

Critical Whiteness Studies Methodologies

Special editors:
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Precarious workers that made this special issue possible

This special issue is a product of a joint venture that was supported by many who have invested their valuable time and work. We put all this effort into it because we strongly believe that topics presented in this special issue need to be addressed and discussed in an open and unrestricted way. This is an open access, volunteer-run graduate journal and most of us who were directly responsible for this special issue do not have a secure income and thus consider ourselves part of the precarity within the academy. Although we constitute labour within the academy, our position can in many aspects be paralleled with the invisible and de-valued work of young people in other jobs or sectors forced to take up unpaid internships in order to get their foot in the door. Some of us also face problems that arise from working in different national and linguistic settings and thus share the precarity that is specific for migrant labour. We thus want to point out that none of us who have worked on this special issue have received any kind of payment. In order to acknowledge that, we decided to calculate the monetary value of our work that includes various

tasks listed below. Our calculation does not include the work of those whose papers have been rejected. The estimate was calculated upon current hourly wage rates of various tasks, where available. However for some type of work, such as editing, reviewing or author's contributions, we simply could not find any specific hourly wage rates and we suspect this is because in academic publishing this type of work has often not been remunerated. In order to put a price on authors' contributions, we have used rates available for authors in non-academic publishing, and for editing and reviewing we have used hourly rates that we could otherwise get for teaching and/or research. The value of our work is thus estimated using an opportunity cost approach, applying market wages as well as different measures of replacement costs. We have calculated that the **'wage theft' that was endured by all of us amounts to an estimate of: £24000**. By doing these calculations we want to emphasise that we should define and standardise wage rates for all types of work that makes academic publishing possible. We think that everyone should be paid for their

work and we call out in solidarity with all those struggling to make a living in this climate of intermittent employment, instability and enforced austerity. We strongly believe that knowledge, ideas and resources are a public good and should be subsidised and available to all. We also think that the issue of unpaid and invisible labour within academia should be more widely discussed. Therefore we also encourage all those who share our concerns to continue exposing precarious work within and beyond the academy.

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Editorial: Different pathways into critical whiteness studies

Linda Lund Pedersen and Barbara Samaluk

This special issue explores the complexities of critical whiteness studies methodologies. We decided upon critical whiteness studies (CWS) as our nodal point for this special issue since we believe whiteness often stays unchallenged as un-articulated and invisible social, political and economic norms surrounding and penetrating academic knowledge production. Whiteness is a difficult concept to pinpoint since its definition tends to transform over time, space and location, yet at the same time it remains stubbornly hegemonic. To adopt whiteness as a theoretical inspiration is a way of questioning prevalent perspectives, privileges and interests (Pedersen 2012; forthcoming). This implies that whiteness and racialization should also be connected to the material and functioning of contemporary capitalism (Garner 2006; Acker 2000), and that we should question knowledge production and embedded epistemologies. The political force of whiteness seems to be its quality as a neutral marker and its strong affiliation with norms and standards (Pedersen 2008). We are therefore interested in the processes of how

whiteness is embedded, assigned, taken up and resisted. We think it is necessary to ask the following questions: how does whiteness play a part in signifiatory processes as well as in research methodologies and not least in alliances between researchers and their interviewees and/or research subjects/objects (Gunaratnam 2003).

The field of critical whiteness studies is characterised by diverse scholarship, which uses conceptual frames that view whiteness from a social constructionist, phenomenological or existential perspectives. Phenomenological and existential perspectives focus upon the lived/living experience of whiteness and how whiteness directs, often in the background, towards itself as the norm for our life-world (Ahmed 2007; Puwar 2004; Fanon 1967/1952; Alcoff 2006; Pedersen 2012; forthcoming). These questions bring whiteness forward as other modes of being are seen as not-belonging, non-normative, as *odd*. For us it is not sufficient to stop with the question that something or someone is understood as *odd* but to ask the question in what situation, event, location and context does one be-

come *odd* and who are the ones to understand this as *odd*? Through this questioning whiteness becomes relevant, visible and tangible. It foregrounds whiteness as a privilege that make 'white' people visible for themselves as a racialised category (Toni Morrison 1992, 90). And further social constructionist approaches to whiteness acknowledge that 'there are no white people as such only a (changing) set of idealized norms, practices, and investments that constitute a white racialized ideal' (Hunter et al. 2010, 410). These approaches to whiteness help address differential workings of whiteness as they manifest within specific contexts, experiences and historical movements. Moreover, they provide a set of analytical tools to explore how critical whiteness continues operating as a global cultural hegemony that characterises our everyday lives, experiences, practices, as well as regional, national and supra-national politics and policies (Reyes and Mulinari 2005).

The collection of papers presented in this special issue seek to develop critical methodologies for studying whiteness as a social, cultural, political and material phenomenon. It is rooted in ideas of postcoloniality, transnationality and intersectionality. In line with Lopez we argue for postcolonial and transnational approaches to whiteness 'across a range of geographic and cultural incarnations, where the concept of whiteness as a form of

hegemony historically linked to colonialism clashes in the new post-colonial moment with new, competing narratives of national histories' (Lopez 2005:19). Through historical contextualisation postcolonial whiteness is on one hand able to grasp various shades of whiteness that form in contemporary postcolonial contexts, and on the other hand explore how they relate to the hegemonic whiteness that represents the institutionalization of European colonialism.

The neglect or belated discussion of whiteness in some locations might not be as innocent as a *not yet* theorised area as it may be that the insights can provoke unease with different national histories. This neglect or 'forgetting' of colonialism and race-relations might be a formative part of European history in the sense that colonialism was understood as something taking place elsewhere and not in the eye of Europe (Hall 2000; Goldberg 2006). As we need to focus upon colonial centers, the exploration of postcolonial whiteness also entails the inclusion of peripheral geographies in the exploration of processes of racialization and whiteness. By looking at different geographies from postcolonial perspective one can uncover the relational workings of whiteness between peripheries and the centre (Ponzanesi and Blaagaard 2011). And also to approach whiteness as a relational category helps us see that whiteness 'forms part of a sys-

tem of meaning about race, class, gender [*and other intersections (our emphasis)*] rather than something to be studied on its own' (Ware and Blaagaard 2011).

Our decision to emphasize one aspect of studying racialization processes is also reflected in our acknowledgement of the difficulties of engaging with intersectional and multidimensional perspectives (Christensen and Siim 2006). According to Brah and Phoenix intersectionality signifies 'the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation – economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential – intersect in historically specific context' (2004: 76). This definition is quite telling because it denotes racialization processes that are social in nature and can take different shapes and forms in diverse contexts. By focusing on whiteness, we can critically investigate the traps that can arise in intersectional analysis due to particular embeddedness and/or specific location that can render whiteness invisible. At the same time we have to take into account that whiteness is not simply an add-on concept, but a concept that can become visible through intersectional analysis within specific contexts. As Ware argues 'starting with 'whiteness' as something already defined and findable is likely to be misleading as it suggests an essentialism that's not useful' (Ware and Blaagaard 2011,

155). To engage in studies of racialization and whiteness it cannot be enough emphasised that *critique* and being *critical* is the driving motivation.

All that we have argued above is important not only in terms of understanding whiteness more clearly but also to contribute further towards a critical whiteness scholarship that goes beyond epistemological ignorance in relation to race in terms of whiteness (Swan 2010). Not only can we as academics be the researchers of racism but we can also be the producer of racist theories, as Balibar insightfully argues: '[t]here is in fact no racism without theory (or theories)' (Balibar 1991, 18). This means that academics are accountable for the knowledge that they produce, rather than hiding behind 'objectivity' of representing the world as it is out-there. This special issue thus attempts to 'ask the other question', as Mari Matsuda (1991) encourages us to do in our research and thinking. How can we open up for new questions, and even more importantly, which methodologies can assist in exploring our own blind spots and thereby be more reflexive on the power structure which permeate any human interaction not only scientific methodologies (Lykke 2010, 82)? Matsuda's methodology of "ask[ing] the other question" searches in the sphere of 'both the obvious and non-obvious relationships of domination, helping us to realize that no form of subordination

ever stands alone' (Matsuda 1991, 1989). For us to ask the other question is to focus on processes in order to analyse social, economic and political phenomena. We are interested in what is disrupted and disturbed more than simply supposing that it is the disruption and distortion that is the problem. Through the experiences and views of researchers that are very differently positioned within hegemonic whiteness, this special issue attempts to uncover the embedded epistemological ignorance of white privilege within academy and the broader knowledge production.

The articles presented in this special issue address the methodological challenges in critical whiteness research by looking at not often explored geographies, locations and translations¹ of CWS. They contribute to the still evolving scholarship that explores changes that travelling concepts of whiteness and race (with accompanying intersections) undergo as they enter different social, political, economic, disciplinary or theoretical contexts (Knapp 2005; Essed and Trienekens 2008; Michel and Honegger 2010; Gronold and Lund Pedersen 2009; Richter and Caporale 2009; Samaluk 2009; Huijg 2011). As such they offer novel critical voices on analysing whiteness that is otherwise still dominated by North American and British analyses of racial hierarchies and meanings and their respective local histories/geographies. As Nayak ar-

gues 'new geographies of whiteness can displace the construction of critical whiteness studies as a Western pursuit and open up researchers to a global interpretation and postcolonial understanding of such race markers' (Nayak 2007, 737). This issue accordingly presents lived experiences, views, positions and different contextualizations of whiteness within often 'forgotten' geographies. It offers original methodological insights in researching white privilege that have to do with lived experiences, positionality, translations and applications of CWS to different geographies and the innovative application of theories within and across disciplines. In this special issue we are thus not only concerned with what is lost in translation but mostly what is gained in this process. Similar as Pereira, Scharff and Marhia (2009) argue that a lot of insights and knowledge can be found through translation and travelling theories, we argue that translation and travelling of CWS to other geographies offers novel insights on whiteness as a global and relational hegemony.

The article by **Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz** titled **What Makes a White Man White** explores how upper middle class men in Rio de Janeiro self-identify as white. By pointing to complexity and intersectional nature of racial identification in Brazilian context this article offers an innovative translation of whiteness as unearned privilege and a

site of power. By historically contextualising Brazilian nation formation Ribeiro **Corossacz** teases out racist consequences of colonialization that have been inherited from epistemologies of the 'Old world' and are crucial in understanding post-colonial whiteness in contemporary Brazil. As Goldberg argues 'the globalization of the racial is predicated on the understanding that racial thinking and its resonances circulated by boat in the European voyages of discovery, imported into the impact zones of colonization and imperial expansion' (2009, 1275).

In this regard Ribeiro **Corossacz's** article shows how despite subsequent changes and critique of racialised system, this colonial baggage influences the imagination in contemporary Brazil, where whiteness still signifies privilege, modernity, beauty and the norm upon which the other is defined, problematised and studied. In her article she discusses how her interviewees (white upper middle class men) questioned her research, were turning their narratives towards 'problematic' groups or suggesting a more 'legitimate' research object. Despite color evasive discourses narrated by her interviewees, Ribeiro **Corossacz** demonstrates how whiteness in the Brazilian context relates to a social class that is produced through historical-cultural factors, and is used to legitimise privilege. But what may seem as class from one point of view can also look like race or

gender from another (Acker 2000). In this regard Ribeiro **Corossacz** analysis is very powerful in exposing the privileged social position of white men that is earned through symbolic value of whiteness that equips them with the 'certificate of qualifications for life'. Whiteness thus grants privilege and superior starting positions in life and is sustained exactly because it 'does not want to be named'. This concept of whiteness as the unnamed privilege is exposed also in our next article that is effectively 'reversing the gaze'.

In her article **Methodological Reflections on Being an East Asian Researcher Researching the White Majority**, Sayaka Osanami Törngren exposes the often-overlooked issue of non-white researchers researching white subject. This is a welcome contribution not only to critical whiteness studies, but also critical race studies in general. Importantly, the author calls upon other minority researchers to interrogate research practices in critical race and whiteness studies. The contributions of minority researchers, alongside those of critical majority white researchers, can help inform, interrogate, deepen and reshape methods in this field and offer different insights on workings of whiteness. As Gronold and Lund Pedersen (2009) argue, white scholars face various challenges and dilemmas in transferring the knowledge on whiteness in pre-

dominantly white classroom at the white academy. Contributions from minority researchers provide necessary counter-voices that can be effectively used in the knowledge transfer that challenges white hegemony within academy. The article exposes how returning the gaze revealed lines of exclusion, as well as the ways in which lines of inclusion were proposed in responses. In this article we can as well trace how inclusion and exclusion of different minority groups is connected with colonial past that clashes into post-colonial moment and forms the ground for mythical imagination that defines Swedishness and whiteness/blackness and their various shades. The article reveals how the researcher is positioned in the hierarchy of acceptability in comparison to other minority groups according to her race, nationality, gender, age and class. Examples presented in the article help us observe 'the many shades of difference that lie within this category – that some people are 'whiter' than others, some are not white enough and many are inescapably cast beneath the shadow of whiteness' (Nayak 2007, 738).

Furthermore, this article demonstrates the transnational character of whiteness in which 'Swedishness is strongly connected to the visible white Europeanness'. Although informants in the research had origins from different parts of Europe and Latin America, they all embodied white European heritage.

Although there are without a doubt shades of whiteness that can define informants originating from these diverse localities very differently, **Osanami Törngren's** research shows that these different interviewees used a common parameter for exclusion, which was built on embodied white European heritage. Also research focusing on inward European migration in the UK gives similar results, which shows that although Central and Eastern European migrants in London are constructed as the 'Other' through various intersections, they often narrate a common 'We' that creates imagined sameness with other white Europeans also by problematising black and non-Christian identities (Samaluk 2009). As Ponzanesi and Blaagaard argue in their introduction to the special issue on Postcolonial Europe, 'the European is what the other is not, therefore unmarked by race, ethnicity and religion but in reality implicitly constructed upon the idea of maleness, whiteness, and Christianity' (2001, 3). The hierarchy of acceptability in **Osanami Törngren's** article is further pronounced by comparing visible and audible difference. The findings point out that embodying a different 'look' was more exclusionary than embodying a different accent or name.

By reading **Ribeiro Corossacz's** and **Osanami Törngren's** articles we discovered the acute commonalities of exclusion. In the former

we could see the normative perceptions of who is supposed to be researched, whilst in the latter we can see the normative understanding of who is supposed to be a researcher. The articles thus offer both sides of the same coin that point to embedded global epistemologies that help maintain the existing privileges that are embodied in whiteness. As Goldberg (2009) argues, racism is relational, firstly because it forms in relation to specific historical context and secondly because racist arrangements in one locality depend on racist arrangements everywhere else.

Relationality is also evident in **Kristín Loftsdóttir's** self-reflexive account presented in this issue entitled **'The White Flesh of a Fish'-Reflections about 'Whiteness' and Methodologies**. Her examples from different localities around the globe show that 'within a racist system of the world everyone are racialised', yet specific racialization depends on contextual, historical and intersectional workings of whiteness in specific localities. Her account speaks about the reproduction of colonialism and racism through social constructions of whiteness in predominantly non-white society (Niger). In this locality whiteness is associated with "Westerners", thus dividing the world into powerful 'white' north and poor 'black' south'. Self-reflexivity enables her to understand how it feels to be racialised as well as to prob-

lematise the persistent invisibility of whiteness to 'White Western' beneficiaries that are present in Niger in the name of development, tourism or research. Thus she argues for an auto-ethnographic method, which entails a critical self-positioning that enables white researchers to 'see' whiteness. Additionally she argues for extended case method and ethnographic analysis. Her example of Iceland shows one a context that is characterised by a predominantly white society, where most people never reflect on their social categorizations as 'white', and where deeper insights on workings of whiteness can best be gained indirectly, through an extended case study. As she is guiding us with the companion of Balibar in her position paper:

Focusing on a specific case embodied in 'social drama' can be seen as particularly important with issues like racism, which as stressed by scholars, increasingly became coded under different labels, making it more difficult to target (Balibar 2000; Harrison 2002).

The extended case study can be an important method because it opens up the possibility to think about race differently or resist prevalent hegemonies. It may also open historical and temporal aspects of racialization processes taking place in a specific locality. This is particularly useful for understanding how at different points in history differ-

ent groups have been constructed as more or less 'white/civilised'. And lastly Kristin Loftsdóttir argues for the usefulness of ethnographic analysis that can provide 'deeper understandings of the lived realities of people, and how 'whiteness' is expressed in particular localized circumstances while intersecting with other aspects, often in contradictory ways'. This helps avoid the essentialised notion of whiteness as something fixed, but rather as mutable and adaptable category that is closely linked to colonialization processes within diverse localities.

Our next article offers an interdisciplinary reading of discursive conditions structuring particular understandings of belonging and difference in postcolonial Swedish context. The main argument of **Malinda Andersson's** article, **Seeing through the White Gaze: Racialised Markings of (Un)Familiar Bodies in Swedish Transnational Adoption Policy**, is that the non-white bodies of the transnational adoptees are treated as a foreign and "non-Swedish" presence both within the adoptive family and within the white nation. The focus of this study is the relationship between race, family, nation, Swedishness and Whiteness. Drawing on postcolonial and feminist perspectives, **Andersson's** contribution shows the consequences of mythical imagination on social policies within specific nation or 'nation family', where she argues that

ideas of 'one single point of origin' are crucial. As **Andersson** is arguing in her paper 'the stability of the adoptive family is threatened by the fact that the child resembles *another family*, and *another nation*'. The author thus contributes to the 'growing examination of the material effects of whiteness as an oppressive social relation enacted through state welfare' (Hunter et al. 2010, 409).

The analysis of the Swedish context is interesting because it challenges the image of Sweden as progressive nation in terms of equality. The image management of many European countries often obscures inequalities and masks everyday racialised practices that are deeply rooted in imagined national community. This holds particularly true for the image of the Nordic countries as paradigmatic example of gender equality in social science as expressed from both an insider and outsider point of view (Tuori 2007). This equality is conditional, based upon an idea of homogeneity within the population. This not only frames the Nordic countries in a particular way, but also seems more generally to be a major tendency within much gender equality rhetoric, where it is the foreigner/minorities who are positioned as the one in need of civic integration with regard to gender equality. Gender equality appears as a qualifier for approximating whiteness (Ahmed 2007; Pedersen 2012; forthcoming). This assumption was proven on several

occasions in the different Nordic countries together with the curious silence about the colonial past and history (Tuori 2007; Keskinen et al. 2009).

With respect to this, Anderson's article demonstrates once again the need to approach whiteness through postcoloniality. The quotation of Allan Pred that **Andersson** uses in her article is very telling in this regard: '[t]he spectre haunting Europe, is the spectre haunting Sweden.' Being promoted as a progressive country does not mean that racism does not constitute national imaginary. This image can only obscure the reverse gaze. **Andersson** shows how this is in policy documents articulated by non-defined 'Nordic', 'Scandinavian' or 'Swedish' appearance. This article shows how CWS in combination with postcolonial theory enables scholars to unpack what is the informal, unwritten and unspoken criterion that defines individual's belonging to the imagined 'family of the nation'. Furthermore, her article shows dehumanization of colonial subjects within policy documents, where children with 'non-Nordic' looks are exoticized and dehumanised. This also establishes a connection with **Osanami Törngren's** article, in which she recalls an encounter where she was perceived as 'small and cute', and how this perception seemed to grant her interviewee a privilege to treat her in a patronising way. Reading the two

articles together thus gives us a broader picture and understanding of the workings of whiteness within postcolonial Swedish context.

Despite this apparent focus on national contexts articles demonstrate that whiteness is not confined to a specific locality. As Ware argues with the inspiration from Stuart Halls' concept of 'forgetting' mentioned earlier in this text; 'each country has a different relationship to its own colonial history; patterns of racism in the current period - questions of immigration controls, persecution of minorities, attitudes to Islam - all this needs to be analysed within national contexts without losing sight of how Europe itself is constituted' (Ware and Blaagaard, 2001, 160). Such interpretation enables the interrogation of whiteness as relational and transnational phenomena that can provide imaginary connection between individuals and groups from different locations and can have serious social, economic and political consequences.

