# “Calm down! This is Sweden, not your country!”

On the use of national identity as a means of othering by the already othered

Lugna ned dig! Det här är Sverige och inte ditt land!
När en redan andrafierad andrafierar genom att använda sig av den nationella identiteten

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# Foreward

This study is the culmination of what I have dubbed one of my 'Covid degrees'. Thanks to the Swedish government's investment in education (even more significant during the Covid years), I was able to carry on studying after finishing my last (pre-Covid) degree in 2020. This study and degree were unexpected developments but ones that in many ways exemplify the past 25+ years of my life. As someone whose life journey has bridged various countries, continents, and cultures, I have become very interested in matters related to belonging, identity, diversity, and immigration. This study touches on all of those and more (e.g., race/racism and discrimination/inequality). By offering an analysis of a situation in which I was personally involved, I hope more consideration of othering beyond race will follow. Additionally, no matter how othering presents itself, it is my hope that the importance of belonging – however one defines that or chooses to express it – is an important takeaway.

A sincere tack så mycket to my advisor Staffan Löfving and my examiner Tobias Hübinette. I consider myself very lucky to have had both of you as teachers during my program. Staffan, I had you for many classes and it was undoubtedly the subject matter in combination with your way of teaching that kept me coming back each term. Tobias, your passion for and research related to the Swedish context is truly to be admired. Related to the article Peter and you wrote that is cited in this study (but to which I was introduced in a Karlstad University linguistics course), I think it should be required reading for any immigrant to Sweden as it helped make clear many of the things my Swedish husband could never really articulate but which are so fundamental to how the country and to some degree many of her people operate. This was in a very real sense a degree that found me; a subject to which I can relate but also one that I feel has much to teach me (first, as a human being and then as a global citizen). Thank you both for sharing my journey.

Finally, tack så mycket, Jan Näzell, for holding me to account by encouraging me to finish this thesis despite an international move. I know well the importance you place on matters related to those examined here, and that gives me great hope for humanity.

Linda Gogliotti-Näzell

# Contents

# 1. Introduction

This study is an autoethnographic analysis of an intercultural encounter which brought to the fore the notion of othering beyond race. Briefly[1], this study looks at in-/exclusion in terms of (un)belonging to a state (in this case, Sweden) based on an interaction I had with someone who did not seem to think I belonged in Sweden (or Sweden to me). While asserting his belief of my unbelonging, he also asserted his identification with the country, thus simultaneously invoking national identity as a means of showing belonging and as a way to other another for perceived unbelonging.

As this study considers 'othering beyond race', an important first step is explaining what is meant by 'race'. In an article entitled "Equality Data as Immoral Race Politics: A Case Study of Liberal, Colour-Blind, and Anti-Racialist Opposition to Equality Data in Sweden", Wikström and Hübinette (2021) examine 'discursive mobilisations of race and racism' when discussing the possibility of introducing the use of equality data. In a country that espouses color-blind and anti-racialist norms, such an introduction is deemed contentious – if not unnecessary – by many. Due to such opposition and the purported norms, one might be inclined to believe that race plays little role in Swedish society. Such a conclusion would, of course, be incorrect.

Particularly given the context from within which the study data originates (i.e., Sweden) and the strong associations in some countries (e.g., the US) of race with skin color, a better understanding of what is meant by race is paramount, especially given Sweden's purported color-blind norms. After all, according to Spencer (2013), despite disagreement as to whether

[1] Appears in full in the experience vignette (section 4)

race even exists, “social and political philosophers are still going to need to talk about a human division that looks a lot like race in order to address important issues about discrimination, justice, identity, solidarity, and so on” (p. 2), which this study aims to do. There is, in fact, a race debate which speaks to this lack of consensus on the basic meaning of race, and one approach to settling on an understanding of the term has been to define the word according to its ‘ordinary’ meaning (Spencer, 2013).

In response to this lack of consensus among race scholars as to what the ordinary meaning of race is, Haslanger (2000, p. 44), who considers race to be malleable and socially constructed, positioning people into “’subordinate or privileged’ power relations within a society according to ’perceived’ differences in ‘bodily features’ that are ‘presumed’ to flag ‘ancestral links’ to different ‘geographical regions’” (as cited in Spencer, 2013, p. 2), “identifies the ordinary meaning of ‘race’ as just whatever ‘race’ refers to in ordinary discourse” (Haslanger, 2008, as cited in Spencer, 2013, p. 5). According to Haslanger, race is that which divides humans into Whites, Blacks, Asians, and other groups like that (2008, pp. 64-66, as cited in Spencer, 2013, p. 5). Using descriptors such as ‘White’ and ‘Black’, skin color and race are often used interchangeably, e.g., in the US, where I come from originally. Despite the incorrect or at least misleading interchangeability of the terms, this tendency is how the term is commonly used and understood.

Following on from that interchangeability, the belief that taking race into consideration will lead to racism/discrimination, color-blindness (essentially, the absence of consideration of skin color) or color evasiveness seems to be the preferred response of some. While my personal

understanding of race tends to lean more towards the common understanding of ethnicity with its consideration of language, culture, religion, etc. (some of which are equally contested terms), a general understanding of race as a distinction or descriptor based on the visible category of skin color is used throughout. Yet, it is worth stressing here:

> In practice, 'race' may be a major constitutive factor in determining ethnic categories, but to revive the idea that it is somehow 'objective' and less socially constructed than ethnicities founded on religious, linguistic or other more obviously culturally determined factors is to fail to recognize that race is a cultural rather than a biological phenomenon, the product of historical processes not of genetically determined physical differences. (Ashcroft et al., 2000, pp. 167-168)

In the Swedish context, whiteness is often juxtaposed against the 'racialized other' in terms of inclusion and acceptance especially vis-à-vis migration-related diversity (e.g., see Mendick et al., 2024; Schütze, 2023; Schütze & Törngren, 2022). Frequently, othering is understood or presented in terms of the White majority population othering a racialized minority. Reflective of more recent immigration, this racialized Other might be, e.g., a Muslim, Arabic-speaking individual who perhaps arrived as a refugee or asylum seeker. When that is the case, ethnicity rather than race might be considered the distinguishing variable. Regardless, while contrasting these categories (some of which are visible) may be useful at times, it can give the impression that whiteness = inclusion, belonging, or at a minimum the absence of othering. Based on my experience, I do not think that is necessarily true.

