Black American Women in Sweden:

Making Sense of Changing Fields

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INTRODUCTION: TALES FROM THE FIELD

Border Crossing

"From what part of Mexico are *you*?" I was surprised to learn that upon first seeing me; most local people assumed that I was some kind of fellow Mexican. They would look at my brown skin and assuming that I couldn't be a *gringa* American, would ask me this question in Spanish, as if there were some small region that spawned unusual looking Mexicans like me. I was a one-semester undergraduate exchange student at the University of Texas, El Paso, the first time I crossed the American border. During this semester, I spent several Sundays at a homeless shelter just across the river in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, helping to take in people for the beds available, learning to play dominoes, giving impromptu English lessons and taking impromptu Spanish lessons.

This shelter harbored many who hoped to make it across the border to the US whether permanently or as part of a cycle of intermittent/seasonal work; not only from Mexico, but from Central and South America as well. I remember a long conversation I had at the shelter with a black man from Colombia who, having made it as far north as Ciudad Juárez by himself, was still trying to get into the States to work and support his family back home. During my time there I witnessed people, in desperation, running across the border into the U.S. at border checkpoints and being chased by *La Migra* (the border patrol) sometimes on foot and sometimes in their trucks. One occurrence stands out in my mind in this process of crossing. It was obvious to the locals that "American

looks" were important when trying to slip past border patrol. Occasionally the shelter would try to help 'unusual cases' (i.e. the very young or very old) steal away into the U.S. One day, there was a teenage brother and sister duo at the shelter who were being prepared to cross. But they were not to cross together. As it was explained to me, the fair-skinned sister would be dressed in American clothes (baseball cap, blue jeans, tennis shoes) would be sneaked across via one of the regular check points later that day surrounded by Americans[1] (and thus more likely to blend in and 'pass' through). Her darker-skinned brother would have to take his chances crossing later that night with a *coyote*[2]. I never found out if they successfully made it across and were reunited on the other side.

I would go to this shelter along with another American student, who happened to be a tall white male with blond hair and blue eyes. One evening, as we walked across the border checkpoint into Texas land, I was stopped, asked to show identification and questioned by border patrol – most likely checking for English fluency. My brown skin was suspect. Although, my friend offered his ID as well, they were not particularly interested in it. This is not to say that he did not have his own set of problems once he crossed over the other way into Mexico. (Un)fortunately for him, he fit the stereotype of the rich American. He had been robbed once and another time he had been physically attacked by a drunk man. As we would walk together along the shopping streets, dressed similarly in old jeans and tennis shoes, shop vendors would call out to him or intercept him and try to sell him things. I would be spared from this since my color marked (or should I say 'un'marked) me as a regular poor local, but the American side of the border

[1] All of whom were white.
[2] A coyote is an individual who, for a price, illegally smuggles people into the U.S. from Mexico, sometimes at great peril to all involved.

was his region. There, he never had any problems.

During the subsequent times that I traveled beyond the borders of the U.S. this 'misplacement' resumed. A few years after my experiences in the Southwest borderlands, now as a graduate student, I was in the Dominican Republic for a summer researching the representation of African heritage at the national anthropological museum in Santo Domingo[3]. One day, I found myself invited to join a group of Americans for a weekend trip to a resort in the southern region. Near the entrance to the resort our van full of Black Americans was stopped. Dominicans were not allowed there, we were later told. When the guards were informed that we were Americans, we were allowed to pass. Experiences such as these, along with many others piqued my interest in studying the experiences of African-Americans living outside the U.S. If brief international visits could stir such conflicting feelings of belonging in people, what about long-term or permanent residency?