Also **Andersson** is locating her analysis to a broader context. She argues that by means of 'blood and roots' the skin color of adoptees ascribes a symbolic belonging to another family, another nation that is not part of 'white imagined communities'. This resonates with **Osanami Törngren's** point that her 'looks' was more excluding than her accent or name. Furthermore the plural in **Andersson's** use of the term 'white imagined communities' is very tell-

ing in that workings of whiteness are not just confined to a specific nation state, but are effectively transnational. As Ware argues, 'in Europe we are talking about the majority white population, who - broadly speaking - draw on similar sets of resources in terms of thinking about what it means to be white (and European) (Ware and Blaagaard 2011, 159). This imaginary sameness connecting people and groups beyond national borders is visible in the resurgent of what seems to be a close relative of what is known under nationalism and fascism. However, this modern version is not confined only to a solitary nation but has as Paul Gilroy argues become effectively pan-European². Furthermore the articles of this issue have shown that 'white imagined communities' and 'Europeanness' is not necessarily confined solely to imaginaries that are forming within Europe, but may also be transnational. As Knapp argues, 'European constellation of nation-states also represents a long history of transnational interlacements, including those with the extra-European world, based on violence, hegemonic interest and exchange' (2005, 263). As we can see in all presented articles, these can be ascribed through national or regional markers, such as Scandinavian, Nordic, European, Central and Eastern European, Latin American, etc...

This special issue demonstrates that in order for CWS to interpret

the workings of transnational 'white imagined communities', it needs to go beyond narrow and problematic national, regional and continental divisions. These 'forgotten' geographies of whiteness thus tell us that CWS should embark onto decolonialization project more seriously. This is not just important in order to understand the workings of whiteness within specific localities, but also to expose commonalities across global and transnational manifestations of whiteness that importantly affect these different localities. It is crucial to have the variety of voices and translations that enable us to understand specificities but also commonalities of workings of whiteness in different yet relational geographies. Although articles in this special issue are located within different contexts defined by particular nation states and thus offering various insights, they are also very much relational. They all indicate to the importance of understanding the colonial origins, power-relations and renewed postcolonial moments that provide the connecting point for relational imagined communities that are on one hand still very much tight to the nation state and on the other hand transnational in their scope and effects.

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Endnotes

¹ By translation we do not simply mean the translation into one language to another, but also broader implications of translation that have to do with theoretical, analytical, epistemological, political and ethical implications of issues of language difference and translation from one context to the other (Pereira et al. 2009).

² See the entire interview with Paul Gilroy conducted by Rosi Braidotti on London's riots at <http://www.rosibraidotti.com/index.php/press/videos/london-riots-conversation-rosi-gilroy>

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What makes a white man white? Definitions teetering between color and class among white men in Rio de Janeiro

Valeria Ribeiro Corossacz

This paper discusses how whiteness is perceived and described by upper-middle class men self-identifying as white in Rio de Janeiro. In part one I present a brief history of the role played by whiteness in the formation of Brazil as a nation and the specific characteristics of Brazilian color classification with particular attention for the relationship between class and color. In part two I explore the main methodological problems related to the study of whiteness within the framework of Brazilian research on whiteness and French sociological analysis of the upper-middle class and aristocracy. In particular I focus on the relationship between researcher and interviewee when the latter is part of a dominant group and the foci of the investigation concern his/her dominant position. I then discuss interviewees' efforts to give definitions of whiteness, their silences and laughter, and the different types of answer they offer. Class appears as a privileged language for giving concrete content to whiteness: while class is described as something more tangible and objective, whiteness is perceived by these men as elusive and impossible to put into words.

Keywords: Brazil, racism, whiteness, class, methodological issues.

Introduction

In this article I present data gathered through an ongoing research project on whiteness and masculinity among upper-middle class white men in Rio de Janeiro.

The position of upper-middle class white men can be considered one of socio-economic privilege, given the analyses that the social scientific literature of the last fifty years has produced about the social groups subject to various forms of domination, exploitation, and socio-economic and cultural exclusion in

the history of Brazilian society: black and indigenous people, women, and the poor.¹ This research aims to study racism, sexism and their articulation through an examination of the social group that is located in the privileged position within each of these two systems of social relations: white men. In Brazil, class is a highly relevant element for defining whiteness and masculinity. By choosing to study upper-middle class white men, I aim to focus even more closely on the element of privilege that characterizes these two

social positions. By upper-middle class, I refer to individuals belonging to what are defined as the A-B classes (ABEP 2011), representing the top of the social pyramid.²

A study of upper-middle class men who identify themselves as white can aid in an effort to understand the mechanisms of racism by analyzing how the privileged condition of whiteness is constructed from within this condition. The central aim of this investigation is to understand how the privilege characterizing the condition of whiteness takes on legitimacy.

In this paper I will examine in detail one specific aspect of this research: how whiteness is perceived and described by the men I interviewed, and in particular how class appears as a privileged language for giving concrete content to whiteness. I will not put too much focus on the intersection of class, gender and color in definitions and experiences of whiteness, as this has already been addressed elsewhere.³

A brief history of racism and whiteness in Brazil

Brazil gained independence from Portugal in 1822, and became a Republic in 1889, one year after the abolition of slavery. In the process of the formation of the Brazilian nation, the European-descended oligarchy that governed the country experienced a powerful inferiority complex in relation to the Old World, who was considered more civilized and mod-

ern (Garcia 1993). In the second half of the nineteenth century, this feeling of inferiority also found expression through racist ideas and theories of European origin that spread through Brazil (Skidmore 1974, Azevedo 1987, Seyferth 1989, Schwarcz 1993). The European-descended oligarchy blamed all the nation's ills, from economic backwardness to poverty and tropical diseases, on the descendants of African slaves and on the *mestiços*,⁴ who constituted the overwhelming majority of the population and were considered to be biologically degenerated and therefore socially and culturally inferior.⁵ In keeping with the racist ideology, only a nation with a white population was considered capable of achieving modernity and expressing a strong national identity.

In order to overcome this situation, a political project was developed between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century aimed at 'cleaning' the nation of blacks and *mestiços*, those segments of the population that were considered to be and treated as inferior and degenerate. The idea was to progressively whiten the population until it became homogenous in terms of color, (Seyferth 1989 and 1991).

The theory of *branqueamento* expressed, at the political and cultural level, a common perception among Brazilian society's ruling classes that the descendants of African slaves represented a liability for the

future of the Brazilian nation, a burden from which the nation must liberate itself. From a political point of view, the theory of *branqueamento* was practiced through two different moves: the establishment of a ceiling on the number of Africans entering Brazil (despite the fact that, for almost three centuries, Africans had been enslaved and transported to Brazil by force) through the passage of an 1890 decree that prohibited Africans and Asians from entering Brazil without authorization from the National Congress (Vainer 1990); and, at the same time, the promotion of immigration by those European people considered at each historical moment to best serve the requirements of the population whitening project (Seyferth 1989 and 1991). Between the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, different national groups – Italians, Portuguese, Germans, as well as Japanese – immigrated to Brazil, thanks in part to institutional support. Brazilian authorities saw these groups as white people whose men would be willing to engage in sexual relationships with black women in order to produce progressively whiter progeny (Seyferth 1991). This theory and practice of *branqueamento* clearly illustrates the degree of violence characterizing Brazilian society's conceptualization and treatment of the population descended from African slaves in the years following the abolition of slavery.

In the nineteen thirties and forties, during the Vargas government, institutional actors were particularly concerned that social groups of diverse national origins identify with the Brazilian nation. To this end, the valorisation of *mestiçagem* – understood as cultural and 'racial' mixing – functioned as an effective paradigm to conceptualize social relations among individuals of diverse origins as occurring harmoniously. Although the ideal of *branqueamento* remained deeply rooted in Brazilian culture, *mestiçagem* was now viewed by elites as a distinctive and positive element of the Brazilian nation.⁶ As in other Latin American countries, historical mixing between indigenous, Portuguese and African peoples and cultures began to be recognized as a positive element in the creation of a national culture and identity.⁷ During the forties, the phrase 'racial democracy' spread, used to describe the idea of Brazil as a country without racial prejudice or discrimination, a representation that has subsequently come under strong criticism (Guimarães 2002b).

Despite these changes, in the twentieth century being classified as white continued to imply in the dominant discourse an identification with modernity and wealth as well as culture (in the sense of institutional education) as well as beauty and intelligence, whilst on the other hand being classified as black meant identification as poor, culturally backward or, at best, closer to the

ludic spheres of life (music, sport, and dance). Black people remained at the bottom of Brazilian society's social and economic pyramid. What was produced was a combination of the valorisation of *mestiçagem* and the reproduction of the social mechanisms that had historically discriminated against black and indigenous populations.

This valorisation of *mestiçagem* was and still is often woven together with the belief that, since all Brazilians are 'racially' mixed, there are no 'true' whites or blacks and there could therefore be no racism (the same attitude is also present in Mexico, see Morena Figueroa 2010). Many Brazilians believe that discrimination in Brazil is based exclusively on class; that is to say, that black people are not discriminated against because they are black, but because they are poor (Guimarães 1999 and 2002c).

Lastly, it must be noted that the ideology valorising whiteness (identified here with European origin) brought with it the tendency for African- and indigenous-descended people to prefer color terms that are closer to white when classifying themselves by color or, in other words, the tendency to avoid self-identifying as black (Silva 1994). In fact, in contrast to the polarized black/white system of the United States, Brazil has a color classification system, termed a *continuum*, that privileges nuances and indistinct color categories. In official sta-

tistics, there is a specific category, *pardo* – literally meaning 'brown' – that refers to people whose parents are of different colors.⁸ The possibility for people to move themselves along the color *continuum* is also enabled by the relational and situational character of individuals' color classifications in Brazilian society, and by the importance of class and education in defining an individual's color.⁹ In more recent years, however, this *branqueamento* tendency has strongly decreased and various instances of claiming black identity have emerged (Sansone 2003). In addition, Brazilian society today no longer negates racism to the degree it did in the past, but rather seeks to fight it through, for instance, the promotion of public policies for racial equality. One of the most relevant of these policies was the implementation of affirmative action measures to help black students in accessing public universities (Santos and Lobato 2003, Steil 2006). The latest population census data (2010) reflects this change: the percentage of the population that defines itself as black or *parda* surpassed the white percentage, reversing the tendency of the last few decades.¹⁰ If in the past the valorisation of 'racial' mixing produced a homogenizing logic that functioned to reproduce *branqueamento* (whitening), today the valorisation of 'racial' mixing may also appear as a ground for defining black identities.

Studying whiteness

This research project builds on the theoretical framework of studies on racism and of critical whiteness studies that developed in the 1990s in the USA.¹¹ Although they focus on questions raised in the Anglo-American context, studies in this field offer several lines of approach for studying the theme of whiteness in the Brazilian context.¹² Rather than being taken as a self-evident fact related to physical traits,¹³ whiteness must be deconstructed, treated as a process whose characteristics must be analyzed according to the cultural context and historical moment: by whom and how is a white person defined (Baldwin 1984, Frankenberg 1999 and 2001). It is necessary to reveal the multiple points of view from which whiteness can be perceived: generally it is invisible to those who are considered white, but visible to those who are considered black or non-white (Morrison 1992, Frankenberg 1999, Ahmed 2004). In societies shaped by racism and by experiences of European colonization, the condition of whiteness involves access to a series of social advantages that are perceived by their beneficiaries but often not consciously recognized as such, or at any rate their beneficiaries do not consider the consequences of whiteness for those who do not share their privileged position (Harris 1993, Frankenberg 2001, Brander Rasmussen et al. 2001a and 2001b). Whiteness dis-

tinguishes itself as the expression of a structurally privileged position, even though some people identified as white do not enjoy the same privileges of whiteness. It is thus fundamental to analyze how whiteness can be shaped by other variables: class, nationality, gender, sexuality, and religion (Frankenberg 1999 and 2001).

Although a true field of whiteness studies has not yet developed in Brazil, there have been some significant contributions.¹⁴ Studies on whiteness (Silva Bento 1999, Piza 2000 and 2003) have confirmed the data already produced by investigations of forms of racism, that from both aesthetic (identifiable with European ancestry) and social (as status indicator) standpoints, whiteness represents a resource capable of materially guiding social relations as well as biographical pathways. These data demonstrate that, despite a widespread tendency to identify with a color category that privileges the indeterminate, people's lives are still governed by the black/white opposition as far as social relations and values are concerned. Guerreiro Ramos, perhaps the first Brazilian scholar to critically address the condition of whiteness in Brazil, also focused on the central role of this opposition. He argues that 'what in Brazil is called the 'the *negro* problem' is the reflection of the social pathology of the 'white' Brazilian' (1957, 192). According to Guerreiro Ramos, whites are a mi-

nority in Brazil despite the fact that 'on an ideological level, whiteness is a dominant criterion of social aesthetics' (1957, 172). The whiteness he refers to is defined according to European criteria, and these criteria do not match the majority of the individuals who define themselves as white. In the face of this situation characterized by contradictory moves – the desire to identify as white knowing that one does not correspond to the social aesthetics of European whiteness – white people react by making excessively frequent reference to their European origins or by focusing on the study of black people, in relation to whom their whiteness is confirmed. Guerreiro Ramos therefore focuses on a white subject who feels imperfect when compared to a European white person, the Brazilian subject's point of reference. In addition, Guerreiro Ramos notes how white appears as an invisible 'racial' position in the face of the extreme visibility of the position of black. Guerreiro Ramos drew attention to this feature when he pointed out that, in common language in Brazil, the identification of an individual by color was applied only to black people: '*preto, negro*' (literally black, negro). In these terms, 'human color loses its contingent or accidental character and truly becomes substance or essence' (1957, 194). In a shrewd move, the Brazilian sociologist invites readers to 'translate into white' the terms in which the subject is 'the

black' in order to draw attention to the disparity in the substantivised use of these two colors. The expression white does not in fact function on the level of language in the same way that black does. The expression 'white' is, in contrast to that of 'black', insufficient to represent the plurality of facets that comprise the subjectivity of a white individual, who therefore deserves to be designated not solely by his or her color. And despite this invisibility on the level of language, the social condition of whiteness functions as a kind of passport that allows individuals to automatically access a series of privileges.

In addition to critical whiteness studies and Brazilian research on whiteness, it was also extremely useful for my research to read studies on the upper middle class and aristocracy in France, especially work by the ethnologist Le Wita and Bourdieuan sociologists Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot, where they reflect on their object of study itself and the challenges inherent in the specificity of this object (studying a dominant group). Given that whiteness and upper middle class status both enjoy the solidity of a dominant position, these studies represented a fertile terrain for me to reflect on many of the issues that emerged in the course of my investigation. The common challenge in researching Parisian aristocratic and upper middle class families and the whiteness of upper-middle class men lies in

the difficulty of leading the interview, the sensation that something in the interviewees' accounts is taken for granted, thus producing disorientation for the researcher; there is a 'we' in the interviews that is neither explicit nor defined but nonetheless always present.

The research context and interviewee demographics

Rio currently has a population of approximately six million residents, 3,500,000 of which are whites and 2,500,000 of which are *pardos* and blacks.¹⁵ So far I have interviewed fifteen men who define themselves as white, ranging from 45 to 58 years old.¹⁶ These men are residents of the Zona Sul neighborhoods, an area developed around the coast which is the wealthiest and the most prestigious urban region, boasting the best services and quality of life. The Zona Norte is the less culturally, architecturally and commercially prestigious area with a noticeably lower quality of life, although it does exhibit internal variation. Both of these zones contain favelas, areas occupied by citizens who cannot afford to live in the city's neighborhoods, where the houses sprout up haphazardly and lack standard access to water, electrical, gas and sewage services; favela residents are almost always cut off from state-provided health and educational services as well. In relation to the demographic composition of the areas in terms of color, the percentage of *pardos* and

black people in the Zona Sul is only 16% of the population, while white people constitute 84% and, in some neighborhoods, as much as 93% of the population (Garcia 2009, 184). The Zona Sul is therefore especially homogenous in terms of the color of its residents, although this does not include the people who work there.

The majority of the people I interviewed are freelance professionals—a photographer, a designer, a writer/entrepreneur, but there are also state employees (medical doctors, university professors, researchers at medical research institutes), an architect/engineer, and an employee of a private company that operates in the financial sector. All the interviewees held university degrees and some held doctorates. Although the men I talked to have been living in Rio for several years, they are not all originally from the city; some of them spent periods of their childhood/adolescence in other regions of Brazil or abroad. The most significant difference between interviewees is the socio-economic position of their families: participants can be divided between those coming from a family in which the parents – typically the father – attended university and enjoyed an already solid socio-economic position, and those coming from a more disadvantaged family who subsequently achieved upward mobility. An initial analysis of the data reveals that the difference in their families of origin does not appear to have produced sub-

stantially different modes of perceiving whiteness.

The men I interviewed all come from families that they identify as white or *misturadas* (mixed). Some of them stress the foreign origins of their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents (Spanish, Portuguese, Lebanese or Italian). In some cases, the ancestors' origins are defined in terms of color: for César, his Portuguese mother is proof of his whiteness, João defines the Spanish origins of a part of his family as *moura* (Moor), Alberto speaks of his family as including Jewish forced to convert to Christianity, and he defines his sister as *morena* (dark). None of them is currently in a stable relationship with a black woman or man, but a few of them had brief relationships with black women when they were younger. Not all of the interviewees have children, but those who do define the children as white. While many identified their family of origin as *misturada*, none of them defined their immediate family as such. The mixing paradigm therefore refers to the past and (familial and national) origins, but not the present or future.

With the exception of a few rare cases, all their current and childhood friends are white. These men share the experience of having lived their childhoods and adolescents in settings where black people were present but almost always in the capacity of service workers (cleaning women, gardeners, nannies and

servants). In some cases interviewees recall enjoying forms of emotional intimacy with black people (playmates, nannies and servants) even though they rarely experienced equality with any black children or adults. During their childhoods, some of the interviewees played together with children from different social-economic strata (both higher and lower), but in adulthood their regular interactions are with people who share their social class. At the time I interviewed them, only two of the men lived in buildings that hosted black residents, who at any rate represented an exception in relation to other residents identified by interviewees as white. Many of the interviewees reported that, in the course of their daily lives, the only black people they meet occupy subordinate positions.

Frankenberg uses the phrase 'social geography of race' (1993, 43) to refer to the way that people perceive and narrate the physical landscapes where they grew up or live in terms of their social relationships with people of other colors or social classes. What emerges in the accounts of these men is a social landscape where whites and blacks only meet within clearly codified circumstances in which the white occupy hegemonic positions and the black subordinate positions. This picture corresponds to the statistical data about the color of Zona Sul residents and demonstrates that, at least in the more well-off neigh-

borhoods, the valorisation of *mes-tiçagem* has produced not a more egalitarian social fabric but rather a situation in which racism exists alongside a discourse that negates its existence.

Interview process: whiteness as research object and methodological challenge

My access to the men I interviewed was affected by my social position in terms of color, class and gender, specifically the fact that I consider myself and am considered a white, middle-class woman as well as by the fact that I live in the Zona Sul during my stays in Rio. As a white, middle-class woman, multiple degrees of identification existed between me and my interviewees, and it was mainly my interviewees who identified me as similar to them. As a woman, in contrast, I was placed in and experienced myself to occupy a social position opposite that of my interviewees (Ribiero Corossacz 2010).

I made contact with my interviewees through various channels: through friends, relatives, acquaintances and by asking the interviewees themselves to point me toward a white male resident in the Zona Sul who would be available for interviewing. The definition of white man was therefore provided by those who indicated people I could interview. This point is worth noting because one of the aims of my inquiry is to understand exactly how

interviewees define ‘white man’ in a society where, as a result of the historic valorisation of mixture, such an act of naming is currently considered complex.¹⁷

I began the interviews with an introduction in which I outlined the themes I hoped to address (whiteness and masculinity in well-off classes). I took a biographical approach and asked the interviewee to recall some moments of his life (childhood, adolescence, adulthood) with a focus on his own color and that of the people he interacted with. I deliberately chose to never ask my interviewees, ‘what does it mean *to be* white?’, because I considered this phrasing to push respondents toward a static, permanent formulation of what can be, in the interview or the course of daily life, experienced as a dynamic process or condition open to change. I instead took an approach that could allow the interviewees to talk about their own experiences and definitions of whiteness, asking them ‘How would you *define* a white man? What *makes* a white man white?’.

With respect to this, the main feature of the interviews was the gap between researcher and interviewee: while I did not take for granted what constitutes whiteness, my informants did. This generated a communicative gap that in some cases led to non-communication, the impossibility of responding to my questions about the definition of whiteness and of white people.