As a White immigrant[2,3] to Sweden – one with Swedish roots on her biological father's side – it has been a somewhat different though related kind of othering that I have experienced and about which this thesis is written. One point of departure of this study is that it does not take the presumably native, White Swede as the perpetrator of othering in Sweden. Rather, as illustrated through an experience vignette recounted in section 4, the person othering is, in fact, an Other themselves. A second point of departure is that the person being othered – this author – is visibly one with the majority if only based on race (i.e., skin color or White). Like most places … including Sweden, even when not explicitly stated or even acknowledged, race – particularly when equated with skin color – is pervasive and, in some respects, inescapable in large part due to its visibility. Yet, while othering can be due to racialization of people, the event recounted and examined here is illustrative of othering not based solely on race but rather beyond it. Thus, other related variables (such as ethnicity, culture, language, dress, etc.) may be more or at least equally relevant at times than race.

While the primary focus of this study is othering – "the subordination or exclusion of people based on the discursive production of difference or 'otherness'" (Hua et al., 2022, p. 314) – in

[2] Where there might be a distinction made between immigrant and migrant, here the term immigrant is used throughout to indicate anyone who has moved to a foreign land (in this case, Sweden) for the purposes of living or working. This can include immigrants, (economic) migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, 'love refugees', etc.

[3] In Swedish, the word immigrant (invandrare) is generally viewed in opposition to (as the antithesis of) a 'Swedish' person (svensk) (see Runfors, 2016). That is not how I intend the word to be understood. Especially coming from the US which has historically viewed itself as a country of immigrants, unless Native American, one's ancestors were immigrants to the US (except in the case of slavery when people were forcibly brought). Despite these immigrant ties, most still consider themselves Americans or perhaps a hyphenated or compounded variant (e.g., Italian American). Unless one is an Indigenous person, our ancestors came from other parts of the world. Thus, my usage of the word immigrant differs from the way it is used when translating invandrare. See Runfors (2016) for a discussion of invandrare usage in Sweden and how it compares to the word 'Black' in the US vis-à-vis racialization (including classification) of people.

parallel focus is identity in connection to feelings and assertions of national (un)belonging[4]; race, amongst other variables, being a part of identity and often associated with othering. Following on from Haslanger, Pratt (1985, p. 139), in reference to John Barrow's *Account of travels in the Interior of Southern Africa in the Years 1797 and 1798*, wrote:

> The people to be othered are homogenized into a collective 'they,' which is distilled even further into an iconic 'he' (the standardized adult male specimen). This abstracted 'he'/'they' is the subject of verbs in a time-less present tense, which characterizes anything 'he' is or does not as a particular historical event but as an instance of a pregiven custom or trait. (as cited in Ashcroft et al., 2000, p. 142)

While Others are diverse in appearance and background, this study examines a phenomenon that, while studied (e.g., see Hübinette, 2020), is not discussed in the literature or amongst people including immigrants themselves as much as I believe is warranted – the othering of an Other by an already othered. It is this othering of Others by Others that is in focus here. By considering this alternate view of othering – one that does not merely consider the possibility of a majority member excluding a racialized minority – this thesis looks at the possibility of a member of an outsider group othering a member of a presumed different outsider group, whether it be based on ethnicity, culture, language, etc. Additionally, the assertion of national identity as a means to either include or exclude someone is examined in connection to othering. Since "it is undeniable that *Othering* impairs intercultural and international relations among racial, ethnic, and national groups" (Liu & Kramer, 2019, p. 459, italics in original), additional

[4] Also referred to as non-belonging in some literature; for the sake of readability, unbelonging will be used throughout.

investigation seems most worthwhile. Further, given the potentially cyclical nature of this phenomenon, coupled with continued migration and, thus, increased diversity and exposure, this topic seems worthy of further consideration, if only due to the negative consequences of unbelonging.

This thesis unfolds as follows: After this introduction, section 2 contains background information such as a discussion of the Swedish context and prior research. Then, in section 3, the research design/methodology are presented, including the research method, theoretical grounding or key terms, data used, study aims and guiding questions, discussion of researcher subjectivity (i.e., author lens) and methodological limitations. Section 4 is the experience vignette which comprises this study's research material or data. Section 5, the critical analysis/discussion section where possible causes and effects of othering, possible future research, etc. are addressed, is followed by section 6's conclusion.

Before proceeding any further, however, I want to make clear – othering, despite its negative consequences, is something each of us does, including this author. This study was not born from shock or despair at having been othered as I too other people (intentionally or otherwise depending on the circumstances). What was 'shocking' and difficult to understand (if only in academic terms) was how race could not easily explain the othering I had experienced. Perhaps due to my background (namely, where I was born and raised), I do not think race is irrelevant particularly in terms of othering. However, when trying to make sense of this encounter, race as an explanatory factor seemed insufficient. Given at least the perception of the dominance in academic literature of racialization as the main cause of othering (or, e.g., that which is perhaps

most worthy of scholarly attention), this study offers an example of (an)other possible/potential dimension(s) of othering beyond race. As will be argued, in some instances, such as the experience vignette recounted here, the key principle of othering may, in fact, not be one's race, or skin color.

## 2. Background information

Especially when engaging in qualitative research, the value of details cannot be underestimated. Not only are specifics critical to understanding a given encounter, but also, given the nature of this study, it is important to do as Solomos (2022) suggests and "locate the analysis of racial and ethnic relations firmly within historical and social processes" (p. 175). Contextualization should include, but is not limited to, discussion of local history, politics, and cultural, social, and economic matters, etc. (Solomos, 2022, p. 222). Specifically, as regards this study and its Gothenburg, Sweden, context, linkages between race, racism, and migration (Solomos, 2022, p. 237) become relevant as "(t)he term migration has also been used by many analysts as strongly linked with the dynamics of racisms, disadvantaged status, and the representation and positioning of the 'other'" (Song, 2014, p. 169, as cited in Solomos, 2022, p. 238).

### 2.1 Context

Before recounting the experience vignette that is the basis of this study (see section 4), it is important to understand the context within which the event transpired, namely Sweden's, specifically Gothenburg's, recent history vis-à-vis immigration, including but not limited to the admission of refugees and asylum seekers. For those unfamiliar, Sweden is a northern European (Scandinavian) country with Norway and Denmark to the west and Finland to the east. With a total population of some 10.5 million people as of May 2024 (Statistics Sweden, n.d.),

Gothenburg, which lies on the country's west coast, is Sweden's second-largest city with a 2023 population of over 600,000 people (Statistics Sweden, n.d.).

As of 2023, approximately 20% of the country's total population were foreign-born, a significant percentage of whom may have migrated there during the recent past (10-15 years), a period of time in which Sweden accepted record numbers of refugees and asylum seekers as a result of conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other parts of the world (Statistics Sweden, n.d.). It was during that time that I too immigrated to Sweden. Due to the circumstances that brought me there – to marry a native/local person – it is not uncommon in local parlance to refer to someone like me as a 'love refugee'. Though perhaps offensive to some, this expression is not meant to minimize the experiences of genuine refugees. Rather, I believe it is meant to indicate that – although different – we can experience many of the same challenges, e.g., with integration, attaining employment, etc., albeit a 'love refugee' often has a local/native partner for support (a point which should not be minimized). Regardless, as someone not born in the country (i.e., a foreign-born person), one is by definition a non-native Swede even if/when citizenship is obtained[5].

