labour market and in entertainment and night life environment where discrimination of certain groups of people are normalized (Ibid, 106-107). Molina says that racism is very much ingrained with in the systems in Sweden and it is only by acknowledging and make it visible that one is able to change it. Processes of racialization permeates a range of sectors in Sweden and maintains differences and ascribes attributes to groups that are highly affected by racial symbols which in turn enables, justifies and maintains oppression (Ibid, 109.)

Racialization can be compared to "gendering" where a person or an object is described with a gender or sex and thereby given meaning connected to that. Scholar Therese Svensson is critical towards when studies on race and ethnicity solely studies the "underprivileged" group, in this case, non-white people because it signals that only non-white people go through the

process of racialization. Svensson therefore opposes the notion that only people of colour are the only ones that appears to be racialized. Instead the scholar calls for a rephrasing of the concept racialization to *"marked"* and "unmarked racialization" where the difference lays within the differences in *how* people are affected differently by racist treatment due to the "kind of" racialization that person is exposed to (Svensson, 2014).

3.1.6 Exotification and stereotypes

When it comes to the intersection between race and gender it is evident that gender has been used to oversexualize or desexualize some racial groups more than others (Hübinette et al 2012, 22) also sometimes referred to with the concept *exotification*. It can be both people and places that are referred to as more exotic and exiting than others. On an individual level this can be perceived as something positive, however it is often highly connected to a colonial discourse about "the Other" (Lundström 2012, 208-209). These stereotypical and exotifying assumptions only gets meaning in certain contexts, for example a person or heritage that is considered different in Sweden could be the norm in other parts of the world. However, some ideas about certain groups or people are more universal. Studies show that in societies where traditional gender roles are clear, shows that men who deviates from the norm are often "demasculated" and feminized, and that same logic can also be used towards men that are seen as a threat (Hübinette & Tigervall 2012, 150). Align with the notion of race and sexuality, hypersexuality is widely connected to non-Western women who historically have been described with dehumanizing words like primitive, animalistic and hyper-sexual (Lundström 2012, 205).

The notion of exotification can sometimes be difficult to place within the box of discrimination due to the way that it is conveyed and that it is highly subjective. Since exotification is harder to pinpoint as discrimination, because of its complexity and sometimes non-hostile character, Lundström emphasises that there is no point in trying to determine whether or not exotifying comments are positive. The effect of it is that it decreases the subjective space of the individual and places people in narrow stereotypical boxes (Lundström 2012, 210-211). The notion of exotification sprung from how groups are represented continues to shape discourses about certain groups and people (Hübinette & Tigervall 2012, 139). How groups are represented (in the context of the Western world) and what kind of images that are sent out, follows the logic of racialization, where non-white people are ascribed specific attributes connected to ideas about race and ethnicity.

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In Sara Ahmeds book *Strange encounters*, *2000* the scholar discusses how the "strange body" is formed in relation to post-coloniality. The book discusses how the process of creating a stranger's body into making it more dangerous than other bodies. The scholar also dismisses that it is *any* body that we simply do not know but rather that some *(*specific) bodies that beforehand are alleged as the stranger. Align with the notion of colour-blindness and multiculturalism the scholar suggest that it is in the welcoming and acceptance of the stranger that it is actually produced (Ahmed 2000, 4). By accepting that the stranger exists the image that some bodies "are" strangers is upheld (Ahmed 2000, 4). In other words, the stranger as essential and as something that in relation to nation building and belonging places the stranger in-between, not belonging here or there (Ibid, 5). The stranger can also be something that is consumed in regard to food, activities and clothing. By consuming the "ethnic other" it can simultaneously increase and decrease the borders between races and cultures (Ahmed 2011, 37-38).

3.2 Identity: returning to in-betweenship

In Western discourse, identity is described as being something that only subordinated people has or "practices". Identity politics is also often discussed as being something that only concerns women, non-binary or non-white people. Identity means different things for different people in different contexts. It can be connected to race, nationality, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. For instance, in the Western world white maleness is seen as the norm and in absence of both ethnicity, race and identity. When it comes to identity it is often framed being based on dichotomies, either you belong to/identify with certain categories or not. However, when it comes to many of these main categorises the division is difficult to clarify on where to draw the line and why. Despite this, there is still a strong urge in categorising people, both objectively and subjectively.

In relation to race there are a growing number of people who do not fit the given categories and/or fall in-between, challenging the historical notion of racial purity. Also, the question of identity has been more on the agenda due to globalization and rising migration creating new forms of identity and diaspora groups (Brah 2012, 26). The space of betweenship can be viewed as an expression for these "new" and/or mixed identities.

Within postcolonial studies and in line with societies becoming less homogenous a concept that exemplifies being in-between is the concept of *third space* which is a space that has been created through exclusion and inclusion from current normative rooms (Arbouz 2012, 38). Another concept that the Postcolonial thinker Homi K. Bhabha has discussed in relation to this is *hybridity* which refers to identities sprung from or shaped within these third spaces. Both concepts refer to how "new" identities are formed in multicultural societies and spaces and further challenges and disrupts the notion of homogenisation and static identities. The concept of hybridity is often used in relation to the idea of a blend of cultural identities where the body and/or skin-colour is often left out of the equation (Sandset 2019, 8). The re-focus of the body, skin-colour or race also unpacks and challenges the idea that all people effected by hybridisation share the same experience (Ibid, 8). Despite that the idea about cultural mixing in multicultural societies on the surface seem to be encouraged it is also seen a threat. This because the emergence of third spaces and hybrid identities disrupts status quo and the racial inflexibility of our modern societies. Within third spaces (where hybrid identities are formed) new ideas and practices take place, demanding a shift within hegemonic discourses (Mythen 2012, 394-395). Further these spaces can thereby be seen as both "negative" and "positive". On the positive side, as mentioned above these "new" hybrid identities challenges traditional racial norms and transcend the notion about race being something static, essential and deterministic. By using concepts like hybridisation, aiming at abolishing the idea about race, it also re-inscribes race since it is evolved out of the idea that race do exist (Sandset 2019, 64).

In the following section, I will discuss how to apply post-colonial studies as a theoretical framework and the concept of betweenship as an analytical concept in a Swedish context.

4 Background

4.1 Being in-between in Sweden

Experiences of being in-between can create a racial ambiguity not belonging anywhere or to any racial category, even if the person subjectively does identify with a specific racial belonging, objectively one can still be treated as "bodies out of place" (Ahmed, 2007) in relation to those type of categories. Not seldom is it by others that one is categorised as a non-swede or not being adequately Swedish due to supposed racial and/or cultural belonging, but it can also be a subjective feeling of exclusion from a community that for many is the only place you consider home. The concept of betweenship in Sweden has symbolically contributed to the ability to put words on experiences and preconceptions concerning identity, race and belonging (Arbouz 2015, 169). The concept is not only an expression of not belonging/fitting in and further disrupting status quo but it can also be seen as an attempt to formulate new identities (Ibid, 173).

You could say that people living in betweenship in Sweden has an ethnicity (Swedish) that is deenergized from their race. The urge or coercion in having to position oneself in either one or the other box and questions about identity is connected to migration and a change in demographics in different places. Most often it happens to people that has (or generations back) a connection to a place (prior or present) and a belonging or identification in collision with "something else". Being in-between or experiencing that form of exclusion is subjective and can differ depending on context and person. But if I were to group those people in Sweden, who's stories speak about events connected to betweenship, it often refers to people that sometimes is referred to as "second generation immigrant", a person born or raised in Sweden but with both or one parent born outside Sweden or adoptees. A person's exclusion or sense of not belonging is also often connected to racialized ideas about Swedishness (Lundström 2007, 20) like physical traits and skin-colour. The subjective understanding/position in relation to Swedishness is thereby often transferable with the "general image" of Swedishness. As a reaction to the exclusion, persons belonging to these groups can relate to each other in different ways (Ibid, 17). However, it is important to remember the concept betweenship is fluid and not a set category that people that fit the description are fixed to as a homogenous group.