Even the word 'whiteness' (*branquitude* or *branquidade*) was new to my interviewees, and it is in fact a word and concept that is rarely used in Portuguese. I would like to point out that this communicative gap was also a result of the fact that my informants saw me as sharing in their position of whiteness, and found it strange that I would be posing a question such as, 'what makes a white man white?' because they considered me as occupying the same social position of whiteness that they did. The majority of my interviewees had never asked themselves questions that exposed their whiteness as a social position, and they expected the same behavior from me. If the researcher had been black, their reactions would likely have been different: the implicit message that I often received during the course of the interviews was, 'how can you ask me that, when you yourself are white?'. On the other hand, the fact that I considered myself and was considered white may have helped my interviewees to talk about racism because they felt they were among equals and it became easier for them to name racism. I had the impression that my interviewees did not feel themselves to be judged because I was perceived as white myself.

The answers to my questions about whiteness are mainly characterized by silence, laughter, the need to take time to think, the feeling of extraneousness in relation

to the object they are being asked to reflect on. Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot say about silence that 'every interview produces information, even when it comes down to observing the refusal to speak' (2002, 40); however on the level of data interpretation it is very difficult to read this refusal to answer or difficulty in speaking. It is therefore necessary to locate it within a context that goes beyond the interview itself, without disregarding the interview. By analyzing the discourses that revolve around these silences, I have been able to draw nearer to their meaning. While still taking into account the silences, I have worked to relate them to other moments of the interview in which the respondent expressed his vision of the place whites and blacks hold in Brazilian society and/or his own life.

Leading the interview was therefore a challenging and difficult experience. Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot call attention to the intellectual and emotional labor required of the researcher in establishing a dialogue with interviewees of dominant groups about issues he or she knows to be considered 'delicate' or problematic. The two scholars write that 'in many cases the interviews, sometimes so arduous and difficult to get started, are concluded on the initiative of the researcher who is exhausted by the attention required and the tension imposed by the situation' (2002, 53). In some cases, according to them, the researcher

engages in a kind of self-censoring: 'The challenges do not come exclusively from the interviewees: the researcher's own self-censoring may also represent an impediment to the productivity of the interview' (2002, 51). Although real self-censoring did not occur in my case, the further I progressed with the interviews the more I experienced the sense of the difficulty that my respondents underwent in answering my questions about whiteness. Playing back the recordings, I realized that my questions were often preceded by extensive preambles and the request, 'would you please make an effort and try to answer this question: what makes a white man white?'

The words to say it

There's no doubt that blacks exist in Brazil, but you cannot say the same thing about whites. The invisibilisation of white Brazilians in public discourse, along with the valorisation of *mestiçagem*, is the traditional form of representing racial relations for which Brazil is known internationally (Sovik 2010, 15).

Sovik calls attention to the invisibilisation of whites in public discourse and, I would add on the basis of my research, the same is true in the so-called private (by which I mean individual) discourse that develops through an ongoing modulating interaction with public and collective ones.¹⁸ The invisibilisation of white people is the invisibilisation of whiteness as a set of privileges and

conflicts. In order to understand this characteristic of whiteness, I would like to recall Frankenberg's definition of whiteness as an unmarked marker (1993), that is to say, an empty signifier indicating 'racial' positions that exist but are also transparent, impossible to name, but which are nonetheless defined as the norm and normality.¹⁹ The definition of whiteness as an unmarked marker clearly foregrounds the difficulties inherent in studying whiteness among white people, as highlighted in the previous pages. This difficulty was evident also in the perception on the part of my interviewees about what makes a legitimate research object. Some of them suggested that I investigate the favelas populations or moved their conversation onto Black people or the working class on the grounds that they were considered more interesting anthropological subjects and because the interviewees found them easier to talk about.²⁰

During the interviews what emerged was not only the difficulty my interviewees experienced in talking about their own color, but also their difficulty in talking about the color of the people they interacted with. Color is a piece of information that is commonly left out, and when I insisted through direct questions the responses I received often revolved around class instead of color. Frankenberg defines this behavior as a discursive repertoire based on color evasion (1993, 142), or in oth-

er words a way of thinking about the color variable shaped by the attempt to dodge the issue of color-based inequalities in the society in question. This discursive repertoire can be linked to a discourse that appears to be anti-racist ('color is not important to me'), or an expression of the logic of racial democracy according to which there are no differences of color in Brazil, only differences of class. In my research, when this discursive repertoire based on color evasion is enacted by white people, the tendency to not think about or contemplate one's own color visibly co-exists alongside the ability to identify the meanings and implications of Others' colors, the color of blacks.

The responses I received to the question 'what makes a white man white' were naturally quite varied, not only in terms of content but also in the way people answered; furthermore, the same person often gave different definitions in the course of the same interview. Some of them answered that they could not define a white man, alluding to the fact that there is no difference between white and black people (Fernando).²¹ Several answered by referencing what they view as a self-evident fact, or, in the words of one man, an objective fact (Luis): a white person is anyone who is white, who has light-colored skin (Julio, César). Some of them pointed out their European heritage (João, Luis), others referred to themselves

(Alberto); others viewed whiteness as a situational aspect, that is, something shaped by context, making reference to experiences abroad (in the USA and Australia, Julio and César) where they felt less white. These responses suggest a perception of whiteness as something that is not intrinsic to the person but is rather produced by historical-cultural factors. Other interviewees found it almost impossible to answer the question (Pedro), while still others considered whiteness to be a social attribute rather than a physical trait (Carlos, Mauro).

During the course of the interview, even those respondents who had not initially related the definition of white to social position went on to reference classification criteria for whiteness that relate to social class, in particular to a position of social accomplishment. Going over the transcripts, I notice that every respondent at some point during the interview formulates the condition of whiteness in socio-economic terms, some through the category of class itself. This link between class and the color white also emerges in their answers about self-classification, bringing the relationship with class to the center of their perception of whiteness. The overlap between class and color is one of the aspects that characterize Brazilian society; it is thus not surprising that even whiteness is conceptualized through the lens of class. However, it is necessary to understand what

content class brings into the experiences of whiteness for the people I interviewed.

How would you define a white man? What makes a white man white?

Well...(laughter). Unfortunately here in Brazil white is the guy who has a car, a job, who works in an office, who has a chance; things are starting to change, but it's tough, for instance you hardly ever see a white policeman, they are almost all black, *pardos*, it seems like there's a stereotype, it's the same in the Comlurb (TN: all of them are black).²² You never see a black person at the bank counter, you don't see them in lawyer's offices or in public relations jobs. It's coming to an end, it's a slow process because it comes from education, but now with affirmative action things will change. A lot of people are opposed to affirmative action. (Carlos, 52 years old, writer and entrepreneur)

The definition of white man that Carlos offers paints the picture of a Brazilian society divided along the color line: on one side the white people who 'have a chance', who can gain easy access to privileged positions; on the other side the black people who instead occupy the most disadvantaged positions in the job market. Carlos' words suggest that the white person enjoys a fun-

damental privilege ("has a chance"), which is difficult to change because it is rooted in education and thus linked to social condition. Unlike other interviewees, Carlos focuses on the present, mentioning the policy of university admissions quotas for self-defined black and *pardos* students as a tool to transform this privileged condition associated with whiteness.²³

The idea of whiteness as a kind of universal pass also emerges in the account by Mauro, 54 years old, graphic designer:

What do you think it means to be considered white in Brazilian society, in Rio?

Well, it's like I told you, I don't make this distinction, but I see that people who are white, it's like they have a certificate of qualifications for life, you'll have..., unless you mess up a lot, unless you're the kind of person who never applies yourself...

Mauro uses the image of a certificate of qualifications, something which functions like a document that publicly establishes individuals' skills at the moment when they take their places in society (although he uses the term 'life' giving this experience a much broader connotation). In some ways the idea of a certificate of qualifications brings to mind the concept of public and psychological wage that Du Bois uses

in 'Black Reconstruction in America 1860-1880' to describe the situation of white workers in comparison with that of black workers. According to Du Bois, this is a kind of symbolic wage in the sense that identifying with whiteness carries with it a series of advantages that apply even to those in the lower social classes, and are therefore not necessarily economic. Whiteness is therefore described as an advantage, even though Mauro does not view it in these terms:

So do you think we could say that the fact of being considered white is an advantage?

It's strange, I'm not sure you'll be able to understand, or if I'll be able to say something that makes sense: I don't think that being white is an advantage, but I think that being black is a huge disadvantage. I don't think that being white is an advantage, actually the job market is really competitive, here in Rio there are so few positions, just being white doesn't guarantee you anything.

In this excerpt we see an eloquent shift that allows us to understand the mechanism through which the perception of whiteness is constructed. Although Mauro just described the condition of whiteness as akin to having a certificate of qualifications for life, he now overturns the situation: by focusing on the situation

of black people, Mauro effectively erases the advantages enjoyed by white people as if the disadvantages faced by black people were not the direct result of the existence of advantages reserved for white people. Similarly Silva Bento writes that 'the recognition of a black lack is part of whiteness, that is, the entirety of the features that define the identity of a white person; however, the other side of the coin, that is a recognition of white privilege, is not part of whiteness' (1999, 28). This mechanism through which the white person, in a manner of speaking, steps offstage and leaves the black person to take the leading role is very common and involves a missing or partial awareness of the consequences of one's own whiteness, which takes the form of an inability to express what it means to be classified as white. In Mauro's case, one sees a person who is able to perceive some of the consequences of being identified as white, but who at the same time is reluctant to recognize all of its implications. This also functions as a form of defense; later in the interview Mauro states that he does not believe that being white gave him advantages in his life.

Pedro, 49 years old, a researcher in a prestigious research institute, offers another kind of response. Pedro is one of the interviewees who displayed the most difficulty in giving content to whiteness.

- If you had to choose, what features would you say make a white man white?

That's a hard one...From my point of view...It's...(pause). I know that people who...(hesitation) who have, a whole...That is, historically we live in a privileged situation, right? It's always been that way in Brazil, because of the entire history of Brazil.

In this response, Pedro carries out a shift that allows him to identify with whites and to acknowledge a privileged condition that is deeply rooted in Brazil's history as the distinguishing characteristic of whiteness. As with other interviewees, Pedro references Brazilian nation-building in order to give content to whiteness, identifying the origins of the privileges that white people enjoy in this historical past.

In her ethnography, Le Wita refers to Barthes' definition of the bourgeoisie, which struck me as particularly useful for understanding some of the facets of whiteness in my interviews: 'the bourgeoisie is the social class which does not want to be named' (Barthes 1994, 219). In the same way one could say that white is the color that does not want to be named. Barthes' definition is fitting for the way it highlights this aspect, which he defines as the deflection of the term bourgeoisie; this refusal to speak the word does not, however, mean that they are not conscious of

their bourgeois status. A similar situation can also be observed in the case of whiteness: it is not named as such – the word produces disorientation and a mix of curiosity and discomfort – but the interviewees know that they constitute part of a category which they view as something taken for granted. What struck me about the interviews is precisely this two-fold tendency to not speak about whiteness per se while at the same time being conscious of occupying this position perceived as normal, or, one might even say, natural. This seems to be a typical trait of dominant groups in that they are accustomed to seeing – and defining – other groups as specific while considering their own social positions to be self-evident, taken for granted, inherent in their own family histories and biographies (Guillaumin [1972] 2002 and Le Wita 1988). Like upper middle class and aristocratic status, whiteness expresses a dominant position of which its occupants are simultaneously aware and yet not aware. What emerges from the interviews is precisely this strange balance between the perception of one's own privileged position and the simultaneous refusal to develop a full awareness of the consequences of it.

Conclusion

The social universe that emerges from analyses of the biographical narratives of my interviewees is one in which relations with people identi-

fied as black are limited to subjects occupying a subaltern position. In some cases there are black classmates or friends, but they are exceptional. During the interviews, the men reference mixing as a characteristic feature of Brazil, but this mixing does not appear in the narrative mapping of their social lives. In order to understand how the social separation of color-based social groups can coexist with the valorisation of mixing, one must take into account the combination of the valorisation of mixing on one hand and the deeply rooted valorisation of whiteness (the ideology of *branqueamento*) on the other. This separation between color-based groups also helps us to understand the difficulties faced by my interviewees when responding to questions about whiteness.

Despite the Brazilian tendency to avoid clear cut color definitions, the main characteristic of the men I interviewed is that they are sure of their social position as whites: they are subjects who do not have to prove their whiteness. Although they all recall their foreign familial origins, the interviews show that they have family histories in which their relatives always identified themselves as white. At the same time, however, whiteness appears as a fleeting object in the definitions they offered.

Although my questions offered a constructivist approach to the definition of a white man and whiteness, some responses revealed how physical features (white skin and

straight hair) are sufficient for the definition of whiteness. For other respondents, in contrast, whiteness appears in the interviews as a set of privileges rooted in class or Brazilian history, but seldom as a privilege in itself that is reproduced in the present. Whiteness is like a privilege that one inherits, but interviewees do not take into account the possibility that they might decide what to do with this inheritance. Through this perspective, interviewees are able to avoid feeling personal complicity with the system that grants these privileges, that is to say, with racism; they are able to see themselves as occupying a passive position even while acknowledging their privileges. As Ahmed (2004) points out, acknowledging the privilege of whiteness is not in itself sufficient cause to leave it behind. The central issue that emerges regards the perceived legitimacy of their own privileged social condition. Legitimacy can here be understood as a synonym for inevitability. Talking about inequalities of gender, class and race, Acker notes how visibility is related to legitimacy: 'legitimate manifestations of inequality tend to be either invisible or to be seen as inevitable' (2004, 206).

It is additionally important to note how, in the excerpts examined here, the register of class represents a device to omit not only color but also gender. In these excerpts, there is a subject who introduces himself as neutral and describes a world in

which sex difference remains unnoticed. This discursive modality reveals how the combination of whiteness and masculinity allows these men to identify themselves with the norm, thus producing a discourse that is doubly dominant.²⁴

The men I interviewed tend to define their social position by class, failing to consider the fact that each one of them also perceives himself to be white. The tendency to use class as a marker for defining their own whiteness takes on additional meaning when one considers the historic Brazilian tendency to consider class more relevant than color. For interviewees, class seems to represent the only register through which it is possible to name the advantaged position from which they come and in which they live. While class is described as something more tangible and objective, whiteness remains elusive and impossible to put into words. Speaking of class becomes a way for these white men to reproduce the hegemonic character of whiteness and its invisibility, which, however, only functions as such for white people.

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Endnotes

¹ For example, see Hasenbalg 1979; Hasenbalg and Silva 1992;

Guimarães 1999 and 2002a; Paixão 2003; Araújo and Scalón 2005; Bruschini, 2007. The texts cited here are only a few examples of an extensive literature that focus on the position of the most discriminated social groups. However, through a comparison of the quantitative and qualitative data, the figure of the upper-middle class white man is revealed as enjoying the greatest level of privilege of both social and economic status. This privilege is the result of the combination of racism, sexism and class inequalities understood as social and cultural systems.

² According to a recent research, the A class comprises 82,3% Whites and 17,7 Blacks. http://www.bbc.co.uk/portuguese/noticias/2011/11/111116_saude_negros_brasil_mm.shtml, accessed 23/11/11.

³ Additional aspects of this investigation (the choice to work on whiteness and the social construction of masculinity) are addressed in Ribeiro Corossacz 2010 and Ribeiro Corossacz 2010a. In another forthcoming article I examine how the intersection of class, color and sex shapes some of my interviewees' experiences of whiteness.

⁴ Translated from the French *métis*, this was a racist term used to indicate those born from sexual relationships between mainly Portu-

guese men and indigenous women or between Portuguese men and African slaves.

⁵ Please see Ribeiro Corossacz 2005 for a more extensive discussion of the debate surrounding the statute of 'racial' groups that comprise the Brazilian population between the eighteen and nineteen hundreds as part of the national identity formation process.

⁶ See Wade (2001, 2005) for an analysis of the inclusive and exclusive aspects of *mestiçagem* (mestizaje) as a nationalist ideology and a lived process in other Latin American societies.

⁷ In his analysis of Brazilian colonial history, Freyre (1933) contributed significantly to the affirmation and diffusion of the image of Brazil as a country whose national identity is founded on the valorisation of *mestiçagem*, negating the violent character of Portuguese colonialism.

⁸ However *pardo* is not used by Brazilians in everyday life color classification.

⁹ Multiple authors have studied the characteristics of the color classification system in Brazil, including Pierson [1942] 1971, Nogueira [1955] 1998, Harris and Kottack 1963, Sanjek 1971, Silva 1994, Telles 2003, Sansone 2003.

¹⁰<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/17/brazil-census-african-brazilians-majority>.

¹¹ In developing this research, certain texts on racism were especially useful to understand whiteness: Guillaumin [1972] 2002, Tabet 1997, Sherover-Marcuse 2011. For an introduction to critical whiteness studies, see Frankenberg 1999, Nayak 2007, Twine Winddance and Gallagher 2008. One must also recall that the black feminists were the first to recognize whiteness as an element of racism and to outline its characteristics (Lorde 2007).

¹² Sovik defends the use of the category 'whiteness' 'to understand the Brazilian discourse about racial relations' (2004, 364). Ware also supports the idea that whiteness, identified as social prestige, allows us to locate racism in Brazil in relation to that of other countries (2004, 8).

¹³ Most people think that whiteness is related to race, and consider race to be a biological fact, that is to say, an objective fact rather than a historical and social fact.

¹⁴ According to my investigations, the following authors have addressed whiteness: Guerreiro Ramos 1957, Silva Bento 1999, Rossato and Gesser 2001, Piza 2000 and 2003, Norvell 2002, Carone and Silva Bento 2003, Sovik 2004 and 2010, Cardoso 2010, Huijg 2011.

¹⁵ These statistics date from 2007 and are drawn from the Rio de Janeiro government website www.aramazemdedados.rio.rj.gov.br.

¹⁶ The interviews were carried out in 2009.

¹⁷ In relation to this point it bears noting that under no circumstances did my color categorizations of the informants diverge from the categorizations given by the people who indicated them to me, or from the self-classifications of the interviewees themselves. There was therefore a correspondence between the three points of view, which lead me to believe that a rather unanimous consensus exists when identifying a certain kind of white person, one occupying a middle class position.

¹⁸ I would like to point out that invisibilisation is not the same as invisibility: white people are visible, especially to non-whites, but they tend to not be represented as whites because of the discourse about *mes-tiçagem*.

¹⁹ Frankenberg also highlighted the risks and limitations of the definition of whiteness as an unmarked marker: 'The more we scrutinizes it, however, the more the notion of whiteness as unmarked norm is revealed to be a mirage or indeed, to put it even more strongly, a white delusion' (2001, 73). On whiteness

as an unmarked marker, see also Frankenberg 2004.

²⁰ This (often unconscious) perception about what makes a legitimate research object is shared by the researchers who have often chosen research objects that are problematic in terms of social and institutional dynamics.

²¹ The names are pseudonyms.

²² Comlurb is the municipal company in charge of urban sanitation in Rio de Janeiro.

²³ In Ribeiro Corossacz 2007 and Ribeiro Corossacz 2010, I examine the potential effects of university affirmative actions for black and pardo students on the perception of whiteness in the public discourse.

²⁴ In Portuguese, the question 'what makes a white man white' does not require the word 'man', seeing as adjectives are made to agree with the gender of the subject. Nonetheless, the word 'branco' is still used, which is at once masculine and supposedly gender neutral.

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Methodological Reflections on Being an East Asian Researcher Researching the White Majority

Sayaka Osanami Törngren

Criticisms have been cast toward researches concerning race and ethnicity being traditionally dominated by middle class white men, and different responses and positions to the criticisms have emerged. However still, the methodological discussions of the social positions of the researchers are circled around the issues of white researchers' challenges in approaching the minority population, or concerns among researchers of ethnic and racial minority background in studying their own groups or other minority groups. I believe that there is an obvious lack of attention in the current methodological consideration in the field of ethnic relations: What happens when a researcher who is of ethnic and racial minority background researches the white majority population? The paper attempts to open up a methodological discussion that is missing in the field today. As a researcher of East Asian background in Sweden, interviewing white Swedes generates possibilities to observe how white Swedish interviewees interact with and communicate the racial and ethnic differences between the researcher and the interviewees. This paper will draw examples from the qualitative interview materials from my doctoral dissertation on Swedes' attitudes toward interracial relationships.

