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# Racial profiling: Personal experiences that people of color face in Sweden

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Abstract:

**Racial profiling: Personal experiences that people of color face in Sweden**

The purpose of this study is to explore the personal experiences of racial profiling that people of color face in Sweden. Racial profiling is a social issue in the world today and a much-disputed subject in the Swedish society. The study was conducted with qualitative interviews with four people of color in Sweden. The intersectionality perspective was used as an analytical tool to analyze the experiences people of color face with the help of social constructionism theory. The results showed that all four interviewees have experienced racial profiling in different settings in their lives. In addition, the study showed that the interviewees' experiences of racial profiling differed depending on the interviewees' identity attributes such as gender, race, and their religious affiliation affecting their vulnerability and experiences of racial profiling. The findings also show that the four informants have experienced and are vulnerable to everyday racism in Sweden due to the existing prejudices in the Swedish society.

**Keywords: race, racial profiling, people of color (POC), intersectionality, experiences.**

## **Preamble**

We would like to thank all of the informants who participated in our study. Thank you for sharing your experiences. We would also like to thank our supervisor Brita Backlund Rambaree and our families who have supported us.

Last but not least, we would like to thank each other for the commitment, encouragement and support during the study.

## **Thank you!**

Anela Rasidovic and Halimo Hussein

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## 1. Introduction

TV 4, a Swedish tv channel, recently broadcasted a segment on racial profiling through their programme “Kalla fakta” (‘cold facts’). The episode allowed people of color (POC) to share their stories about racial profiling providing evidence that it is a problem in the Swedish society (Bergdahl, 2019). Moreover, the informants shed light on the disadvantages POC face in their daily lives because of racial profiling, especially concerning/in terms of discrimination by the police (Bergdahl, 2019).

The discussion regarding racial profiling is on the rise in Sweden. As things stand today, a simple Google search of ‘racial profiling Sweden’ shows over 600,000 results. The experiences of racial profiling are often left unheard in society because of POC’s status as a minority in Sweden. It is important to examine racial profiling because of its relevance in international social work. A personal aspect of the subject is that the authors of the research are both women of color. From past experiences, we feel that we have been subjected and still are subjected to racial profiling due to our appearance and other individual attributes. We consider this topic to be an important subject in our society due to the exclusion and segregation that occurs in the Swedish society. Racism is manifested in different ways in the Swedish society. A personal experience is that racism has been manifested through grunts and hateful looks which turned into hateful comments. The comments turned into people pushing one in the streets and harassing one because of one’s race. Racial profiling is a way to use racism in the society and we want to shed light on the experiences that people of color have of this phenomenon.

In the Swedish context, ethnic profiling or ethnic discrimination are more commonly used than racial profiling to explain the experiences of discrimination that people with different ethnicities face (DO, 2019). According to the Equality Ombudsman, ethnic profiling is having negative conceptions about people with darker skin complexion and/or with a different religious belief (DO, 2019). It is however relevant to use the term race as it is a relatively new term being used and it puts full focus on race. As Lundström (2007, p.21) states that; *“researchers have emphasized how the concept of ethnicity is characterized by shortcomings, as it risks obscuring different processes of exclusion, segregation or discrimination based on beliefs that are linked to appearance.”* Although the definitions of ethnic and racial profiling have similarities,

there are great differences. Bhopal (2003) mentions that ethnicity refers to groups in which people belong to often sharing the same characteristics such as place of origin, culture and language. These characteristics are, as Bhopal (2003) discusses not easily visible or measurable making racial profiling more relevant to use in this research context. Furthermore, based on how these authors describe ethnic and racial profiling, we choose to focus on racial profiling as it fits our research and the research aim.

In this study emphasis will be on intersectionality as people of color have different genders, race, and religious views all intersecting and shaping one's experience. It is interesting to view racial profiling from an intersectionality perspective due to the different aspects of vulnerability that one faces.

### 1.1 The relation to international social work

Research has shown that approximately thirty-two million people in the US have been subjected to racial profiling (Amnesty International, 2004). Since racial profiling is considered as a new phenomenon in Sweden, there is not enough research done on this topic for statistics, but the level of awareness is on the rise. The experiences of racial profiling continue to, however, be misunderstood. Racial profiling affect individuals or groups in a variety of different ways and in many different settings such as the housing market (Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2008) and the labor market (Bursell, 2012). The experiences vary from individual to individual. The level of vulnerability to racial profiling varies depending on other aspects of identity such as ethnicity or gender shaping the individuals' experience (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015). This type of discrimination hinders many people around the world from progressing and it contributes to the level of inequality. Racial profiling can have emotional, psychological, financial and/or physical consequences (Franklin, Boyd-Franklin & Kelly, 2006). Racial profiling affects people of all backgrounds making it a topic of great relevance for international social work. It is important that social workers have knowledge about this phenomenon because it is a subject that is related to national and international social work. It is beneficial for clients to receive help and support that they need when they are treated unequally and denied their rights to housing, education and health services due to their race and due to racism. It is important that social workers use their position in the society to shed light to racial profiling and racism in general

both in the work with clients and also within the organizations that they work in. The home page for National Association of Social Workers issued an initiative 2007 by their president (NASW, 2007). The document emphasizes on the importance of social workers having knowledge regarding racism. The document provides definitions of institutional and structural racism, the relation between racism and social work.

## 1.2 Aim & Research questions

The aim of the research is to explore the personal experiences of racial profiling among people of color in Sweden. Using intersectionality theory, the study also aims to shed more light on characteristics that may make individuals more or less vulnerable to racial profiling.

1. How is racial profiling experienced by people of color in Sweden?
2. How can the experiences be understood through intersectionality?

## 1.3 Essay disposition

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. In the first chapter of this research, an introduction of racial profiling is presented together with the aim, research questions and its relation to international social work. An explanation of the important concepts in the research are presented in chapter two to avoid confusion and give a better understanding of the subject. Chapter three covers previous research on topics regarding racial profiling in the world and in Sweden. Chapter four covers the theoretical approaches; social constructionism and intersectionality explaining the link to racial profiling and how they are used as analytical tools in the data analysis. Chapter five explains the chosen research method and the research process. Chapter six presents the findings using quotes from the informants and provides an analysis using social constructionism and intersectionality theory. The final chapter of this essay covers our own discussion and reflections of the main findings as well as recommendations for future research.



## **2. Explanation of concepts**

### **2.1 People of color**

The concept people of color (POC) is a term combining people of all ethnic/racial groups that are not considered white; highlighting the systemic racism that this group experiences (Alvarez, Liang & Neville, 2016). POC as a term is more commonly used and understood in the US context. The term is often used to replace words such as immigrants or minorities (Alvarez, Liang & Neville, 2016). In this research context, POC refers to those who are not considered ‘white’ or ethnically Swedish. Therefore, in this research context and the Swedish society, POC is used as a term for people from the Middle east, Asia, Africa and/or even European countries such as Albania or Romania.

### **2.2 Race / racial profiling**

Race as a concept is socially constructed (Kang, Lessard, Heston & Nordmarken, 2017). The term divides individuals into different groups or categories depending on their individual attributes such as the color of their skin or their ethnic origin (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007). Kulis & Marsiglia (2015) state that there is an unanimity that race should be considered as something that is socially constructed rather than a biological fact. Race becomes important in the society due to people putting social and cultural meaning to it. Race is constructed to create a hierarchy and to discriminate people in certain groups. The societal belief is that there are people with distinctive characteristics and that few races are naturally inferior or superior. This results in the dominance of the other being justified. Kulis & Marsiglia, (2015) emphasize on the importance of highlighting the social experiences of race that exists in our society despite that science has shown that humans have common biological and genetic heritage.

Racial profiling means that individuals are discriminated against due to their appearances such as skin color, name, culture, language, ethnicity and religion. Racial profiling is usually used by law enforcement in the US and Canada targeting individuals with specific traits (Jacobs, Foster, & Azmi, 2017). Definitions of race, ethnicity, oppression and privilege that are socially constructed in the society occur on a personal, cultural and structural level. Oppression becomes visible when the societal norms and

values are only based on the dominant culture. An example of this is the hijab (headscarf) that is worn by Muslim women; western societies are based on the dominant Western culture therefore the hijab is considered to be a symbol of oppression. On a structural level, oppression against people with different race and ethnicity, is seen on an institutional level such as in the judicial system and in policies where resources are divided unequally (Kulis & Marsiglia, 2015).