4.1.2 Whiteness in Sweden

In order to be able to analyse how and why people are being racialized in a certain way one must understand the impact that whiteness as academic concept has. The complex narrative regarding Sweden and the history of a homogenous people into becoming a colour-blind anti-racist country with progressive immigration policies needs to be taken into consideration. This has led to a situation where most people in Sweden claim to not see colour or race. However, simultaneously being a place where non-white people are discriminated against and where segregation is expansive.

In the context of the Western world, Sweden has undergone rapid racial changes when it comes to the country's inhabitants (Hübinette, 2019, 16). Until the 1930 Sweden was considered an almost exclusively homogenous white country with only a few percent of its population born outside the country (Ibid 17). However, Sweden has never been entirely racially homogenous due to its Sami and Romani population along with other minority groups (Ibid, 18), although these groups have not entirely been considered belonging to the general majority population. Until the 1960 thoughts about race and purity played a very important role in the Sweden's nation building and in the emergence of the Swedish welfare state (Hübinette in Wasniowski 2018, 69). In 1960, immigration from South and Eastern Europe begun and immigration from places outside Europe started to really pick up from the 1970 an onwards peaking in the late 1990. International transracial adoption was also initiated during the 1950 which later became a substantial group of Swedes born outside the country (Hübinette 2019, 21).

However, it is not until the 1990, whilst the expansion of immigration to Sweden occurs that the impact and fluctuations in Sweden's demographics were distinct (Hübinette 2019, 24). These historical events and a steady flow of people moving to Sweden for various reason (family, work, conflicts, discrimination) has resulted in Sweden becoming one of the Western world's most heterogenous and multicultural countries (Ibid, 24-25). Based on the (often insufficient) figures from *Statistics Sweden* the so-called non-white population can be counted to 1/5 of the whole country's population (Ibid, 25). The strong aversion against using concepts like race and whiteness in Sweden as well as the anti-racist colour-blind agenda is very specific to Sweden and its narrative (Ibid, 69).

To further understand the historical development round the concept of race in Sweden different historical events can be placed within different discourses on race. The scholars Tobias Hübinette and Catrin Lundström describes these historical cycles and the history of whiteness in Sweden with the help of the notion of regimes. Hübinette claims that the history on whiteness is characterized by a feeling of loss and melancholia (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014). This feeling of loss and affliction over a white nation unites both nationalist and anti-racist groups and might explain the expansive alienation and self-segregation that prevails in Sweden (Hübinette 2019, 63) and also the entering of the anti-immigration party, the Sweden Democrats (SD) into Swedish Parliament (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014, 423). The anti-racist movement has in itself become a white attribute, a movement towards creating a positive white identity without really progressively performing any actions that hinders racist actions to occur (Ahmed 2011, 218).

The concept of hegemonic whiteness can further help us understand the "specific whiteness" that prevails in Sweden. According to Hübinette and Lundström hegemonic whiteness is enabled by the notion of colour-blindness which sees whiteness as a normative unmarked position, a position that all people in Sweden strives towards performing since it is the ultimate pillar to be able to fully access Swedishness. The unwillingness to speak about race and categorising people into more groups then "Swedes" and "Immigrants" has resulted in a notion where Swedish equals white (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 426).

The hegemonic whiteness in Sweden has gone through (perhaps) some contradictory changes and phases. The regimes (time-periods) that has minted the discourses on race and whiteness in Sweden, Hübinette and Lundström divides into three periods. The first period dates to have outplayed during most of the 20th century where in the creation of nations and national belonging and affinity was on the agenda and race played an important role (Hübinette 2019, 64). During that period Swedish whiteness was constructed as the purest of the pure and whiter than all other white races (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 427). It was also during this time that Swedish state institute for race biology was founded who's aim together with legislators was to preserve the white Swedish race. Minorities were ridiculed and immigration very restricted (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 427-428). The Swedish preoccupation with race (that can be found in today's Sweden as well) scholars have different thoughts about. Some claim that it lies within biological/medical thoughts about specific bodily traits and

specific white ideal that became established both within and outside Sweden (Hübinette in Wasniowski 2018, 77).

The second regime can be traced to the 1960-70s and is characterise by solidarity with the "third world", anti-apartheid, transnational adoption and gender equality. Also, the anti-racist movement grew strong during this period and had together with the women´s movement, activist and intellectuals a high influence on society. That regime is also associated with the anti-racist colour-blind movement that emerged in the 1980 (Hübinette 2019, 64). During this period (that can be seen as a complete shift from the first period) the branding of Sweden as a nation free from racism and a colonial past was successful (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 430). As a part of this more progressive period and a rejection of former racial thinking, international adoption was institutionalized and Sweden is today the country in the world with the most adopted people in its population per capita (Hübinette in Wasniowski 2018, 78).

The third and present period, according to Hübinette and Lundström, started year 2001 in relation to the 9/11 and "war on terror" events. This period is characterised by anxiety, melancholia and fear of "the Other" which also resulted in stricter migration laws and surveillance (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 431). This is also a period where the welfare state got less power due to the emergence of a neoliberal economy and neo conservative culture (Ibid, 431-432). Further, due to globalization, cultural hybridity has become the norm in many western countries which also contributed to the reinforcement of nationalism and the social construction that cultural differences lie within blood band and race (Hylland Eriksen 199, 49).

The shifts from one period to another can be considered rather extraordinary and also contradictory in some ways but the scholars agrees on that it goes align within the image of the "good Swede" only fuelled by different actors where the second phase of hegemonic whiteness moulded in a postcolonial whiteness (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 430) to fit the progressive era in the 60 and 70s. It can also be seen as a first and clear expression of the colour-blind anti-racist era that were to follow (Hübinette in Wasniowski 2018, 80). Further the authors claim that the characteristics of the different regimes are not fundamentally different due to that both strands reminisce and shares the idea of bringing back "old Sweden" which is something that by both is being perceived as being threatened by people of colour (Hübinette & Lundström 2014, 433).

The normative whiteness in Sweden today has been created and is maintained through different interactive factors. With influence from the historical image created as a part of building the nation Sweden where swedes as a people considered being something particular and higher ranked. Further to the normative Swedishness and its strong connection and identification to "white Western" automatically creates a distance to the "non-Western" Other (Mattson 2005, 152).

5 Methodological approach

My main method for this thesis which is of qualitative character is semi-structured interviews both individually and in focus groups. The choice of method is because this study aims at gaining knowledge and understanding experiences that together will add to the field of study. In order to be able to answer my research questions, *how betweenship is experienced and interpreted*, semi-structured interviews is a suitable method to gain the above stated knowledge. By using interviews as a method, the subjective understanding of a phenomena can be explored more thoroughly. To be able to answer this thesis question formulation questions derived from my theoretical framework was unpacked and formulated into more responsive themes that are measurable/explorative.

I think combining group and individual interviews was ideal for this research project. A group discussion can spark topics and ideas that would not have come up in an individual setting at the same time it is impossible to know beforehand how the dynamics between the group members will play out. Would someone for instance be silenced and how in-depth regarding a particular question can you go in a group setting? (Michell 1999, 36). For some people, speaking in a group can mute some people and I therefore wanted to combine individual and group interviews for this study. Me as a researcher was aware of the difficulties that can occur in a group setting which can also affect the result of the material. However, despite having an awareness that this could occur it was difficult to regulate all aspect during a session. To combine focus group and individual interviews was also a good way to understand what questions worked and which did not in relation to my research questions (Ibid, 40).

5.1 Focus groups and individual interviews

A focus groups sessions or group interview can spark interesting discussions and make people feel more comfortable speaking on subjects whilst realising that their experiences might be shared (Ackerly & True 2010, 172). A shared dialogue enables reflection that can lead to new understandings and knowledge not only for the research but for the respondents as well. One purpose of a focus group session is to evoke and make use of the dynamic and argumentation between the respondents around a specific subject (Harboe 2010, 62). Since the area of research that I am working within is often rooted in the shared experience with other "group members" I thought it would be a good method for this study. Focus groups can also be a

good method when examining just this, mutual experiences and identity (Michell 1999, 36) and to use to give voice to otherwise silenced groups or groups that normally does not get to formulate their own experiences. Another purpose of a focus group session is to create less tension in relation the passive role of the researcher (Wibeck 2010, 23).