## 2.2 Prior research

The primary focus of this study is othering. However, given the experience vignette under examination, there are a number of other issues that will be considered for a more profitable

[5] Related to being 'foreign' – For statistical purposes (see Statistics Sweden, www.scb.se/en_/), in addition to being foreign-born, even when born in Sweden, one is considered to have a 'foreign background' if they have two foreign-born parents.

analysis[6]. They include: unbelonging, race/racism, national identity, discrimination/inequality, immigration, and diversity.

In and of itself, othering is not a new phenomenon. There is a wealth of prior research on the subject, even specifically related to the Swedish context. For example, Idevall Hagren (2022) looked at othering in discursive constructions of Swedish national identity, 1870-1940 (also the title of her article). She found that, although the ideas and discourses of who the Other is change over time, the discursive practice of othering with its linguistic repertoire can be used for a number of purposes, including creating and unifying national identity as well as managing perceived social threats (Idevall Hagren, 2022).

Using material from the mid-20th century, Hyltén-Cavallius and Fernstål (2021) examined a conversation between a Dialect Archive collector and a Roma family in early 1950's Sweden, paying attention to positioning of origin and citizenship. Their analysis, which stressed the family's agency in negotiating belonging, challenged a Roma discourse that viewed them merely as a passive group subjected to discrimination and stereotyping (Hyltén-Cavallius & Fernstål, 2021). Despite their foreignness being continually stressed throughout the conversation, the Roma tried to clarify that they did belong in Sweden and that they did contribute to society. In doing so, they were opposing being positioned as foreigners (Hyltén-Cavallius & Fernstål, 2021).

Using contemporary Swedish minority literature, Hübinette (2020) looked at images and representations of transnational adoptees of color to understand how their portrayals are perceived by non-adopted non-White Swedes with regard to class, race, and Swedishness. By

[6] See section 3.2 for a discussion of key concepts that theoretically ground this study.

way of characters in the literature, the othering of Others, in this case non-white transnational adoptees, was found as adoptees are sometimes seen as 'race traitors' towards minority (non-White) Sweden (Hübinette, 2020).

Also in the Swedish context, Runfors (2021) examines how descendants of immigrants to Sweden experience racialization. In "Navigating the Radar: Descendants of Polish Migrants and Racialized Social Landscapes in Sweden", Runfors investigates this rarely investigated area as it is generally assumed their integration into 'Swedish whiteness' is unproblematic due to their skin color. What she found was that Swedish whiteness requires not just physical whiteness (skin color) but also performative whiteness in terms of abilities and behavior (Runfors, 2021). While skin color/appearance may allow them to remain invisible (meaning, appear Swedish), other things can easily give them away (i.e., make them stick out as non-Swedish). These include their last name, their upbringing, their religion, how direct they are when speaking, etc.

In another article, Runfors' study participants were not limited to just Polish descendants but to young descendants of migrants to Sweden from various places. What she found was that, despite having varied backgrounds, there was an emergence of a shared racialized identity position (Runfors, 2016). This positioning changed from when they were younger with the shared positioning developing as they got older. Perhaps surprisingly, she found that, despite their heterogeneity, a majority of the migrants' descendants had similar experiences, which, according to her, revealed processes of othering that that went beyond ethnic categorizations and ties. These processes, based on perceptions of whiteness and non-whiteness, racialized and homogenized this mixed group of young people (Runfors, 2016, p. 1853).

Despite the preceding research, and as stated previously, one should not think that othering can only be related to race or even ethnicity or immigration status. Hjort (2023) investigated young adults' negotiation of their identity in relation to representations and othering of Norrland and the rural. Perhaps surprisingly, she found that, due to the stigmatization of their rural locale and the related marginalization and invisibility they felt as not even government officials seemed to care about them, they viewed this injustice as natural and, as a result, difficult to complain about (Hjort, 2023), perhaps in part because they had chosen to stay/live in rural Northern Sweden.

In another study focused on the Swedish rural North, Goicolea et al. (2023) first analyzed how youth subject positions of the 'racialized other' were produced, and then how those positions interconnected with the notion of belonging to the rural community. They argued that these belonging-to-the-(rural)-community discourses created boundaries that excluded 'other' youth In addition, the discourses created resistance and contestation (Goicolea et al., 2023). In Goicolea et al.'s study, race and migration were in sharp focus as was 'Swedishness', a presumed factor in the experience vignette recounted in section 4 thus included here for consideration.

While the current study has, and all the previously mentioned studies have had, a focus on Sweden, othering is not, of course, just a Swedish phenomenon. Huot et al. (2016), by means of a critical discourse analysis, found that othering constructs 'undesirables' within the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act. And Rashid and Cepeda-García (2021) found self-categorizing and othering in migrant integration in Berlin. Even when having the best of intentions, they

found that people who were involved in supporting migrant integration in European societies implicitly categorized them as an out-group. Doing so can potentially lead to suboptimal integration outcomes and inadvertent exclusion of the very people they are trying to help integrate (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021); an unfortunate irony and included here to stress the negative outcomes of unbelonging.

Given the focus on othering particularly when related to national identity, some prior research is especially relevant. For example, regarding this 'Other' that is produced as a result of othering, Hua et al. (2022) noted that "(t)he process of imagining a 'cultural identity' for oneself […] requires the invention of what Sampson (1993) calls a 'serviceable other' – with a 'cultural identity' different from one's own" (p. 316). Hua et al. (2022) further argued that, "understanding how people engage in 'acts of distinction' should be a priority for scholars in intercultural communication if we are to respond to the rise of tribalism and nativism" (p. 321). Here, 'acts of distinction' were understood as acts performed by people to mark and accentuate cultural difference "as a practical means of managing their social identities and interactions with others" (Hua et al., 2022, p. 313).

Additionally, related to intercultural encounters, such as the one that comprises this study's data, and sojourners and immigrants, of which I am one, Liu and Kramer (2019) examine the conceptualization of the Other in intercultural encounters. They found that migrating individuals (referred to as sojourners and immigrants) produce fused identities by integrating their Other-identities into their Self-identities, resulting in an enriched sense of self. Liu and Kramer (2019) refute the view held by biculturalism which takes a difference-as-problem

approach to sojourners' and immigrants' Other-identities. Instead of viewing them as abnormal, deviant, or alien, in need of being managed, reduced, or even eliminated, Liu and Kramer (2019) refute the notion of a dichotomous ethnic ties vs. host culture paradigm.