As mentioned in the introduction section, racial profiling will be the focus of this study due to Lundstörms (2007) definition of ethnic profiling. Racial profiling highlights the broader perspective of the experiences that the informants have. In this study, the term racial profiling will be used to explain how racism can be manifested in different ways. Racial profiling is a way to express racism therefore it is connected to racism and discrimination. The experiences of the informants of this study will be looked upon from a racial profiling perspective.

### **3. Previous research**

Segregation is not a new phenomenon, but the problem continues to exist in the world we live in today. Religion, race, gender, social status are all aspects which make us all different and therefore categorize us in different groups in society (Kamali, 2005). Segregation goes hand in hand with discrimination in society where one may be restricted or limited in certain areas such as the housing market, labor market, social life as well as other aspects in society (Kamali, 2005).

In the following chapter, previous research will be presented on topics related to racial profiling such as discrimination, and/or ethnic profiling due to the insufficient research on racial profiling in Sweden. Moreover, previous research on racial profiling in an international context will also be presented.

#### **3.1 Experiences of discrimination in Sweden**

Experiences are shared in a Swedish report written in 2005 regarding ethnic discrimination in Sweden. The study conducted in the report suggests that those with a foreign-background are often degraded in relation to their competence and abilities

because of their background (Kamali, 2005). Due to this, people with a foreign sounding name may face greater difficulties in finding work and being called for an interview (Kamali, 2005). The vulnerability increases if the applicant's knowledge of the Swedish language is limited or perhaps not perfect. The study also mentions that people with foreign backgrounds are more likely to be offered short term positions than long-term positions (Kamali, 2005). The level of discrimination varies greatly depending on the individual and their personal attributes therefore some groups in society may be more vulnerable to discrimination than others (Kamali, 2005).

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published a report in 2008 covering the topics of racism as well as the different types of discrimination that exist in many countries throughout Europe (FRA, 2008). The annual report mentions discrimination in health care services in regard to race and/or ethnic origin (FRA, 2008). Countries such as Germany, Netherlands, Italy and Sweden had received complaints for racial/ethnic discrimination (FRA, 2008). Among several countries in Europe, Sweden had the highest number of complaints for racial/ethnic discrimination in health care services (FRA, 2008).

A report was conducted in 2018 on the ‘anti-blackness racism’ that exists in the Swedish labor market (Wolgast, Molina & Gardell, 2018). A quantitative study was done in order to find out if Afro-Swedes from Africa, are disadvantaged due to their skin color in regards of work positions, salaries and opportunities of advancing in their workplace. The study compares Afro-Swedes to the rest of the population in Sweden, consisting of ethnic swedes and all other ethnicities than African. The study shows that Afro-Swedes are discriminated in the labor market due to the color of their skin. They are denied the same rights that the rest of the population have, such as having access to career opportunities, statuses and resources such as higher salaries. The study also shows that the unemployment rate is higher among afro-swedes than the rest of the people living in Sweden. The authors of the study define racism as being actions and practice instead of ideas and thoughts. Racism is not only what one thinks but also what one does (Wolgast et al, 2018).

### 3.2 Labor market

Empirical evidence was presented in a study done in 2006/2007 regarding ethnic discrimination in the labor market in Sweden (Bursell, 2012). Pairs of resumés were sent out with the same amount of merits, however, using two different names. One of the applications had a foreign name whereas the other resume had a Swedish-sounding name. Both were used and sent out to different occupations across the labor market. Those assumed to be Swedish by name were called back twice as often in comparison to foreign-named applicants. Although the researcher uses the concept “ethnic discrimination” it is still relevant to the topic of racial profiling. The study suggests that discrimination does take place in the labor market since there was a significant difference in call-backs for ethnic Swedes and those with “foreign” names. Because the applicant’s names affect their experience in the labor market, the research suggests that racial profiling takes place in the labor market. Due to this, one can conclude that the entry to the labor market may be less accessible to those with foreign-sounding names in comparison to Swedish-sounding names (Bursell, 2012).

### 3.3 Police searches

The term racial profiling is relatively new in the Swedish context and yet to be researched further. In countries such as the US and the United Kingdom (UK), racial profiling is a known social issue which is often broadcasted on social media (Mulinari, 2017).

Research done in 2013/2014 regarding police activity showed that individuals with darker complexions in the UK have a 4,5 higher chance of being stopped and searched in comparison to people of a lighter complexion (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Asian and mixed-race individuals were nearly twice as likely to be stopped and searched (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Based on the statistics provided by the Ministry of Justice (2015) it is evident that certain groups face a higher probability of being stopped and searched by police officers. In addition, the research suggests that the darker the complexion an individual has; the more likely they are to be subjected to racial profiling (Ministry of Justice, 2015).

### 3.4 Housing market discrimination

The housing market is another area in society in which racial discrimination may occur. Some groups may not have the economy to provide for a quality housing unit or perhaps have different housing preferences (Hanson & Hawley, 2011). Another possible reason could be racial discrimination against those that do apply for housing units. A field experiment was done in the United States to investigate if landlords discriminate individuals based on their race and/or their social class. Emails were sent to landlords using names that have a high chance of being either white or African American names. Emails were altered in terms of grammar, language and spelling to see the difference between class in relation to race and compared to the level of responses (Hanson & Hawley, 2011). Based on the research outcomes, those with African American names, in general, faced more discrimination by a net level of 4.5 percent (Hanson & Hawley, 2011). Emails with higher social class, however, showed less discrimination to African American names (Hanson & Hawley, 2011). Emails implying that both races are of lower class showed that African American names received less responses than white sounding names (Hanson & Hawley, 2011). The findings show how the intersectionality theory is important to consider in the way an individual is treated. In this case, both race and social class are factors intersecting with one another and affecting their experience.

A research paper published by Ahmed & Hammarstedt (2008) shows the existence of discrimination in the Swedish housing market. Names of applicants were made up for research purposes. This study compared Swedish and Arabic/Muslim male names. These made-up names were used to send applications for rental apartments through the internet. The male name that sounded Arabic/Muslim received fewer callbacks and invitations for apartment showings in comparison to a Swedish male name (Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2008). The study also found that females had a higher chance of getting called back than males (Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2008). This suggests that both racial, ethnic and gender discrimination exists in the housing market favoring certain individuals more than others.

#### **4. Theoretical framework**

In this chapter, the theoretical perspectives are presented which will be used to analyze the collected data. The theoretical perspective that we have chosen are the intersectionality theory and social constructionism. We chose these theories due to their explanation of the phenomenon racial profiling. The social constructionism was chosen because race and gender are socially constructed and through that comes intersectionality due to people of color having different gender and race.

##### **4.1 Intersectionality**

Marsiglia & Kulis (2015, p. 52) define intersectionality as “multidimensionality and complexity of the human cultural experience and describes the place where multiple identity traits come together or intersect.” The vulnerability is a result of the combination of identities intersecting with one another, which in this study, is the combination of gender, ethnic and religious background.

Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced intersectionality in 1989 as an analytical tool to explain the experiences black women face in employment (Crenshaw, 1989). Crenshaw argues that one cannot understand the experience looking into ethnicity independently. Instead, Crenshaw says that identity traits reinforce one another and therefore one should include the other factors such as race or gender to understand how the experiences are constructed (Crenshaw, 1989). Being for example, homosexual, can mean being more vulnerable to discrimination and marginalization due to the existing prejudice against this group (SOU, 2006).

Intersectionality plays a significant role in this study since the chosen informants differ in social class, nationality, job positions and appearances. Intersectionality theory is the focus as well as an analytical tool to understand the influence of individual attributes on POC experiences of racial profiling. POC experience racial profiling due to their different identities such as religious, gender and race identity therefore it is of importance to use this theory to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of racial profiling. Intersectionality refers to identifying oneself in different groups in the society such as gender and/or religious groups.

## 4.2 Social constructionism

Social interaction is a part of everyday life. The feelings or thoughts we receive from these interactions may be negative, or positive; perhaps pleasant or maybe unpleasant (Witkin, 2012). All of these thoughts or feelings that we gained from the interaction shape the way we view things and therefore our reality of things (Witkin, 2012). To simplify, our reality and the knowledge we have are social constructs (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Social constructionism theory emphasizes on the idea that people create/construct their realities therefore prejudices and discrimination are constructed through interaction by people (Payne, 2005). Through social interactions, individuals are constantly shaping their own reality and creating meanings of things (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015). Some realities we create are based on human agreements or because we believe they exist (Searle, 1995), therefore racial profiling is a concept that is constructed by people in order to discriminate people with different beliefs and norms than the majority culture. The concept of social constructionism goes hand in hand with other sociological subjects such as societal norms, belief systems, social order, and power relations within society (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Furthermore, using this theoretical framework, race as a phenomenon can be seen as a social construct meaning humans are the ones creating and shaping the phenomenon.