Keywords: Interracial research, race of interviewer effect, non-white researcher

Introduction

I heard a young, female, white European researcher working with a research on an immigrant community presenting her work and her methodological perspective on being an Insider and Outsider at an international conference. She said, 'It is important that you are liked by the ethnic minority community members and it is very important that you become accepted and become a part

of the community'. I was one of the few who objected to her simplistic idea of becoming an Insider as a matter of being 'liked' by the community members, nor did she seem to question the impact of her whiteness, an Outsider status with power and access to resources.

There are different positions within the methodological question of knowledge production; nevertheless, the existing methodologi-

cal discussions on the social positions of the researchers are centred around the issues of white researchers' challenges in approaching the minority population, or concerns among researchers of ethnic and racial minority background in studying their own groups or other minority groups (e.g. Adamson and Donovan 2002; Sands, et al. 2007). There is a limited number of methodological discussions and literatures specifically addressing non-whites researching the white majority. As Hoong Sin states, there is a great imbalance in the published literature on interracial and interethnic research and the focus has primarily been on white researchers' challenges in approaching the minority population (Hoong Sin 2007, 489). Furthermore, Gunaratnam asserts that researchers in ethnic relations construct the non-white respondents as racialised others (Gunaratnam 2003). Whiteness and otherness is rarely problematized and looked at in a 'reversed gaze' (Hoong Sin 2007, 490), and the form of researches and the knowledge produced in the field are normalized: race and ethnicity are observed and analysed from a white gaze.

I agree with Hoong Sin's assertion that there is an apparent lack of attention in the current methodological consideration in the field of ethnic relations (Hoong Sin 2007). This article attempts to open up a methodological discussion that is missing in the field today: what happens

when a researcher with an ethnic and racial minority background researches the white majority population? As a researcher of East Asian origin, specifically Japanese in Sweden, I argue that interviewing white Swedes by 'reversing the gaze' generates possibilities to observe how white Swedish interviewees interact and communicate the racial and ethnic differences that may or may not exist between the researcher and the researched. This paper examines 'how' and 'when' race and ethnicity are marked, seen and negotiated within the interview process by sharing examples from the qualitative interview materials from my doctoral dissertation on white attitudes toward interracial relationships.

My Research and Position

My research project

My dissertation project examines the attitudes of the majority society toward interracial dating, marriage and childbearing. The study was conducted in Malmö Municipality, the third largest city in Sweden, where 30% of some 298,000 residents were born abroad, and 10% of the population has two parents born outside of Sweden (Malmö City 2011). A mixed methodology has been employed as a means of exploring people's attitudes toward interracial relationships. Both the quantitative and qualitative data was gathered in Swedish. The quantitative data was collected by means of a

self-reporting postal survey containing a variety of general statements and questions about different racial groups, including interracial dating, marriage, childbearing and number of contacts with persons of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The postal survey sample was randomly selected from the governmental address registry and consisted of 2,000 residents of Malmö Municipality between the ages of 18 and 78. The data was collected from November 2008 to February 2009 and a total of 622 people responded to the questionnaire.

Among the 622 survey respondents, a total of 194 people, 100 men and 94 women, agreed on the survey to be contacted for follow up interviews. The respondents were first systematically categorized according to gender and place of residence. After this categorization, 27 interview informants whereof 14 women and 13 men were randomly selected. Three female respondents who directly made contact with the researcher and showed willingness to be interviewed were additionally chosen as interviewees. All the interviews were carried out in the fall of 2009. The age of the informants varied from the youngest being 21 years old to the oldest being 71 years old. They had diverse occupations from student, to blue collar workers, as well as highly qualified professionals and retirees. Among the 30 informants, 6 persons (4 women and 2 men) had at least one

biological parent who was of West European, Central/East European or Latin American origin¹; although during the interviews these persons expressed a shared white Swedish majority culture and social position. A total of eight interviews (4 female and 4 male) were conducted face-to-face and the rest of the interviews were carried out on the telephone. Interviews were semi-structured and questions were constructed based on the survey results. The interviewees were asked to react and respond to the survey results spontaneously, rather than articulate their personal thoughts about interracial relationships. This was an intentional choice and an attempt to eliminate the effect of social desirability needs that can be experienced by the informants. As Ehn writes that when people comment on actual societal questions, such as immigration and immigrants, they tend to give answers based on how others act and think rather than what they think (Ehn 1996, 137). Therefore, formulating questions that put the focus on the survey result and how the interview informants perceived and believed others would react to interracial marriage becomes effective in understanding the attitudes. Ehn states that this enables an interpretation of the interview result that reflects a social construction of meaningful experiences and cultural identity rather than simply being an interpretation of what the informants think and have experienced (Ehn

1996, 137).

Researchers and the researched

The decision to utilize a mixed methodology came in part from my awareness of both my research subject and my position. Issues concerning methodology, interpretation and practice in relation to the positions of researchers and the researched involved in qualitative studies are discussed extensively (e.g. Merton 1975; Essed 1990; Holme and Solvang 1997; Punch 2005). The race of interviewer effect refers to the ‘“response bias” and “measurement error” that has been recorded in the “adjustment” that people make to their opinions and attitudes when questioned by an interviewer from another racial or ethnic group’ (Gunaratnam 2003, 54). It is a process of ‘avoiding responses that might offend the interviewer of the “opposing” race, and of being frank (or at least franker) with interviewers of one’s own race’ (Hatchett and Schuman 1975, 527). In response to this a group of scholars, with a belief that interviewees would give more ‘honest’ or ‘accurate’ responses to researchers of a similar social position, advocate racial and ethnic ‘matching’ of the researcher and the interviewees (e.g. Fine 2004; Archer 2002; Essed 1990). The debate surrounding the race of interviewer effect and ‘matching’ the interviewer and interviewee can be linked to the classical conception of the social positions of

researchers and interviewees, insider and outsider perspective. Merton writes, the Insider doctrine claims that ‘the Outsider has a structurally imposed incapacity to comprehend alien groups, statuses, cultures and societies’ (Merton 1972, 15).

The issue of the race of interviewer effect and matching is widely discussed within the context of white researcher researching minority population or researchers of minority background researching minority population. Limited numbers of studies are available on RIE involving non-white interviewees and white informants in survey situations (e.g. Hatchett and Schuman 1975; Athey et al. 1960; Krysan and Couper 2003; Cotter, et al. 1982), and especially in interview situations and other qualitative inquiries (e.g. Hoong Sin 2007; Kim 1977; Phoenix 1994; Tang 2002).

The race of interviewer effect is noted and exhibited in numerous researches; however, a group of researchers has stressed that the ‘matching’ of race and ethnicity would not necessarily reduce the power relation in an interview situation and lead to a more ‘accurate’ and non-marginalized interpretation of the phenomenon studied (e.g. Gunaratnam 2003; Gallagher 2000; Gallagher 2003; Hill 2002). Phoenix argues that there is no unitary and clear impact of race and gender positions of researchers and interviewees (Phoenix 1994). Rhodes also affirms that even though race

has an effect on interviews and what the respondents may say, it is improper to conclude that such differences account for the 'truthfulness' of the responses (Rhodes 1994). Moreover, as some researchers argue, the idea of 'matching' ignores the dynamic interplay of social difference and is guilty of recreating the simplistic belief of commonality and difference among the members of racial and ethnic groups (e.g. Gunaratnam 2003; Tinker and Armstrong 2008; Hoong Sin 2007).

It is well established that respondents and interviewees have the potential to give socially desirable answers in other qualitative studies and interview settings (e.g. Punch 2005; Holme and Solvang 1997). Therefore, even though race may have an effect on interviews and what the respondents may say, it is improper to conclude that such differences solely account for the 'truthfulness' of the responses (Phoenix 1994). If it is so that different results are produced depending on the different social characteristics of the researcher, Phoenix continues, it is precisely the reason for researchers of varying social positions to carry out interviews across the social differences, since 'it illustrates the ways in which knowledge are "situated" ' (Phoenix 1994, 66). Gunaratnam writes that 'the question then becomes not whether 'race' and ethnicity affect interviewing relationships, but, rather, how and when racialised dynamics are produced

and negotiated within the interview process, and how they are given meaning in analysis' (Gunaratnam 2003, 76). As Gunaratnam indicates, racial and ethnic differences between the researcher and the interviewees and the effect and impact that these might have should not be regarded as a possible bias or obstacle to getting honest answers, but rather as an opportunity for minoritised researchers to explore matters that are of critical significance to our own lives (Gunaratnam 2003). It gives an opportunity for the researcher of non-white background to observe how the categories of race and ethnicity are ascribed and marked within the interview context.

The research context and my position

Post-war Sweden is a country of immigration, and people of diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds have become an undeniable part of contemporary Swedish society. The period between 1970 and 1985 is regarded as a turning point in the Swedish history of immigration. During this period, the dominant immigration category shifted from labour migrants to asylum seekers and family reunifications. As the categories of immigration shifted, the country of origin of the immigrants also expanded from predominantly within European countries to outside European countries (Statistics Sweden 2010). As the immigration from outside European countries

increased, discrimination and racialisation are widely documented in researches (e.g. Ahlberg and Groglopo 2006; De los Reyes 2006; Sawyer and Kamali 2006).

The connection between whiteness and Swedishness, or conversely between non-whiteness and non-Swedishness, is discussed by several scholars. Pred argues that visible differences like skin colour or other bodily markers are interpreted as cultural differences in Swedish society (Pred 2000). The perception of culture depends on identifying the difference of the other through those differences that are visible. Hervik states that not only culture but also ethnicity is used to describe 'non-Western' people, and that 'the schematic features evoked by the local terms for "ethnic" and "ethnicity" consists of visible and audible features of minority groups' in Scandinavian countries (Hervik 2012, 14)². Mattsson also argues that the idea of Swedishness is strongly connected to the visible white Europeaness (Mattsson 2005). Even in elementary school settings, Runfors writes that the classifications 'non-Swedish' and 'immigrant children' were based on prejudgments of what Swedes 'look' like, regardless of whether the students were Swedish citizens or not, or whether they had or had not been born in Sweden (Runfors 2006, 115). Studies also show the racialised experiences among international adoptees in Sweden

because of their visible differences from the majority society (Hübinette and Tigervall 2009; Rooth 2002; Signell and Lindblad 2008).

Even though there is an understanding that racism and discrimination exist in Sweden and several scholars point to the connection between Swedishness and whiteness, there is a belief that Sweden is a colour-blind society (Hübinette and Lundström 2011a; Osanami Törngren 2011; Hübinette and Tigervall 2009)³. Colour-blindness, 'a mode of thinking about race organized around an effort to not "see," or at any rate not to acknowledge, race differences' (Frankenberg 1993, 142), can be observed clearly in Sweden⁴. Sweden has not been left out of the history of race and racial thinking, both in terms of the belief in the biological race during the early 20th century and later as a social product. Yet in modern-day Sweden, as in some other countries in Europe, talking about race has become taboo due to the profound history of eugenics and the experience of World War II⁵. Brekke and Borchgrevink write about the ambiguous categorization of people according to the colour of the skin in Sweden and state that '[t]he sensible approach to the issue, which is also the official Swedish approach, is to consider colour irrelevant to the appraisal of an individual' (Brekke and Borchgrevink 2007, 79). Acknowledging the inequality of opportunities in Sweden based on the

colour of one's skin, they write that:

"Dark complexion designates a 'group', probably with a flexible boundary, which is not a group in any other sense than in the eyes of the beholder of native extraction. The group has no official name, yet 'membership' may imply a difficult time in Sweden" (Brekke and Brochgrevink 2007, 80).

My research and my position give me a great opportunity to challenge the idea of colour-blindness and observe how race and ethnicity is communicated and negotiated. I am a young, female academic and a researcher of Japanese origin, permanently living in Sweden. I have visible characteristics such as my non-white appearance, my non-Swedish name, and my language skills, that signal that I do not belong to the majority population in Sweden and I do not share the ascribed characteristic of the majority population, whiteness, which is considered to be the norm of Swedishness. While I speak Swedish fluently and with the southern dialect, as conversation goes on it would not be difficult for a native Swedish speaker to see that Swedish is not my mother tongue. Prior to conducting face-to-face and telephone interviews, I had telephone contact with all the informants and they received written and oral information about the research project together with the information on how the interview

materials will be confidentiality and anonymously treated. My Swedish skills were therefore exposed from the beginning to the interviewees through the initial contact and written information. In the survey, the only visible characteristic of my 'non-Swedishness' would be the combination of my non-Swedish Japanese name and Swedish last name. In telephone interviews, the visible characteristic might be my language use. However, in the face-to-face interview situation, visibility cannot be avoided.

Reversing the gaze: Interviewing white Swedes

This section presents some cases from the qualitative materials that I have acquired, in which my race and ethnicity are implicitly and explicitly communicated. The names that appear in this article are pseudonyms.

Where are you from?

When conducting the telephone interviews I was careful not to disclose information about my ethnic or racial background. It is perhaps because of this that I was not asked about my origin as much as I initially suspected during the phone interviews. Only 5 out of the 21 telephone interviewees asked me a question concerning my origin. Among these, one specifically asked if I was Japanese because he saw my name on the cover letter. Another telephone interview informant won-

dered whether my personal intention of carrying out research on attitudes toward interracial marriage was to do with me being married to a Swede, because I had a 'foreign name'. These two interviewees interpreted my name as non-Swedish and foreign while it can be speculated that my Swedish skills were sufficient enough for the majority of the telephone interviewees to presume that I was from Sweden and felt no need question my origins.

The question 'where are you from?' should be analysed critically, particularly in face-to-face interviews, in relation to the question of race, whiteness and the norm of what it means to be Swedish. Six out of the eight interviewees that I met face-to-face asked me where I was from, while the majority of the telephone interviewees who did not 'see' me did not ask the same question. As Mattsson argues, the idea of Swedishness is strongly connected to the visible white Europeaness (Mattsson 2005). Asking the question of my origin in face-to-face meetings seems an automatic and natural process for the interviewees because they 'see' that I am Asian, and so according to their belief cannot be a part of Sweden and Swedishness. Asking me about my origins reveals the process of communicating the visible differences and the subsequent need for clarification of my ethnicity. The question 'where are you from' reflects the connection between whiteness and

Swedishness, and the processes of marking me not being Swedish.

Clarification of ethnicity

Clarification of my ethnicity altered the course of a number of the interviews, moving the interviewees in some instances to be more giving and interesting. When I called Lennart for a telephone interview, he was very dominant and demanding, that I carry out the interview immediately or there would be no interview. He expressed explicitly how he wanted the interview to be done. Towards the end of the interview, Lennart asked me where I was from. When I said that I was from Japan, the tone of his voice changed and became friendlier. He said that his children were adopted from Asia. Lennart referred to his children and compared them to how he assumed I must be. Someone who was unknown to him became familiar: he could visually imagine what I looked like, place me in the category of Asian and could relate to and categorize me through his children. The interview ended on very good terms by Lennart telling me how interesting and important my study is, in contrast to how he had reacted at the beginning.

In the face-to-face interview, the visibility of my Asian appearance, in combination with the ambiguity of my ethnicity seemed to trigger discretion in revealing honest thoughts. Helena first communicated our racial differences by referring to me

specifically as Asian and stating that 'this result is not amusing for you is it?' when I explained the survey results showing that South/East Asian was one of the least preferred groups for a marriage partner. The comment was a clear indication of her recognizing and categorizing me as part of what I defined in the interview context South and East Asian, and also sympathizing and imagining that finding out that Asians were not favoured as marriage partners by white Swedes was not a pleasant thing for me, being Asian myself. At the end of the interview, Helena asked if I had been born in Sweden. When she found out that I was of Japanese origin, her idea of Thai women subsequently came forward. She told me that she had 'totally forgotten' to talk about the marriages between Thai women and European men. Helena told me about her experience of travelling to Thailand and how disgusted she was to see Thai women flocking around white European men. Not only did Helena articulate the stereotypical picture of Thai women and white men travelling to Thailand to meet them, but also the practice of 'importing wives'. Helena told me an anecdote that she had heard about a Thai woman being 'imported' by a Swedish man, learned the Swedish language quickly and when she became fluent in the language, she got a job, acquired Swedish citizenship and then divorced him. She said that the Swedish man was 'her ticket to

Sweden' and that the Thai woman took advantage of him. Helena concluded her story by telling me that 'it would take a long time before this stereotype proves false'. Her opinion about Thai woman was without a doubt strong and concrete. This anecdote itself is very interesting since the practice of 'importing' Thai women is less problematized than the practice of Thai women 'taking advantage of the Swedish men'; the centre of the blame is on the Thai women. When Helena articulated the images of Thai women as well as her strong opinion, it was hard to imagine that she just happened to 'totally forgot' to talk about it. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that her first reservation in talking about Thai-European marriages may have stemmed from the insecurity of not knowing my ethnicity and origin. As the race of the interviewer effect refers to the practice of interviewees making 'adjustments' to their opinions and attitudes when questioned by an interviewer of a different racial or ethnic group in order to avoid responses that might offend the interviewer (Gunaratnam 2003; Hatchett and Schuman 1975), Helena's case, I argue, is an example of the interviewee not revealing real thoughts in order to avoid offending the researcher of a different racial background. Once the researcher's ethnic background was clarified, the interviewee felt secure enough to reveal her thoughts on a specific ethnic group. It is also in-

interesting to observe that Helena felt safe to express her explicit thoughts on Thai women after finding out that I am Japanese, which may reflect the intersections of race, ethnicity and gender, as my position as Asian woman is interpreted and negotiated differently from my position as Asian and Japanese woman, which indicates the ethnic hierarchy that exists within a racial category. When she did not know my ethnicity she put me into the racial category of Asian, while through communicating my ethnicity I was categorized as not belonging to the stereotypical picture of Thai women.

Gap between the expectation and the reality of who I am

Through the initial contact by phone and letter, the interviewees seemed to have a picture of who I was and what I looked like before meeting me in person. Even though my name and language skills were exposed before the initial face-to-face meeting, some informants that I met in person never imagined that I was Asian. In this respect the reactions of the informants were very similar to Ann Phoenix's experiences of some white interviewees in her studies being surprised to see her as they did not expect a black researcher (Phoenix 1994). Furthermore, as Kim and Hoong Sin experienced, the surprise also seemed to originate from the association of poor language skills and being Asian. Hoong Sin recounts an

interviewee reacting to his fluency in English by saying 'I didn't know you're Chinese!', despite the fact that initial contact had been made and the interviewees should have been aware of his non-anglicised name (Hoong Sin 2007). A similar response was observed in several incidences in my study.

As Hoong Sin discusses, some of the interviewees had not paid much attention to the letter that I had sent to them, but formed an assumption of me through the telephone conversation prior to our meeting (Hoong Sin 2007). Johanna expressed that she did not initially think that I was Asian, and explained to me that she could hear during our initial telephone conversation that she heard 'something' but not 'Asian' in my spoken Swedish and could not really guess what it was. Helena expressed that she had not expected me to be Asian and in fact was surprised to find out that I was Asian because she did not hear an 'Asian accent' in my spoken Swedish, saying that she did not 'see' or 'know' that I was Asian before she met me. In both cases the interviewees did not expect me to be Asian because I did not have what they imagined to be an 'Asian accent' when speaking Swedish, which implies a stereotype of Asians lacking language fluency or having a distinct Asian accent. Because the interviewees had an idea of how Asians should speak the language, some never imagined that I would be Asian. This indicates

that language as a visible difference functions not only as a marker of Swedishness and non-Swedishness, but also an indicator of Asianness and non-Asianness.

Stereotypes of poor language skills and how it might affect the expectation interviewees have of the researcher is an interesting aspect to analyse. Interviewing in English, Tang, whose first language is Chinese, felt uneasy about communicating in English and received comments of disagreement or specification about her choice of words in interview questions. Tang expresses that she felt an element of British cultural superiority over the foreigner and the cultural assumptions and subjective perceptions embedded in the language (Tang 2002, 715). Unlike Tang, I did not have any difficulty in communicating in Swedish with the interviewees or experienced them correcting or questioning my choice of words. In fact, I received positive comments on my Swedish skills. On several other occasions, both during the face-to-face and telephone interviews, when I answered the question of how long I had been living in Sweden, the interviewees expressed that I was very good at Swedish in comparison to other 'immigrants who never seem to learn Swedish even though they have lived in Sweden for many years,' indicating again that language as a visible difference function as a marker and boundary of Swedishness

and non-Swedishness. Language proficiency can function as a tool to place individuals and groups in relational hierarchy; my position was negotiated according to my language proficiency in comparison to how proficient the interviewees believed other 'immigrants' to be. While it is unclear how my Swedish language fluency affected the interviews and the interviewees, especially on the telephone, one thing became obvious: people think that Asians and immigrants in general speak the language in certain ways. My language skill became something that separates me from the 'immigrants', and in a way positions me closer to 'white Swedes'.