During the focus group session that I held I made sure that I did not ask all the questions but rather encouraged the participants to take charge and ask each other questions. I did this to make sure I really made use of the focus group as a method to gather and analyse data through group interaction (Wibeck 2010, 25-26). I also used the information that I received during the first focus group session to revise my interview guide prior to the individual interviews.

5.1.2 Sample group
For this study I interviewed a total of eight people whereof three of them where interviewed two times (one session in a focus group and one individually). The gender division was equal, where four of them are women and four are men with and age span between 20 to 46 years old. The informants where carefully selected based on the criteria that had been previously formulated. To be able to take part in the study the informant had to fit and recount the following information. The informant had to identify with different aspects of experiencing betweenship which entailed how they described and identified their background or ethnicity was the basis of the criteria. The informant also had to be born or brought up in Sweden with one or both parents (alternatively also grandparent) from abroad or more specifically persons who in some contexts are referred to as second or third generation immigrant. Further, a criterion was that the informant also had experienced exclusion, alienation, discrimination and/or gotten their Swedish affiliation questioned or similar based on their origin, racialization or other physical markers. No prior profound knowledge about the concept or field of research was required.

5.1.3 Selection and Implementation
The first step before I started collecting my empirical data was to conduct a sample group based on the above stated criteria. To do so I formulated an informational letter that was spread on different social media platforms and also in my own social networks. The interest of participation was big but after shorter conversations with potential informants, some of them did not end up participating for different reasons. When I had a sample-group put together I prepared two interview guides, one for the individual interviews and one for the

focus group that would fit a semi-structural form of interviewing. I also formulated a letter of consent that was sent to the informants prior to the interview session to read and then presented a second time at the time of the interview. The informants were also notified of that they could withdraw their participation at any time during the study.

5.1.4 The interview sessions

I conducted a total of nine interviews whereby one of them was a group interview consisting of three people (same three people that I also conducted did an individual interview with). I decided to conduct the focus group prior to the individual interviews. This in order to "test" some if the questions in a group setting but also to potentially gain inspiration for the individual interviews hence because of the more relaxed and free setting. All of the interviews were recorded and lasted for about 40 min to one hour and the focus group session lasted for about 2 hours. The interviews were all conducted in Gothenburg Sweden in Swedish and then transcribed as a whole. All the quotes that is used in the thesis was later also translated from Swedish to English by me.

5.1.5 Who are the informants?

Even if it is very important for me to try and ensure my informants anonymity it is also important to provide a little personal background information about who participated. The informants name has been replaced with pseudonyms and their background will not be detailed specifically. This anonymisation did not have any effect on the respondent's stories.

Informant 1:

Sarah, 46 years old was born in East Asia and adopted to Sweden at the age of 6 months.

Informant 2:

Elise, 26 years old and brought up in Sweden with a Swedish mother and a father from North Africa.

Informant 3:

Sebastian, 32 years old. Born in Sweden with a mother with roots in East Asia and a father from with roots in France.

Informant 4:

Tom, 31 years old. Born in Sweden with a mother and father with roots in Central Europe.

Informant 5:

David, 29 years old. Born in Sweden with a mother with roots in South America and a father with roots in Spain.

Informant 6:

Eden, 20 years old. Born and raised in Sweden with both parents with roots in Eastern Africa.

Informant 7:

Sasha, 36 years old. Born and raised in Sweden with mother with roots in South America and a father from Sweden.

Informant 8,

Isabelle, 25. Born and raised in Sweden with a mother with roots in Italy and a father with roots in South America

5.2 Ethical considerations

There a few ethical considerations that needs to be addressed when conducting a study like this. Both when it comes to the respondents and regarding the role of the researcher. The power relation between the researcher and the respondent is an inevitable factor to consider. One way to address this is to reflect upon the execution of the chosen method. I chose to mix individual interviews with a focus group session because of the shift in dynamics. In my focus group session, I tried to shift the focus from me taking up too much space in the session and encouraged the group members to ask each other questions and feed of each other's thoughts and answers. My role was simply moderating, steering back the conversation to the topic if the conversation went in the "wrong" direction. During the focus group session there were however some more dominant persons in the focus group than others whereby I did my best to try direct questions to those more passive in the group. Always when doing research that involves people and their personal stories it is important to be aware of that it can become sensitive. To deal with that I conducted a letter of consent that was also conveyed verbally prior to the session which contained information about that their participation could be terminated at any point of the study. The letter also contained information about the purpose of the study, information about anonymity and estimated time of the interviews. The issue of

confidentiality is important in this study. It can be hard to guarantee impeccable confidentiality (Bryman 2016, 127) despite using pseudonyms, removal of unique personal traits and places. However, I made sure and informed the participants that recordings and transcripts was kept away from any third party.

5.2.1 Positionality

Situating myself within the context of this thesis aims at analysing my own experience and position in relation to the themes in this work. It is of importance to understand and reflect around the position that you hold as a writer and of the people you intend to study when conduction research. Being born and raised in Sweden in a non-white body, as a person who would identify as mixed, questions concerning identity, belonging, skin-colour and race in a Swedish context have always been a part of my life and later also of my academic interest. Prior to deciding to write this thesis I have always returned to these questions concerning Swedishness and how difficult and complex the conversation round this topic is. That complexity was also expressed during my conversations with the respondents of this study which is something that I can relate to. Although that one could sense the unfamiliarity and a sense of former silence in relation to sharing experiences about oneself in relation to race there was also a strong urge and openness to share these experiences and unique knowledge that affects a large part of the Swedish population today.

5.3 Process of analysis

In order to analyse my material, I have carried out a thematic analysis of my material. Thematic analysis is a fairly common method within qualitative research and aims at systematically extract and identify themes and subjects out of your material. Core and subthemes are extracted by reading, re-reading and coding the material (Bryman 2016, 11). To be able to extract themes, certain tools are provided by the method to be able create categories that can say something and that are connected to the study's research question, theoretical framework and field of study. Unlike other analytical methods, thematic analysis does not have any strict rules of conduction or implementation (Ibid, 584) and it is therefore important for the researcher to narrate around each step of analysing the material. However, there are a few common traits/steps to be followed while executing thematic analysis and getting to know the material. To be able search and identify themes it is recommended that you look for repetitions, similarities/differences, language used, transitions, theory related material and missing data (Ibid, 586).

5.3.1 Implementation (step by step)

All of the interviews where recorded and was done in a face to face setting except for one interview that was done via videocall. Notes was taken during the interviews in addition to the recorded material. After each interview I made notes about my reflections and thoughts concerning the interview. All the recorded material was then transcribed and the choice to transcribe all the material was done in order to get to know the material further and to not miss things that one might do if only part of the material is transcribed (Bryman 2016, 479). While transcribing I also made notes, this with the research questions and theoretical framework in mind. All the transcribed material and all the notes taken during the interview session was read through. After the transcription and a general reading was done, I did a *first open ending reading* without making any specific notes. Then a *second reading* was done where I started making some broad notes that was related to my research question and the previous research field. This step also entailed getting a sense of what my material was "saying" also to get a sense of what general main themes that could be identified. This was also the step where the notes that was taken were used as a foundation for the later and *third step/reading* in starting to extract patterns that evolved into codes. Another way to describe this step is that patterns/codes was extracted from the material during the third reading and put on a separate sheet of paper. All the extractions/codes were then narrowed down and some compiled together (similar codes) to then be highlighted and "transformed" into different main and subthemes giving them different colours. Also a few quotations from each theme and subtheme was extracted and put on a different sheet to be used later in the analysis. The different colours then became three different categories/themes in which all of the subthemes and codes where sorted in under.