Finally, in the Swedish context, Dharmaputra et al. (2019) analyzed what they called the shifting practice of Swedish policy towards refugees. They traced the attitudes and perceptions of both the Swedish government and society regarding the refugees and the Muslim-minority groups in Sweden in order to show the relationship between changing practice and changing identity discourse (Dharmaputra et al., 2019). They argued that, compared to before and during the early days of the refugee crisis, the 'Self/Other' relationship had changed (Dharmaputra et al., 2019), moving from acceptance to othering. In Dharmaputra et al.'s study, acceptance was juxtaposed against othering. While othering can, in my opinion, include acceptance (e.g., when taking a more multicultural approach which celebrates, or at a minimum tolerates, difference), here as in this current study the focus was on othering that is in opposition to acceptance; othering which serves to exclude or alienate.

The literature above informs this study and the analyses and assertions made throughout.

# 3. Research design / methodology

This study takes a qualitative approach to the analysis of a phenomenon in the Gothenburg, Sweden, context between two presumed Others.

## 3.1 Method

The nature of this investigation is the analysis and interpretation of a personal, previous event. Given that this event transpired in 2023, the method employed is largely retrospective. Guiding

the analysis and interpretation is an effort to try and put myself in my interlocutor's shoes (so to speak). Absent his opinions/thoughts, I must rely on contextual, historical, and contemporary information when trying to make meaning of the situation. Since I cannot (and would not wish to) disregard my own personal experiences as an immigrant to Sweden, I will try to qualify my comments and make the assumptions guiding my understanding as explicit and transparent as possible. That said, the phenomenon of othering is well researched; thus, using a vignette of a personal experience to exemplify it should prove useful. Joining research that analyzes historical and contemporary examples of othering will be this particular incident in this specific context.

In *Qualitative Research and Intercultural Understanding: Conducting Qualitative Research in Multicultural Settings*, Court (2018) outlines different research methods that may apply to qualitative research. Of those presented, the following points are relevant to this study:

- This study represents an after-the-fact attempt to give meaning to a situation in which I was both participant and observer.
- As part of my attempts to discuss and interpret (give meaning to) this interaction, previous research related to the phenomena at hand has been consulted and considered (see section 2.2).
- As part of the thesis-writing process, ideas and words were shared as part of program coursework.

- Throughout the process of writing and thinking, criticality [of (other) possible interpretations, various literature, etc.] was practiced.

- The final goal (publishing of this BA thesis) is perhaps the most overt way of engaging in research by potentially adding to/extending the field as a whole.

As Court (2018, p. 23) explains, and as is true here, this topic originates in an experience I had. Because of my close proximity/personal connection to the topic, I have had to strive even harder to become aware of and overcome my preconceptions and expectations. Although (or rather because) I believe I have become quite aware, recognizing the biases and discrimination immigrants in Sweden and elsewhere can face (as a result of my own experiences, but also through my Intercultural Studies course readings as well as others – newspapers, forums, etc.), essential for me is to try and contextualize this experience by considering the recent/historical changes that have taken place locally (in Gothenburg and Sweden) as regards immigration specifically. To gain deeper insight into the interaction under analysis, trying to understand the situation through the other participant's eyes is an important challenge.

Regarding the potential challenges of analyzing a situation in which one is personally involved, it is important to note that, although this thesis was started while living in Sweden, much of it has been written later while living outside the country, which has given me the distance (in both time and space) to reflect upon this prior experience. This distance has afforded me additional time to carefully consider the events while not being immersed in the day-to-day experiences that can influence – positively as well as negatively – interpretations of that context. Particularly as I am back in the country in which I was born (though not the area I was

raised), I can recognize similar challenges to those back in Gothenburg but from a different perspective.

## 3.2 Theoretical grounding

A number of concepts/key terms theoretically ground this study, all of which are interconnected/interrelated. Thus, considering them all together can help shed light on the interaction under analysis. In no particular order, concepts include: othering, unbelonging, race/racism, national identity, discrimination/inequality, immigration, and diversity.

A key concept of this study is the phenomenon of **othering**, which can be defined as "the subordination or exclusion of people based on the discursive production of difference or 'otherness'" (Hua et al., 2022, p. 314). Reasons for othering are myriad (including but not limited to the racialization of others) but usually with the intention of excluding or subordinating another as in 'us' vs. 'them'. Such prejudicial behavior can lead to **discrimination** and **inequality** as well as **unbelonging**.

Amongst other reasons, **othering** can be one reason people feel they do not belong (i.e., feelings of **unbelonging**). As noted in f.n. 2, non-belonging is a similar term that can also be found in the literature. My use of unbelonging follows on fairly closely from how Korteweg and Yurdakul (2024) use the term non-belonging. According to them, non-belonging is more than simply not belonging. They define non-belonging as "actively constructed, entailing the denial of personhood, where personhood captures one's sense of self, one's capacity to act, as well as the human and citizenship rights tied to this. Non-belonging affects group formation, community building, and social relationships" (Korteweg & Yurdakul, 2024, p. 294).

As related to this study, **unbelonging** and its negative connotations are in focus/of interest. Unbelonging can be the result of **racism**, the creating of racialized others. Likewise, racism can result in, or be the cause of, **othering** and, as a result, can create feelings of unbelonging, particularly when groups are held in contrast to one another, e.g., when distilled into simple binary relations (Hua et al., 2022, p. 314), or when using a particular category as a benchmark or standard/ideal. For example, Lundström (2017) examines the 'white side' of migration in her article of the same title – "The White Side of Migration: Reflections on Race, Citizenship and Belonging in Sweden". She discusses the pre-constituted image of 'the migrant' (e.g., non-western, non-White, non-privileged, seeking a better life in Europe or the US due to poverty), and asks important questions related to **national identity** such as why some individuals are not regarded as migrants despite having migrant status whereas other individuals, who are national citizens, are seen as migrants and denied their national belonging.

As argued here and illustrated through the experience vignette, **othering** can have dimensions beyond **race**. Othering through the invocation of **national identity** has the potential to affect one's feelings of belonging and inclusion in a given country, even when it is, in fact, one's own. The resultant **discrimination** or **inequality** one can be subjected to due to being othered on account of prejudice related to being different and unlike the (perceived) norm can be substantial.

While discrimination and inequality may be the outcome of othering, so too can they be the cause. **Immigration** as historical and present-day phenomena is relevant on many levels, not only in terms of the specific context (Gothenburg, Sweden) but also in terms of movement of

people from their home countries to new/different countries. Particularly when discussing a topic that includes the component of immigration, the idea of diverse peoples coming together [especially (visible) minority groups entering a (presumed) majority country] and the ensuing **diversity** that results, is extremely relevant. As a result of migration, one can find themselves in a situation of being othered. Again, while immigration is certainly not the only cause of othering, even when viewed in a more positive sense (as in multiculturalism), othering can be an (unintended) outcome of immigration in terms of positioning newcomers as different, or Others.