The stereotype of poor language skills might have created a gap between the expectation and the reality of who I was. A more precise example of where the gap between who an interviewee expected me to be and who I really was came from the initial meeting with Peter. I was standing at the meeting point and he passed by without noticing me. He telephoned me to inform that he would be arriving in about five minutes and I stood at the meeting point waiting. The meeting point was an obvious one and I was the only person standing in the area. The distance between me and Peter when he passed by was less than one meter. It was very clear that Peter did not see me since he did not expect an Asian person. During the interview he mentioned that he could

imagine being in a relationship with an Asian person and told me about the good reputation that Asians have in the small town from which he originally came. He told me how the Asian immigrants who he assumed were Vietnamese came to his hometown and 'they worked and they learned Swedish fast'. He continued and said that they gathered by themselves and continued with their lives as if they were living back 'home' not in Sweden, but nobody reacted to it and they were accepted because 'they worked and had a good reputation.' The comment 'continuing with their lives as if they were living back home' is normally negatively laden as a sign of unsuccessful integration, yet in this case it was not articulated as something negative because of other positive aspects such as learning Swedish quickly and working hard. Even though it should be noted that the positive image of Asians being 'hard working' may be stereotypical, Peter was the only interviewee who explicitly communicated that he was positive toward Asians and that he could imagine having a relationship with an Asian. As much as it is possible that Peter was actually positive about Asians, because of the awkwardness of his passing in front of me without giving me a second glance, he may have felt the need to 'recover', and to defend the position that he had nothing against Asians. His comment about Asians learning the language quickly, contrary to the

image of Asians speaking Swedish with certain accent, is noteworthy. His positive ideas about Asians function as a marker of Asians being more acceptable immigrant group compared to others and indicate the racial hierarchy that may exist in Sweden.

Intersection of age and gender

There were a few instances in which not only my race and ethnicity but also my age and gender seemed to influence the interviews. One of the telephone interviewees, Linnea, assumed that I was a foreign guest student. She expressed that her 'own' people in Sweden have not welcomed immigrants who have come to Sweden in recent years. In explaining this, she excluded me from the category of immigrants by saying: '... and with that I don't mean you because you are one of these guest students, right?' She continued to talk without waiting for my answer and I never had the chance to inform her that I was not 'a guest student'. This comment clearly indicates that she perceived me as not belonging to Sweden; neither a Swede nor an 'immigrant' but a temporary 'guest'. In excluding me from the category of 'immigrants' it seemed as though she did not reflect on the fact that I spoke Swedish and had a Swedish surname. Looking at the transcription, it became obvious that she interrupted me quite a lot and started talking before I had finished my sentence or question. The

power relationship in the interview could be interpreted as unequal, yet the fact that she believed that I was a guest student and that she was telling me things from her Swedish perspective seems to have worked well in the interview, as she was not hesitant about disclosing her own personal thoughts, including her own intimate feelings and views about immigrant groups, and what she considered other Swedes to be like. Hoong Sin refers to this type of situation as the reverse of the 'conventional power dynamics' that benefit researchers (Hoong Sin 2007, 492). The interviewee's perception of me as a foreign guest student and the subsequent power relations worked positively because as Rhodes indicates, the interviewee, a middle aged female Swede, could talk to the interviewer, a female 'student' and a young 'guest' about what things were like in Sweden (Rhodes 1994). Linnea's comment excluding me from the category of 'immigrants' is also of interest as it assumes that the category 'immigrants' and the category 'researcher' or 'Ph.D. student' do not overlap, indicating the intersection of class with ethnicity and race and the inferior position assigned to the category of 'immigrants'.

During our face-to-face meeting, Karl compared himself to me: 'You know, I am big, tall and look at you, you are so small and cute.' Although he expressed his uncertainty about my origin and background, whether

I was an immigrant or a transnational adoptee, he explicitly articulated his opinions about international adoption, stereotypes of Asians and even about Asian-Swedish marriages. For example he expressed that he could never imagine having a relationship with a Thai woman who is half his age because he would 'only be her ticket out of Thailand', and that he thought international adoption carried the connotation of 'buying children'. This is interesting since he still saw me as 'small and cute', and this might indicate that he distanced me from the Thai women that he was talking about. Or it might indicate unequal power dynamics that seems to grant the interviewee a privilege to simply express any kind of thoughts in my presence. He articulated his thoughts about Asians without any hesitation, despite expressing uncertainty about whether I was an immigrant or an adoptee. In fact, during the entire interview he never asked specifically about my origin. At the end of the interview, when I asked if he had expressed his thoughts in a satisfactory manner, he said that the experience of meeting and talking to me had been a positive one, and that he felt it had been a positive experience for me as well. He articulated that he had not felt pressured to answer the questions that I asked, but could remain calm and express his thoughts carefully and clearly in his own way. His perception of me as 'small and cute' was naturally somewhat problemat-

ic from a professional point of view, in that he might not have taken the interview as seriously as he should have, although on the other hand my 'small and cute' appearance may have eliminated the threat and fear of expressing what he thought. During the interview, Karl explicitly stated that he could not imagine having a relationship with a black person, and explained that the differences in the colour of the skin were 'too much', indicating the relational position of race and the racial hierarchy that exist in Sweden. I doubt that he would have disclosed this if he had not experienced the interview situation and my presence as positive, or if I were not Asian. Moreover, this informant's perception of me as 'small and cute', not to mention him telling me openly that I was small and cute, would probably not been expressed if I had been a male or female researcher of white or of another racial background, or if I had been the same age or older than him. Again, the reversed power dynamics seemed to benefit the interview situation, even though his comment about me being 'small and cute' and his honest thoughts about Thai women were discomforting.

Concluding remarks

All interview settings involve processes of negotiating social positions between the researcher and the researched; however, my position as a non-white and non-Swedish researcher examining the ma-

jority population provided a unique opportunity to 'reverse the gaze' that other researchers may not have. This is especially interesting since race and ethnicity is not something readily discussed in Sweden and the idea of colour-blindness is deeply rooted in Sweden. While it was not the aim of this analysis to address the question of whether race and ethnicity had an effect on the interviewees' words, highlighting the incidents and encounters I had with interviewees illustrate that the boundary of race and ethnicity are implicitly and explicitly communicated between the researcher and the interviewees.

Gunaratnam argues that instead of asking if interviewees would give more 'accurate' and 'honest' answers to researchers sharing the same social characteristics, the focus should be on 'how and when racialised dynamics are produced and negotiated within the interview process, and how they are given meaning in analysis' (Gunaratnam 2003, 76). This process does not differ greatly from being self-reflexive in analysing any other interview content and situations. Each researcher has combinations of social positions and characteristics that are unique, and others who do not possess those positions and characteristics may not be able to acquire the same kinds of knowledge. After all, '[t]he role of social scientist concerned with achieving knowledge about society requires enough detachment

and trained capacity to know how to assemble and assess the evidence without regard for what the analysis seems to imply about the worth of one's group' (Merton 1972, 41).

The examples from the qualitative interviews on my research highlight the incidents in which the boundary of race, ethnicity and non-Swedishness in relation to non-whiteness are implicitly and explicitly communicated between the researcher and the researched. The question of 'where are you from' reflects the norm of whiteness in Swedishness and the clarification of my ethnicity could lead to a positive interview situation and revealing of negative stereotypes in some cases. This indicates the relational boundaries of race and ethnicity, and the ethnic hierarchy that exist in Sweden. Stereotypes of Asian not speaking the language fluently led some informants to be surprised to find an Asian researcher. This exhibits that language as a visible difference functions as a marker of race and ethnicity, and an indication of non-Swedishness. Some examples from the interviews also show that boundaries of race and ethnicity are defined and negotiated through intersections of gender, age and class.

The aim of this paper has been to address and open up a methodological discussion that is missing today: The challenges and possibilities of a non-white researcher in interviewing white research respondents.

'Reversing the gaze' enabled the analysis of how the white Swedish majority categorize non-whiteness and non-Swedishness, how the majority sees and communicates racial differences. I hope that this article can contribute to the further development in the methodological discussions and also encourage other researchers of minority background to question the research practice within the field of racial and ethnic studies.

Endnotes

¹ In this case, West European refers to someone who has an origin from for example Germany, Great Britain, France, Central/East European refers to someone who has an origin from for example former Yugoslavia, Poland and Hungary and Latin American refers to someone who has an origin from for example Chile, Uruguay, Argentina and Mexico. These are socially constructed and contested categories in the Swedish context.

² Trondman (2006) also discusses the differences between the category 'immigrant' and the perception of 'immigrant' in Swedish context.

³ For further discussions on the construction of whiteness and the practice of colour-blindness within the Swedish context see for example Hübinette and Lundström 2011a, Hübinette and Lundström 2011b, Tigervall and Hübinette 2010.

⁴ For further discussions on the construction of whiteness and the practice

of colour-blindness within the Swedish context see for example HübINETTE and Lundström 2011a, HübINETTE and Lundström 2011b, Tigervall and HübINETTE 2010.

⁵ Read for example, Gingrich 2004, Goldberg 2006, Skovdahl 1996, Hagerman 2007, FuruHAGEN 2007, Gustafsson 2007, Broberg and Tydén 2005.

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Through the White Gaze: Racialised Markings of (Un)familiar Bodies in Swedish Transnational Adoption Policy

Malinda Andersson

This paper will explore racialised markings of transnational adoptees and adoptive families in current Swedish transnational adoption policy. Policy statements about transnational adoptees' physical appearance, and the significance ascribed to it in adoptive family relations and everyday life make up the empirical data. Drawing on critical social policy, postcolonial feminism, critical whiteness studies, and Foucauldian archeology, the paper offers an interdisciplinary reading of the discursive conditions structuring understandings of belonging and difference in this particular context. This paper concludes that the adopted subject is ascribed a natural orientation towards the birth country and the biological family in the documents. Dark skin colour is made a symbol of belonging to another nation, another family. This approach is an arrogation of destabilisation, with the purpose of challenging the ways in which transnational adopted bodies are constructed as revealing and disturbing elements in white Swedish imaginary. To conclude, racialised markings of transnational adoptees as familiar, but yet unfamiliar bodies make visible the symbolic boundaries withholding transnational adoptees unconditional national and familial belonging.

Keywords: Social Policy; Racialisation, Whiteness, Discourse, Transnational Adoption, Belonging, Difference, Sweden

Social policy and the discursive production of difference

Social policy is often associated with ideas of justice and equality. However, within European social policy research there is a tradition of theorising welfare as a differentiating practice. Such studies can be conducted from various viewpoints. Early approaches investigated social stratification and uneven distribution of material resources (Esping

Andersen 1990). As a consequence of the linguistic turn, more recent approaches have acknowledged the ways in which groups and social problems are constructed through social policy (Leonard 1997; Carter ed. 1998; Dean 1999; Lewis 2000). Departing from these developments, differentiation in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality have been studied in the field of critical social policy (Lewis, Gewirtz

and Clarke eds. 2000; Fink, Lewis and Clarke eds. 2001). As Lewis (2006:88) points out, discourses of the universal are still constitutive of intersecting power structures.

This paper explores Swedish transnational adoption policy and the research foci will be on questions of belonging and difference. I conceptualise social policy as a discursively embedded practice produced by, as well as productive of, identifications and categorisations (Lewis and Gunaratnam 2001, 145). Welfare theorists have argued that social policy constructs the nation as an analytical category. Drawing upon feminist and postcolonial perspectives, I understand nation formation as a parallel process of inclusion and exclusion. In context specific ways, boundaries are drawn between those assumed to belong 'here', and those assumed to belong to 'other places' (Williams 1989, 1995; Lewis 2000). National communities are imagined through ideas of a common past and myths of origin. Those myths are nevertheless real in their consequences, and construct some origins as more desirable than others (Yuval-Davis 1997, 26-27).

I will explore issues of belonging and difference, with regard to both nation and family. Within postcolonial feminist theory, symbolic links between these categories have been pointed out. In the European context, nation and family are both associated with notions of 'home'

and commonly illustrated by the blood metaphor (Brah 1996). As Ann McClintock (1993, 63) reminds us the term 'natio', from which 'nation' derives, means 'to be born', bringing myths of origins to the fore. A similar myth of origin is expressed in the significance ascribed to blood ties in the definition of family (Hill Collins 2000, 163-165). When imagining national community, Puri (2004, 161) argues that ideas of 'one single point of origin' are crucial. As I see it, these approaches contribute to an understanding of the relation between inclusion and exclusion of subjects and family practices within particular national realms.

In this context, bodies are made markers of (un)belonging. Bacchi and Beasley (2002, 331) describe social policy as a prime site for the articulation of bodies. Exploring how transnational adoptees and adoptive families are marked and discursively positioned through racialisation and normative whiteness is my main concern here. Policy statements about transnational adoptees' physical appearance make up the empirical data.¹ How is physical appearance accounted for? What significance is ascribed to skin colour in adoptive family relations and everyday life? Which are the discursive conditions making these statements meaningful, and which are the implications in terms of national and familial belonging? The theoretical framework sketched out above enables an analysis of how markings

of particular bodies in social policy could be read as discursive boundary making, regulating national as well as familial belonging in specific contexts.

Exploring whiteness

Within social policy, racialisation and the subtle ways in which whiteness as a norm is operating in welfare institutional contexts are of growing interest. In the introduction to a *Social Politics*' special issue on these matters, Hunter, Swan and Grimes (2010, 409) suggest that critical whiteness studies provides a means to name racialised power in welfare discourses and practices. A similar approach is to be found in Alastair (2010), exploring child care policies in Ireland. Following Lewis (2000, 64), I conceptualise social policy as a field of meaning production, constructing categories of belonging. From this perspective, an important aspect of racialised power is the power to define someone's national or familial belonging. This paper offers a postcolonial and feminist inspired reading of the discursive conditions structuring particular understandings of belonging and difference in Swedish transnational adoption policy. In an interdisciplinary dialogue, the paper centralises the discursive aspects of racial differentiation.

A useful discursive perspective can be found in Michel and Honegger (2010). They describe whiteness as a racialised mark-

ing process, where subjectivities and practices are positioned as 'white' or 'not white' in relation to naturalised attributes (Michel and Honegger 2010, 426-427). To analytically capture such processes, I have combined these theoretical insights with Foucauldian archeology, as it is outlined in *The Archeology of Knowledge* (Foucault 1968/2002). My choice of methodology is based upon a wish to construct a link between text and context that does not privilege the status of any individual authors. Statements of transnational adoptees' physical appearance are analysed as expressions of discourse. Discourse provides the conditions for how a topic can be meaningfully spoken about in a particular time and space. Furthermore, as discursive and social practices are conceptualised as interwoven, subjectivities and practices are negotiated in relation to prevailing discursive conditions.²

The empirical sample consists of political reports, research reports, social work guidelines and educational material on transnational adoption published in Sweden between 1997 and 2008.³ *Barn i homosexuella familjer* (SOU 2001:10) is a Swedish Government Official Report investigating gay parenting. *Internationellt adopterade i Sverige* (IMS 2007) is an official research anthology on identity development, social adjustment and mental health among transnational adoptees in Sweden. *Internationella adoptioner*.

Handbok för socialnämnder (NIA 1997) and *Internationella adoptioner. Handbok för socialtjänsten* (SoS 2008) contains guidelines for social work practitioners in the evaluation of adoptive parent applicants. *Adoption* (Lindblad 2004), and *Att bli förälder till ett barn som redan finns* (SoS and MIA 2008) are educational texts; the first addressed to undergraduate students, the latter to adoptive parents to-be. The texts are characterised by their authoritative function as they provide knowledge usually considered legitimate and trust-worthy. The racialising effects of these social policy genres are easily obscured by their assumed neutrality (Alastair 2010, 212).

It has been argued that the particular challenge for scholars studying whiteness is that racialised marking processes are usually hidden (Crenshaw 1997; Michel and Honegger 2010). Consequently, Michel and Honegger (2010, 435) observe that explorations of whiteness require an analysis of 'wording, valuing, and devaluing embedded in specific argumentative logics'. In my analysis I take Foucault's (1969/2002, 31) advice to consider every statement seriously, even though it at first may appear unimportant or even banal in its consequences. What makes this advice of particular relevance here is because descriptions of physical appearance usually do not stand out in the texts; rather they are mentioned in pass-

ing. Also, the advice is valuable in the analysis of the significance ascribed to skin colour in family relations and everyday life, where naturalisation of meaning is an issue.

Not only do discursive conditions make some statements possible, they also limit the possibility of uttering other statements (Foucault 1969/2002, 134). This issue is scarcely developed in the archeological approach, but later on Foucault (1976/1990, 27) indicates that:

Silence itself – the things that one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies [...]. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.

Thus, silences do not mark the limit of discourse, but are conceptualised as integral part of discourse. Following this line of reasoning, I suggest that social policy as a field of meaning production could be theorised as a play between what is present, and what is absent.⁴ A similar approach is to be found in Crenshaw (1997, 254), who argues that 'scholars must locate in-

teractions that implicate unspoken issues of race, discursive spaces where the power of whiteness is invoked but its explicit terminology is not [...].’ Within critical whiteness studies, whiteness has been described as an *un-named* position (Frankenberg 1997, 6). However, as Ahmed (2004) acknowledges, it is not everywhere, and for everybody, that whiteness is un-named. It is, she suggests, white normativity itself that tends to make whiteness invisible for those inhabiting it. In sum, I understand whiteness as an explicit, as well as implicit racialised marking process.

Transnational adoption and race in Sweden

Northern European countries and Sweden in particular, have been described as prominent in terms of equality work. This is much due to social democratic re-distribution programmes and acknowledgement of women’s and children’s rights (Eriksson, et al 2005). However, researchers (Eriksson, et al. 2005; Pringle 2010; Sager 2011) have pointed out the risk of this progressive image obscuring ongoing differentiating practices. With regard to racialisation, Pred (2000, 1) forcefully demonstrates that Sweden should not be treated as an exception, but that ‘[t]he spectre haunting Europe, is the spectre haunting Sweden’. In many spheres of public life, the concept of racism seems to

be treated with suspicion. Molina and de los Reyes (2006, 295-296) trace such reactions to the fact that racism collides with historically important and predominantly social democratic ideas and politics of inclusion and modernity.

There is today extensive research on mechanisms of racialisation in Sweden. Research on the relation between ‘Swedishness’ and whiteness is crucial here. Mattsson (2005, 149-150) summarises the hegemonic discourse on Swedishness in a number of criteria, including formal as well as informal aspects of belonging. While citizenship represents a formal criterion of belonging, notions of blood ties, family resemblance and cultural knowledge represent informal ones. Mattsson (2005,150) argues that physical appearance is fundamental in the Swedish national imagination. Drawing upon eugenic discourse; white skin, blonde hair colour and blue eyes have been considered Scandinavian traits. To be unconditionally considered a ‘Swede’, ethnographic studies have thrown light upon the significance of looking ‘Swedish’ (Sawyer 2000; Lundström 2007; Hübinette and Tigervall 2008).

Hübinette and Lundström (2011) argue that the role of whiteness in the construction of the Swedish nation must be traced back to the history of scientific race classifications. Within this discourse, North Europeans was considered the “whitest whites” in the hierarchy of

race (Dyer 1997, 118). The establishment of the Swedish Institute for Race Biology in the early 1920s' and eugenic sterilisation programmes lasting until the mid-1970's, illustrate how race discourse has come into practice in Sweden (Hübinette and Lundström 2011). In European countries, Goldberg (2006) notes, race is located in the past, which limits the possibility of articulating contemporary race related issues. In the official Swedish national narrative, race is seldom an issue at all. As Catomeris (2004, 10-13) points out, the denial of these parts of history sets Sweden aside European racial histories, and makes room for the image of Sweden as a world conscious country.