5.3.2 Operationalisation

My questions were translated into operational variables/themes that operates like a bridge between the theoretical framework and the material. The theoretical framework was then used to create categories and themes. The process of extracting the themes was not linear but also entailed some revising and combing of themes and subthemes. The overarching question is: how do (using the theoretical concepts that I am working with) my respondents formulate the notion of betweenship? How do they formulate or reformulate experiences of being in that position? How do they formulate their identity using the concepts in the theoretical framework?

6 Results and analysis

In this chapter my findings will be presented and analysed within the theoretical framework. The empirical findings will be discussed in relation to the themes that has been created using thematic analytical method. The theoretical framework that has been presented previously will together with my research questions be the foundation for this analysis. After thematically analysing my material these were the themes and subthemes that emerged in the material used to structure this presentation:

- The borderland of Swedishness
- The Swedish whiteness
- Race and exotification

- Being in-between and construction of new identities: a stranger at home
- Identity in betweenship: non-binary identities in relation to binary race categories
- Strategies within the space of betweenship

6.1 The borderland of Swedishness: the importance of race and ethnicity in Sweden

Almost all of the respondents found it difficult to define Swedishness and what that entails. The data demonstrates a consensus around that the concept of Swedishness is of subjective character and almost impossible to specifically define. According to the material, it is very clear that Swedishness is not an identity that one can statically inhabit but is rather contextual (Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992, 4). The material shows that the inconsistency in defining one's identity based on origin is highly influenced by other people's perception of you:

> "…Since I am born here, I do know that I have a lot of Swedishness in me if you can say that. But despite that, it feels like I still cannot be accepted as one hundred percent Swedish. So, it is hard to put myself in a specific category". (Eden, 20)

As the quote above indicates, it becomes a matter of having to defend the right to or not to self-identify along racial and cultural lines. The deficits that exists within the Swedish language exists perhaps because of the fact that most theories and concepts are extracted from critical whiteness studies in the Anglo-Saxon part of the world and therefore the discussion on race remains tentative in Sweden. The lack of words and standpoints that the conversation about race, is not necessary in a Swedish context, makes it hard to both discuss and understand race and racialization (Hübinette 2019, 71-73). The hardship in relation to self-identification positions people in the borderland (Lundström 2007, 95) of ethnic and racial identity, and having to categorise within one or the other category becomes impossible.

> "…I do not think that much about that I have another origin or what should I
> call it. But at the same time, I have always carried it with me, to be like,
> particularly with my appearance and so on and the image that other people
> have of me" (Sasha, 36).

As the respondent above resonates, this constant insecurity and fear of not being included and having to take responsibility for other people's perception of you. What appears to be common in the material is also the lack of control to be able to formulate and not being able to own your individual story concerning racial identity. This lack of control utters itself in two ways, one concerning to be positioned (Lundström 2007, 109) *into a predetermined frame* and the other concerns *cultural expectations and an obligement to share*. Whilst navigating the borderland of Swedishness, to be positioned is often not an active function but rather a condition minted by self-awareness and uncertainty which can be seen as a consequence of our preconceptions of others. This is often expressed through excessive self-cautiousness that is enabled depending on the context. In order to countervail any preconceptions/presumptions, one often embraces different strategies like adjustment in language, modified bodily expression, style and clothing and in some cases change of ones given name (Lundström 2007, 102), this in order to be able to pass as a Swede easier.

What also generates this uncertainty is that the lines/borders for belonging or not, are ambiguous. Whether or not one actively chooses to identify as a swede or not, the lines between being able to pass as a swede or not is both ambiguous and conditioned. Further the rules are conditioned by silent agreements and codes (Hübinette 2019, 59). This makes the belonging to Swedishness very fragile and in some cases temporary, making it hard to be more than one thing "forcing" people to choose. Further by having to choose sides (even if

this is not always possible since whiteness essential and a cultural capital that only some possess) positions people in having to take a stance against something, i.e. either you are an immigrant or a swede.

The fact that whiteness and specific bodily markers has become an important factor to fully justify ones Swedishness is sprung from the strong conviction about Swedishness being something particular and pure (whiteness being a huge part of that together with language, class, gender and religion). One strong idea that is being presented in Sweden is the one about a disintegrated nation, consolidates the idea that not everyone that holds a Swedish citizenship can become "real" swedes (Lundström 2007, 85; Hübinette 2019, 63). Despite the silent requirements and ideas about race and heritage, there is also a kind of "false notion" and provisional adaption to Swedishness that can be enforced through the level of language, education and other cultural habits. People that are experiencing betweenship are often, deliberately or subconsciously, adapting to and/or navigating this space of fragility in order to avoid being detected as inadequate.

> "So, I have always felt some sort of responsibility to in a way contest the image that people have of people from foreign countries. So, then I have overcompensated by being extra nice maybe to really try and prove that I do not have any bad intentions when I am for instance walking into Pressbyrån or whatever it might be". (Sasha, 36)

This fragile and uncertain space of inclusion often generates inhibit behaviour, overcompensating in order to fit the image of expected Swedishness. Respondents in this study all testifies that one's authenticity in relation to Swedishness in constantly questioned and examined. Whereby Swedishness becomes a privileged/power position where both bodily (skin-colour) and cultural identification matter (Lundström 2007, 19). An example of an active form of exclusion is questions asked (that often comes from a good place and meant to create conversation) like; *where do you come from*? but that can have excluding effects instead. In those situations, it is one's body and not citizenship, nationality or even ethnicity that manifest the notion of inclusion and/or exclusion and further the level of ones Swedishness. Even if a person subjectively identifies as being Swedish, a person's physical traits can make it hard to claim Swedishness. On an individual level, these kinds of exclusionary remarks are sometimes waved of as curiosity but on a structural level can be

more distinctive, as for example discrimination on the labour or housing market (Lundström 2007, 76).

> "No, but I still get the question very often, *where I am really from*, what heritage I have, what kind of like; but if you are Swedish, why are you so dark? Or for example; you have dark tones in you, dark hair, dark..." (Tom, 31)

These kind of questions (like in the quote above) points towards the strong relationship between whiteness and Swedishness and the body becomes the marker for your national identity. In the quote below one of the respondents reflects upon this:

> "Eh, people really ask like two, three times a day at least and it is really annoying. Not because I am ashamed to have another background or whatever but to constantly having to stand up and legitimize my identity and that I am Swedish. Yes, I have another decent, no I am not great at speaking Arabic, yes I have been there." (Elise, 26)

In a society that claims to be post-racial these situations are often dismissed as harmless and people who point them out are described as sensitive. In relation to this, another respondent reflects up on the notion around the lack of control and to just inhabit a certain body (non-western/non-white) you are exposed to questions that demonstrates exclusion. If you belong to a group that previously always have been disregarded and made invisible, comments that pinpoints your difference (Othering) by emphasising specific stereotypical traits, can be a way of regaining ownership of the pallet that is being served to you by society. The quote below indicates that non-white bodies are always marked/visible and can therefore expect to be singled out:

> "…what I think has been difficult is that I do not get to own the story. I do not get to own this, instead it is something that has to happen on other people´s terms. I cannot myself get to choose when I am going to talk about it, and when I then have to talk about it. I do not get to decide how, instead it can even be a situation where the questioner dictates." (Sarah, 46)

The constant "Othering", which is also being described by another respondent below, is, according to my findings common among non-white people growing up in Sweden:

> "It is the way I have been treated in my life; I mean when everybody constantly indicates that you are not Swedish it becomes really hard to force yourself onto the feeling of being Swedish. It is basically that. If people had been more accepting of people that does not originate from here, as Swedes, then I would most likely feel a lot more Swedish then I do today" (Eden, 20).

This understanding of oneself in relation to Swedishness is a reoccurring theme in the material. People that are navigating the space of betweenship are constantly juggling these borders of inclusion and exclusion and of explicit binary racial categories. Indirect "forcing" people to claim or reclaim Swedishness, and by doing that, aggravates that Swedishness is essential. However, in some contexts this is more flexible than in others. Like mentioned above, this goes against the historically established idea about Swedishness as something particular and authentic, an unachievable ideal that one is born into and cannot socially become. It shows to prove that the above-mentioned idea still is very strong and that people, whose identities are cross-boundary, becomes deviant and a constant target for scrutinization. Some do, in order to avoid having your qualification for belonging questioned and as an effect of exclusion, reject their Swedishness (not everybody can do that) to instead embrace what they are ascribed to.