Tales from the Field

As was depicted earlier, my own personal experiences with placement and positioning across borders sparked interest in how black Americans are placed and attempt to place themselves as black and American in new locations. As an Anthropology student, I have had opportunities to spend time abroad. And as an African-American student, my unique feelings of otherness during such travels, although disconcerting, became sources of great and growing interest to me. It was also during this time in graduate school, that I began to be introduced to texts containing (usually only brief yet

[3] Thompson, Dondrea. 2002. The Politics of Display or the Display of Politics: Cultural Policy and the Museo del Hombre Dominicano. *Museum Anthropology*. Summer, 25(2): 38-49.

fascinating) accounts of other black anthropologists experiencing these same issues. The dynamics of placement and positioning are sometimes most explicitly illustrated in the stories of anthropologists of color doing fieldwork since, in Gina Ulysee's words, it is often these researchers who "[embody] more identities than [they know] how to negotiate…" (Ulysee 1997)

Anthropologist Karla Slocum (2001) considered her field work experiences not only a type of professional cultural travel but also as unexpectedly personal 'travels in race, gender, national identity and practice'. Here she describes her own personal experiences with placement and identity during two early work experiences abroad.

> One point in my life when I found myself reflecting deeply on the meaning and politics of my identity as a Black woman occurred when I was traveling in the Caribbean on a work assignment. In 1986, I worked for an international agency as group leader to twelve U.S. high school students who would participate in community development projects in Grenada. …Three years after the [U.S.] invasion –at the time of our group's stay—the legacy of the U.S. presence was evident in many ways… Our group resided in a Grenadian town in which there was open hostility toward Whites, especially Americans. This was significant because all but one student (an Asian-American) and myself were White.
>
> It was not long before most of the group had had several unsettling encounters. Community members gave them hard stares, uttered racial epithets, and made threatening gestures toward them. On one memorable occasion, this anti-United States/White hostility was expressed by several Grenadians in a truck, who vigorously waved machetes and shouted racial epithets as they passed the students on the road. For the students, this moment was particularly jolting and shaped many of our future discussions of cross-cultural encounters and expectations about foreign travel as (White) Americans. After all these experiences, the students modified their behavior in an attempt to appear less like 'typical' Americans, and as they began work in the community, the relations between the townsfolk and themselves were not as tense.
>
> My own initial experience, however, was quite different from that of the rest of the group. When alone, and even sometimes when with the students, I did not receive the same critical comments about being American, or about being White. When walking in other Granadian towns, I was often mistaken for a local or a resident of another Caribbean island – that is until I spoke and revealed my American accent. And when I walked around the town in which we lived, people were intrigued by me as a foreign Black person, wondering how I could look like them and be American at the same time (as if all Americans are White). I found Granadians to be immediately accepting of me and curious because of this common look, rather than showing hostility toward me as an American.
>
> Thus the status that the students experienced versus the status that I experienced in the United States, both of which were partially circumscribed by race, were inverted in this momentary space. The Grenadian setting provided a kind of paradox to the typical daily existence to which we were accustomed. As White, wealthy Americans, the students had been accustomed to roaming relatively uninhibited in the world; their race, class and nationality afforded them that mobility. In Grenada, however, they did not hold the privilege with which they were most familiar; they

> learned that wealth and Whiteness did not grant them full access wherever they chose to live. In my case, I maneuvered with greater ease and in a less obtrusive way than I did in many U.S. settings. Paradoxically, I seemed to have access to more venues than usual. (Slocum 2001, 133-134)

This 'inversion of status' is an interesting phenomenon to witness because it sheds light on the functioning mechanism of white privilege. Being rejected from or not having full access to every location based on the color of one's skin was something to which these students were clearly unaccustomed. They were now placed in a 'marked' category while Slocum found herself 'unmarked', at least when among strangers. The students had to modify their behavior when interacting with the black majority to appear less like 'typical' Americans, in the same sense that black Americans often feel pressured to modify their behavior when interacting with the white majority to appear like 'typical' black people. The Grenadians were kind to her in an Anti-American (meaning anti-white) climate, giving her color more weight than her nationality since in their minds they shared some common bonds (color) that were deeper and more fundamental than national affiliation.