Social constructionism will be used as an analytical tool to explain the experiences of the informants in this study. It will further be used as a tool to explain how people construct norms in the society in order to uphold constructed power structures that enhances prejudices against people with a different race or background. Intersectionality will be explained using gender and race as socially constructed.

## 5. Method

In the following section, the research method and data collection will be described in detail. Information about how the entire research process took place as well as how we picked our informants will be explained. Furthermore, ethical considerations will follow as well as a discussion regarding validity and reliability of the data.

## 5.1 Research design

The choice of research design is a qualitative method in order to receive a more in-depth perspective of the subject (Patton, 2002). The interview questions are semi-structured to give the informants more space and freedom to share their thoughts and experiences (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This study was conducted using a deductive approach where a theoretical perspective was the starting point of this study and applied to the collected data (Hayes, 2000).

## 5.2 Mode of procedure

Before we began writing about the research, both authors did research on the topic to help us figure out what it is we want to explore. We used a variety of different sources available using the University of Gävle's library database. Using the library's database and the subject guide "social work" option, we could find previous research and books about racial profiling. The concept racial profiling alone gave us roughly over 200,000 hits when searching the library's database. With the peer-reviewed option, the number of hits reduced to 100,000 which was more than enough for us to find different perspectives and information. Out of these 100,000, addition terms were added to the search engine to find the most relevant sources for our study. The words intersectionality and discrimination were added to the search. The first two pages were most relevant based on our research and around 10 sources were used in this research. In addition, previous course literature was also used for defining the concepts in the research, the theoretical framework and the analysis.

One of the important parts in research is deciding from whom we will collect our data (D'Cruz & Jones, 2013). The interviewees have been chosen based on purposive sampling in which individuals were selected based on their relevance to the research subject (Frankfort & Nachmias, 2008). The target group in this research was people of color making this sampling method most appropriate (D'Cruz & Jones, 2004). The authors wrote a post on social media, Facebook and Instagram, in order to find participants. The post consisted of information about the study and that the study aims to investigate the experiences of people of color regarding racial profiling. Informants wrote to the authors and stated that they were interested and wanted to participate in the study. In this research, four persons of color were chosen to participate to gain a better



understanding of the experiences of racial profiling. We have chosen to interview two men and two women of color to increase validity and get an intersectional perspective in our data. While picking the informants, our goal was to interview people with different backgrounds to then later analyze the data to see if the experiences differed and to gain a broader perspective regarding their experiences in relation to intersectionality. Focus was put on gender and the informants' individual experiences; therefore, we did not take age into consideration in this study.

The interview questions were carefully chosen in relation to our aim and research questions. In addition, the interview questions were written in a simple manner in order to be understood by the informant and avoid confusion or biased answers. Once we found informants willing to participate, a consent letter was sent out for them to read before initiating the interview. The questions were not sent out ahead of time as we wanted the informants to speak freely and not think too much about the questions before. Two out of four informants' interviews were carried out using audio phone call on Facebook through Messenger and Facetime. The two informants preferred audio/video calling due to the location differences and the inability to meet face-to-face. The remaining two informants took part in face-to-face interviews. The choice of language was depending on the informants' preference and could either be Swedish or English. All informants chose Swedish as they found it easier or simply it made them more comfortable for the interview. This allowed the informants to express their experiences more freely. We chose to have one author conducting the interview and one taking notes during the interview. We did this because we assumed the interview would be more relaxed instead of having two people asking questions and jumping in and out of the discussion. This also allowed the note-taker to identify possible patterns or themes that the individual shared and follow up on them towards the end of the interview. The interviews lasted between 30-70 minutes depending on the individual and how much they wanted to share.

### 5.3 Tools of analysis

The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, in other words, finding themes and patterns in the data (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Atlas-Ti version 6.2 was used as a data analysis software in which we uploaded the audio file and coded the data. The data was in Swedish in audio format and coded in Swedish but later translated to English.

While coding the data, we both replayed the recordings and discussed the findings. While discussing the findings, both authors identified key categories from the interviews summarizing what all informants spoke of. Themes were then created by the authors putting together these categories in relation to the corresponding theme. Therefore, the informants' quotes were divided into the different themes. The quotes were selected based on the relevance to the study and the research aim as well as the research questions to avoid information which may be off-topic (Frankfort-Nachmias et al, 2015). The emerged themes and patterns were analyzed with the quotes made by the informants in relation to the theory and perspective selected.

#### 5.4 Ethical considerations

As ‘‘Kalla Fakta’’ broadcasted, racial profiling is a social problem in the Swedish society (Bergdahl, 2019). This makes it also a very sensitive topic which urges the importance of having ethical considerations throughout the entire research process. We were very aware that it might bring up past negative experiences and perhaps bring back emotions that are attached to these experiences. In order to proceed with the data collection, an informed consent was required from all informants (Grinnell, 2001). The informed consent contains thorough information about the research topic, the research process and the data analysis as well as ethical guidelines such as anonymity and confidentiality (Grinnell, 2001). This consent form also informed the informants how the collected data will be used and who it will be shared among (Grinnell, 2001; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014). The consent form also informed the informants that the research is completely voluntary. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, the names were altered as well as minor details to protect the privacy of the informants in the research. All of the informants received a consent letter beforehand and also received it during the start of the interviews. Before beginning the interview, informants were asked if recording of the interview was allowed and all of them approved.

#### 5.5 Credibility & validity issues

Validity and credibility are important aspects in research (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). There are a variety of different aspects that may weaken or strengthen a research.

In the case of carrying out the interviews, most interviews were conducted with informants from the same municipality which gives a deeper understanding of the situation in this specific location but cannot be used as a representation of Sweden as a whole. In addition, the research consisted of four informants and may therefore lack a proper representation and cannot be generalized.

While we are looking into experiences of racial profiling that people of color may face, there may be factors that were not considered or brought up by the informants. These factors could influence their experience making them more or less vulnerable to racial profiling and influencing their experience of racial profiling. Examples may be their level of education, the level of work experience and/or personal characteristics such as a disability and/or sexual orientation. These individual attributes can, for example, be potential factors influencing the way other people see and treat them therefore affecting their experience of racial profiling.

During the entire research process, the researchers interpreted the data separately to summarize the data and form themes. The interpretation of the data was done separately in order to avoid misinterpretations. This strengthens our research as there are two perspectives therefore ensuring validity and credibility in our data. The data was translated from Swedish to English. Both researchers are fluent in English and Swedish enhancing the quality of the translated data.

In order to avoid bias the interview questions were not leading questions and the data was fact proved due to the authors repeating the answers that the informants gave. Assigned supervisor proof read the thesis and identified any changes that needed to be done.

## 5.6 Limitations

Since the research was conducted through interviews, we had some trouble with creating the “right” interview questions. The questions that we created were considered as research questions and we had to re-do them in order to form them into interview questions. We also thought that the formulation of some questions gave us the same answers despite them being different questions.

The choice of sampling was also a limitation because we faced difficulties finding people to participate in our research. The plan for the study was to interview four people but we discovered during the interviews that we needed one more person of color but due to time limitations we could not interview a fifth informant. We wanted to have an informant with a ‘white-passing’ background to explore further the informants’ experiences of racial profiling but time was of the essence and we chose to proceed with the informants we had available to us. White passing refers to a person of color that can pass to be white due to that person’s attributes that look typical “white” such as fairer skin color, blond hair and lighter eye color.

### **5.7 Generalizability**

An important aspect in research involves generalizability and the extent to which the results can be applied as a whole in further settings by researchers (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The research comprises of, as mentioned, four informants with different backgrounds which may not be a proper representation of Sweden as whole, but it sheds light to the social problem (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The study is intended to explore people of colors’ experiences and the intersectional perspective for these informants. However, the findings of this research do not account for all people of color as all of the individuals have different experiences and individual attributes shaping their experiences of racial profiling.

## **6. Results and analysis**

In the following chapter, the main findings as well as analysis will be presented. The themes that emerged during the interviews and during the interview analysis will be presented. Two of the themes are connected to our research question in order to understand the experiences from a intersectionality perspective. The remaining three themes cover other experiences people of color face in Sweden as told by the informants in the study.