6.2 The Swedish whiteness

When whiteness is discussed within critical whiteness studies it is described as something invisible and as a universal norm. Therefore, when we talk about race or racialization, we are most certainly referring to non-white bodies (Andersson Björk 2017, 117). It is not solely about language i.e. how one's racial belonging and changing demographic is to be explained, it also has to do with performativity. How certain bodies can or cannot move in certain rooms and how the limits and conditions vary depending on how that specific body is read. In relation to the invisibility of whiteness or as a result of it, white bodies (due to its normativity) can expand and inhabit rooms and thereby pass unnoticed. Other (non-white) bodies that resides these rooms, become deviant and are constant targets for suspicion and 'othering` (Ahmed 2011, 135-136). In my material, it can be about appearance, however it is not solely about that, Swedishness is also "done", in terms of language and other specific and sometimes silent characteristics and agreements that in ways seem "natural". One of the respondents explains it like this:

> So, to get closer to the norm you have to adapt in all the ways you can which for me is the way I speak since I don't want to bleach myself, but I have also straightened my hair during most part of my life (Eden, 20).

In the quote above Eden is reasoning around on what adaptions that occurs within a context that is highly affected by whiteness as a social norm. Navigating within this norm smaller or bigger adaptions to "pass" is common for most people. The notion of bleaching that is brought up by Eden in the quote refers to a practice where people apply chemicals onto their skin and one of the common reasons for it is to make it fairer. In the article *Investigating motivations for women's in Tanzania, 2011* skin bleaching is practiced in order to become whiter and in extension more beautiful (Lewis et al. 2001). This also shows to prove that solid norms also set standards for what is beautiful and not. This sheds light on that it is easier for some bodies to pass and penetrate the structure of given norms on Swedishness that exists then it is for others.

Within the process of racialization, the notion of subjectivity becomes more ambiguous and you can be placed within or outside the Swedish community based on societal and structural terms. These terms/borders are constantly changing and betweenship can be seen as a consequence/result of these definite borders around Swedish identity. It can therefore be difficult to define and explain experiences concerning inclusion/exclusion based on your racialization. A lot of these experiences are produced in relation to a lot of self-assurance and microaggressions that can be hard to pinpoint. Microaggressions being "smaller" more subtle comments and/or actions that often is part of targeted groups everyday life. These pinpoints (aggressions) are also often invisible or viewed as insignificant for the ones that are not exposed to them (Sue, 2010).

The material shows that there is often a feeling of exclusion rather than something practical occurring. Not belonging to the norm is proven to be exhausting, placing people in a position where one has to navigate around this using different strategies. The two quotes below indicates that it can be draining to be the one that stands out, being challenged, questioned or constantly being subjected to excluding processes.

> "…And then when I lived in Los Angeles, I remember that I thought it was very nice to live there and to be able to feel like the norm" (Sasha, 36).

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> "…I cannot say that I am Swedish a lot of the times or I have kind of chosen
> to not do so because there is always a counter-question" (Isabelle, 25)

Most respondents in this study instinctive response to define Swedishness, was that it ought to be about national belonging and citizenship. However, their experiences of betweenship described the duality in feeling a strong connection to the nation Sweden at the same time being assigned a position outside the Swedish society and context, often due to bodily traits. The explanation below shows to explain Swedishness from one of the respondent perspectives and it manifests the strong perception around the relationship between whiteness and Swedishness:

> "Yes, it is only about appearance, I mean it can be people from like England,
> it does not have to be ethnic swedes, just people who look like they are from,
> I don't know but like how people looked like here like 200 years back in
> time, for the most part anyway. It is so hard to define." (David, 29)

This indicates that it is not about national belonging or ethnicity but rather about appearance and/or skin-color, where the concept race can help us analyse these mechanisms of categorisation. However, what became evident amongst the respondents in this study is that it is difficult to speak about the self in racial terms and it is evident that the conversation in Sweden is characterized by a colours-blind approach. Despite that very few of the respondents in the study talked about Swedishness in terms of race and whiteness they had a clear understanding around the complexity around being excluded from Swedishness, sometimes over-compensating in different situations in order to be "accepted" and welcomed. At the same time as the colour- blind approach diminishes the experiences of being non-white in Sweden. In relation to this a consequence is self-exclusion and urge to proclaim the proposed heritage that you are racialized as.

> " ...so you have then built some kind of identity based on you either being
> *super Swedish* or "in Sweden I am no f****** "svenne" (swede) since I
> have my roots there, there and there. And then you go *there* and discover,
> wow how Swedish you are, I am nothing like that" (Focus group).

In this double exclusion, the body operates as a symbol for a system of race that follows binary thought patterns (Arbouz 2015, 173). In this sense your Swedishness is also constantly negotiated when positions shift. There are of course more factors, besides skin-colour, that matters when it comes to passing as Swedish or not (which is also constantly changing).

However, one can ethnically/culturally inhabit Swedishness but still be viewed as a non-Swede:

> "…it was important to be as white and Swedish as possible, then you cannot lump yourself together with and run around in deviant gangs..." (Sarah, 46)

> "I have always, just like a lot of other adopted always seen myself as white on some levels. If not that, at least that was what I was striving towards. So, when I was growing up, I really hated the way I looked without being able to say that I did" (Sarah, 46).

> "…In Australia it was not like that, but it was really rather like this; but how come, because you are not blonde, how can that be? Like, is not everyone in Sweden blonde?" (Isabelle, 25)

The connection between whiteness and Swedishness is also evident in other parts of the Western world and not only in Sweden and what it does is that it sets a norm for the boundaries of Swedishness and constantly divides people into fixed categories that one either has to assimilate towards, having to defend or reject. Since whiteness in relation to Swedishness also is incorporated into structures, hierarchies between groups, putting some (white) groups above others. A consequence with an "inadequate" Swedishness is that it limits some groups space of action (Mattson 2005, 139).

6.3 Race and exotification

As has been mentioned in the section above discussing the connection between whiteness and Swedishness the empirics also show that persons that get racialized as non-white are also viewed as exotic elements in society. This is evident in everyday situations in terms of comments and reactions that one can face which becomes evident round a notion about the obsession about race in a society with a colour-blind self-image. On an individual level, to be singled out and othered, can of course be disturbing and annoying. Further these remarks are also often filled with ancient preconceptions of people and groups adding different or certain meaning to specific bodies (Arbouz 2017, 200). The quote below indicates that these stereotypical images, on an individual level, can affect and dominate the image of oneself.

> "Because as soon as I wore something pink or as soon as I put my hair up in a specific way or put too much make-up on, I could not afford that. The

room to play around with my looks, I believe, was not as big as if I would
have been a light-haired white girl with mingled eyes" (Sarah, 46).

Sarah is not only describing a result of the exotification of certain bodies, but also how that process effects how one tends to self-identify and how other people's perception of you effects the image of yourself of what is desirable or not. Some bodies are not neutral and complex but rather fixed and filled with stereotypes. The process of exotification can also have gendered connotations which is also clear in Sarah´s description above. The exotic Other becomes something to desire, driven by lust not seldom with sexual connotations. Further, the desire is very much connected to the specific "Otherness" of that person since it is based on those specific racialized attributes and stereotypical images one gets desired (Lundström 2012, 195). Certain bodies are automatically connected to certain places and habits where sexuality (as a colonial heritage) has been something that very often is connected to non-white bodies in different ways, where the sexuality can be either unrestrained or subservient (Ibid, 205). Another respondent explains an experience like this:

> "A lot of the times it was positive like; -Wow, how beautiful you are, I love
> Asian features and stuff like that you know. But then I realised that it was
> not always positive. And then I do not only get racialized as Eastern Asian,
> but I also get racialized as South American or something, I guess. I am not
> sure what they are referring to but that is what they think" (Sebastian, 32).