A few years later while conducting Master's degree research on the nearby island of St. Vincent, she found that:

> When they first saw me asking questions at the docks, most had placed me not as North American but as Vincentian. Approaching them with questions caused the women traders to assume that I was a government representative sent to obtain information about trader's work. This meant that I was marked as someone to fear because I might charge them higher fees or monitor their compliance with shipping regulations. In their eyes, I appeared to fit local categories of class, and probably color, that were different from the ones the traders (mostly rural, "lower-class" women) occupied. They also placed me into their categories of nationality, assuming I was Vincentian as well. As in Grenada, it is likely that my outward appearance as a Black person led them to not see me as an American. Even as I became closer to some of the women over the months, they remained surprised that I could be Black and American." (Slocum 2001, 141)

During both of her experiences in the Caribbean, Slocum is continually faced with the paradox of being both insider and outsider simultaneously to the people she worked with and among. Again, it was not her appearance that set her apart. It was her unusual

behavior of asking questions of people unknown to her (and most likely taking notes) that led to the trader women positioning her in a class above their own. The Vincentian's placement of Slocum within local categories is of course expected; although it is interesting to note that even later in the fieldwork, after she developed personal relationships with some other women they still remained surprised that she could be black and American as if these identities were mutually exclusive. This paradox of greater maneuverability and access of which Slocum speaks also has its limits, which can soon become problematic.

'Blending in' and sharing physical characteristics with the local population sometimes is the source of the conflict. Gina Ulysee, Black American woman and Anthropology student wrote about her experiences in Jamaica where everyone, it seems, had a different identity for her, except the one she wanted them to have. Unlike Slocum's experience of being positioned 'too far away', Ulysee had the equally unsettling experience of being positioned 'too closely'.

> I also noticed that some faculty assumed that when we Black anthropologists work in the field, we do not face as many hardships or sacrifice as much as white anthropologists do. The truth is, I found that in Kingston I embodied more identities than I knew how to negotiate—outsider/insider, feminist/half-anthropologist, native...
>
> Many people were offended by my short, natural hairstyle. Women couldn't believe I had cut off all that hair. Most men reacted with verbal violence to women with hairstyles like mine. I was often asked, "Why did you do that to your head?" That question was often followed by, "Do you have a man?"—suggesting that I was a lesbian. Back then, before "low hair" became fashionable, the middle-class women who wore this style were often artists or "yardies" (Jamaicans who went abroad and came back) or working class women who do not adhere to social norms, known as "rebel-women."
>
> My love for the sun and this cropped hair gave me another identity in Jamaica. People assumed I was African. When asked, at times, I would answer, "Aren't we all?" which often discombobulated the inquirer. That my natural appearance was equated with African-ness is more than ironic, since many Africans, themselves, also suffer from that perverse "white bias." The Afro-phobia—fear of blackness—that pervades Jamaica is among other things bound up with a fear of economic and in some cases social poverty.
>
> On some grant applications, I requested funding for certain status symbols. I wanted to document the fact that as a dark-skinned woman in Jamaica, I had special research requirements because I

> had neither the political nor social luxury of whiteness. As a "native" of the region, I would be expected to know better than to "dress down." Before my return in 1995, I shopped for my status symbols, a "lady's" wardrobe—jewelry and designer glasses that said "foreign" or "money"; clothing that included tailored pieces for the interviews with officials, lots of high heels, perfume, make-up…
>
> At the arcades—the markets where the women I was researching worked—I wore long floral skirts and linen shirts or blouses that covered my arms, which got me the respect of the older men around, who dubbed me their African Princess, but annoyed the women vendors, who thought I must be either pregnant or spineless, because I did not accentuate my body as they did. When I did wear shorter clothing, I dreaded going to the field site without my survival clothing kit because the markets are filled with the testosterone of the "goose-killers"—young men the market women hire to steer customers to their stalls—who would grab me and demand that I talk with them. (Ulysee 1997)

Ulysee's sharp reply of "Aren't we all [African]?" was a direct attempt to loosen the power of placement from the grasp of others. Initially, she was either placed as an insider, a local with low 'yardie' social position or placed as an outsider, an African, also with low position. She used her learned knowledge of local classifications proactively, attempting through dress and outward material possessions, to actively place herself as an outsider of high positioning by crafting and projecting identities of her own choosing.