### **Description of themes**

Theme 1 - Everyday racism as a theme was a topic that all of the informants discussed as they were sharing their experiences. In this theme, the informants shared their experiences regarding racial profiling that the informants encounter on a daily basis. According to the informants is racial profiling a way of exposing people to discrimination and racism. Racism, discrimination and racial profiling go hand in hand.

Theme 2 - Experiences of racial and ethnic profiling: One of the recurring themes in the data collection is the topic of racial and ethnic profiling. The topic of ethnic profiling became of relevance as informants felt that they experience both racial and ethnic profiling depending on the circumstances. In the following section, the informants will share their experiences of racial profiling and ethnic profiling as they see the two.

Theme 3 - The difference in vulnerability: This theme is connected to one of our research questions in terms of intersectionality. The topic of intersectionality and how the experiences vary were mentioned by all of our informants. Some of them expressed that they felt more vulnerable to be subjected to racial profiling as they could identify with several different groups in the society. Within this theme, the informants' answers will be presented.

Theme 4 - Being questioned. This theme emerged during the interviews as all of our informants expressed that their experiences of racial profiling have a connection with being questioned and suspected in different settings.

Theme 5 - Prejudices in the society. This theme emerged during the interviews due to the informants speaking of being in a vulnerable position when one is subjected to racial profiling. It is clear in the study that prejudices play a great role when one is subjected to racial profiling.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter five regarding methods, our informants were chosen using the purposive sampling method. The following is an introduction to our informants with information they have shared during the interview:

Informant A is a woman born in Europe with Somali roots. She is a Muslim and wears a hijab (headscarf). She studies to become a health-care practitioner.

Informant B identifies as African and refers to himself as dark-skinned. He has lived in another European country and works as a social worker today in Sweden.

Informant C is a Muslim woman from Palestine.

Informant D is a male and a university student in Sweden. He refers to himself as having dark hair and a beard. He is a Muslim.

All informants are between the ages 23-33 years old.

## 6.1 Everyday racism

All informants shared experiences relating to the everyday racism that they face. All informants feel that racial profiling have affected their daily lives. The following section captures the informants' experiences of everyday racism.

Informant A explains that she feels that the color of her skin is the first identity trait people notice about her and this, according to her, makes her stand out in the crowd. She has an experience on a train when two white men came and sat by her and started to stare.

*“I don't know if they were ethnic Swedes, but they were white at least, they sat close to me and just looked at me. I got genuinely scared and just thought ‘oh my god...I am more and more scared after everything that I have seen happening in the society. I see black people discriminated against all the time, like the woman in the subway (news story). It was security guards that attacked her! I don't feel safe.’”* - Informant A

Informant A expresses her worry that something will happen to her because of her race. It is evident here that the societal norms that are socially constructed in the Swedish society contribute to people of color being judged due to the perceptions of their race. Informant A makes a reference to a news story in Sweden in which a pregnant black woman was forced out of a train and aggressively attacked to the ground by security (Henley, 2019). This news story went viral and the video was shared on the internet. Informant A expresses herself in words describing herself as vulnerable to racial profiling and having feelings of powerlessness and discomfort in situations where she may be considered a minority or less of value by the ethnic Swedes or someone with lighter skin than her.

*“I would feel safer if there were people there that looked like me, because then I know that they could help me if something were to happen.” - Informant A*

The discomfort and unpleasant feelings informant A shares are feelings that all the informants mutually relate to. This can be a result of the degrading treatment portrayed in media and also related to the experiences they face in real-life. Informant A expresses feelings of hopelessness in this quote above. Hopelessness if something were to happen, that no one would help her unless they were similar in appearance and could understand the discrimination she is facing.

*“You don’t have to talk to someone to be racially profiled. You can also be racially profiled by the way someone treats you, their facial expressions, body language, and attitudes. Someone can act very mad or uncomfortable – which is noticeable in their body language. You can feel that you aren’t liked by someone or welcome. This can take place anywhere...the bank, the bus.... anywhere” - Informant B*

Racial profiling does not have to be direct verbal contact, but as informant B states, it can be the facial expressions, the vibes the person sends out, and their body movements indicating discomfort and anxiousness when they see you. Informant B states that racial profiling can take place anywhere, highlighting the level of vulnerability and the daily-life experiences for this individual. Because informant B states that racial profiling can happen anywhere, this also suggests that racial profiling is something normal to experience among people in public. He further explains that he considers his experiences are racial profiling due to people not knowing his ethnicity. He explains that a person of color is subjected to discrimination/racism based on race because people do not often know what ethnicity he has or even who he is. The experiences of informant B indicates that racial profiling is something that is socially constructed by people. It is manifested in every aspect of an individual's life. It creates the notion of “the others” which divides people into categories. Race is explained as socially constructed and that prejudices are created by people in order to uphold power structures in the society.

*“When I lived there..(another European country), I got stopped 3-4 times a week whereas in Sweden, it happens only a few times a month. If I’m lucky, five times a month but if I’m unlucky, 10 or more times a month.” - Informant B*

Informant B shares the number of times he gets stopped in Sweden. This may suggest that police officers are racially biased as they pick out people who they assume are breaking the law. In the case of informant B and previous research conducted by the Ministry of Justice (2015), it is most likely against someone with a darker skin complexion.

Informant B also recalls an experience when he was walking in a neighborhood to a friend's house. He had trouble finding the apartment and a local neighbor called the police as the neighbor found him suspicious.

*“There are stereotypes that immigrants are criminals. For me, it feels like, it's fear. Fear for the unknown – something they aren't used to... They must have seen me as a threat since they called the police.”* - Informant B

In the quote above made by informant B he feels that it is not only stereotypes, but that people are afraid of things that they might find unusual or not used to, in this case; it could be someone unfamiliar in the neighborhood or it could also be because of his appearance that the neighbor interpreted as danger or a threat.

Informant A and C give examples on how racial profiling is manifested in different parts of one's life:

*“It (racial profiling) happens all the time. Like in the labor market... There are many who don't get hired because of the way they look. I have heard stories from friends that get called to interviews. Everything sounds very promising before the interview, the employer is interested... but when they get to the interview, it's another dynamic than what it seemed like.”* - Informant A

Here it is clear that informant A expresses a common discrimination that happens in the Swedish society. This is seen by the previous research mentioned earlier by Bursell (2012) where different resumes were sent to several occupations within the labor market with different names. Bursell (2012) states that the resume with the assumed Swedish names were called back more often than the ones with the foreign names. Bursell (2012) shows the experience that informant A has which is that discrimination does exist in the



labor market which leads to less accessibility to the labor market by those with foreign names.

*“I felt that, because of my appearance and because I am not ethnically Swedish, I received comments, got asked many questions and just was treated differently in comparison to the Ethnic Swedes. It’s (racial profiling) a big problem in Sweden. It’s one of the main causes that people take the wrong path in life. It can be anything from drug abuse to criminality just because of racial profiling...being treated differently. It makes a person feel hopeless and want to give up since no one else believes in them” -*

Informant C

Informant C shares school experiences from elementary to university where she felt that she was treated differently than her Swedish classmates. She mentions the consequences of racial profiling where some may be overwhelmed with feelings of hopelessness or discriminated against that they choose drugs or criminality. This emphasizes the effects and consequences that racial profiling may result in.

*“I have to struggle and fight (for something) more than others. I have to show and prove who I am and what I stand for and that I am as good as them (Swedish majority). I shouldn’t have to struggle more than anyone else just to show that I am equally as capable as them (Ethnic Swedes)” - Informant C*

Informant C highlights the struggle being a POC in this quote as she mentions she has to struggle more than others to prove she is equally good otherwise they would not believe her.

*“I got offered short term jobs and it is noticeable that Swedes get better job offers and long-term employment. I often thought to myself, is it because I am bad and not competent enough? It felt like I had a lot of luck when I got a permanent job because it doesn’t happen otherwise. I got lucky because they (the job) were looking for someone who could speak another language. So, it was decided. I don’t think I would have gotten the job otherwise. I had thought (to myself) so many times to change careers because I didn’t feel like I had the privilege to do what I really want to do (career wise)” -*

Informant C

Informant C continues and emphasizes the effect racial profiling has on people. She expresses herself in terms that she is not as privileged as others in society and her self-

esteem suffered from this. Even though informant C has the right competence, she felt that she couldn't pursue her dream career because of her background. Informant C also says that it's about 'luck' in certain job positions.