The 1960s and 70s marked a shift in Swedish adoption policy and practice. From the 1920s onwards, national adoption – the placement of white children born outside of marriage, into the homes of white, childless, wealthy couples – became part of Swedish population policy (Lindgren 2006). However, by the 1950s the number of children available for national adoption decreased, partly due to the development of contraceptive technologies and liberalisation of abortion legislation (Markusson Winkvist 2005). Demands from various actors to facilitate the adoption of children born abroad (often of colour), contributed to the establishment of transnational adoption in the late 1960s (Lindgren 2006). Out of Sweden's population

of 9 million, 50 000 people have a transnational adoption background. Proportionally, this makes Sweden the leading country for transnational adoption in the world (Hübinette and Tigervall 2009, 335-336).

In the 60s, Swedish mass media portrayed transnational adoption as an act of solidarity with the 'Third World' (Markusson Winkvist 2005). In today's Sweden, transnational adoption is first and foremost described as a state sanctioned reproduction technique. Briggs (2003) has explored how the iconographies of 'rescue' and 'need' come into work in the politics of transnational adoption. Such ideas serve to legitimise transnational adoption practices in current Swedish social policy. Even though political and ethnic aspects of transnational adoption are pointed out in policy as well as public debate, the more fundamental critique is, I would say, controversial in Sweden (Andersson 2010).⁵ However, transnational adoption policy has changed over time. Historical studies (Lindgren 2006; Jonsson Malm 2011) have acknowledged a biologist turn in Swedish family policy, with implications for how the idea of what is in the best interest of the child is negotiated in adoption policy and practice.

Evasive markings

Yngvesson (2003, 7-8) argues that stories about roots have a hegemonic status in transnational

adoption. These stories ascribe considerable significance to physical appearance. Bodily markers such as skin tone and hair colour are assumed to connect those people sharing bodily markers. Consequently, physical appearance works as a symbol of both belonging and difference. In Swedish adoption research, the terms 'visible adoptees' and 'invisible adoptees'⁶ are established ways of categorising adoptees. The distinction between visible and invisible refers to the possibility of being able to determine, by sight, whether or not a child and its parent(s) have the same descent. Originally, the terms grew out of an objective to distinguish between transnational adoptees and national adoptees (Hübinette and Tigervall 2008, 300). In contemporary Sweden, national adoption is very unusual in comparison to transnational adoption.⁷ The idea of 'visible' and 'invisible' adoptees are part of the discursive conditions that make statements of physical appearance in current transnational adoption policy meaningful.

Statements about transnational adoptees' identity work and social relations in and outside of family, illustrate the ways in which stories about roots structure transnational adoption policy in Sweden (Andersson 2008; 2010). An assumed lack of resemblance with the majority of the native white population is the departure point in the statements of transnational

adoptees' physical appearance. According to official statistics from the Swedish Inter-country Adoptions Authority (MIA), of those children arriving to Sweden through transnational adoption between 1969 and 2009, the three largest groups are born in Asian, South American and European countries (MIA 2011). I argue that statements of physical appearance in the texts are implicitly based on the group defined as 'visible adoptees'. Children of European descent seem to be excluded from this category, and when they are discussed it is made explicit.⁸

Brekhus (1998) emphasises that language plays a crucial role in marking processes. 'The very act of naming or labeling a category, simultaneously constructs and foregrounds that category', he notes (Brekhus 1998, 35). As such, a label makes certain subject positions available and others unavailable for those included in the group. In the texts, transnational adoptees' bodies are marked in mainly two different ways. Firstly, there are articulations describing their physical appearance as 'different',⁹ 'atypical'¹⁰ or 'exotic'.¹¹ When these descriptions appear in the texts, what the bodies are assumed to differ *from* is not articulated. In other words, the point of comparison remains unmarked, which implies that transnational adoptees are described as different, atypical or exotic *per se*. These statements become meaningful in a context where darker skin and hair

colour have been made symbols of difference (Mattsson 2005, 150). Compared to the terms different and atypical, the term 'exotic' stands out as it draws upon a colonial romanticisation of 'the other' (Loomba 1998).

Secondly, there are statements describing physical appearance as 'non-Scandinavian',¹² 'non-Nordic',¹³ and 'non-Swedish'.¹⁴ A similar, but slightly more developed way of arguing is to be found in statements announcing that transnational adoptees' physical appearance 'differs from the Scandinavian [appearance]'¹⁵, that it 'differs from the common Nordic [appearance]'¹⁶ or that their physical appearance 'separates them from the Swedish majority'.¹⁷ Here, physical appearance is constructed as closely related to geographic region. It is implied that there is something that can be characterised as Scandinavian, Nordic or Swedish looks. As in previous examples, *what* characterises these looks is not defined. The terms seem to be used interchangeably, resulting in a linkage of these geographical spheres as in the Nordic race myth. Since Scandinavia, the Northern European countries and Sweden are imagined as white communities, defining Scandinavian, Nordic or Swedish looks becomes unnecessary.

In Ahmed's (2000, 21) terms, the statements of transnational adoptees' physical appearance construct the adopted body as 'out of place',

of non-belonging. Ahmed (ibid, 44-46) theorises skin as a border, marking out bodily spaces. Skin differentiates bodies from other bodies and regulates encounters in various social spheres. Ahmed is directing her focus away from the concept of 'otherness', and conceptualises racialisation through the question of 'strange(r)ness' (ibid, 21). She challenges the ontological status of 'the stranger', and explores how racialisation constructs some bodies as already stranger than others (ibid). The evasive markings of the adopted bodies in the texts naturalise, as I see it, notions of strange(r)ness. Ahmed (2010, 150) proposes that 'whiteness could be described as an ongoing and unfinished history, which orients bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space. Conceptualised as an orientation, whiteness functions as a norm withholding adopted bodies unconditional belonging, not permitting them to take up that space.

As previously discussed, I understand silences as integral part of discourse, rather than its absolute limits. I suggest that the lack of definitions regarding Scandinavian, Nordic or Swedish looks in the texts may be conceptualised as a discursive absence meaningful only in relation to what is actually present in the texts. Discourse produces a legitimate space for some statements, while limiting the space for other statements. As I mentioned earlier, there is a reluctance to talk

about race in Sweden today. I am not aiming to fully explain this reluctance, but to consider the discursive conditions making statements, as well as silences, meaningful. The point I would like to make is that descriptions of transnational adoptees' physical appearance in non-terms implies a particular form of marking. In their evasiveness, these labels contribute to the reproduction of the image of Scandinavia, Northern Europe, and Sweden as white communities. The adopted body is not marked in itself, it is marked in relation to something constructed as unmarked – whether it is made explicit or not. In other words, the adopted body is marked when it is envisioned through the white gaze.

In the documents I have analysed, physical appearance is made an important matter in the everyday life of transnational adoptees in Sweden. In one of the texts, the significance of physical appearance is summed up in a section about transnationally adopted youth and identity work. Referring to established Swedish adoption research, it is noted that adopted teenagers 'have to learn to handle' that because of their looks, they will at times be 'treated as immigrants, while they feel like Swedes'.¹⁸ There are at least three points to make here. Firstly, this 'discrepancy between ethnic self identification and external identification',¹⁹ as it is also formulated, is naturalised in the texts. Identifying as a 'Swede', but

not being recognised as a 'Swede' because of one's looks is described as a fact, rather than a problem. Secondly, resisting racialisation is made a responsibility of the adoptees, rather than of society. As a final point I would like to mention the use of the term 'immigrants'. It is common in Swedish welfare discourse, but has been widely criticised for its exclusionary and even racist implications (Pringle 2010, 22-23).

Preparing for difference

In previous work (Andersson 2010), I have drawn the conclusion that the construction of the adoptive family in Swedish transnational adoption policy is built upon assumptions of difference. These differences are discussed with regard to the relation between parent and child, and the relation between the adoptive family and their social surroundings. With regard to family life, differences in terms of genetics as well as appearance are discussed and in this paper, I will focus on the latter. In my analysis of social work guidelines used in the evaluation process, differences appear as facts. Furthermore, adoptive parents are advised to take these differences into account, when reflecting on their own parenting abilities. An issue that is likely to be part of the evaluation is whether the applicants have particular wishes regarding descent of the child. In this context, physical appearance is a closely related topic.

In current social work guidelines, published in 2008, there is a short statement about the importance of this discussion.²⁰ In previous guidelines, published in 1997, the issue is dealt with in more detail:

Many adoptive parents to-be have already before the evaluation thought through their experiences of bullying and racism in Swedish society, and how this may affect them and their child. Because of that, it occurs that a family wishes for a European child, or that they only would like a fair skinned child. A family may say that they could accept whatever country, but not a child with negroid features. These families often say that it does not matter for them, but that they think of the child and what is in its best interest.²¹

This statement is structured around an example where the applicants have certain wishes regarding the descent and appearance of the child. The example is framed in a way which makes the adoptive parents appear conscious about their choice. Not wishing for a particular child is made legitimate if the motives could be interpreted as 'in the best interest of the child'. I suggest that the argument of 'the best interest of the child' becomes a legitimising device to this kind of wish.

The formulation of the 'child with negroid features' is somehow ambivalent. On the one hand, it clearly

draws upon colonial and eugenic discourses (Mattsson 2005, 143). On the other hand, it is used as an illustration of an 'authentic' context, with the consequence of displacing the responsibility of what is actually stated. The example functions as a linguistic resource enabling a crossing of certain discursive boundaries. In the previous section, I read the descriptions of transnational adoptees' 'non-Scandinavian', 'non-Nordic' and 'non-Swedish' looks as a reproduction of these geographical spheres as white communities. However, in comparison to the most recent example, these descriptions might also be read as a wish to avoid more obvious racial classifications, or in other words, as benevolent efforts of de-racialisation.

Disturbing differences

The assumed differences within the adoptive family are continuously made relevant when portraying the adoptive family. As I have mentioned earlier, these differences regard the relation between parents and child and the relation between the adoptive family and their social surroundings. In current compulsory educational material for adoptive parents to-be in Sweden, the first time with the child is described as follows:

In the beginning, the adoptive parents appear as strangers to the child. The child has to get used to the fair skinned people who speak oddly, smell different, and

behave in peculiar ways. The parents have to get used to the child and its character, its different appearance, smell, and its ways.²²

In this statement, the first time seems to be a crucial moment in adoptive family life. Both parents and child are ascribed the need to get used to each other, because in the meeting, the differences between them appear. The differences are about looks, smells, and ways of being. The parents are mainly accounted for through their actions; they 'speak oddly' or 'behave in peculiar ways'. The child, on the other hand, is provided with a 'character'. In that sense I would say the child is attributed an identity as different.

I find it hard not associating this statement with the idea of the colonial meeting (Loomba 2008). Here, representatives from two groups constructed as different – or sometimes even opposites – have to confront each other's ascribed differences. The relation between them is that of an uneven dependency. The example illustrates the overlapping of national and familial communities. McClintock (1993, 64) has acknowledged how the nation in the colonial context could be imagined through an iconography of the family, 'a family of black children ruled over by a white father'. In a Swedish context, Catomeris (2004, 59-60) has discussed how Swedish foreign aid resembles a parent-child relation, where 'We' should assist

'Them' in their 'development'. These examples contribute to a theoretical framing of the statement, which brings intersecting differentiation processes to the fore.

In one of the texts it is concluded that the physical appearance of the adopted child 'makes the adoptive family stick out and no longer be anonymous'.²³ In this statement, the adopted subject is constructed as embodying difference in a way that marks the adoptive family as a whole. Compared to previous quote, the parents appear to have lost their strange(r)ness. Marking processes are multifaceted. In the educational material, an adoptive parent is quoted when noting the possibility of becoming 'recognised as an immigrant family'.²⁴ Another text discusses how the adoptive family 'may be affected by existing attitudes towards immigrants in Swedish society'.²⁵ It is stated that '[a]doptive families need to acknowledge and be aware of what different physical appearance could bring about'.²⁶ Apart from the risk of racist or other insulting comments, it is reported that transnationally adopted children could be made objects of curious questions and physical approaches.

One of the texts mentions that 'it is not unusual that unknown people approach younger adoptive children with non-Nordic looks in an unrestricted way, referring to that he or she looks so pretty or precious' and that 'they may even think that they have the right to pet or touch the

child.²⁷ The adoptive parents are clearly advised not to be tolerant of such behavior, and also, to give this message to their child. Statements regarding the significance of physical appearance include racialised and normative positioning as well as a confirmation that unpleasant encounters may occur. Some of the statements illustrate how whiteness operates as a norm in the construction of the adopted subject and the adoptive family. Other examples offer an opening of resisting racialisation in everyday life. As we can see in the above statement, these two mechanisms may also come into play simultaneously.

The statements about the adoptive family are structured by ideas of the importance of family resemblances. As Witt (2005, 141) points out, resemblance has a strong symbolic value; its meaning transcends itself and becomes a symbol of familial belonging. In the texts, the lack of blood ties between parents and child in the adoptive family is expressed in both inner and outer assumed differences. The lack of blood ties seems to cause a particular scarceness in the adoptive family that is impossible to remedy. Furthermore, this makes family life difficult, and the relational ties unstable. Through these statements, the biological family is ascribed natural attachments, while the adoptive family is portrayed as a family where attachment is a challenging project. The strange(r)ness ascribed

to adoptive family relations, implies ordinariness in biological family relations. The stability of the adoptive family is threatened by the fact that the child resembles *another family*, and *another nation*.

In the older version of the social work evaluation guidelines, not wishing for a particular child because of its looks is also made legitimate through the argument that a child that physically differs from the adoptive parents '[most often will] make that obvious, which may still be a very sensitive issue; that the spouses cannot have a biological child.'²⁸ I suggest that the adopted body is constructed as a revealing body; a body that deprives the parents the possibility of passing as a biological family; a body that risks being a constant reminder of shortcomings regarding biological reproduction. In the statements of how the adopted child provides the family with public visibility, the adopted body is constructed as a disturbing body; a body that causes the adoptive family to be in a vulnerable position in terms of exposing it to racialised curiousness and assaults; a body which unsettles the white surface of the family and the national imagined community.²⁹ Taking the contribution of Puwar (2004) into account, the question that needs to be explored further is how the presence of the adopted subject is negotiated in spaces imagined as white.

The logic of blood and roots

The empirical excerpts analysed here, have to be located within a broader context. As I (Andersson 2010) have suggested elsewhere, current transnational adoption policy in Sweden centralises problematic consequences of separation from birth country and biological family. Through essentialist notions of national, cultural, and ethnic belonging, transnational adoptees are advised to cultivate their origins. Integrating into the adoptive background is constructed as a means to reach a sense of wholeness, and unity. Creating openness around these issues is described as a particular adoptive family challenge. However, the ultimate challenge seems to be the striving to overcome the assumed differences between parents and child.

By means of a logic of blood and roots (Andersson 2010), the adopted subject is ascribed a natural orientation towards birth country and biological family. Skin colour is made a symbol of belonging to another family, another nation. Describing the looks of transnational adoptees of colour as 'non-Scandinavian', 'non-Nordic', or 'non-Swedish', implies a reproduction of these geographic spheres as white imagined communities. Also, these 'non'-labels reinforces an already existing avoidance of dealing with racialisation. With regard to family relations and experiences in everyday life, I have found that transnational adoptees

are ascribed a more or less permanent difference and strange(r)ness. This is expressed in the way the adoptive family is marked through the colour of the child.

I argue that discourse analysis provides not only useful, but also necessary tools to deconstruct social policy categorisations. Discursive productions of sameness and difference do not exist in a vacuum, rather they are embedded in the particularity of context, and have to be explored taking such specificity into account. By making use of postcolonial and feminist conceptualisations of national and familial belonging, discursive perspectives on racialisation and Foucauldian archeology, I have constructed a theoretical and methodological framework, enabling certain research questions, readings, and conclusions regarding normative whiteness. Such an interdisciplinary approach is an arrogation of destabilisation with the purpose of challenging the ways in which transnational adopted bodies are constructed as revealing and disturbing elements in white Swedish imaginary. To conclude, racialised markings of transnational adoptees as familiar, but yet unfamiliar bodies, make visible the symbolic boundaries withholding transnational adoptees unconditional national and familial belonging.

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Endnotes

¹ The term 'physical appearance' is translated from the Swedish term 'utseende', used in the empirical material.

² With regard to transnational adoption in Denmark, see Myong Petersen's (2009) discussion of the ambivalences of racial subjectification in a discursive context where race is not acknowledged.

³ The empirical examples analysed here, are also included in previous analyses of transnational adoption policy in Sweden (Andersson 2008; 2010)

⁴ In a different setting, the theme of presence/absence has also been explored by Burman, Smailes and Chantler (2004), drawing explicitly upon the work of Anne Phoenix.

⁵ While the term 'transracial adoption' is established in the U.K and the U.S, 'international adoption' is the term used in Sweden. The difference between these terms is that the first immediately identifies the race dimension.

⁶ My translation of: 'synligt adopterade' and 'osynligt adopterade'.

⁷ Family placement, on the other hand, is a developed practice. For overview see Höjer (2006). As opposed to adoption, family placement does not imply juridical separation between the child and the biological parent(s). This makes it an interesting case with regard to familial belonging.

⁸ One example where such clarification is explicitly made is a section where explanations to unemployment among transnational adoptees are discussed. It is argued that since "also adoptees born in Eastern Europe" (Lindblad 2009, 229, my translation) face unemployment; the explanations cannot be reduced to ethnic discrimination. In my reading, the assumed whiteness of transnational adoptees born in Eastern Europe, legitimises biological explanations for unemployment among the group (Andersson 2010, 108-112).

⁹ My translation of: 'annorlunda' (IMS 2007, 111).

¹⁰ My translation of: 'avviker' (SoS and MIA 2008, 94).

¹¹ My translation of: 'exotiskt' (IMS 2007, 114).

¹² My translation of: 'icke-skandinaviskt' (IMS 2007, 19).

¹³ My translation of: 'icke-nordiskt' (Lindblad 2004, 194).

¹⁴ My translation of: 'icke-svenskt' (IMS 2007, 205; SoS and MIA 2008, 94).

¹⁵ My translation of 'avviker från det skandinaviska' (SoS and MIA 2008, 19).

¹⁶ My translation of: 'skiljer sig från det gängse nordiska' (NIA 1997, 20).

¹⁷ My translation of: 'utseende som skiljer dem från den svenska majoriteten' (IMS 2007, 18).

¹⁸ My translation of: '[...]bemöter andra människor dem således ibland som invandrare, samtidigt som de själva känner sig som svenskar' (SOU 2001:10, 140).

¹⁹ My translation of: 'diskrepans mellan den etniska självidentifikationen och den externa identifikationen' (SOU 2001:10, 140)

²⁰ SoS 2008, 65

²¹ My translation of: 'Många blivande adoptivföräldrar har redan före utredningen tänkt igenom sina erfarenheter av mobbing och rasism i det svenska samhället och vad det kan komma att betyda för dem och deras barn. Därför händer det att en familj önskar barn från Europa, eller endast kan tänka sig ett ljust barn. En familj kanske uppger att den kan tänka sig vilket land som helst, men inte ett barn med negroida drag. Ofta säger dessa familjer att det kvittar för deras egen skull, men att de tänker på barnet och dess bästa' (NIA 1997, 20).

²² My translation of: 'För barnet är adoptivföräldrarna till en början främlingar. Barnet måste vänja sig vid de ljushyade människorna som pratar konstigt, luktar annorlunda och uppför sig märkligt. Föräldrarna måste vänja sig vid barnet och dess karaktär, dess annorlunda utseende, lukt och sätt att vara' (SoS and MIA 2008, 76).

²³ My translation of: '[...] adoptivfamiljer sticker ut och inte längre kan vara anonyma' (MIA and SoS 2008, 19).

²⁴ My translation of '[...] registrerad som en invandrarfamilj' (SoS and MIA 2008,

92).

²⁵ My translation of: '[...] kan komma att påverkas av olika synsätt som finns på invandring i det svenska samhället' (SoS and MIA 2008, 19).

²⁶ My translation of '[a]doptivfamiljer behöver vara uppmärksamma på och medvetna om vad det annorlunda utseendet kan medföra' (SoS and MIA 2008, 93).