While Black American anthropologist Carla N. Daughtry was conducting dissertation research on the identity formation of (black) Sudanese refugees in Egypt, she got to experience first hand what her subjects experienced as black people, and specifically as black women in a new land where they do not 'blend in' to the local population. For example, Daughtry as a researcher traveled around the area on her own in a region where no respectable woman can go about unaccompanied by a male. In addition to her movements, her dark skin and western clothes also stood out. As far as the Egyptian men were concerned, she fit their stereotypes of either 'African woman as prostitute' or alternately 'Western woman as sexually liberated swinger'. No matter how conservatively she dressed or how much she avoided eye contact with men, she would

still hear them calling to her in the streets *"Ya, Samaara! Pssst, pssst. Ya Samaara!"* She reflected on these multiply imposed and self-crafted personas:

> I also shift between multiple aspects of my self in the course of my ethnographic encounters with Sudanese and Egyptians. Arab Sudanese, noting my nationality, class background or educational status, identify me as a "Brown" person and emphasize the American part of my Black American identity. But when I'm with African Sudanese, I am readily claimed as a fellow Black; they also attempt to discourage my fieldwork with Arab Sudanese. Still at other times, when dealing with Egyptian officials for instance, I capitalize on the privileges afforded me by my United States passport and affiliation with a world-class university … I will never forget the time an Egyptian cab driver defined my identity in his terms: "Michael Jackson, yes," he said. "African, no." (Daughtry 1997)

Unlike Slocum, Daughtry was not able to move about in a 'less obtrusive way'. She phenotypically blended in with a rejected minority –the Sudanese refugees that were the subjects of her research. The Egyptians identified her as an African woman, which, at least according to Daughtry, came with a host of sexual presuppositions. Daughtry tried changing her clothing and behavior to fit local norms (dressing more conservatively and avoiding eye contact with men), but it did not improve her situation. Her skin color had marked her and she experienced a (hyper)visibility. Such overt behavior as that committed by the Egyptians towards Daughtry would be much more rare to occur in the United States today, however it serves as a concentrated and magnified experience of Black Americans subconscious expectations. Where does she belong? She finds refuge in no single identity (black, African, American, researcher, woman) while in Egypt so she shifts between them, never really feeling at ease. Daughtry also admits to, at times, actively capitalizing on the privileges she is afforded by her American passport. In this research I look at this connection to / relationship with the United States among Black American women in Sweden, as such a connection may not be fully realized until outside the national borders.

Outsiders, 'Us' and 'Them'

Unarguably, the need to belong is a strong feeling. Despite having a heritage so deeply woven into the fabric of American history, within the US, black Americans are still faced with feelings of alienation. Even today in the 21st century, when traveling in some parts of the American nation, one still thinks, 'Can I go there? Is it safe?' Most people of color in the U.S. may have had similar encounters of exclusion. Being made to feel different, alien, not at home, and not belonging is something that can be fundamentally painful, as it questions an individual's identity. One's very physiology is used to mark and place one elsewhere.

Does this mindset disappear in a new country or it is transferred? Instead of looking out for the Klan, are Black Americans abroad looking out for skinheads? Or have they found some measure of freedom, not available in the States? Africans were already being shipped to this land before the Mayflower even set sail. So needless to say it is an especially biting insult when Black Americans are reminded of their stepchild status within the American national family. Black Americans have a long history of going abroad for home, acceptance, membership, belonging, a fresh start, or simply a new perspective on the United States and its meaning and relationship to them (Ottley 1951; Pettinger 1998; Carter 1973; Smith 1970). Although in 1951, LeRoi Ottley described Europe as 'no green pasture', that hasn't stopped thousands of Black Americans from seeking solace on other shores. Historical and individual biographic accounts (Carter 1973; Dunbar 1968; Harrington 1993; Ottley 1951; Smith 1970; Stovall 1996, 1997) account for nearly all published accounts of Black American experiences abroad. Few known published research studies have been conducted specifically on Black American

populations abroad. In reality however, Black American populations not only exist beyond the geo-political border of the United States, they have histories there as well. Historians including Tyler Stoval (1996, 1997) have written a small number of books and articles on the long-standing Black American population in France, while three award-winning independent documentaries have been made by filmmaker Regge Life (1993, 1995, 1999) featuring the Black American population in Japan. Anthropological studies of black American populations abroad are almost non-existent. Anthropologist Nancy Fairley has been conducting research among African-Americans living in Ghana, examining how they reconstruct their identities in a new nation where racialized identities, as Fairley claims, are not important. When completed, this work will provide an informative contrast to my own.