Using the US context as an example, historically each major 'wave' of immigrants has experienced discrimination, e.g., the Irish in the mid-1800s and Italians in the late 1800s and early 1900s. For some individuals, these precedents can become learned behavior, becoming 'justification' for passing on to other groups the racism and xenophobia their ethnic group experienced historically. On a personal level, aside from the Swedish and French ancestry on my biological father's side, the other half of my DNA comes from the Italians and Greeks on my mother's side. Growing up, I recall hearing how my mother's generation (and earlier) tried to distance themselves from being anything other than 'American' if only to minimize the real or perceived discrimination they experienced which they felt was due to their ethnic background. The cyclical nature of othering is perhaps best exemplified by the Irish in the US, where Irish-Catholics seem to be over-represented in right-wing movements (see, e.g., O'Neill, 2024). For an historical account of the interconnectedness of 19$^{th}$-century American populism (in part due to the massive influx of Irish Catholics) and the modern-day populist movement in Western Europe, see Betz's (2013) "A Distant Mirror: Nineteenth-Century Populism, Nativism, and

Contemporary Right-Wing Radical Politics". He shows how past discrimination informs current racism and discriminatory behavior.

## 3.3 Material / data

A personal experience vignette (see section 4) comprises this study's research material or data. The vignette recounts an experience I had with a store clerk/cashier at a local grocery store in Gothenburg, Sweden. As illustrated by way of the vignette, assertions of national identity were used as discursive means to show unbelonging of an Other by the already othered.

## 3.4 Study aims / guiding questions

With the aim of better understanding the phenomenon of othering of Others by Others, some broad questions have guided this investigation. They include:

- How can othering be experienced?
- What are some potential causes of othering of Others by Others?
- What are some potential consequences of othering of Others by Others?

Of interest is the potentially cyclical nature of othering. Specifically, possible causes and effects of discursive, cyclical othering on self and Others.

## 3.5 Researcher subjectivity / author lens

First, it seems most important to discuss this author's personal backstory and how it might influence what is written here. After all, understanding a researcher's positioning vis-à-vis the phenomenon under investigation is critical, particularly when engaged in qualitative analysis as is done here. Given this study's sample size (i.e., one – this author), it is essential that the

‘interpretive lens’ through which I view and make meaning of things be as clearly and thoroughly articulated as possible in an effort to be as transparent as possible.

Born and raised in the US, I lived here through my twenties. It was not until a few years ago that I became a naturalized citizen of Sweden. Before moving to Sweden, I had worked in Japan for 12 years, and then, after initially moving to Sweden, I again worked outside the country on a couple of occasions [in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)] for a few years (1 and 2 years respectively) for want of a job in Sweden. Due to these experiences, I have lived in a number of places where I was not a native and (at least initially) not even a local. While each context has certainly varied in terms of levels of diversity and immigration, culture(s), etc., each of the places I spent time in was known for a steady rollover, if you will, of foreign people/workers. Given my occupation, it was common to have diverse groups coming and going on a regular basis. My employment aside, a country such as the UAE is very well-known for its diversity as its native population is but a small percentage of the overall population with people from all over the world enticed to relocate there due to, amongst other things, financial opportunities and the weather.

In addition to my personal backstory, it is worth explicitly noting that I am cognizant of my ‘whiteness’, especially after having participated in this bachelor-degree program but also as a result of having lived in Asia and the Middle East. Thus, like the majority of Polish descendants Runfors (2021) studied in Sweden, I too am and have been aware of my own ascribed whiteness (p. 73). Further, I am also cognizant of my generally privileged position as an educated ‘Westerner’ who has benefited greatly from living and working with diverse peoples in various

parts of the world. Though some may disagree, none of these are things for which I feel I must apologize. To me, no one should have to apologize for or justify the life they were born into and/or what they have chosen to do with it. That said, as with everyone, this is part of my subjective lens of perception. This lens impacts how I view and interpret the world; how could it not. It is impacted by the color of my skin, the things I have learned/experienced, my ethnic makeup/background, my religious preferences (if any), the language(s) of which I have command, etc. This worldview impacts what I write, just as everyone's worldviews, thoughts, and words are impacted by their individual life stories/histories.

Despite these things – undoubtedly, rather because of them – they make me simultaneously an insider as well as an outsider, depending on the time and place, even in the country of my birth. The latter position (i.e., that of outsider) is one that, depending on the circumstances, I have been rather comfortable in, at times even relished, perhaps in part due to a fusion of my Self and Other identities and the additive benefits and insights I believe I derive from that (Liu & Kramer, 2019, p. 456). While some might argue that I cannot be an outsider in largely 'White' Sweden because of the color of my skin, I would counter that there is more to being an outsider than skin color (= race) alone. More importantly, judgments made regarding (un)belonging depend largely on the people doing the assessing. Thus, as this thesis will look at othering done by Others, it is important to remember that race can be but one of the measures used to assess belonging, in this case, as regards national (un)belonging. Other variables of potential interest could include religion, language, accent/dialect, dress, mannerisms, etc.

Finally, I come to this work as someone who, even when overtly an Other, has not necessarily felt othered/like an Other in the Swedish context. For example, while living in Asia and the Middle East's GCC[7], I was often aware of being an outsider. From being a Caucasian[8] in an Asian land to being a non-Arab/Muslim/Asian in the GCC, it was difficult not to visibly stand out as different[9]. That said, after moving to Sweden, I would be hard-pressed to recall a time when I felt as though I had been othered by someone in my presence in terms of belonging in or to Sweden. This is not to say that it did not happen; it may well have been that I was just not aware of it or the othering was lost on me due to ignorance. This may be why this experience that unfolded in May, 2023, impacted my thinking about othering so profoundly, enough to make it the focus of my thesis. That experience vignette is the basis of this study, and my personal backstory along with the literature is that which informs its analysis.

## 3.6 Methodological limitations

Given the emphasis on an emic perspective in qualitative research, it is reasonable to question why such an insider perspective was not more directly accessed or at least attempted. Using an experience vignette as material/method, in this case, from this author's perspective, a significant perspective – that of my interlocutor – is left unheard; lost, only to be surmised.

[7] GCC = Gulf Cooperation Council (consists of Kuwait, the UAE, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain)

[8] Through interaction with program classmates, it was brought to my attention that use of the word 'Caucasian' can be quite confusing to some. As I am originally from the US (where North American English is generally spoken), we have historically used the word 'Caucasian' to indicate that someone is White and of European origin generally (not from the Caucasus specifically). This may, however, be changing with the word 'White' frequently replacing the word 'Caucasian' now.

[9] Related to clothing being a visible marker of culture or belonging – The last year I lived in the UAE, I chose to wear abayas. Although not required, I chose to do so namely out of respect for the more conservative Emirati culture. While doing so undoubtedly helped me 'fit in' to some degree, it was done more not to 'stick out' quite as much.