*"I am afraid of saying things like where I work because I am scared it (racial profiling) will affect me even more in society and in my career."* - Informant C

In the quote above by informant C, feelings of fear, and vulnerability are shown. Informant C feels that she must be careful with what information she gives as she feels that it can affect her life and her career. This also shows that some experiences may often be left untold due to the fear of information coming out limiting your opportunities in society and exposing you to greater discrimination.

Based on the statistics provided by the Ministry of Justice (2015) suggests that certain groups have a higher chance of being stopped and searched by police officers. In addition, the research suggests that the darker the complexion an individual has; the more likely they are to be subjected to racial profiling (Ministry of Justice, 2015). This can be understood from the social constructionist perspective where certain characteristics (the darkness of your skin f.ex.) make you more vulnerable to being stopped and searched by the police. The darker colored skin one has is linked to criminality as police officers have socially constructed.

In addition, it can also be seen as a socially constructed hierarchy in society. The hierarchy of race was an identified pattern that two informants talked about in the interviews conducted. Garner (2010) mentions that white at the top seems normal and is never questioned. Those who do not fit the category of white fall underneath the whites as they do not fit the 'norm' (Garner, 2010). The structure may be used to explain why many of the informants in this study feel oppressed, powerless and discriminated against. The lower you are in the hierarchy the more vulnerable one becomes as informant C pointed out. There is also a social construction of how 'Swedish' people should be. Demands are put on those with another background to integrate and fit in line with the Swedish norms (Kamali, 2005). If you fail to integrate well in society, the blame is put on the group as a whole and their inability to adapt to the society's norms (Kamali, 2005). This can also be seen as the reason why certain groups or the group as a whole can be discriminated against as they do not 'fit in' with the majority.

## 6.2 Experiences of racial profiling and ethnic profiling

Previous research has shown that racial profiling / ethnic profiling exist in the labor market, in the healthcare system and the judicial/legal system such as the police department. It shows in our interviews that people of color face racial profiling / ethnic profiling in these settings.

Informant B shares his view on racial profiling by explaining how people can be affected by racial profiling in different ways.

*“Racial profiling is based on a person’s appearance, referring to what race an individual is. It can be a European, African or Asian. I would say racial profiling is what I experience, since it’s profiling based on my skin color and other attributes such as hair color and eye color. Ethnic profiling has to do with someone belonging to a specific ethnicity. You can be a part of another ethnicity and not be racially profiled. For example, someone from a European country, Germany, may not be racially profiled due to their appearance until they start to talk or tell you more about them.” -*

Informant B

Informant B shares his own view on both racial and ethnic profiling. Similarly, to informant A, he feels that the appearance is what is noticed first when interacting with someone. He also mentions that in his case, it is not ethnic profiling because the discrimination is based on how he looks and not what ethnicity he is a part of. He clears things up by saying that someone can be from Germany, therefore have another background than Swedish, but not get racially profiled as they are perceived as white and can easily be mistaken for being Swedish. It would be ethnic profiling if the German experienced discrimination once their ethnicity was more obvious.

*“I get more disappointed if the person who is racially profiling me has a foreign background themselves, it’s almost hard to understand. I want to ask the question, ‘why?’ but I won’t get any answer.” - Informant B*

Here informant B mentions that the perpetrators can be people of color, themselves. This brings more disappointment as he feels that other POC should be able to understand the discrimination and not be the one reinforcing the profiling upon others. Informant B also recalls an experience and mentions that the perpetrator was lighter in

skin color emphasizing the importance of skin color and its effect on the level of vulnerability and one's experience of racial profiling.

*"I feel that I experience both ethnic and racial profiling. I have gotten judged based on my appearance which is racial profiling... When people get to know more about my background... that's when I feel that I get judged based on my ethnicity."* - Informant B

Informant B and C both mention that they are subjected to ethnic profiling when the perpetrator knows more about their background. However, if the perpetrator does not have information about their ethnic background and react based on their appearance, they both feel subjected to racial profiling.

*"It's structural discrimination. It has existed for as long as I know and in history, too. The whites have always been better and the best. They are the ones to colonize other countries and so on. People of color have always been in the middle and black people have been at the bottom. It goes way back in time and history. It's not a new phenomenon."* - Informant C

Informant C refers to structural discrimination when explaining the treatment, she faces in her daily-life. The structural discrimination in society restricts people and their opportunities. Informant C mentions a hierarchy of society where whites are at the top, people of color in the middle and black people at the bottom. Interestingly, informant C has a separate category in the hierarchy for darker colored people which suggests that this group, in comparison to other people of color, are more vulnerable to discrimination and maltreatment in society.

*"It depends on which context. Racial profiling feels like a question of interpretation... more about how one interprets. When the interaction between people is closer, the ethnic origin can be more relevant than race."* - Informant D

As informant D continues the discussion regarding racial profiling, he mentions that it is a matter of how one sees it and interprets the discrimination. In other words, it could also mean that we construct our own reality and therefore the experience depends on the context and how one makes sense out of the situation. Informant D has experienced both types of profiling. Informant D discusses the importance of the difference of ethnic and racial profiling. He states that if someone that knows him profiles him then it is ethnic profiling due to this person knowing his ethnicity while if someone that does not

know him would likely subject him to racial profiling. He states that this is due to the person judging him of his appearance and race rather than his actual ethnicity.

Social constructionism theory suggests that humans create their reality and this reality is influenced by factors within society such as cultural or societal norms (Payne, 2005). Through social constructionism, the experiences faced by POC can be seen as the result of social construction of norms in Sweden. There are norms, structures and beliefs in society which favor certain characteristics and therefore may refuse anything that goes against these social norms in society. Kamali's (2005) report suggested that those with foreign-backgrounds were more likely to be degraded in relation to their competence. It can be a constructed "reality" in which it is believed or presumed that POC are less competent and less educated. Having this presumption or belief forms our reality and our truth about people and things. This therefore influences the way someone may treat or act towards POC. While the perpetrator has their own reality, so do the informants. For example, as informant C points out, she struggled to find work in her choice of career and felt that she was not equal in value as others in society. This can be seen as an example of how her experiences shapes her reality and her feelings. The experiences she has had with previous employers have shaped her reality in a negative way as she felt less competent and not having an equal opportunity to succeed in her career.

### 6.3 The difference in vulnerability

All informants shared different experiences and these different experiences can be understood from the intersectional perspective. People of color consist of persons of/ people with different genders, ethnicities and religious backgrounds. The informants spoke of the vulnerability that they face due them being in different categories in the society.

*"We do not blend in with the masses the same way, let's say... other people of color that originate from other countries. We stand out in the crowd."* - Informant A

Informant A explains the vulnerability for darker colored people. During the interview, informant A mentions that this is the first thing people notice and from this quote, she emphasizes how dark skin people stick out in crowds. This, according to our informant, makes one vulnerable to racial profiling. Informant A continues and mentions how her other individual attributes affect her vulnerability to racial profiling.

*"I'm wearing a headscarf. I'm a Muslim. That I am a Muslim is strengthened even more because I wear a headscarf today. I can be identified that I am a Muslim from afar compared to a Somali guy who is a Muslim, you have to ask because it is not visible on him that he is a Muslim. It is visible on me."* - Informant A

Combining the two quotes made by informant A, she discusses her vulnerability from three different perspectives. Informant A mentions gender, race, and religion influencing her experience of racial profiling. To begin with, she feels that she sticks out with the color of her skin. In addition; informant A also has a headscarf symbolizing that she is Muslim putting her at greater risk for racial profiling. She is also a woman and feels that women are at greater risk since they show that they are Muslim as for guys, it is not as obvious. In cases like these, the woman is more vulnerable as these individual attributes intersect. The intersectional perspective is quite fascinating as one attribute can change the experience one faces. For example, if informant A was a male, she wouldn't have a headscarf therefore she perhaps would not get the same treatment as she does today.

*"I am a woman, I am young. I used to say there are many faults in me according to the norms (in the Swedish society) .... I am Muslim. I am Palestinian."* - Informant C

Informant C shares feelings of vulnerability and low self-esteem as she mentions some of her identities. She feels that they do not meet the norms and therefore may make her feel less of value to others in society.

Informant C sheds light on the same intersectionality perspective as informant A where informant C shares her story of wearing the hijab (headscarf) and that she later took it off. She felt that when she decided to take it off, she noticed that she got treated better than with the headscarf. Informant C mentions the hateful comments she received while she had the headscarf. The following quote emphasizes what difference a head-scarf makes in the experience of racial profiling. As mentioned earlier, the head-scarf symbolizes the religion of Islam allowing people to categorize her into groups increasing her likelihood of being racially profiled.