Exotifying notions and comments are not seldom communicated as compliments just like we can see here in the quote above. When groups and individuals are exotified and also sexualized it reduced them to those specific traits and attributes. These colonial images of "the Other" are further reproduced in media, literature and film which also legitimise these ideas (Lundström 2012 and Hübinette & Tigervall, 2012). As these images of "the Other" is reproduced it does not only become others look on you, it can also become your look on yourself. Sarah resonates like this:

> "But still, I had a very hard time being different, I did not like that. And in
> relation to boys which was important to me at the time, like finding a partner
> and I thought it was very difficult being that "Chinese person". Who wants
> to be together with the Chinese person? (Sarah, 46).

The respondent in the quote above is describing an idea that she has of herself in relation to how she thinks that she will be perceived. This effects the space she is in and feel she can operate within in order to avoid being targeted and placed within a stereotypical frame.

By the upholding of hegemonic whiteness, it places and defines bodies in set specific ways. By these definitions, bodies are also ascribed certain qualities, prerequisites and abilities, both physically and psychologically. By reproducing mental images that are minted by ideas that are racially framed, all bodies and their attributes thereby operates based on prescribed manuscripts (Arbouz 2017, 202). The concept *racial framing* goes align with (and as a result of) the racial distinction that hegemonic whiteness is maintaining. The logic of the separation of races, a desirable/dominating whiteness and a marginalisation of everybody that are shaped/framed outside that white frame (Ibid, 202). These (white) ideals are not only embodied as solely physical differences but also contaminates how certain bodies and groups can or cannot justify specific social practices and what is expected or not. Persons that carries experiences of betweenship often gets their origin questioned due to/based on having a body that acts against its prescription and different identity markers gets questioned and/or made invisible.

> "…I have noticed that Swedish people has a fixation around heritage and background" (Sebastian, 32).

The quote above testifies that bodies that do not fit the racial framing and a binary race system becomes deviant and a target for questioning and exclusion. Often when this sort of racial fixation is brought up or condemned the reactions are often minted by todays colour-blind and anti-racist discourse (Arbouz 2017, 203) and therefore dismissed. The current taboo round the concept race makes these discussions hard to carry out in Sweden today. However, for people that are racialized as non-white, as has also been mentioned previous in this research, this kind of questioning is a part of their everyday life. Often it is bodies that are incomprehensible, without racial logic that are targets for scrutinization.

6.4 Being in-between and construction of new identities: a stranger at home

Based on the answers from the interviews in this study there is a strong sense of duality when it comes to discussing questions concerning betweenship. There is on the one hand a feeling of incompleteness and urge to belong and on the other hand a resistance against the fixed, generating a feeling and a sense of pride and richness within the multiple.

The core of betweenship seems to be the feeling of incompleteness, the notion of not being fully welcomed or accepted in any context. Further it is also more than a feeling and is often a position without a choice due to the "the lack of" or incompleteness when it comes to bodily traits/skin-colour or certain cultural knowledge and habits. That position gets to represent a form of vacuum and a *body out of place*. A body that appears to not fit in any specific context and is therefore prone to be scrutinized or at least always carrying a fear and stress of the possibility to be. One of the respondents explained the concept of betweenship like this:

> " It is exactly that, when we are talking about betweenship, that you never get to decide for yourself. So, whatever I do someone else will always push me like; no but you are there. That is what I think is the core within betweenship, that if I myself had, it's not about being both, it is rather about neither nor which is the problematic and annoying part of it. I mean if it had been the best of both worlds, then I would not damn be sitting here wining, right, why would I do that?" (Focus group)

The quote above symbolizes not only that betweenship is often a position and a label that has been enforced upon you, but it also echoes with the notion of undefinable bodies. Bodies that disrupts the idea of a racial status quo, forming so called new hybrid identities. Another respondent describes the notion of betweenship with the feeling of being "out of place" like this:

> "Is it me that there it is something wrong with? Am I crazy for feeling that I don't belong anywhere? Because I do not fit in amongst mine, I do not fit in Poland nor in Hungary, because I do not speak the language, I do not have that, I do not have that connection" (Tom, 31).

Not only is your body supposedly telling a story around a certain narrative, that you either might have to defend, reject or explain but these feelings are also hard to sort out and to put words on. What happens when a person is navigating the space of betweenship is that a form of apprehension is being built up because of the fear of being exposed or ridiculed. This so

called "conditioned" belonging to Swedishness or another category of origin represents an uncertainty of not knowing when or where you will have to explain/defend yourself. This is expressed by another respondent:

> Concerning the question regarding my parent's authenticity, yes but you simply get questioned; "*they don't feel like your real parents*". Yes, but who are to tell me who feels like what? And if you also lack the language to even be able to analyse that for yourself then it becomes even harder to convey that of course. It took many years, even decades I should say. Although I do think that, a lot of the times it was these questions that constantly reminded me of this "differentship" (Sarah, 46).

Even though we claim not to see colour and in situations where Swedishness is "done right" (Lundström 2007, 76) it is still hard to claim your space and Swedishness. Transnational adoptees are a group that really demonstrates the strong relationship between Swedishness and whiteness and shows to prove the clash between the objective and subjective, concerning these questions. Many adoptees live up to the criteria of having a Swedish ethnicity and the incorporated cultural capital but "fail" when it comes to appearance, since whiteness is operating as the excluding marker. So, you could say that the foundation of Swedishness is whiteness and then some possess different amount of cultural capital that in different ways can bring you closer to passing as a Swede. Adoptees are thereby very often placed in the borderland of Swedishness. Objectively they are not recognized as "real Swedes" but when or if it gets known that the person is adopted you can then be considered more OK since it is then expected that you share Swedish cultural values (Ibid, 86-91). Respondent Sarah reflects upon this in the quote below:

> "As adopted, where we on the outside are classified based on how we look, classified to not really belong, where the condition always has been present; yes but you are Swedish *because of*..Otherwise I am not" (Sarah, 46).

This narrates around that your belonging to Swedishness is both conditioned (often determined by others) and fragile, where your agency, depending on context can be taken away from you. When transnational adoption peaked in Sweden around 1970/1980 the discourse around it was very influenced by the colour-blind approach. Studies has shown that this approach has resulted in a vast taboo in speaking in racial term making it very hard for adoptees to speak about their differences in appearance but also to be able to formulate discriminatory actions against them as racism (Hübinette & Andersson 2012, 100). What is

apparent for adoptees in my material (but also for others that identifies with betweenship) is that the urge to proclaim the "Swedish" lies within the connotations that the category immigrant holds. Our language has simplistically made swedes and immigrants into dichotomies, where swedes equals white and immigrants equals non-white. Further not only is the term completely wrong when it comes to what it actually means for some but also the fact that the category immigrant often is associated with negative ideas and attributes. Some of the respondents resonated like this concerning this issue:

> "It is like this, as long as my father follows every rule in the book and avoids stepping on someone's toes, everybody thinks he is a fantastic person. But as soon as he would do something wrong, then it is not like that, then it is like; fucking Chilean" (Isabelle, 25).

> "…I never thought about skin-colour or ethnicity before, I don't think anyone does that when they are little, but then I got it pointed out very early in my life, as for many non-whites. It was like this, I got it introduced and tried to grasp what it meant and then I realised that it is not always positive". (Sebastian, 32).

> "It is very foreign for me actually, that I do not actually think of myself like that. It's like when I hear the TV talk about like "second generation immigrants" and stuff, for me it's like I do not think that I belong to that myself. It is really like a different group they are talking about" (Sasha, 36).

To not being able to live up to the norm, both physically and culturally being on the border of worlds can often equal feeling like a fraud. Your position can also be very visible and noticeable compared to an unmarked invisible position that whiteness is. Since racial categories often is put in contrast with each other, Swedishness (extensively whiteness) stands for something good, or at least something neutral and therefore desirable. Even though that Sweden today is fairly racially and ethnically mixed, being in-between is very much connected to not belonging to the norm physically. It is also the self-awareness and other peoples look on you that adds to the feeling of betweenship and Otherness.