²⁷ My translation of: 'inte ovanligt att främmande människor närmar sig yngre adopterade barn med ett icke-nordiskt utseende på ett gränslöst sätt med hänvisning till att han eller hon ser så söt eller gullig ut" samt att "[d]e kan till och med tycka att de har rätt att klappa eller ta i barnet' (Lindblad 2004, 194).

²⁸ My translation of: '[kommer] att göra det uppenbart, det som kanske fortfarande är så känsligt: att makarna inte kan få ett biologiskt barn' (NIA 1997, 20).

²⁹ In my reading of the constructions of the adoptive body, there is a parallel to Douglas' (1966/2002) suggestion of using the polluter as an analytical figure to explore constructions of purity. Critical whiteness researchers (Dyer 1997; Mattsson 2005) have theorised purity as part of the construction of whiteness, which is partly related to the symbolic meaning of white as a colour.

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‘The White Flesh of a Fish’: Reflections about Whiteness and Methodologies

Kristín Loftsdóttir

Introduction

I am in the pastoral zone in the Sahel area in Niger, and I have a rare opportunity to bath in a little stream. Lush vegetation surrounds the stream in one place so I can take of my clothing and wash myself properly instead of the half a litre of water that usually I splash on different body parts. It should be celebrated opportunity but I feel uncomfortable. My body looks, somehow, like I have never seen it before; white and sweaty, with every blemish and rash visible. Suddenly, I start thinking about the fish that the WoDaaBe find so repulsive. ‘We don’t like fish’ someone told me once, ‘because it has white flesh.’ Looking at my own pale body, this sentence starts to echo in my mind. I feel like I am that fish, my body looking like its white, shiny flesh.

I had lived in Niger for more than a year but my encounter with whiteness had started much earlier. It was uncomfortably embodied in various encounters and images, such as in reminders of how wealth and power in the world is divided according to a colour line,

where ‘white’ people like myself occupy roles of powerful beneficiaries in Niger, doing research, tourism or working within international development. It was also in the everyday experiences of little children walking behind me, calling ‘anasara, anasara’; a term originally referring to Christian person but which now was used referring to ‘white’ people in general. Particularly startling was how whiteness was, for those Nigerians I interacted with, generally associated with ‘westerners’, thus dividing the world into powerful ‘white’ north and poor ‘black’ south (Loftsdóttir 2003). As scholars have pointed out, critically looking at the social construction of whiteness, the power of whiteness is so strongly invested in how ‘white’ bodies are normalized, making the power of such categorization often invisible to those defined as ‘white’ (Puwar 2004). In Niger, I had been startled by these relationships of power so clearly visible, and the intersection of my categorization as ‘white’ with other categories of difference such as my gender. In my experience other ‘white westerner’ did usually

not reflect on their own racialization in this context and its association with power (Loftsdóttir 2003). Prior to living in Niger, I had never systematically thought about whiteness as a racialization process, my origin in Iceland making it very easy to avoid thinking this way. When I was growing up, Iceland was homogenous compared to other countries; a small island with population of 250,000. Even though historical immigration has probably been underestimated, it was not common to hear any other language spoken, and darker skin tones were rare. My shock in Niger revolved around that whilst even in a place where the reproduction of colonialism and racism through social constructions of whiteness were almost screaming in your face, many 'white westerners' still refused to acknowledge their position of power as 'white' individuals or that racialization had anything to do with everyday dynamics (Loftsdóttir 2003 and 2008). In addition, as my example at the start of this paper indicates, it involved the painful recognition that within a racist system of the world everyone is racialized, regardless of whether they think about themselves in such a way.

In my discussion here, I illustrate a few points based on my own experiences in researching whiteness. I stress in particular three aspects that I see as important methodological tools: auto-ethnography, extended case method, and ethnographic

analysis. These three tools are discussed in relation to my research in Niger among WoDaaBe pastoral nomads which focused on mobility and strategies of survival in increasingly globalized world, and in my native country Iceland where I have focused on post-colonial narratives and racialized identity. Even though these aspects are to some extent interlinked, I present them here as separate for a more coherent argument.

To Situate Whiteness

Analysis of whiteness constitutes one part of a deeper analysis of racism and racial identity in general (Hartigan 1997:498). Whiteness as such is thus not the object of analysis, but the historical constitution and the hegemonic status of whiteness as a social and historical construct and its invisibility; how it functions and becomes meaningful in a particular local context. Even though deconstructing whiteness does in itself not change the structural inequalities that are so important in reproducing racism and racialization, it is still imperative to make those structures more visible. The critical investigation of whiteness seeks thus to 'deterritorialize the territory 'white' to expose, examine and disrupt' (Nakayama and Krizek, 1995: 292). I find it extremely important that we, as scholars, continue to emphasize that whiteness is not a fixed category but historically constituted, and thus shifting and contest-

ed (Hartigen 1997). As such there is no essence in whiteness because it intersects with other categories of difference, being simultaneously 'local, temporary and self-contradictory' as phrased by Sara Trechter and Mary Bucholtz (2001:5).

Auto-ethnography

As previously mentioned, I was struck by the importance of whiteness when conducting my research in Niger in 1996-1998, for the daily life and desires of many WoDaaBe migrant workers in Niamey, were embodied in interactions and structural relationships between Nigeriens and those from the 'west'. As a physical landscape, international development in Niger constructs a particular view of whiteness which, even though invisible to many of 'white westerners', is clearly visible to those their work was directed towards (Loftsdóttir 2008:203-206). Analyzing whiteness had not originally been the goal of my research. However, to some extent, even though not theorizing it clearly prior to arriving in Niger, my research was already revolving around this issue, which took on a sharper focus after a period of living there. Feminist scholars and anthropologists have emphasized the importance of self-positioning to make visible the relationships of power involved in research and dissemination (Okely 1992). The writing of auto-ethnography – where the researcher positions him or herself within the text

– has, in a similar way, been seen as important for critical scholarly reflection. Auto-ethnographic writing engages with the political context in which the research takes place, making this context visible to the reader (Lambek 2005:230). Auto-ethnography can also be seen as an important methodological tool and, as stressed by Laura Voloder (2008), a conscious self-positioning that can be used as a heuristic resource (p.33). Thus, instead of seeing the 'intrusive self' as a hindrance, it becomes an important resource for the research (Cohen 1992: 226). Such an approach requires that the researcher uses his or her position consciously during the research process – not only afterward – as a source of information and insight. In studying racialization and racism, I see such critical self-positioning as extremely valuable. My own interaction with WoDaaBe was, for example, particularly informative in helping to understand racialization and to gain deeper insights into the larger relations of power. To give one example: a few times WoDaaBe who did not know me did not want to enter my house due to the fear that I would later accuse them of stealing something. That in itself (which was later elaborated on in conversations with other WoDaaBe who knew me better and thus trusted me more) told me something about the asymmetrical relationships of power between the 'anasara' in Niger and the WoDaaBe. This was in stark con-

tradition to how WoDaaBe would normally explain their relationship with 'white westerners', usually emphasizing that these were relationship of 'equals' and of 'friendships.' Also, my own relationship with other 'white westerners' in Niger was equally informative in understanding how whiteness operated within this particular context.

Extended case method

Analyzing whiteness in Iceland was more difficult, perhaps because I was a part of a naturalized majority in a society where 'white' skin color is not much mentioned or reflected on. In a country like Iceland, it is still no less important to try to understand how whiteness is generated and made meaningful to different individuals based on particular localized and global contexts. Icelanders themselves have not always been firmly situated within the equation 'white/civilized' as can be seen in historical sources, where Icelanders were often described as semi-savage (Loftsdóttir 2008). Contemporary Iceland is shaped by a sudden increase in immigration, numbers of foreign nationals multiplying from 1.8 % of the population in 1996 to 8.1 % in 2011 (Statistical Series 2009). Polish people have been the largest immigration group in Iceland (see discussion for example in Skaptadóttir 2004), and in some public media one can see racialized discussions of Polish people, where they are in some sense

seen as less 'white' than the other Icelanders.

Asking Icelandic people directly about their views of race and racism is, however, only fruitful to a certain point as most people have never reflected on their social categorization as 'white.' As John Jr. Hartigan has pointed out, a focus on specific events can be useful to explore racialized identity (Hartigan 1997), but such an emphasis can be seen as deriving from the extended case method that anthropologists have used for some time (Englund 2002). When a huge debate arose in Iceland in 2007 in relation to the re-publication of the nursery rhyme 'The Ten Little Negros', I saw it as an extremely valuable opportunity to gain deeper insights into how whiteness was articulated within an Icelandic context. In this instance, the extended case giving my research a more solid 'ground' to stand on and to address this issue in a meaningful way to other Icelanders. Victor Turner has pointed out how 'crisis' or 'social drama' can in fact make basic value systems or certain organizational principles more transparent and visual (1974:35). Focusing on a specific case embodied in 'social drama' can be seen as particularly important with issues like racism, which as stressed by scholars, increasingly becomes coded under different labels, making it more difficult to target (Balibar 2000; Harrison 2002). Taking a particular 'social drama' as a point of analy-

sis in research in relation to racism can thus help to detangle or make visible aspects that can be difficult to approach in another context. In addition to analysing blog debates written by Icelanders, I interviewed 'white' native Icelanders and 'black' people with immigrant backgrounds from Africa, asking questions such as what they felt about the debate regarding the book republication and about the book itself. Asking about the nursery rhyme generated much more interesting and vivid responses than just asking more generally about racism. Focusing on the rhyme also opened an historical angle, as the rhyme was originally published in Iceland in 1922 and republished few times since then. I saw the analysis of the social environment of the original publication of the rhyme as an important part in deconstructing the persistent views in Iceland that racist ideas did not exist in the past, thus pointing out that the publication in 1922 fitted well within other reproductions of racist images in Europe and in Iceland (Loftsdóttir 2011a).

Ethnography

My last point on methodology and whiteness is to emphasize the importance of ethnographic analysis for a more nuanced analysis. That does not mean that all research has to be ethnographic, but as a research tool ethnographic research is different from media analysis and interviews (both methods that I have also em-

ployed in my own research) in the sense that it generates different kinds of information. As stressed by Bronislaw Malinowski who shaped this particular methodology in the early 20th century, scholars should analyse the discrepancies between what people say on one hand about what they do and what they actually do in everyday situations (1984), the inconsistencies not always being visible to themselves. Malinowski highlights how people verbally describe certain social structures within society and their own thoughts and feelings about them, while acting on those in a completely different way and often not consistently. Ethnographic analysis thus gains deeper understandings of the lived realities of people, and how whiteness is expressed in particular localized circumstances while intersecting with other aspects, often in contradictory ways. Without this approach, we risk fixing whiteness as something essential, as a thing in and of itself. My example of certain WoDaaBe hesitating to go into my apartment in Niamey, contradicted, for example, what most people had stressed in conversations, emphasizing their friendship with 'anasara', downplaying any relationship of power. In addition, through ethnographic analysis it was more possible to analyse the intersection of gender and racialized identity, where whiteness was not uniformly associated with power.

Post-structuralists, under the influence of Michel Foucault, have emphasized that categories are discursively created. However, as highlighted by Paul Rabinow (1984:10), Foucault's sense of discourse involved not only textual representations but lived relationships and practices. This indicates that it is not enough to analyse discourse only from the perspective of language or visual images, but we have to look at the negotiation and destabilization of hegemonic discourses by various actors as evident in practice. Ethnographic methods can thus make agency more visible and help to draw out the intersection of various forms of differentiation (Loftsdóttir 2011b:200).

Conclusion

Whiteness constitutes a shifting category, as various scholars have identified (Jackobsen 1998), in addition to intersecting with other categories such as gender, sexuality and age. My own discomfort of associating myself with 'the flesh of a fish' reflects these overlapping and entangled issues at play: I was reminded of the structural relationships of racialization that I was a part of, regardless of whether I wanted to be or not, the desire to be liked and even seen as beautiful just to mention few. I have discussed three methodological tools that I have found useful to approach whiteness; tools have intersected in the process of my own work.

Critical self-positioning is important in order to situate oneself in relation to the subject, simultaneously as have important methodological potentials. Using extended case examples helped me tease out notions of whiteness in interviews, in addition to anchoring, more effectively, my analysis in an historical perspective. Lastly, ethnographic analysis gives us a different kind of date, helping to complicate and gain a more nuanced understanding of racialization in the present. As a scholarly subject, we need to use a broad range of methods to analyze and understand whiteness in all its complexity and as a historically constituted phenomena, with both local and global expressions.

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Tufuku Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (eds). 2008. White Logic, White Methods: Racism and Methodology. Lanham: Plymouth, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. 416 pp. Paperback

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The debate among ‘minority’ scholars and people of color over hegemonic research methods and theories in social sciences has not yet come to a halt. Indeed, Tufuku Zuberi and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva continue the legacy that started in the United States of America with W.E.B. du Bois. The two have edited a book that critiques ongoing research methods that treat ‘race’ as a social constant rather than a social construct. Zuberi is known for his versatile and international engagement in academia, human rights activism, filmmaking and his extensive knowledge of W.E.B. du Bois’ writing. While Bonilla-Silva is primarily known for his broad knowledge and research of the racialization of Latin Americans in US society.

Taken as a whole, this book is an ideological critique of academia in

its various formations. It claims ‘the language used by social scientists is usually reflective of an unarticulated causal theory. It is irrelevant whether the social scientist is aware of this or not.’ (9) Describing their book project as political within a ‘war of position against White Supremacy’ (23), the editors and authors question [white] positionalities, reflecting upon the ways positional oblivion whitewashes colorblind-racism and subsequent academic knowledge re-production. Bonilla-Silva and Baiocchi call this debate on race, positionalities and knowledge reproduction an ‘overdue conversation in the discipline [of sociology]’ (137), especially since most whites in the post-civil rights era believe that racism doesn’t matter anymore or that race simply became a question of ‘cultural identity’ (163). Although

most of the book's authors share this attitude toward mainstream theorization, one author – Stanfield II – takes this 'unawareness' further: He believes that the active neglect of racial matters in academia is in fact caused by 'the deep emotional roots of race' (273), which makes the discovery of race almost unbearable for well-situated academics who cannot grapple with changing world realities (281).

Zuberi's and Bonilla-Silva's editorial ambition is to 'tell the real story of the hunt' (329), the theoretical footing of which is found in the first and final chapter. Accordingly, both authors define the backbone of their professional critique: White logic is the 'context in which White supremacy has defined the techniques and processes of reasoning about social facts' (17), whereas white methods delineate the 'practical tools used to manufacture empirical data and analysis to support the racial stratification in society' (18). Moreover, as the title indicates, whiteness is seen as the structure that generates racism. Yet, only one article touches upon the difficulty of researching whiteness, the generating structure of racism so to say, within such a statistical area: Gallagher (article 10) explores methods to interview white people. He gives examples of potential interviewee answers, and asks an important question, namely whether researchers can 'ask questions that challenge our [white] respondents to think about race as a

political category [...].' (176) Overall, it would not go amiss to have more examples of how one could methodologically expose whiteness in quantitative research without taking the 'scientific detour' via the racialized Other. Finally, it is essentially the interlocking of white logic and method that furthers racialized knowledge reproduction in racially stratified societies. Ultimately, what connects all authors is their view of academia as 'a form of [White] cultural and political hegemony' (275).

The book is subdivided into seven main chapters – each with three to four articles – that aim to deconstruct the bond between statistics and race. The second chapter entitled 'Race as a Variable' criticizes the use of race as a fixed and immanent variable, and is followed by 'The Logic of Method', where questions of causation and social dependencies are raised. An 'interactive model of racial inequality' (121) in statistics is called for, one which is able to treat race as a changing, interlocking system of social stratification that is socially constructed and recurring in various formations. Importantly, Paul Holland ('Causation and Race') notes that '[p]roperties or attributes [race, age, gender, test scores] of units [individuals] are not the types of variables that lead themselves to plausible states of counterfactuality' (100) and have the potential for a great methodology text in class.

Chapter 4, 'Interpreting the Problem', tackles definitions of words such as race, racism or post-racism. The insistence of racism as a structure and not simply an individual shortcoming ('Anything but Racism: How Sociologists Limit the Significance of Racism') or a clash of different cultural identities (i.e. "The End of Racism" as the New Doxa: New Strategies for Researching Race'), is a topic just as important as color-blind racism in the US post-civil rights era. At the same time, that experimental methodology remains untouched by critical race theory ('Experiments in Black and White: Power and Privilege in Experimental Methodology'). Article 11 - 'White Ethnographers on the Experiences of African American Men: Then and Now' - a fantastic overview of ethnographic research of white researchers, analyzing urban U.S. Afro-American masculinities and lives between the 1960s to the 1990s, dissects the intersections of the White male middle-class gaze with that of knowledge reproduction.

Chapter 5, 'Dimensions of Segregation and Inequality Typically Missed', starts out with an article on racial residential segregation calling on more sophisticated and overlapping macro-, micro- and meso-level analyses (article 12). It moves on to deal with questions of educational achievement (article 13), and critical demography challenging conventional measurements of racism relative to wealth, status and power

in the USA (article 14). The chapter closes with an article by Zuberi and Bratter questioning the notion that 'interracial marriages' are fading racial boundaries. It contends that increased diversity may as well serve 'to redraw the lines of race' (252).

'The Gospel of Feel-Good Sociology' by Stanfield II is an academic highlight in this book and rightly launches the chapter on 'The Practice of Racial Research'. In his article, he draws a belligerent account of academic research and its race-exclusive feel-good bubble. Ultimately, he attests that only an opening to critical race research in sociology can prevent the discipline from becoming obsolete in the future (282). The next article 'To Win the War', maps out the US American Pioneer Fund and its support and lobby of race biased research in modern US social sciences. This is then supported by 'Being a Statistician Means Never Having to Say You're Certain' outlining the biased use of statistics by journalists, lawyers and public intellectuals, and the way their writings in turn reinforced public opinion and thereby stiffened Afro-American responses to the legal system and the police. Having said the latter, Austin ('Crime Statistics, Disparate Impact Analysis, and the Economic Disenfranchisement of Minority Ex-Offenders') shows how such reiterated public opinions connected to crime statistics repeat racial discrimination, making it almost impossible for people belonging to

minority groups to 'engage in such mundane activities as shopping [...] without being closely watched, having a pizza delivered to their door, or paying for a purchase by check' (308).

For people suspicious of or not using quantitative methods this book could only partly deliver useful advice. However, the book's significance lies in its aim to criticize the most common assumptions about race as fixed variable in today's statistical practices, which is unfortunately still of utmost importance. Particularly in fields such as sociology, education, political science, and criminology, analyses according to fixed categories are the backdrop for most contemporary research. Yet whether it concerns regression models, statistics or numbers of various kinds, it is not the use of unified quantitative methodologies per se that are under attack in this book, but the way categories are established, used and interpreted by 'white logics'. It is reasonable to demand that those academic fights at the front of the social sciences are tackled, yet at the same time, most authors highlight directly or indirectly that those daring to talk about race as a structural phenomenon are facing challenges in their career, something that the editor Bonilla-Silva is easily able to echo from his own experience (15).

Overall, the collection of articles is well chosen in terms of their length and mix between statistic-

heavy, ethnographic and theoretical articles. The importance of the Chicago School for the development of 'race' in research and society in the USA re-appears in many of the articles. This can serve as a call to others to trace the development of 'racial thought' in other countries' respective academic worlds. Along with recent work on indigenous research methods and people of color queer methodologies, this book deserves its place in scholarship on critical race or ethnicity studies, due to its implicit emphasis on critical statistical research methods, a seldom popular topic within academia.

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Mark R. Warren. 2010. Fire in the heart: How white activists embrace racial justice. Oxford University Press. 249 pp., (paperback),

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In the introduction to their recent special issue on *Intersecting Whiteness, Interdisciplinary Debates*, Steyn and Conway (2010) wrote, 'Illuminating whiteness invokes the question of what political or social strategy is needed to provoke change' (285). I would argue that scholars who study whiteness and anti-racism in particular raise this question, and many ask them in relation to their own work as well. One example of such questioning is the recent book by Harvard education professor Mark Warren, *Fire In The Heart* (2010). Warren's work has long explored community-building in the United States, and in this text he turns his attention to an underexplored community – white racial justice activists. He attempts to understand the identity processes that these activists undergo as they become fully committed to racial justice causes because, as he says, 'further progress in racial justice depends on many more white Americans coming to an understanding of racism and develop-

ing a commitment to take positive action' (1). In this book, Warren's research methods are shaped by questions surrounding his scholarly stance, while his presentation style is molded by issues of accessibility. In both realms, Warren is concerned with creating an intelligible account that does not betray his own commitment to racial justice. I would argue that for critical race scholars, including those engaged in whiteness studies, Warren's book provides a compelling example of a racially just methodology put to practice. At the heart of this methodology are concerns around respect for research 'subjects' and the accessibility of scholarly ideas.