While I think it would have been interesting to get my interlocutor's point of view, from the beginning, I did not believe that was feasible (or even advisable) for a number of reasons:

1) This interaction happened in May, 2023. While analysis of this event started almost immediately (and continued up until the time of study submission), a significant amount of time has passed since it occurred due largely to an international move. As noted previously in section 3.1, this extra time has provided both distance/space in time but also emotional and intellectual distance to reflect.

2) While this experience was profound to me (enough for me to consider writing a BA thesis about it), it may not have been so for my interlocutor. Because we interacted in the course of his workday, this may not have been anything more than any other interaction with a customer. Though I do not believe that to have been the case (based on his reaction during the interaction), I do not know the degree to which he was impacted by the experience. Months later (after formalizing my study focus), it was doubtful that following up would have amounted to anything productive (if he remembered at all).

3) Finally, and perhaps most important, I followed up with his company immediately after the incident since I believed his words to be inappropriate when dealing with customers. Thus, even if it had been possible to communicate with the person shortly after the event, he could possibly have taken a defensive position, e.g., thinking his job was at risk; a perhaps natural/expected response. This would not have been productive.

As a result of not having the other participant's words and thoughts to consider, I must strive even harder to offer potential, credible explanations that go beyond merely a superficial

explanation and dive more deeply into the lived experiences of immigrants to Gothenburg/Sweden and the challenges they/we face (including but not limited to those related to the historical divisions of 'vulnerable' areas, employment, discrimination, belonging/inclusion, identity, etc.). As an inductive study, my analysis is based solely on this one interaction. However, I believe there is potential to offer insight into something not often talked about – the othering of Others by Others. Since the analysis is based on an interaction between two seemingly non-native Swedes[10], an assumption on my part but one I believe to be correct, there is the potential to shed light on this topic.

## 4. Experience vignette

The situation that serves as the impetus for this study is recounted below. It took place in May, 2023. Given the previously mentioned limitation of a post-experience analysis from the perspective of only one of the interlocutors, a repeated disclaimer, while perhaps not necessary, seems warranted. It is worth stressing that this retelling is from my perspective only. Such an account is by default one-sided, lacking a counter perspective. As of the final writing of this thesis, though a significant amount of time has passed since the event occurred, starting from shortly after the event occurred, I took notes to start processing/reflecting upon what had occurred. In addition, details were recorded in order to follow up with the company where he worked and that was done immediately. Note: Specific details have been intentionally excluded

[10] I can, of course, unequivocally say this is true about me. While I cannot definitively say this is true for my interlocutor, I strongly believe it to be so. Although my opinion is based on external variables that can certainly be misinterpreted (based on expectations and/or preconceptions/stereotypes), I believe I am sensitive enough to these issues to not prematurely pass judgment. Further, I think it would be naïve to say that there cannot be observable characteristics that identify someone as being a non-native person from, e.g., a particular part of the world based on, e.g., the manner in which they speak. However, it should be understood that there is always the possibility that one's assumptions are incorrect.

(e.g., the name of the store, its location, etc.) as the intent is not to shame or cause harm to the store or its employees.

**Experience vignette:**

*I had gone food shopping at one of the grocery stores in my local area. Though smaller than many of the other nearby stores, this shop is one of the well-known chains here in Sweden as well as internationally. Although not my main place for getting groceries, particularly in the time leading up to this incident, I had been going there fairly frequently.*

*As a student, I often look for discounted items, something that has become far more common in recent years, especially after the Covid pandemic when stores were trying to get rid of excess product. That day, I had found tortellini deeply discounted, so I considered it a very good trip. As I usually do, after checking out and packing up my items, I checked my receipt. I found that two of the five tortellini had rung up incorrectly. Although all five were marked the same, two came up as more expensive on the receipt. I suspected the cashier had already noticed this since I had seen his face change when he was ringing me up. At one point, he looked confused. I imagine he too had noticed that, even though all of the items were identical, two of them had rung up differently. Not having fixed the problem immediately, it was left for me to discover (or not).*

*After taking out the five tortellini and confirming the labels, I took my receipt and all five packages and went back in line, leaving the rest of my groceries on a shelf area across from the check-out lanes. One person was in front of me, so I waited until they were finished. When it was my turn, I showed the cashier my receipt and said (in Swedish) that all were supposed to be 70% off but only three of them rang up correctly; there was a mistake. He looked concerned, as if he*

*were thinking of what he should do to correct it. In Swedish, he told me to bring the rest of my items back to the register. This seemed rather illogical, perhaps even a delay tactic, as no one else was around, and I was mere feet from my bags. Annoyed, I let out a heavy sigh. I did not understand why I should bring the rest of my items when it was the five items that were in question, and all five of those items were already there for him to look at. It seemed little more than a (further) inconvenience.*

*After I sighed, his response was to say (in English) "Calm down! We're in Sweden. This is Sweden, not your country!"*

*Looking back, I recall having a light-bulb moment. As I was getting ready to immediately respond (to what effect, I am not sure, but something related to the fact that I was far from not calm), I had an epiphany of sorts. I realized – Sweden IS 'my' country, or conversely, 'my' country IS Sweden. I do not think that was what I had initially intended to say or where my mind had gone. However, in those few seconds of quiet before my response, this rather profound sense of indignation or determination came over me. Before saying something rude or sarcastic (both possible options/alternatives in such a situation), I responded in kind (in English) with a simple "Sweden IS my country" to which he replied, "My country too." Again, I responded, "Did I say it wasn't? Did I 'accuse' you of not being Swedish?" It was at this moment that I think (based on his behavior) that he had a reciprocal moment of clarity. Watching his facial expressions, it was as if something had also dawned on him – I had not asserted, implied, or even insinuated anything to that effect. Whether Sweden was or was not 'his' country, I could not say. While the thought had never even crossed my mind, it clearly had for him about me.*

*The irony of this situation was that it was pretty clear to me that this person's place of birth was not Sweden. I based these assumptions on purely observational things which, of course, can be wholly incorrect. However, based namely on the way he spoke, it was pretty obvious that Swedish was not his native language[11]. I say this as someone who very much speaks non-native Swedish and who is married to someone whose English clearly 'betrays' his Swedish background. To me, this is wholly irrelevant and rather to be expected. But again, obvious to me (but potentially incorrect) was the likelihood that this individual had probably experienced racism, othering, exclusion, etc. due to his ethnic/racial/religious/linguistic background … and that anger was now directed at me. Perhaps based on my Swedish ability and/or feelings he had about the country to which he assumed I do 'belong' (or any other number of things), he was making clear the identity of the geographical location in which we were standing and, most importantly, the point that this country was in sharp contrast to the one from which he presumed I came (= where I 'belonged').*

*The cashier and I managed to get through the remainder of the transaction. However, I left feeling very angry, enough to follow up with the company about the situation. I had not, up until that point, realized that one needed to bring a passport with them when grocery shopping … or so that is how it felt. I could not quite comprehend how citizenship had somehow gotten wrapped up in the fact that a grocery store register had not scanned my items properly.*

[11] Given ambiguity of, and preferences for, various terms, I use native language in a general sense, as mother tongue, L1, etc. are used colloquially.