> "-*Yes, everybody here is Swedish except for Sebastian,* that is a sentence that I have heard in my life. I was the only one that was non-white in my class growing up" (Sebastian, 32).

> "I did not know what "the whiteness norm" (vithetsnorm) was when I was little. I did not know why I did not want to be black" (Eden, 20).

> "No, so I am thinking a bit around the fact to not be 100 percent Swedish and to not be 100 percent Bolivian. I am not familiar with Bolivian culture so if I go there then I would not be considered a Bolivian and when I am here, I have not lived as belonging to the norm, at least not to 100 percent. I am referring to when it comes to appearance (Sasha, 36).

> "I feel like many, specifically adoptees, develops into what I could say a social chameleon, a sort of chameleon behaviour almost. I don't know if that is a fact or if I'm just delusional, but I feel like there is a fear of being left out, therefore you really need to adapt in order to fit in" (Sarah, 46).

In these quotes above, there is a shared experience of exclusion that tells you that you are "almost right" but not quite. Your body and appearance essentialises your position which determines who really belongs to a specific context and who does not. The images of these different categories that exists can be reproduced and embraced by those that are said to represent a certain group. However, these images and stereotypical narratives can also be rejected, challenging these binary notions round groups. More about this in the section below.

6.5 Identity in betweenship: non-binary identities in relation to binary race categories

Despite that it has been proven to be difficult to place people into set categories it still seems to be "natural" in our way of defining people to base it on their attributes and assumed heritage. Further these attributes are often shaped within dichotomies where people who fall in-between a given category challenges this idea, (often involuntarily). For those who does not quite fit any of these given categories are therefore left out. Betweenship can thereby be seen as space of incompleteness but also as an expression for the potential growth of "new" hybrid identities and spaces. The idea that society produces, that puts you in a position where you ought to be either or, or half this and half that fuels the idea of fixed and inflexible racial categories in opposition to the multiple which was also confirmed by the statements and experiences in my material. But also, in some cases, embracing the multiple, like in the quotes below it is also seen as a strength to be able to navigate through and jump in and out of different worlds:

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> "…Many problems are connected to being in-between, but I also think that there is a lot of power in being able to identify with different cultures and like the appreciation for differences. And like I said, I think that I have noticed that a lot when I am traveling and it is easy for me to or I think that I have large understanding for a wide spectrum of different people" (Elise, 26).

> …for me, or at least that is what I think it has meant that I might have looked the other way, maybe that I think about this as being a citizen of the world and that it has opened, opened up the mind for, I don't know, dissidence and like people that are from different places and different cultures" (Sasha, 36).

> "…for me it means that I have more homes than a person who does not exist in a betweenship, it can be positive, it is positive, but maybe it is not always that comfortable, but it is still, I think that it is giving me more perspectives and that it enriches my life more than anything else (Eden, 20).

These common affirmations that some of the respondents are talking about, can be seen as a form of shared strength in being able to adjust to different people and cultures. Further, there can also be a sense of pride within these spaces, in being able to formulate experiences that before has been causing a sense of exclusion or alienation. However, it is important to note that experiences of betweenship are not homogenous and opinions differ. There is a danger in ignoring that the people navigating these spaces are a heterogenous group with both shared and individual experiences. At the same time as these "new" voices of hybrid identities are getting heard and disrupting racial status quo, spreading this new narrative can also reproduce images of race and ethnicity as having an essential value. But the way in which hybridity should be understood is in opposition to this, as transcending boarders and interactive processes that creates these new identities and concepts (Lundström 2007, 95-96) and not only like two categories overlapping and somehow blending. Further, these hybrid forms of identities are meant to expand the way we normally think about racial identities and offer an alternative to the discourse that places some bodies clearly inside or outside a given category. In the quote below Sarah explains:

> "I am not a "betweenship person", it is rather a condition that I am in, but it is not a position that I want to have" (Sarah, 46).

Sarah puts the finger on the notion to not re-essentialise the mixed and multiple which in some ways can seem to follow the same logic as a binary race system. These new identities

also become labels and labels are filled with stereotypes. Sarah's argument in not wanting to be labelled might also be a reaction against the lack of self-identification. The urge to label and/or categorise is also something that mainly non-white bodies are exposed to, the fact that they have to be managed and understood, whilst white bodies is the unmarked norm with a silent privilege (Sandset, 2019) and it is only in contrast to the norm that "the Other" can exist. However, categorisation happens constantly, and categories can for instance be important in order to gain knowledge and to make specific groups conditions visible. However, how people are identified and categorised are not essential or a "natural" process but is determined by who (in that given context) is in the position of power to do so (Mattson 2005, 148).

Even though it is evident that people who in one way or another identifies with a form of betweenship perceives those experiences differently they still, in different contexts, relate to each other in different ways. These different experiences, of various forms of exclusion and alienation create multiple identities that are shaped within these spaces, often unconsciously. Even though that the respondents in my study have different relationships towards their own or parent's migration, affiliation with multiple places or cultural capital they all have in common to deviate from the Swedish norm. Two respondents resonate like below in regard to fellowship with other people with the same experience:

> "…I think that I have a lot more in common with other kids that has grown up with different cultures in comparison to other kids that grew up in Sweden. I think that I have a much stronger bond to that community then what I have to a classic Swedishness" (Elise, 26).

> "Yes, I mean everybody that has an immigrant background in Sweden kind of have a unity. I think it's funny cause often when we talk with each other, it can be when my father is talking to the kiosk owner, let's say he is from Iraq, and my dad can be from Eritrea but they still talk about the homeland, the homeland as if they had the same homeland" (Eden, 20).

It is in the contrast to a normative Swedishness (Mattson 2005, 145) that respondents in this study relates to. Even if the image of both the Swede and "the Other" are conceptualized, they are still images that one has and are relating to. So, within the space of betweenship people that share these experiences, identify with each other in different ways, both willingly and unwillingly. In relation to this, the concept creolization is starting to shape in a Swedish

context, which relates to the two quotes above meaning that through ambivalence and exclusion, new non-fixed identities are taking shape. The connection lies within the notion of being categorised as non-white, having some sort of connection to migration (your own or within the family) but still have a strong affinity to Swedishness (Landehag & Tasin, 2015).

As much as it can be empowering to share stories and experiences with people that identifies along similar lines as you, it can also be painful and hard to do so. As respondent Sarah says in a quote on p.39 that among adoptees it can exist a form of distancing and disassociation from one another. This is something that has been raised in other research within this field. The notion of race becomes very evident in relation to adoptees because it is a group that specifically represents a category that share the cultural and (often) the socioeconomic capital with the majority population but however deviates from the norm when it comes to appearance. Many adoptees, especially during their childhood and early adult years avoids reaching out to other adoptees. There are a few different factors to why this occurs, but it can be connected to the strong gravitation to the white normative Swedish image and therefore one almost instinctively rejects "the Other", also to avoid being compared with "them/that" and exposed as not belonging. It can also be that adoptees reminds one another of their particular position and consolidates that particular position which often is a position that is infantilised, in other words adoptees are often spoken about as precisely children with less agency (Hübinette & Tigervall 2008, 133-134).

6.6 Strategies within the space of betweenship

As a way to approach and refute those experiences that the respondents in this study are articulating they also use various strategies to handle and cope with the situations they face. In this section I will concentrate on some of them.

An approach that has been discussed previously in this thesis is to oppose the binary and not to buy into the simplified ideas about Swedes and immigrants. To oppose that dichotomy it broadens ideas about people on the border and can (influenced by postcolonial concepts) empower those not fitting in any given category or norm. How strategies are used and formulated can also be approached on various levels, structural or individual. On a structural level it can be to within academia and in public debate formulate new worlds and identities. This includes changing language, dismantling stereotypical ideas and being critical towards historical events and hierarchies. On an individual level it is about how to concretely handle

comments and everyday situations in relation to racial belonging. Often when it comes to strategies on an individual level it is often expressed as preceding comments or aggression to an extent which is possible or as self-protection. The respondent below describes how this can manifest.