*"I had a head-scarf before... a hijab. I felt that I was exposed and more vulnerable to racial profiling. It was easier for others to categorize me (as a Muslim). As soon as I took off the head-scarf, I felt that I got away from all the comments, the looks, the*

*judgement. it was a lot that I got away with. My religious affiliation affects the way I am treated. I got called Easter-witch, comments that I should go back to my country.” -*

Informant C

All of the informants expressed the difference of the two genders, male and female. They stated that men and women are both likely to be racially profiled depending on the setting and the person that is doing the racial profiling. Informant B and C stated that men are more likely to be met with violence when they experience racial profiling from the police.

*"I think that for women, it is easier to be exposed (to racial profiling / ethnic profiling) than a man. Because, as a woman, you are considered to be an easier victim because, while as a man you may be perceived as being able to protect yourself more so as to say between brackets. As a man you can hide some things, if you are from a Muslim perspective or people who wear a headscarf, it is easier for a man to hide his religious belonging than a woman. Therefore, she becomes a clearer target for racial profiling. I think more is happening to them. " – Informant D*

Here, informant D shares the same opinion as informant A which suggests that women are more vulnerable. Women can be seen as the weaker sex, therefore being an easier target for perpetrators. But, the vulnerability increases if the woman has a head-scarf which then points out that the woman is Muslim. This is a clear example of the intersectionality theory where we see that four individual identities intersect. These include being a woman, being of color, and being a Muslim, and wearing a headscarf. Taking away or adding more identities influence your vulnerability to racial profiling as well as your experiences of racial profiling.

*“I joked with my friend the other day and told her that we might need to take off our head-scarfs. I meant it genuinely, we should. Otherwise we are vulnerable.” -*

Informant A

The quote above made by informant A implies that taking off the head-scarf reduces her level of vulnerability to racial profiling.

*“It (the vulnerability) depends on the situation, at work a woman may face more discrimination but outside on the streets, police are more likely to be violent towards a man. It happens to women too, but more likely for men”.* - Informant C

Informant C gives another perspective where she believes that the context is worth considering when discussing the level of vulnerability. She expresses that women can be more vulnerable in work-places whereas men can be a bigger target for the police.

*“If I think about what I have been through and my experience of racial profiling, it would say that there is more discrimination towards men. This is based on the information I have from myself and others I know.”* - Informant B

Based on informant B's own experience, men are more vulnerable to racial profiling. One can also assume that race in this case also plays a role. Informant D, who is also a male, sees women being more vulnerable. This shows how different experiences are depending on the individuals and their personal attributes. Informant B says that he is black which can be the reason why he experiences racial profiling in a different way than others.

*“My son, who is below the age of 10, has experienced racial profiling. In his age, he has already witnessed racism in school and outside. It is sad to say that but that's the reason why we are talking about this today, because it exists.”* - Informant B

This quote above suggests that POC of all ages can experience racial profiling.

*“We have darker colored skin we, that are from Africa, there's history connected to our origin. Slavery, slave trade... there is a sad story connected to where we are from. Other immigrants with another background or belonging with perhaps a lighter skin complexion may get the idea that they are better than us that have darker skin. Many have expressed this in words such as using the N word, or other words like ‘rat’, ‘dirt’ and ‘slave.’”* – Informant B

Informant B explains the historical context of racism in which darker skin colored people have been maltreated. This is an example of how social construction takes place. People of darker skin were connected to slavery in history. Informant B believes that there are



still traces of the discrimination left because from past historical events. Informant B implies that because of history and the current structure of society, people of lighter complexions may feel that they have more power and are better than darker colored people.

Informant B continues the discussion and shares an experience where he was being interviewed for a job. He noticed the boss staring at him for a while and eventually asks him about his faith/religion out of curiosity.

· *“Do you have another religion or belief about life? I asked her what she meant by that and then she said ‘your hair’, is there a connection to some other belief/religion?” - Informant B*

Informant B mentions that he has dreadlocks and that is what made the boss curious. The boss had assumed that the dreadlocks symbolized being “Rastafarian” although that was not the case at all for informant B. It was just his style of hair, but it raised suspicion during a job interview.

Using the intersectionality theory, it becomes visible how power structures and inequality are intertwined with individual attributions based on race, gender, religion, clothing style, and hairstyle as mentioned by the informants (SOU, 2006). With these attributions being connected to the power struggle and inequality in society it can shape the individuals experience and their level of vulnerability to racial profiling.

#### 6.4 Being questioned

Some of the informants stated that they felt questioned in their daily lives and that they were doubted as human beings. They stated that they felt a need to always do more than the majority population in Sweden to prove themselves worthy in school and in the labor market. They feel that they are doubted in the society as they are assumed to be different from ethnic Swedes. Informant D recalls an incident at Arlanda Airport where he felt that he was racially profiled due to his appearance.

*“I was the only one who was stopped and he said that it was a control and tried to make it sound normal and random pointing out travelers. But as I stood there more than*

*10 minutes, there were several people who went the same way as I went and no one was stopped or asked where they had traveled. It was pretty clear. To point out, the majority were Swedes with Swedish appearance, blond and blue eyes. They were not asked where they had traveled and I felt that I was profiled on the basis of how I looked like...dark hair and a beard". - Informant D*

Informant D continues to explain that the questioning in itself is not what the fault is but that one is always expected to answer the questions asked because one has different appearance. The attitude in the society is that the dominant culture (the Swedish) has constructed the norm of asking people of color questions and making them a subject of suspicion. It has become a societal norm to expect that a person of color must answer the questions that are asked and clear the suspicions that arises because of people's prejudices.

*"It's almost like it's expected of you to explain yourself". - Informant D*

The informants expressed the same experiences of being questioned and suspicious to others. informant B expressed the exhaustion and resignation that come with having to live with the questioning and always proving yourself of being worthy.

*"It is very demanding and exhausting. It always feels like you have to do more than enough to prove that you are equally as good as others. It is sad but it is something you just have to live with". - Informant B*

Being questioned is part of informant B's everyday life because he feels that he must state that he has an education and that he possesses the competence that is suitable for the work he performs. He recounts an incident with an elderly lady that he helped when she fell on the way to his job. She offered him money and he refused, but she insisted that he needed the money because he is unemployed. He says that he feels that she assumed that he was unemployed due to his foreign origin.

*"She took out 50 or 20 crown (Swedish currency), I can't remember... she thanked me and told me to take the money. I thanked her and told her I don't need the money. She told me that I needed the money because I had no job. I explained to her that I had a*

*job, she then asked me what I worked with and if I had an education. I kept answering her questions, but she kept repeating and repeating my answers". - Informant B*

The informants state their experience of being questioned and suspected when being racially profiled in different settings. This shows that it is evident that they are profiled because of their race and appearance. Informant B's experience with the lady and informant C's incident at the airport, can be explained with the socially constructed norms and values that exist in the Swedish society. Perceptions and prejudices about their race led to them being questioned and suspected at the airport and by the lady. The societal values enhance the prejudices about people with different race which can lead to people being expected to act a certain way due to their background.

*"You end up in a dilemma where you feel part of the society at the same time not. No matter how much I contribute, however much I am a part of the society, I will still not be regarded as a human being who is as much worth, at least in the eyes of people. It is what affects me the most. One wants to be perceived as a human being who is a part of the society and not someone who must always have to explain and be even better than others in order to be accepted and seen equally worthy. It is deeper than just racial profiling." Informant D*

The informants state that it is not enough that one can speak fluent Swedish, that one has an education or has a certain status, but one is judged collectively for an image that has been created in the society. You are referred to as "the other" and become a stranger. Marsiglia & Kulis, (2015) write that generalization of different groups in society creates stereotypes and ideas about individuals. Groups tend to see themselves as individuals and the outside groups as undifferentiated (Marsiglia & Kulis, 2015). According to the social construction theory people construct their realities that they live in, a person may know something as he or she perceives it but that does not mean that it is the truth. People construct the stereotypes and generalizations that the informants of this study speak of. Racial profiling and ethnic profiling being carried out due to the constructed ideas about certain groups in the society (Berger & Luckmann, 1991).

## 6.5 Prejudices in the society

All of the informants spoke about prejudices as a reason to why people are racially profiled. They explained that prejudices and presumptions of their appearances and background are reasons that make them a target for racial profiling. In the following section, the experiences of racial profiling in relation to prejudices will be presented using quotes from the informants.