When traveling to another country, one is often put into a defined and accurate category of outsider. On the other hand, for people of color, that outsider status can bring back memories and associations of outsider status in the U.S. And in Europe one can subconsciously or consciously link the two whether fairly or unfairly. Outsider status, it is soon learned is a double-edged sword. 'Good' outsider status frees one from the cultural norms, while keeping him/her outside of the anti-immigrant local ethnic/racial hierarchy. While on the other hand 'bad' outsider status makes one feel excluded, 'not one of us' and is especially noticeable if physical characteristics are shared with those on the bottom of the local pecking order.

Discussions such as these may be old but one thing that remains today is a notion of difference; the hyphenated and qualified identities such as African-American, and black American that at once both separate those of African descent from the rest of America,

and link them to their African heritage. While white Americans may choose hyphenated identities for themselves, black Americans and others of color do not have the luxury of choice. Several years ago, my brother and his wife were aboard an international cruise ship and like all others aboard the ship they had to fill out emergency cards. They were personally instructed by a cruise ship official that they must write down 'African-American' or 'Black American' and not just 'American' so that they would be able to be identified. It is this notion of difference that is still palpable today among black Americans in the United States. Is it also the case among black Americans outside of the US? What do these slights and misplacements stir up, if anything, in the mind of the person being placed, especially since Black Americans have a history of having their identities and sense of belonging shaped by the white majority.

"Ah, chickening out from doing the real Africans eh?" an instructor replied to my telling her of my research focus. Comments such as these stung obviously for more than one reason. The backhanded and even possibly humorous implication of Black Americans being 'fake Africans' notwithstanding, I found myself insulted that research among Black Americans was somehow less than worthy. After all, Africans are of course more exotic, more anthropological, aren't they? I should study 'them' shouldn't I?

I was met with raised eyebrows whenever I mentioned the subject population size aloud. What would be the significance of such research? I understand the value of research should not be dictated by population size. Afro-centric Feminist Epistemology challenges the Eurocentric Masculinist validation process by asking, 'who decides what is important and what is not?' It also de-centers the 'either/or' dichotomy by utilizing a 'both-and' conceptual orientation and values concrete knowledge through personal lived

experience of researchers as well as subjects (Collins 1990; McClaurin 2000). One could say that this research is not 'traditional' anthropology. The researcher is black, not white, and female, not male. The location is Europe not Africa, in a city not a village, and I am doing research among 'us' not 'them'. As I have shown in the experiences of Slocum (2001), Ulysee (1997) and Daughtry (1997), and which has been noted by Narayan (1993), the very, concepts of self/other, anthropologist/native, insider/outsider should not be assumed to be stable or even oppositional. For instance 'Europe' is often found in Africa and vice versa. 'Us' can include 'them'. In fact, these dichotomies may be better conceptualized as a sliding continuum where position is determined by a confluence of individual agency and changing societal influences.

With this research about the experiences of black Americans (who generally have a history of conflicted feelings of belonging in the US) living in Sweden, I am curious to see if there is a shift of perception of belonging to the US among black Americans when outside the US. I became interested in examining these issues in Sweden because of a lot of the similarities between Sweden and US. The majority of the population is of European descent with sizable and growing non-European immigration and diversity. Sweden has its own scheme of belonging not dissimilar to that which exists in the U.S. So how do Black American women negotiate their multiple identities in Sweden? How do they make sense of their experiences? What is their connection to the US as a result of this separation? These questions and others will be examined in the chapters that follow.

CHAPTER 1 ONE: POSITIONING THE FIELD

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Research Questions and Theoretical Framework

The goal of this research is to explore how black American women negotiate being both black and American in Sweden. In order to address this, this study is framed by two questions. The first question asks, how are the women placed and positioned in Sweden and how do they place and position themselves in this new location? The second question asks, do the women have a sense of belonging to the U.S. and/or Sweden? And if so, what form(s) does it take? In attempting to discuss these research questions, I draw from a range of academic literature such as that on social fields, transnationalism, positioning, sense-making and intersectionality.