# 5. Critical analysis / discussion

Related to researcher subjectivity, a qualification is again worth repeating – The interpretations offered/assumptions made are based on my personal assessments supported by literature. The possible causes and effects of othering of Others by the already othered offered below are, as written, possibilities not certainties. However, the meaning attributed to the experience is mine.

## 5.1 Meaning attributed to the experience

Regardless of the possible reasons why my interlocutor chose to other me (intentionally or not), the outcome was the same – I felt a bit shocked that I was being treated that way as it was wholly unexpected. Having lived in a number of countries, I pride myself on being rather well-versed in how to behave in a variety of diverse environments. Generally speaking, I am sensitive to cultural expectations and norms and try to adhere to them as best I can. Because of this admittedly self-assessed high(er) level of intercultural competence, believed to have been acquired through interacting with diverse peoples from far-flung places around the globe over several decades, I have always felt fairly confident in my abilities to navigate various cultural landscapes. Further, ever since moving to Sweden, I had always felt a certain connection to the country and her people[12]. Now, looking back, to some degree, my surprise seems almost naïve if not downright foolish. Wrongly perhaps I had felt a sense of belonging not only because I married a Swedish man, but also because some of my ancestors came from that land. In some ways, it is ironic. Unlike in the US where my ancestors had immigrated to in the early 20th century, I can trace my Swedish lineage back to the 1700s. That I can do that, and that I have

[12] Although I grew up knowing I was biologically part Swedish, I never identified as such based on my appearance, the parents who raised me (my mother and the father who adopted me due to marriage), the last name I had since approximately age 5, lived family traditions, etc. Because of those things, I identified more as Italian American.

more than one passport, seems wholly irrelevant though. Particularly in the context of grocery shopping, I found it perplexing as to why this should even come up. Yet, it did. And in doing so, I was othered, made to feel as though I did not belong there. Should one have to explain and defend to a shop clerk their 'right' to exist in a country when grocery shopping? Should one have to 'prove' they belong simply to go about their daily tasks? Especially when the other person is very likely an Other as well, having to justify one's connection(s) seems doubly inappropriate.

## 5.2 Possible causes

Runfors (2016) notes "when someone is positioned as being out of place, it means that they have crossed socially constructed borderlines" (p. 1855), a point made by Cresswell (2004, p. 103). Specifically related to the interaction in question, there may have been any number of reasons why my interlocutor chose to respond to me as he did. Possibilities include my sex (perhaps my sighing did not align with what he considered appropriate behavior for my gender), feelings for the country from which he assumed I came (e.g., perhaps he assumed I was an American due to the 'Hawaii' baseball cap I was wearing or the way I spoke, and he had contempt for the US), my inability to speak Swedish fluently (e.g., as evidenced by perhaps incorrect grammar and/or non-native-like pronunciation), etc. As regards the last point, "language is considered a strong determinant of social categorization" and where there is a linguistic gap, e.g., with an immigrant's (in)ability to use the language well/properly, the person will be distinguished from the host linguistic community as an out-group (Liu & Kramer, 2019, pp. 453-454).

While there could be any number of reasons why someone would choose to other another person, of primary interest here is the possibility of having previously experienced othering, particularly when/if that person might be considered an Other themselves, as well as the related feelings of national unbelonging as a result of prejudice and/or discrimination faced. While these possibilities cannot be confirmed absent input from my interlocutor, it is likely he may have experienced one or more of these given his presumed background and his assertion of national belonging (in his case, not mine). Othering as related to national identity is of interest and not necessarily the norm in my experience. Meaning, it was a rather unusual response, in my opinion, so there must have been a reason for it.

## 5.3 Possible effects

There are a number of possible effects that could result from othering as related to national identity, which is in focus here. For instance, feelings of (un)belonging can result from either feeling as though one belongs, or not. Personal agency could result in someone resisting the label of 'outsider' put on them by others, such as the Roma in the article by Hyltén-Cavallius and Fernstål (2021). If positive, this may be due to (heightened) feelings of inclusion or identification with the country and her people. Due to those feelings, one might wish to assert their affinity for the country and/or her people. Alternatively, resistance can also be asserted if one feels alienated or excluded due perhaps to othering, lack of inclusion, discrimination, etc. One might also choose to explicitly assert their affinity for a different country (e.g., one's birth country) as a result of exclusion. Expressing one's affinity for – and connection to – a country can be an attempt to show that the person feels they belong, even/especially when others

might judge them as not belonging or the discourse does not support their inclusion, again, as with the Roma family.

As suggested here and illustrated in this study's experience vignette, aggressively asserting one's national identity can perhaps indicate genuine feelings of affinity or perhaps mask feelings on unbelonging. The othering of Others by Others can be cyclical in an effort to self-identify as belonging but to the detriment of the other Other. In a broad sense, such othering can result in the perpetuation of myths related to what constitutes a particular country's national (e.g., Swedishness). If all but the most typical of citizens is considered an Other, this will perpetuate the myth that diversity does not truly exist and, when it does, that 'deviation' is an anomaly, outside the norm, and, thus, not good so excluded.

Back to the experience vignette under analysis here, while 'othering' may imply one person's belonging [to the exclusion of an/other(s)], as I view this interaction, it may also speak to something wholly different. Certainly, the cashier in this case could have been displaying positive identification and belonging (to and/or with Sweden). On the other hand, he could have been displacing his own sense of unbelonging. A bit like a hierarchy[13], while Swedish society may dub him an 'outsider', I am **more** of an outsider in his opinion (despite perhaps visibly looking the part of a 'Swede'). Not unlike a pecking order, in the hierarchy of belonging, he deemed himself higher than me. Or, perhaps conversely, he felt I was deemed higher by society (perhaps because of my skin color or presumed country of origin) so he wanted to take me

[13] The hierarchy metaphor can also be found in Runfors (2021, p. 74), there a racial hierarchy, and Hübinette (2020, p. 261), there used when discussing the appearance of being Swedish and performing Swedishness amongst 'minority Sweden'.

down a few notches (so to speak). Comparing himself to me or others, my interlocutor may have felt any number of emotions. While he certainly could have felt pity for/superior to me, he could also have felt jealous, inferior, or inadequate, not unlike the non-whites who were not adopted about whom Hübinette (2020, p. 261) wrote; they too may have felt such emotions when comparing themselves to non-white adoptees in terms of appearing Swedish and performing Swedishness. Hence the desire to perhaps other another Other.