In *Fire*, Warren develops what he calls a 'head, heart, and hand' (212) model to explain some whites' deepening commitment to racial justice. In this model, the head represents individuals' knowledge of racism, the heart represents ethics and emotion, and the hands represent white individuals' relationship-building and activism (214-15). These

three aspects build off each other to deepen white individuals' commitment to racial justice. Warren found that, 'moral concerns [i.e. the 'heart'] [...] play a key role in the development of commitment and action' for white activists (216). Nearly all of the activists in his study began their journey of racial justice activism through what Warren terms a 'seminal experience' (27) that produced a 'moral shock' for the individual (32). From here, white activists generally began to build relationships with people of color, which further taught them about racism and personalized these lessons. Eventually, though, most of the white activists began to feel personally invested in racial justice – that it was not a commitment they made on behalf of people of color but for themselves, as well. They began to understand the stakes that white people have in racial justice, which often led them to work in white communities in attempts to envelop more whites into the cause (see chapter 5). These activists also strove to develop multiracial collaborations and used them to prefigure the kind of communities they hoped to create (see chapter 7). In the end, the white activists from Warren's study created new identities that revolved around their racial justice commitments. In this identity, Warren concluded, 'the head, heart, and hand are all engaged' (217).

Understanding his work as 'exploratory and largely inductive',

Warren used semi-structured interviews with fifty activists to gather information about this 'largely unexplored field of human endeavor' (10). Part oral history and part focused on the present, these roughly three-hour interviews examined both the individuals' development as racial justice advocates and the meaning they take from their development and work. The developmental process, Warren writes, allows us to appreciate racial justice commitment by whites as a process, instead of some simplistic, definitive response to a single event. Throughout, Warren focused on what he calls 'the told' and not 'the telling' (236), analysing what he understands to be the empirical content of his interviewees' narratives, rather than discursive practices within those narratives. He aimed to cautiously take his interviewees at their word while also remaining vigilant against the classic interview pitfalls (e.g. well-rehearsed stories). He strove to be respectful of his interviewees and their stories: 'People are the experts on the meaning they make of their own lives' (237).

Warren's sympathetic stance towards the white activists he studied is refreshing. Without romantics and wholly aware of the limitations of his methods, he challenges academics to consider the merits of broaching the usual distance between scholars and the individuals they study. Of course, rapport-building with those we are researching has long

been contested, but Warren's work engages deeper questions. For him, the question is not one of whether rapport-building improves research but of the ethics behind scholarly creations of the meaning of individuals' lives outside of a context of respect for and faith in these individuals.

Aside from his research methods, two aspects of the presentation of the book stood out as significant to the creation of a racially just methodology: the accessibility of the language (through storytelling) in *Fire In The Heart* and the placement of the methodology chapter at the book's end. These features create an approachable scholarly work, as Warren strives to tell the stories of white activists' lives and not strangle their voices. In describing how white activists learn about racism through relationships with people of colour, Warren tells of 'the power of stories' (64) and explains that these stories make an 'understanding of racial discrimination direct and real' (64). Fittingly, story-telling features strongly throughout the book. We learn a great deal about many of the activists – their childhoods, personal relationships, religious and moral foundations – quite often in their own words. For instance, Warren writes of Jim Capraro and his eye-witness narration of a violent white mob near his Chicago neighborhood opened the second chapter on 'seminal experiences' (23-25). Warren does not hurry to analyse his interviewees'

lives but rather gives considerable space for such stories. Aside from portraying a deep respect for these white activists, this also works to make real, even fleshy, the theoretical examination that follows the stories.

Warren opted to place his more detailed discussion of methodology at the book's end. Some methodological information was provided at the beginning of the book, for instance how Warren went about narrowing his focus, garnering participants, and shaping interview questions. Providing this much detail upfront, Warren wrote, 'will help readers interpret and consider the merits of this analysis'; yet he recognized that 'social scientists, students, and others may want to know more' (15). He then placed a comprehensive methodological discussion in an appendix. This section includes the more academic discussions around transcript coding, his research framework, and his rationale for employing qualitative methods. In my mind, Warren perfectly handled the tension between a desire to write an accessible work and a need to remain accountable to his academic base. Warren tries to neither completely relegate a methodological discussion to those he presumed would be interested, nor does he attempt the whole conversation in one place or one kind of language. Thus, in the end, the more technical conversation around methodology does not serve as a

point of alienation but rather becomes something into which readers may opt.

Though I applaud his efforts to write a widely readable work, I craved more discussion on the theoretical literature that informed Warren's work. Such discussion was not entirely absent. For instance, Warren went into some detail about what he referred to as the 'interest/altruist trap', the theoretical debates that try to capture activists' motivations (15-18). On the other hand, Warren's treatment of critical race literature largely addressed the persistence of institutional racism and 'white passivity' and left out any discussion of critical whiteness literature, including white identity development (Feagin 2001, Helms 1990, McKinney 2005, McIntyre 1997, Tatum 1992). Without engaging with this literature, *Fire* loses a valuable chance to provide insight into this underexplored area. For instance, researchers like Feagin (2001) and McKinney (2005) have argued that most whites in the U.S. 'infrequently[...]think directly and consciously about whiteness and what it entails' (Feagin 2005: xii). Warren's work, however, clearly qualifies this generalisation, as the whites in his study develop a commitment to racial justice through deep reflection on their racial identity. Warren's work could serve to complicate our understanding of white racial identity development(s), but it leaves out a discussion of literature on this de-

velopment.

On the whole, Warren's methodological and structural choices in *Fire in the Heart* point to a way forward for critical whiteness scholars (and others) as they/we try to create a racial justice ethic within the academy. For it is nothing new to study whiteness or white people. Many of us in the field, however, particularly postgraduates, often perceive ourselves as feeling our way through a dark room. Though lacking an explicit relationship to certain bodies of whiteness theory, Warren's work does begin to shed light on the kinds of methods we might use – fostering trust with research participants, writing in accessible language, and relegating intensely academic conversations – in the creation of broader, racially just methodologies in the study of whiteness.

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Postgraduates in the White Spaces Research Network

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The White Spaces Research Network developed out of a concern for the difficulties in interdisciplinary dialogue around issues of race, ethnicity and diversity and in critical reflection on the reproduction of whiteness as a social relation of power. In response to these concerns, the Network aims to provide a unique interdisciplinary international forum to engage with ideas from the field of 'critical whiteness studies'. This diverse field of scholarship has produced complex debate around white ethnicities which have been circulating for some time within cultural, postcolonial, literary and historical studies, but which have remained marginal to more traditionally framed social science contexts such as politics studies and organisational theory. The network has developed in response to this marginalisation, focusing its work on exposing, describing and analysing the reproduction of white institutional power in formal and informal organisational settings. The network has sought to develop more inclusive forms of scholarship engaging a range of professionals, activists and learners at all levels. Since its formal estab-

lishment with funds from the World Universities Network it has run a range of events, face to face and ICT enabled; supported a range of student and staff mobility and other research outputs. In 2010 a special issue of the journal *Social Politics: Studies in Gender, State and Society* 'Reproducing and Resisting Whiteness in Organizations, Policies and Places' (Hunter, Swan and Grimes, 2010) published a range of articles from the networks inaugural conference held at the University of Leeds in the Summer of 2009. Since then the network has developed to include members from over 16 countries, with its core members located in Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the UK. Its various activities have also been funded by the Feminist Review Trust, Social Policy Association, and the Universities of Leeds and Sydney.

In August of 2010, the 'New Territories in Critical Whiteness Studies' Postgraduate Conference at the University of Leeds officially launched the postgraduate arm of White Spaces. This postgraduate arm – run by and for postgraduates and early career researchers

– focuses on postgraduate development within critical whiteness studies and aims to create a graduate community that understands the specific pressures, constraints, and opportunities facing postgraduate scholars working in the field. It understands that the critical examination of whiteness within multicultural societies is an important approach for a greater understanding of the shifting accumulations of racial power that shape these societies. As such, they employ critical whiteness studies in order to contribute to significant social debates and pressing contemporary issues. The PG network works semi-autonomously to the broader network – for instance sometimes developing projects specific to postgraduates – but the two have dynamic exchanges, share resources, and feed into one another. The network's activities have garnered their own funding from the Worldwide Universities Network, the Leeds Humanities Research Institute, the Social Policy Association, the Economic History Society, and the University of Leeds. The New Territories conference attracted participants from across Europe and North America. Aside from showcasing their work, these researchers took the opportunity to map out a framework, aims and projects for the postgraduate network.

Transnational, interdisciplinary and intersectional approaches

The network strives to maintain

the transnational character of its founding conference and encourages a broader application of critical whiteness theory to extend it beyond its dominant UK-US-Australia context. Researchers in the network reside in Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, the UK, France, Norway, Canada, the US, South Africa, and Australia. Their research is contextualised in various global locales and often aims to extend the field of critical whiteness studies into new geographic terrains in ways that transcend national, regional and continental borders. We promote international/transnational collaboration by connecting members with similar research interests and providing resources for the creation of virtual programming which allows for global inclusion.

Similarly, network members span different fields in their work, applying for instance sociologically based research on whiteness to literary or historical research. Many also push critical whiteness studies into disciplines in which it has generally been absent (such as music, politics, business, and management). The network's collaborative efforts draw a widening range of involvement, from the humanities, fine arts, social sciences, education, and even engineering.

Our approach to whiteness understands that race constantly interacts with gendered, classed, sexualised and other positions. The interlocking nature of oppressions requires that

an examination of race/racism must not be separated from analyses of gender, class, sexuality, ability and other axes of domination. Thus, we promote an intersectional approach to the study of whiteness.

Enabling postgraduate development

As part of an understanding of the particular needs of postgraduate researchers, the network enables postgraduates to develop as critical researchers and future academics. To do this, the network provides its members with resources such as innovative technologies, connections with other postgraduates and with established academics in the field, and platforms for showcasing research and sharing ideas, with which they may design and lead projects. Some members have developed a series of virtual 'master classes' with established academics from the larger White Spaces network, wherein this mix of researchers from different parts of the globe discuss each other's research in the context of significant debates and ideas surfacing in the field. The postgraduate network has also led to several collaborations and publications, including this important special issue on methodological approaches to critical whiteness studies. Efforts like the masterclasses and publications provide postgraduate members with the skills and experiences necessary for academic employment. The relationship be-

tween the larger White Spaces network and its postgraduate arm also means that members of the latter are able to build relationships with experienced scholars in their field who can share their knowledge with members on the unique pressures and prospects of being a critical whiteness scholar.

Wider engagement

The network aims to build links with practitioners, activists, community groups, and others in order to make an impact beyond the confines of the academy. For many of us, such connections are created through our individual research, yet we also strive to include the participation of non-academics in our projects, particularly those that are web-based or involve virtual technologies. Members also promote educational and activist racial justice efforts taking place in their local settings.

Since the New Territories conference, the network has been active in a number of ways, and it is always open to new members, ideas and contributions. Two important development strands at the moment are: (1) the use of innovative technologies to showcase research and share information and (2) the fostering of research connections and publications. Researchers in the network have established a blog (En/countering Whiteness: <http://encounteringwhiteness.wordpress.com/>) that they will soon be using to

'host' the next virtual master class in order to offer the experience to a greater number of individuals. The blog offers an interactive and thought-provoking platform to bring issues of critical whiteness studies to a wider audience including those outside of the academy. The master class series utilises a video-conferencing technology that has allowed postgraduates and established academics from South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, the UK and the US to regularly connect in postgraduate-led seminars.

Aside from participating in these and other projects, postgraduate members of the network connect with one another through an email listserv that includes individuals from all over the globe and from all stages of postgraduate study. Through this listserv, members share information on opportunities, relevant publications, and conferences and other events; seek support or guidance from each other, for instance in particular aspects of the research process; and pose ideas for projects or publications. The connections fostered here and through other efforts have led to several research collaborations, including joint papers and panels, virtual seminars, and co-authored papers and special issues.

Get involved

The network provides a dynamic, challenging, and critical space in which to debate issues and open

up dialogue within the field of critical whiteness studies and beyond. We are interested in exploring the diversity of perspectives, both ideologically and geographically, and value the personal engagement that people from different approaches and backgrounds can bring to researching whiteness and white ethnicities. The network aims to build on this engagement and to reflect the debates, challenges, and developments in critical whiteness studies, and with the collaborative efforts of current and future participants, it proposes to be an exciting and ongoing enterprise.

Anyone interested in becoming involved in the PGR arm of the White Spaces network should contact Say Burgin hy08snb@leeds.ac.uk or Maddy Abbas ss08msna@leeds.ac.uk at the University Of Leeds. Anyone interested in learning more about or becoming involved in the White Spaces Research Network should contact Dr Shona Hunter S.D.J.Hunter@leeds.ac.uk.

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A recommendation for empirical studies in critical race and whiteness studies: Yasmin Gunaratnam's (2003) *Researching 'Race' and Ethnicity. Methods, Knowledge and Power*. London: Sage Publications, ISBN 0761972870

The book 'Researching 'Race' and Ethnicity' written by Yasmin Gunaratnam" (2003) proved, during the last decade, to be of great value and usefulness for empirical research in studying race and ethnicity. Gunaratnam addresses methodological issues that are still relevant in critically researching race and whiteness. These issues are; the framework of sameness production and othering processes; the attention given to the relations between researchers and research participants; and the importance of signifying silences. I therefore recommend this book and propose in this special issue a presentation that provides an insight into major methodological challenges which are crucial for critical race and whiteness studies.

Gunaratnam addresses in her book a crucial question for critical race and whiteness studies, namely; how can empirical research in social science challenge and transform, rather than reproduce, ethnic and racial thinking? In her book she encourages researchers to work both with and against racial and ethnic categorisations, following the argument of Stuart Hall, that 'race and ethnicity [...] do not constitute different systems of meanings', but rather 'racism's two registers' (Chapter 1, 32).

She puts forward that lived experiences regarding 'race' and 'ethnicity' are complex and ambivalent (chapters 2-4). The multiplicity of such experiences represents a major challenge for students and scholars in critical race and whiteness studies who are, on the one hand, caught by the theoretical recognition of 'race' and 'ethnicity' as social categories, overflowing with multiple meanings, and, on the other hand, by the fact that essentialised identities continue to bear deep significance within everyday life. Gunaratnam reframes

the multiple uses of 'race' and 'ethnicity' within the social production of sameness and otherness, showing how these systems constitute political processes, as they are used to classify populations into (deceptively homogeneous) clusters (29). She reminds us that 'race' and 'ethnicity' thus remain in a constant state of intersectional production and negotiation with other forms of difference such as class, sexuality, disability and age (32).

For scholars working on whiteness with quantitative data, I suggest they should pay particular attention to chapters 2 and 3. Here the scholars can find an important discussion of the methodological biases of the 'race-of-interviewer-effect' and 'matching methodologies' present in quantitative surveys. Resting on hidden assumptions about race as true and objective data, such surveys (re)produce the assumption that 'race' and 'ethnicity' constitute a 'fundamental, basic, absolutely necessary constitutive quality' of a person. This implies the essentialised idea that social groups share an a priori internalised sameness, as well as an 'external difference or otherness' (128). Regarding whiteness, this means that scholars should be aware about the danger of reproducing whiteness as a 'quality of a white person' instead as a system. She states that the production of sameness and otherness is a far more complicated process than presented by the

'convenient binary categorisation', may it be white/black; male/female; inside/outside...(147). She presents discursive opposition between racialised commonality and difference which enables researchers to engage with the multiple, entangled layers of 'race' and 'ethnicity' as lived experiences (Chapter 4). This complexity is strongly needed in studies on race and whiteness and Gunaratnam proposes a set of useful methods of data production and analyses through methodological puzzles inspired by (black) feminism, poststructuralism and postcolonial theories (chapters 5 to 8). The methodology she advocates takes into consideration stances such as relationality and reflexivity, as well as the tools of discourse analysis and multi-sites research.

Chapter 5 examines the ways in which 'race' and 'ethnicity' acquire meaning through different narrative themes in accounts of individual lives. Gunaratnam states that they work as meta-languages that 'can be both hyper-visible or invisible in [their] intersections with other social differences' (122). Taking this argumentation as a recommendation, researchers on race and whiteness have to be aware of the multiple relations which connect various systems of social differentiation. For this purpose she proposes to analyse the entanglement of 'race' and 'ethnicity' with other social categorisations through the concept of relationality.

This brings her to address the ambiguities and meanings generated in research encounters (Chapter 6). As particular ethical challenges, ambiguities of meaning are connected to other narrative themes; to biographical, subjective and social differences between researcher and research participant, and to the ways research is framed by and located within wider social discourses and socio-historical contexts (147). The tools of discourse analysis focus on the function of language rather than considering it as an unproblematic and transparent expression of 'experience' or 'truth'. This method of analysis, highly useful for race and whiteness studies, also puts embodied activities (verbal expression, silence, gesture, movement...) into the centre of analysis, weaving together the discursive, the material, the emotional and the interactional in the stories about individuals' lives (123). This is of importance since whiteness as a dominant category remains largely invisible in narratives, including in research narratives. Gunaratnam convincingly shows that embodied attitudes offer a way to reach beyond such silenced categories.

In her final chapter (8), Gunaratnam follows the path of multi-sited research as a way of connecting and juxtaposing personal experiences of various contexts. She rightly understands multi-site methodology not as doing research in many different sites, but as a methodological tool

that engages with the researcher's circulation and mobility. The different social contexts in which s/he lives should be an invitation to investigate connections between previously unconnected sites as for instance for critical whiteness studies... (183). Alongside other researchers she puts forward, the necessity for reflexivity thus becomes essential for arousing the awareness of our veiled assumptions, and for reflecting on our role in the co-construction of knowledge.

Here I will develop three specific elements of Gunaratnam's book which resonate acutely with methodological concerns of research about whiteness: the framework of sameness production and othering processes, the attention given to the relations between researchers and research participants and the importance of signifying silences. First, replacing the concern for 'race' and 'ethnicity' within the framework of sameness/otherness allows her to go beyond romanticised ideas of internal, a priori similarity within social groups – being 'race', 'ethnicity', 'woman-ness' or any other social category. She convincingly warns against romantic ideas of 'abolishing social distance between researchers and research participants', and invites scholars to find a way of 'inhabiting or occupying it' (195). Exploring the tension between the production of sameness and otherness is a powerful tool for investigating whiteness as part of

dynamic identity constructions, and of relational racialisation processes.

Secondly, paying attention to the relations between researchers and research participants brings her to emphasize the potentially unpleasant side of interview encounters. She very interestingly shows how uneasiness and feelings of awkwardness might draw attention to the researcher's own limits and biases. She convincingly argues that such moments play a central role in data production and the process of creative understanding. This concern stays in direct relation to the exploration of silences and the unspoken, mentioned in landmark studies such as Frankenberg's (1993) and Ware's (1996), as well as in more recent ones (Durie 2003). These researchers have pinpointed out the difficulty of addressing dominant narratives as they remain unspoken and unnamed – at least, 'for many who are white' (Durie 2003, 135). For Gunaratnam, also, the silences serve the purpose of producing an apparently de-racialised identity, enabling those categorised as white to ignore, deny, avoid or forget their racialised subjective and social positioning (114).

Gunaratnam raises important methodological questions that needed to be addressed by research on critical race and whiteness studies: How to figure out silences? Which blank spaces are allusions to whiteness, to 'race' and 'ethnicity'? When might they point to something else?

Such methodological puzzles are related to the methodological problem of naming, and to the shadows of over-interpretation (Olivier de Sardan 2008). Gunaratnam's book makes explicit the analysis of whiteness as produced within the framework of sameness and otherness. Drawing on concrete examples from her own and others' research, she guides us among the complex interweaving of these topics and how this messy entanglement cannot be tidied, as a vivid expression of the dynamic constructions of 'race' and 'ethnicity' as social categorisations. Therefore this book constitutes one methodological milestone for scholars studying critically race and whiteness.

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