Race, National Belonging, and Transnationalism

Racialized identities are often part and parcel of conceptions of national belonging (Balibar 1991; Omi and Winnant 1994; Calhoun 1997; Collins 2001; Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). Concepts of nation worldwide are linked with ideology of common blood and ancestry. The nation has been defined as 'people who share common origins and history as indicated by their shared culture, language and identity' (Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001, 17-18). In this way the nation is an imagined community (Anderson 1991 [1983]). Colonialism, labor migration and other worldwide movements brought people together of different backgrounds where subjugated peoples were either partially inducted into a ready made national identity (e.g. Gilroy 1987) or, as in the case of the United

States, a national identity was formed around them and their status (e.g. Omi and Winnant 1994).

Patricia Hill Collins in *"Like One of the Family: Race, Ethnicity, and the Paradox of U.S. National Identity"* (2001) discusses the racial hierarchy of belonging in the United States in which African-Americans are technically/legally members of the U.S. nation-state (the American family) yet second-class citizens (only 'like' one of the family due to a lack of blood ties). The metaphor of the nation as a family (that shares a blood based racial heritage), provides an interesting perspective of the race based exclusions inherent in the construction and maintenance of American national identity. When immigrants settle into the United States they are placed within this race-based hierarchy (Ong 1996). Nina Glick Schiller and Georges Fouron (2001) co-authored a book about the experiences of Georges and other Haitian immigrants in the U.S., in which this placement and belonging becomes a reoccurring theme.

> As a black man, Georges experiences racial differentiation as part of his life in NY. He weaves into his relationships to both Haiti and the United States what he has learned about who doesn't belong in America. …Georges learns...that he is never fully American. His "Americanness" is modified by his blackness… (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001, 6)

In 1903 W.E.B. DuBois wrote of the 'double consciousness' of African-Americans. "One ever feels his two-ness, - an American, a Negro…" (DuBois 16). And today, it may be argued that, this sense of awareness remains.

America exists as a racialized society (Collins 2001) in which "…racial categories frame different ways of belonging to the nation-state itself, namely, variations of first-class citizenship for white Americans of varying class status, an ambiguous and contested citizenship status for indigenous peoples, and permanent second-class citizenship for people of African descent" (Collins 1998, 8). Using African American women's

experiences “as a touchstone for analysis,” Collins suggests that “African American women’s treatment as second-class citizens reflects a belief that they are ‘like one of the family’, that is, legally part of the US nation-state, but simultaneously subordinated within it” (ibid, 3). This second class citizenship, and its various manifestations, can create a sense of partial belonging. Not only do White Americans have and use the power to define family (the national American family) they also have the power to position non-white Others (in this case Black Americans) where they please (ibid, 4-5), inside the family, outside of it, or somewhere in between. In other words, they decide who belongs and to what extent/degree. As long as Black Americans know their ‘proscribed’ place according to Collins (ibid, 4-5), they’ll be more or less accepted.

American society has as its base, the bedrock of ethnic nationalism. Ethnic nationalism is an ideology which purports that a nation is made up of an ethnically homogenous population. In the United States, white Americans comprise the population that makes up the nation “with whiteness itself grounded in blood ties of racial purity” (Collins 1998, 10). As Collins aptly states, “Only whites can shed their racial and ethnic identities in order to stand for the generalized national citizen. Only whites can be full, red-blooded Americans” (Collins 1998, 19). Historically, immigrant populations made a point to play up their ties to their lands of origins. This was apparently part of a “‘whitening’ strategy,” one in which they “contrasted their claims to ‘civilization’, ‘culture’ and a homeland to the alleged lack of such legacies of black Americans” (Pessar 2003, 24; Glick Schiller 1999). The subsequent influxes of European immigrants also learned and utilized this strategy which buttressed the coupling of “whiteness with American nationality, belonging and social mobility” (Pessar 2003, 24; Jacobson 1998;

Haney-Lopez 1996; Ignatiev 1995; Roediger 1991). Ethnic and racial newcomers learn that in America's social hierarchy, black people rank at the bottom (Pessar 2003, 26; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994; Kasinitz 1992). In the early 1900s, Black Caribbean immigrants quickly found that they faced a similar challenge, yet different outcome from their European counterparts. They also wanted first-class American citizenship and its benefits, but found that it was not available to them in the same way as it was for immigrating Europeans (Collins 1998, 11). Unlike the earlier waves of European immigrants who could, in actuality, become white, more recent racial and ethnic immigrant groups can at best only become 'honorary whites' (ibid, 19).