Further, related to the pre-constituted image of 'the migrant' of which Lundström (2017) wrote – having an idealized or even just a pre-constituted image of what a particular country's citizenry should look/be/act like may have played a role in the interaction under study as well. Comparing himself to this 'benchmark Swede', my interlocutor may not have truly felt part of Swedish society thus displacing his sense of unbelonging onto me. Alternatively, when comparing me to the same benchmark, my interlocutor may have felt I did not measure up, thus pointing out his negative assessment (i.e., that he did not think I belonged).

The question is, when do these comparisons end? How many degrees of (un)belonging register? Was his comment/behavior more a reflection of his (feelings of his) status than mine? Or was my status of most importance? In this instance, I spoke Swedish to him before he made his comment. His comment was in response to my sigh or perhaps to my pronunciation … or any other number of things. What if my skin had not been 'White'? What if I had visibly belonged to a religion not 'native' to Sweden, but different than his own (should he have one)? Is racist and discriminatory behavior acceptable in those circumstances? If someone does not think you speak the language well enough, do you not belong? What happens if your dialect or accent do

not reflect local parlance, or even any of those recognized as 'belonging to' Sweden? Does anything else matter? And if someone is dubbed an outsider, is it acceptable that the feelings you might have for their (presumed) country of origin impact your treatment of them in a public space? Invoking national (non-)identity [= (un)belonging] during the course of a grocery store checkout seems rather irrelevant or superfluous at best.

Similar to bullying, the potentially cyclical nature of othering means that we continue to perpetrate certain behaviors, in this case exclusionary, non-inclusive, discriminatory behavior; perpetuating the same racist behavior(s) that we ourselves may have already experienced. Yet, in doing so, we continue to exclude ourselves as well, not just the other Others. When someone others, this can speak to the exclusion they themselves feel. It is simply displaced on another in an effort to bolster their insecurity vis-à-vis feelings of (un)belonging. For these reasons, the perpetration of 'othering' – the cyclical nature of it – is inherently dangerous (if not violent) as well as illogical.

We are all simultaneously inside and outside of many groups at any given time. When and why should citizenship become the essential marker of national identity, national belonging (or right to exist), or appropriate behavior in a given national context? Outside of perhaps a voting box (or some similar situation where citizenship is a requirement for participation), while humans have a propensity (necessity) of in-group/out-group formation, the consequences of engaging this propensity as a defense mechanism can be rather dire for civil society, especially when people are simply going about their daily life tasks.

Presumably, as a representative of a given society (in this case, Swedish society), anyone who engages in behavior similar to that of my interlocutor stands to alienate a large portion of the population if/when making such kinds of comments. This is extremely unfortunate given the frequency with which people move about the globe nowadays. Are these the values that 'Swedes' (or those that think they belong in Sweden) stand for? That is the impression given. This is unfortunate since, where I live when in Sweden (Gothenburg centrum, the center of the city), there are many international students, particularly in the area where the interaction took place as several of Gothenburg University's campuses are nearby. While every country has cultural expectations and norms, is the go-to method for responding to any undesired (by individual standards) behavior to call into question the person's right to reside/exist or belong in the space?

Finally, returning to Sampson's (1993) notion of a 'serviceable other', it may not be incorrect to say that both of us – I as well as my interlocutor – created a serviceable other in each other in order to further our particular 'agendas'. Whoever an Other is or whatever form an Other takes they are largely used in opposition to someone/something else and to serve a purpose. Here, in this my attempt to assert my lack of acceptance of such treatment, my interlocutor serves the purpose of what values and behavior I do not think serve societies well. The risk is that, in doing so (= creating the serviceable other), feelings of exclusion and unbelonging may only be strengthened. Fortunately, by being able to reflect on possible reasons why an Other might engage in the othering of another Other, given time and space, I come away with a certain amount of empathy if not sympathy for other Others and a strong resolve (to the best of my ability) to not perpetuate such behavior. As for my interlocutor, I trust I served the purpose of

showing how he does, in fact, belong in Sweden (should he or society feel otherwise) by representing another kind of person who he felt does so less. In othering me, perhaps his feelings of belonging could be strengthened. While both of us have demonstrated personal agency, it is my hope that only one of us has done so at the other's expense.

## 5.4 Future research

The possibilities are rife for follow-up study of this phenomenon. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses could potentially offer profitable insights into the suggested motivations for – and consequences of – the othering of Others by Others. Given the large numbers of immigrants Sweden has allowed into her borders in recent years, I believe there is a large pool of experts (here defined as those individuals, like me, who immigrated to Sweden from various lands and for various reasons) who could speak to whether or not this is a widespread phenomenon, how othering has been experienced by them, the causes and effects of it, etc.

Returning to this study's aims,

- How can othering be experienced?
- What are some potential causes of othering of Others by Others?
- What are some potential consequences of othering of Others by Others?

Future research could potentially shed light on the experiences of different persons/groups, and whether, how, or to what degree they have experienced the type of othering discussed here. For those who can admit to having engaged in such othering, understanding the reasons motivating it (especially if related to firsthand othering they have experienced, i.e., cyclical

othering) can be useful for, potentially, decreasing its frequency. The meanings each of us attaches to the experience of othering – particularly if/when done by another Other – can offer some insight into the possible effects with which we as societies must contend as we strive for equality and inclusivity for all.

## 6. Conclusion

From the outset, it was understood that this study would raise more questions than provide definitive answers. However, as someone who was othered by someone who may have been – could possibly still be – considered an Other, I felt an imperative to address this topic in an academic way. Othering can often be considered a phenomenon whereby, for instance, a majority excludes a minority. Particularly with increased migration and international movement, people currently or formerly considered Others can perpetuate similar exclusionary behavior, the effects of which do not bode well for a society that values inclusivity and interculturality. While no definitive answers can be offered to the analysis herein, possible avenues for future research may want to investigate further the interpretations made and questions raised here. For anyone, including non-native Swedes and residents who have been given the opportunity to live in the country, to perpetuate exclusionary and discriminatory behaviors – even when/if one has experienced them themselves – seems dangerous and counterproductive. If each of us is to belong, it should start first with those of us who have ourselves been welcomed into a land. For that reason, othering of Others by Others warrants further consideration.

Finally, in terms of fighting against racism and discrimination, agency is one way a person can find their voice to reject the labels others may put on them. Taking a cue from Solomos (2022), this study has, in fact, been a form of resistance. By using my agency and giving voice to the

experience of having been othered and ascribed an outsider, I am (in the spirit of Hyltén-Cavallius and Fernstål's Roma) forcefully rejecting the label that was put on me. In addition to verbally rejecting the categorization on that May, 2023, day, I continue to do so through this written account. It is my hope that immigrants everywhere can feel inclusion and belonging in their new countries.

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