> "My father named me ***** which means joy, but he registered me as Johanna with the Swedish spelling for passports, so it would be easier to apply for things (Eden, 20).

In this quote above Eden describes a clear example of a strategy that is used to forego or avoid potential discrimination and/or comments in the same way that being white or passing as white in different scenarios. Many of the strategies that are used by the respondents in this study is used preventively and can by bystanders or people belonging to the norm be perceived as overly sensitive or as paranoia. This is rooted in an awareness of the self which can results in the fear of not being welcomed, and therefore avoiding saying or doing different things that might be misinterpreted or looked upon with preconception. Below, Elise describes a feeling that can be very subtitle but still can be seen as a strategy to avoid antagonism which in many everyday encounters seem to be a natural part of navigating according to the respondents in this study:

> "When I was younger, I had the problem that I many times felt like I could not talk about certain things, agree on certain things and not do certain things. But nowadays I do not feel like that very often" (Elise, 26).

Many of these scenarios are also played out sometimes automatically and in the specific situation, not much thought is put into it. Another example of strategizing against potential prejudice comments or similar. During the focus group session one of the respondents resonated around the notion of being non-white and having a white parent.

> "Then I thought, I will never be able to go out with my father unless my mum is there to, it will not work (Focus group).

The respondent in the quote above said that to just leave the house with her father would risk certain looks and comments, questioning their relationship. To avoid the risk of being stereotyped it becomes easier to narrow the space you can operate in the public sphere.

"Grew up in a small white society, homogeneous white society where I think that most of them that was visibly racialized people that lived there, a majority of us was adopted. So, we were a bunch of groups of siblings that was adopted and in school we kept as far away from each other as possible. I do not think that it was anything that we reflected on then but today I realises what we were doing. The agenda was to be as white and Swedish as possible, then you cannot lump yourself together with and run around in devious gangs, so to speak" (Sarah, 46).

According to previous studies and testimonies what is mentioned above is not an uncommon experience being non-white in a white context. Further it is not uncommon to wanting to pass as a swede (white) thereby avoiding being lumped together with other non-white persons (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2008). Other strategies that the respondents shared relates to the notion of adaption in order to widen the space that one can move around in. It can be how one presents themselves, changing the way one speaks or just generally how one conducts oneself. In public spaces it is often concerning a "fear" of being stereotyped and being put into to a box that you might not relay to or that has a bad image. The reason for this is often due to the many negative connotations that is connected to for example being an immigrant.

7 Conclusions

In today's society, it is inevitable that Sweden has become a multicultural society and that a definition of Swedishness is fluid and boundary crossing. Despite this, there are ideas about "Us and Them" spreading, inequality and segregation increasing, and people born in Sweden not feeling at home or being discriminated on due to the colour of their skin. How should Sweden handle the multiculturalism (which is a part of Swedishness) that exists today in the best possible way? In this thesis I wanted to explore experiences and ideas concerning identity, race and Swedishness in relation to betweenship. My aim was further to analyse how the space of betweenship is navigated by those who identify with the notion of being on the border of Swedishness. More precisely, the questions that guided this thesis were; how does persons experiencing betweenship define Swedishness? How is identity shaped in the spaces of betweenship and could this identity formation contribute to an expansion of the concept Swedishness and if so, how?

The material shows that a general definition of Swedishness and what that entails seem difficult. The sense of belonging (into Swedishness) is highly subjective but also contextual. Further the results also highlight that ideas about belonging or not are characterized by a lot of insecurities, difficulties and ambivalence. However, irrespective of the subjective understanding of one's own identity the outside gaze plays a large role in how one tends to identify. Meaning that your body plays a particular role when it comes being able to move freely in different spaces. In extension the result also showed that bodies (some more distinctively than others) are bearers and representatives of a lot of stories and history that can be connected to stereotypical images. It also highlights that the process of racialization is very much connected to the discourse of origin and appearance. This results in and produces those experiences that has been brought forward in the analysis.

The material also demonstrates that persons that are navigating outside the white norm in Sweden are at constant risk of being scrutinised and "Othered". Non-white people in Sweden are also more vulnerable when it comes to being exposed to different kind of discriminatory treatment and symbolic violence on both personal and structural levels. These actions derive from colonial ideas concerning whiteness and "the Other" which still permeates society. The

discourse in Sweden does in some ways "prohibit" to speak in terms of skin-colour and race and the language available to categorise is in a large extent connected to simplified stereotypes. But in contrast, the material describes a sort of obsession around race where non-white Swede are having to "defend" their Swedishness, being questioned or exposed to microaggressions.

The material also implies that there is a lot of insecurities and lack of comprehension (from the outside world) connected to the space of betweenship, not always knowing where to place people or how to approach them. People that identifies with the notion of betweenship is stripped of their complexity and forced to "choose sides" and often assigned to a specific racial category based on appearance. The result showed that having to fend for you heritage, regardless if you identify with that particular heritage or not, is exhausting. Not only do you have to defend or be a spokesperson for a certain group or background, but you are also, to some extent, expected to behave or act accordingly. The result in this study shows that, irrespective of the context, the respondents often carried around a fear of being too Swedish or too something else, always having to balance a thin thread. One consequence when stereotyping and essentialising groups and their characteristics is that discriminatory actions against them become normalised. In ways this removes the person's right to claim Sweden and Swedishness as its own.

In relation to the question on how identity is shaped in the spaces of betweenship, the material demonstrates a self-evident sense pride over one's origin or cultural heritage and the ability to navigate in/out and around borders of identity and belonging. Further, even if betweenship represents a sort of incompleteness it can also be seen as a strength. In relation to the stories that are being shaped within the spaces of betweenship, those stories help to shape the agenda around the conversation concerning race in a multicultural country like Sweden. These new forms of identities broaden and challenge the image and idea of Sweden being a homogenous country further changing the image of Swedishness. People that exist within the space of betweenship has not always been considered being a specific group in society, and I do not want to make those claims here either. However, more and more stories are being heard from people within this space and where one large common ground is to not really fit in but to share the experience of being racialized as non-white (in extension) non-Swedish and/or having experiences of migration, directly or in prior generations. They share the experiences of being Swedish but not "just right" or having been placed within the category immigrant but

not being able to relate to that either. The word immigrant can also (in everyday language) be used as synonym to non-white Swedish persons. This was also evident in my material where the respondent's relationship with the word was complex and, in many aspects, seen as a direct insult. Based on some of the reasoning in my material these shared experiences can also create a sort of sense of belonging generated out of the feeling of ambivalence, insecurities and discrimination. A form of identity creation is being built based on the resistance against the fixed and binary. Further, language and how the conversation is conducted concerning identity, betweenship race and ethnicity needs to be considered and updated. New narratives (like the ones that can be found in this material) need to be addressed and experiences from non-white people that have been exposed to discrimination and racism. Today the conversation tends to be tentative and filled with the narrative "in Sweden we do not see colour". Even if the idea about a post-racial society where discrimination based on skin-colour belongs to the past is a nice vision, the current climate in society unfolds another story.

To conclude, the colour-blind agenda that is evident in Sweden today aggravates a language that pinpoints the specificness of racial discrimination which then make it hard to see/measure. Personal testimonies that shares this picture challenging and explaining their view on Sweden therefore needs to be heard. As a part of this process, on how to structurally maintain a multicultural society that functions, there needs to be a conversation about what role race (as a social construction) plays in our society. If the self-image of colour-blindness does not get questioned, incidents concerning discrimination based on skin-colour will be minimized, met with shock or reduced to individual misfortune. By returning to a nuanced conversation concerning race and its implication simply acknowledges the testimonies from groups sharing experiences similar do the ones in my material. To be able to move forward in today's climate, we need to start having a conversation regarding these issues, by using the "right" language. The results in this study confirms that the concept of Swedishness is not one-dimensional or static but rather something that is constantly changing. The emergence of these "new" identities thereby contributes to an extension of the concept of Swedishness. I therefore think that it is important that we, both on individual and structural level become more aware of what kind of image of Swedishness that we are reproducing, within but also beyond Sweden's boarders.

8 References

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