Informant A states that the police racially profile people based on their origin, where they live and how they dress. She states that she lives in a suburb that is well known in Sweden where she sees the police profiling people based on their choice of clothes and their race.

*“The police are here all the time, I live in a suburb in Sweden and I have seen and heard a lot. Of course, there is crime everywhere in Sweden... People are judged on how they dress, it can be fashionable to wear a specific jacket or shoes to be among the cool ones, but it does not mean that those who dress like that are criminals.” - Informant A*

Informant A discusses the choice of clothing and the effect it has on one's experience. Informant A mentions that people can be mistaken for criminals by the way they dress, even if it is considered to be the current fashion. This can be perceived as having a constructed reality regarding how criminals dress. If we take an example in which police officers see a pattern in clothing among criminals they encounter. Perhaps they have the same brands or designs, they may begin searching individuals with the same characteristics (clothes, in this case). The police officers may interpret the clothes as being related to criminality and respond by suspecting these individuals of crime.

*“... They were like we aren't the police, we know that you're into it (drugs) otherwise you wouldn't have the money to look the way you do...” – Informant B*

The quote made by informant B is another example of the effect clothes has on experiences of racial profiling. Informant B recalls an experience where a group of boys wanted to buy marijuana from him. The boys assumed he was a drug-dealer because otherwise he would not have the money to afford nice clothes. This is a socially constructed view that people of color do not have money, or perhaps the ability to find a well-paid job. This constructed reality can be constructed through media. On tv, for example, there are movies in which people of color are often in drug-related scenes whereas white people have regular jobs. It could even be political parties or news

anchors sharing propaganda stating (directly or indirectly) that people of color are more likely to commit acts of crimes and be criminals.

*‘‘The political party SD (Swedish Democrats), share propaganda about immigrants which isn’t at all true. People can therefore get the wrong perception about immigrants. Some are just simply afraid of the unknown or haven’t had any access or contact with immigrants therefore they just simply base their opinions off of the propaganda. It becomes their truth.’’ - Informant B*

Informant B explains the social construction of racial profiling in the quote above. He states that people construct realities based on what they see on media. The presentation of immigrants by SD, for example, becomes a reality for those who have not had much contact with people of color. This influences people to ‘‘fear the unknown’’ as informant B states and want to avoid contact with people of color as they are perceived to be different and dangerous to society.

Informant A recalls an experience she has encountered within health care services in Sweden. Informant A made a visit to the gynecologist for a check-up. As informant A explains the experience, despite not being able to pick the gender of the gynecologist, everything went well. Tests were taken, and she left the office feeling satisfied with how the visit went. When the results came back in, she saw that the doctor had documented that she was circumcised.

*‘‘He (the gynecologist) assumed that I was circumcised just because I come from Somalia, an African country, dress the way I do and look the way I do. If I had been Swedish, ethnic Swedish and looked exactly like I do down there (genitals), he would not have written so. It was in this way that I could connect that it is because of what I look like or how I dress, and where my origin is.’’ - Informant A*

FRA’s report on racial/ethnic discrimination showed that Sweden had the highest number of complaints for racial/ethnic discrimination in health care (FRA, 2008). The story informant A shares confirms that prejudice exists even in health-care services with professionals. Societal norms and values are strongly embedded in the society that even in health care, the doctors are biased in their work. The gynecologist that informant A met racially profiled her due to her appearance and background. This shows that the realities that people construct are deeply rooted in many parts of the society and effect people of color.

The main findings show that prejudices are one of the reasons people of color experience racial profiling. The informants explain that when people have prejudices against them, they create these ideas and act upon them. They believe that these ideas are constructed by groups in the society in order to oppress the other group i.e. people of color. The prejudices against people of color manifest in different ways in the society;

*“You receive comments, they stare at you, I study to become a professional in health care and I’m out on practical placements and I receive the most comments there. One is the comment about how good Swedish I speak. They tell me this comment after that they have asked me how long I have been living in Sweden. I answer that I have been living here my whole life and they still say that I speak such good Swedish. But am I stupid compared to your son or daughter or yourself...” They do not go around and tell ethnic swedes that they speak good Swedish. That is not something that they (the ethnic swedes) hear.” - Informant A*

Racial profiling can also take place in the educational system. Informant C shares her school background where the school only saw her appearance and name instead of her language skills. She also shares how she was treated on a higher level of education i.e. the university.

*“In elementary school is where it started, and it continued up until university. Professors would ask me where I am from and that it could explain why I had grammar issues in my paper. I got comments that other people did not get”. - Informant C*

*“I once told a friend of mine there was an error in the way he translated something (to Swedish) written in Arabic. He asked me how I knew this... I told him I spoke Arabic and he replied “Oh wow, I wouldn’t have believed that, you have the local dialect!” (Informant C)*

The constructed ideas about race affects people of color in different settings. It is apparent that the constructed realities about them leads to consequences that can put the person in question in further alienation. In the case of informant C’s experience, the professors believed the reason she had grammar issues was because she is not Swedish by origin. This is a constructed reality believing that immigrants have a harder time learning the Swedish language therefore the grammar issues are a result of her not being “from Sweden.” Moreover, in the second quote, the friend was surprised that she spoke

another language since her Swedish was fluent. In addition, the local dialect implies that informant C speaks like any other local Swede in the city as she has the “local dialect.” The friend’s belief could have been socially constructed by interacting with people of color and encountering language difficulties making it surprising that informant C speaks fluent Swedish.

*“The prejudices are based on the belief that one should in some way bear responsibility over someone else's actions. So, if someone else who looks like you has done something that is perceived as negative then you should have the responsibility over it and it is expected that you will do the same action because you look like that person who made that act. You are responsible for things you do not have control over.” – Informant D*

Informant D summarizes the main points analyzed above. There is a belief that people who share the same characteristics (clothes, race, language) are all alike in the way they act and are as human-beings. As a result, racial profiling takes place targeting individuals with certain characteristics based on these constructed realities regarding criminality, race, people of color, and etc.

## **7. Discussion**

### **7.1 Summary of results**

The aim of this study was to explore the personal experiences of racial profiling that people of color face in Sweden. The study shows that people of color are subjected to racial profiling in the Swedish society due to different factors connected to their race and background. The informants expressed that they are more vulnerable to be subjected to racial profiling due to intersectionality meaning that their gender, race and religion could be a contributing factor. Some of the informants stated that the consequences of racial profiling in law enforcement were much harder as a man than as a woman. This is due to the belief that men of color are rougher than women of color due to their gender and therefore are exposed to more violence by the police. The study further shows that people of color are discriminated in the labor market and in the educational system. Furthermore, the findings show that racial profiling affects the daily lives of POC in Sweden but however in different ways, as intersectionality shapes their individual experiences of racial profiling.

## 7.2 Interpretation of results

This section focuses solely on the two researchers' interpretation of the results. The aim of this study was to explore the personal experiences of racial profiling that people of color face. The research questions are answered through previous research and interviews. The findings of this study show that people of color experience racial profiling on a greater scale and that they have different experiences of racial profiling. We discovered that there is a difference regarding the skin color that one has and the origin one has when it comes to racial profiling. We have learned that racial profiling is a subject that is broadly discussed in the Swedish society, but it is not named racial profiling. Previous research and the findings of this study showed that this subject was sensitive, and our findings and previous research has enhanced that notion. For example, two participants were afraid of giving too many details regarding their work place as they believed there would be consequences if they were to be identified in the research. In addition, once the interview was over, two informants continued to share their experience more openly and with more details as they were no longer recorded, and the interview had ended. This suggests that the informants are careful or afraid with what information is shared as they may face consequences even though they are victims of racial profiling.

The findings show that intersectionality plays a great role regarding the experiences of racial profiling. Intersectionality was an important aspect to consider in this research as it affected every experience shared. We noticed that some felt more vulnerable and subjected to racial profiling than others due to their belonging to different groups in the society. Some felt more vulnerable having a head-scarf, some felt vulnerable because they have a darker complexion. Others felt vulnerable being a woman or a man or having dark features like hair and eyes. We learned that every experience is different in its own way and some experiences were more severe than others. We saw that the darker skin you had, the more vulnerable and severe the experiences were especially if you are a male in the Swedish society as informant B shared with us. One informant shared that he/she did not feel that he/she would be racially profiled in the process of finding a job, whereas others disagreed. We found this very interesting when comparing with the rest of the informants' answers. This is where we could see the influence of intersectionality over experiences. We also thought that in order to really investigate this, we would have to look at the career paths they have chosen to see if this affects the experience.



### 7.3 Connection to previous research

With help of previous research, a background on racial profiling both nationally and internationally was done allowing us to understand the phenomenon in a broader perspective. Within this broader perspective, previous research was done in different areas in society by different authors such as the labor market, housing market, police searches, and the overall experiences of discrimination in Sweden. The previous research helped set the scene in a better way and made us question more about why racial profiling exists. The previous research also highlighted the importance of researching this topic further as it showed how this phenomenon affects people in many different areas in society.

The research chosen covered different areas to get a broader perspective of racial profiling. We were unsure if our informants would mention these areas during the interviews but all of them did touch up on the subjects. Although the topic of racial profiling in Sweden lacks information and research, there were other sources which could be of help. Other sources such as being related to discrimination or ethnic profiling were equally as valuable in comparison to those focused on racial profiling specifically. We found that all the sources used were very similar even though different concepts were used. In addition, most of the previous research touched up on the intersectional perspective showing the importance in considering the intersectionality theory in relation to how one perceives, understands or experiences racial profiling. The sources used in the previous research all were conducted with a large sample size which makes it different from this research. While writing the analysis, we found many similarities in the previous research and our informants' answers. Even though, the sample sizes were very different in size, the results were similar, and all showed that racial profiling is a problem in society affecting the daily lives of POC.

### 7.4 Connection to theories

While we were planning this thesis, we thought about what theories would be most applicable to this research. As we have mentioned earlier, we are POC living in Sweden and have experienced racial profiling. We started to share our experiences of racial profiling and it became evident to us that intersectionality was a big part in the way we experience racial profiling. We began thinking that everything was socially constructed

which affected the way we lived our lives and the way people saw us. This resulted in using the social constructionism theory and the intersectionality theory to analyse the results. To simplify, these two theories complemented each other since intersectionality explains the different groups/identities that one is in and the social constructionism explains the construction of these identities. While transcribing and coding the data, it became evident that all informants were very different to one another and faced different levels of vulnerability in different settings in the society. The literature available to us lacked the intersectionality perspective as many focused on race and gender, but not other aspects which also affect one's experience of racial profiling. With findings from this research, more light is shed on how the intersection of identity traits affect one's experience of racial profiling. Social constructionism explained the construction of race and prejudice as well as the effect this has on the informants' experiences of racial profiling.

We find that these theories capture what we intend to research and fit the aim as well as the research questions. These theories go hand-in-hand therefore affect one another. This made it easier to analyze the findings as there was a connection between the two theories.

## 7.5 Discussion of method

In general, the qualitative method chosen was appropriate in relation to our aim and research questions. We used purposive sampling which allowed us to keep the aim in focus while picking participants which also made it easier for us to find the answers needed for our research questions. This ensured quality in our research as our subjects were carefully selected based on the research topic and aim. We interviewed four POC, two from each gender, which we found very useful in this research to get a gender perspective of racial profiling. As mentioned earlier, more data would have been available to us if we had an age perspective in relation to gender, but time was of the essence therefore we choose to focus on one and allow the participants to give further perspectives such as their other identity attributes.

## 7.6 Further research

It would have been interesting to explore more regarding the experiences of racial profiling if we had more time. Since racial profiling is relatively new in Sweden, we would suggest more research on the subject in general. We would also suggest that further research be done on racial profiling from a gender and age perspective based on the information that our informants gave us highlighting the importance of these individual identities. The informants of this study expressed different opinions regarding which gender is vulnerable to be subjected to racial profiling.

All of the informants in the research were under the age of 33. We discovered during the interviews that it would have been interesting to interview more people in an older age range. We believe this would have strengthened our research by giving us a broader perspective regarding the experiences of racial profiling in the labor market, housing market as well as other parts of the Swedish society. This is based on the belief that the older one is, the more one has experienced. In general, it is important to research more using the intersectionality theory to understand the level of vulnerability each individual may have in society in relation to discrimination.

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## **Appendix**

### **Appendix 1**

#### **Information letter - English**

##### **English**

We are two students studying international social work at the University of Gävle. We are conducting a study on the experiences of racial profiling that people of color face in Sweden. We are currently writing our bachelor thesis and would like to shed light on this phenomenon.

You are receiving this information letter because we would like you to participate in our study. The information that we receive from you will be treated with confidentiality. Our interview method will be face to face with semi-structured questions where you will be able to express your experiences of racial profiling. We will be recording the interviews in order to transcribe and analyze them. The recordings will be kept until our dissertation has been approved, once the dissertation has been approved all recordings will be destroyed. You as an interviewee will not be identified i.e. names and additional details will not be mentioned in the thesis nor the city that you live in. No unauthorized persons will have access will have access to the interview material The people that will

have access to the information are; the authors of this thesis, Anela Rasidovic, Halimo Hussein and our supervisor Brita Backlund Rambaree and our examiner. The thesis will be published on DIVA, which is a system for publications, research, and student theses. Therefore, the thesis will be accessible for the public to read.

The participation of this study is entirely voluntary and you as a informant can withdraw at any time during the study. You as an interviewee can choose to answer the questions that you feel comfortable with.

Please contact us if you have any questions regarding our study.

Anela Rasidovic - [vsnl6arc@student.hig.se](mailto:vsnl6arc@student.hig.se)

Halimo Hussein - [halima.ali90@gmail.com](mailto:halima.ali90@gmail.com)

Brita Backlund Rambaree - supervisor: [brita.b.rambaree@hig.se](mailto:brita.b.rambaree@hig.se)

## **Appendix 2**

### **Information letter - Swedish**

#### **Svenska**

Vi är två studenter som studerar internationellt socialt arbete på Högskolan i Gävle. Vi håller just nu på att skriva vår C-uppsats och gör en studie om rasprofilering och hur det upplevs i Sverige. Du får detta informationsbrev då vi önskar att du deltar i vår studie. Informationen kommer att sparas tills att vår uppsats blir godkänd och kommer därefter att förstöras.

Vi kommer att ha personliga intervjuer som kommer att spelas in för att sedan transkriberas och analyseras av författarna. Vi kommer att använda fingerade namn så att man inte kan identifiera dig. De personer som kommer att ha tillgång till informationen är vi som skriver uppsatsen, Anela Rasidovic och Halimo Hussein samt vår handledare Brita Backlund Rambaree samt vår examinator. Obehöriga kommer ej att ha tillgång till informationen. Uppsatsen kommer att publiceras på DIVA som är en portal för utgivningar, studier och studentuppsatser. Uppsatsen kommer därmed att vara tillgänglig för allmänheten att ta del av.

Deltagandet är frivilligt och du kan närsomhelst avbryta din medverkan. Du har möjlighet att välja att enbart svara på de frågor du är bekväm med.

Kontakta oss gärna om du har några frågor.

Anela Rasidovic - [vsnl6arc@student.hig.se](mailto:vsnl6arc@student.hig.se)

Halimo Hussein - [halima.ali90@gmail.com](mailto:halima.ali90@gmail.com)

Brita Backlund Rambaree - handledare: [brita.b.rambaree@hig.se](mailto:brita.b.rambaree@hig.se)

### **Appendix 3 -**

#### **Interview questions:**

##### **Swedish**

1. Har du någonsin känt att du har blivit behandlad annorlunda på grund av ditt ursprung?
2. Har du vid något tillfälle upplevt att du utsatts för rasprofilering? Om ja, på vilket sätt har du upplevt det?
3. Upplever du att rasprofilering är ett problem i Sverige? (På vilket sätt förekommer rasprofilering i Sverige?)
4. På vilket sätt påverkar detta ditt liv/din vardag?
5. Vilka andra faktorer än ditt ursprung påverkar din erfarenhet när det kommer till rasprofilering?
6. Finns det andra faktorer som bidrar till att man blir utsatt för rasprofilering.
7. Vilka faktorer tror du bidrar till att människor blir utsatta för rasprofilering?

##### **English**

1. Have you ever felt that you have been treated differently based on your race/origin?
2. Have you yourself experienced racial profiling? If so, in what ways have you experienced racial profiling?
3. Do you believe that racial profiling is a problem in Sweden?  
(In what ways is racial profiling manifested in Sweden?)

4. What kind of effect does this have in your daily life?
5. What other factors than your origin affect your experiences of racial profiling?  
(Do these factors make you more or less vulnerable to racial profiling?)
6. What factors do you think affect the experiences people have of racial profiling?