> Furthermore, while transnational practices may reduce power asymmetries based on gender and race, and even promote solidarity based on these dimensions, such asymmetries often tend to persist not only as a steady source of struggle, but also of identity. For example, Ticuanense in New York, while marginalized by mainstream society, affirm and recreate an essentialized group identity by positioning themselves as racially superior to their equally impoverished Puerto Rican and African American neighbors. Analogously, Mixtec immigrants remain discriminated against and marginalized by their fellow mestizo Mexicans in the United States… (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, 23-24)

Literature on transnational migration provides insight into how, as the above quote demonstrates, "immigrants or 'bi-national subjects' may be doubly empowered, empowered in one social field and subordinated in another, or doubly subordinated depending on their particular historical and current societal context" (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, 24). Does such a historical context influence how Black Americans make sense of their interactions with Swedes and their new lives in a European nation?

Fields

In this research I utilize Peggy Levitt and Nina Glick Schiller's concept of transnational social field and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of social field. Researchers have shown that since the 1990s, migrants who move internationally "often, and seemingly to an increasing degree, retain bonds of various kinds with their countries of origin (Basch

et al. 1994; Pries 1999; Vertovec 1999; Faist 2000; Kivisto 2001; Gustafson 2005, 8). These international migrants "produce and reproduce relationships and practices that connect sending and receiving countries; they also develop individual and collective identities that refer to more than one place or nation-state. These tendencies are often referred to as transnationalism" (Gustafson 2005, 8). The origin of transnational migration scholarship in the United States has been rooted in and developed by its criticism of the "unilinear assimilationist paradigm of classical migration research" (Glick Schiller 1999; Basch, Glick Schiller, and Szanton Blanc 1994; Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc 1995; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 4). Gustafson explains:

> Contrary to the national perspective, which regards migration as a one-time event, the transnational perspective understands migration as an ongoing process that involves continuing mobility and relationships across national borders. Such transnational connections are often obscured by national understandings of migration, which view migration primarily from the perspective of the receiving country and with a strong emphasis on immigrant integration. A transnational perspective, on the other hand, involves both sending and receiving countries and, importantly, their interconnectedness through border-crossing relations, exchanges and institutions. With this perspective, mobility and belonging are complements rather than opposites (Gustafson 2002b; Castles 2002), and sustained ties with two or more countries are regarded as an integral, and potentially beneficial, part of the migratory experience. (Gustafson 2005, 8)

Levitt and Glick Schiller stress that "…while nation-states *are still extremely important*, social life is not confined by nation-state boundaries" (emphasis original) (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 7). I intend to show in this research that the lives of black American women in Sweden are by no means, whether physically, emotionally, or psychologically entirely bounded by the Scandinavian nation.

Transnationalism is defined as "a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic, and political relations, create social fields that cross national boundaries" (Basch et al. 1994, 22; cited in Gustafson 2005, 8) but do not erase those boundaries. Levitt and Glick Schiller in their discussion of transnational social fields first describe the meaning of social field of which they in part drew from the work

of Pierre Bourdieu. They state that Bourdieu used the concept of social field "to call attention to the ways in which social relationships are structured by power. The boundaries of a field are fluid and the field itself is created by the participants who are joined in the struggle for social position. Society for Bourdieu is the intersection of various fields within a structure of politics (Jenkins 1992, 86). According to Bourdieu, either individuals or institutions may occupy the networks that make up the field and link social positions" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 9). It is known that Bourdieu's concept of the field was crafted to be applied at all scales, from the most macrocosmic to meso-level to the most microcosmic (Emirbayer and Williams 2005, 692). Bourdieu uses the term 'social space as a whole' to describe the national society as a field (ibid, 690). Within this macro-field are multiple and increasingly circumscribed fields, the most microcosmic fields being individual families (ibid, 690). Levitt and Glick Schiller conclude that, "while his approach does not preclude the notion of transnational social fields, he does not directly discuss the implications of social fields that are not coterminous with state boundaries" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 9). Levitt and Glick Schiller proceed to extend the theory into the realm of transnationalism.

Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, 9) define a social field as "a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed. Social fields are multi-dimensional, encompassing structured interactions of differing forms, depth, and breath…" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 9). They argue that "national boundaries are not necessarily contiguous with the boundaries of social fields. National social fields are those that stay within national boundaries while transnational social fields connect actors,

though direct and indirect relations across borders" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 9). They discuss (cf. Chapter Six) how "a social field perspective…reveals that there is a difference between ways of being in social fields as opposed to ways of belonging" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 11). As such "migrant incorporation into a new land" (ways of being) and "transnational connections to a homeland or to dispersed networks of family, compatriots, or persons who share a religious or ethnic identity" (ways of belonging) are not mutually exclusive and can occur simultaneously and reinforce one another (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 2).

I agree that national borders can no longer form the boundaries for examining people's lives and behaviors. Researchers must take into account that an individual's perceptions, actions and practices can be influenced by rules of interaction elsewhere, beyond the borders of the nation. In fact, migrants "are often embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields, encompassing those who move and those who stay behind" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 2). The nature of interaction differs within various fields. By viewing the concept of transnational social fields as extending beyond the boundaries of nation-states, it becomes clearer "that individuals within these fields are, through their everyday activities and relationships, influenced by multiple sets of laws and institutions" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 11). Levitt and Schiller are also cognizant of the impact of intersectionality in understanding behavior in this theoretical context. Individuals, they state, "occupy different gender, racial, and class positions within different states at the same time. Recognizing that migrant behavior is the product of these simultaneous multiple statuses of race, class, and gender makes certain social processes more understandable" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 17). Those who live in

transnational social fields “experience multiple loci and layers of power, and are shaped by them, but they can also act back upon them” (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 15).

Levitt and Glick Schiller offer a broader, higher level view of transnational aspects of fields, while Bourdieu offers a more focused view of social field in his discussion of individual actors, power and positioning. Both allow for the existence of multiple, concurrent, intersecting fields in which individuals are specifically and yet multiply positioned. In this study I identify and discuss three distinct social fields which black American women living in Sweden continuously traverse. It is important to emphasize that these fields are not only traversed or engaged physically. Living within a transnational social field means that fields may be engaged through emotional influence, ways of thinking, sense-making, or memory. They become fields of belonging. These fields are - 1) Swedish field: this field is characterized by interactions with white Swedes and immigrants. 2) American field: this field is characterized by interactions with Americans, white Americans primarily regardless of location. 3) Black American field: this field is characterized by interactions with other black Americans, regardless of location. As such, I refer to the American and black American fields as social locations that can be experienced transnationally, and not just a physical places. I show how influences within these fields of belonging reach out across national borders and are experienced on an interpersonal level. In this research I examine how one group black American women make sense of these changing positions as they navigate their ways through these multiple fields.

Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of field also contributes to my research by delineating a more detailed view of the inner workings of fields as they involve individuals and on-the ground daily interactions. Bourdieu defines a field as:

> a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions. These positions are objectively defined, in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation (situs) in the structure of the distribution of species of power (or capital) whose possession commands access to the specific profits that are at stake in the field, as well as by their objective relation to other positions (domination, subordination, homology[4], etc. (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 97)

According to Bourdieu, there are "'invariant laws' or 'universal mechanisms' that are structural properties characteristic of all fields" (Bourdieu 1993, 72; cited in Swartz 1997, 122). They apply to all fields at all scales, from society as a whole to individual families. First, fields are "arenas of struggle for control over valued resources" (ibid, 122). According to Swartz, "Bourdieu (1989:375) conceptualized resources as form of capital[5] when they become the object of struggle and function as a 'social relation of power' (ibid, 122). Fields 'are arenas of struggle for legitimation… for the right to monopolize the exercise of 'symbolic violence'[6]" (ibid, 123). Struggle takes place over both symbolic and material resources (ibid, 136). Symbolic resources, for instance may include legitimation and recognition, while material resources may include government funds and

[4] "Thus, homology of position among individuals and groups in different fields means that those who find themselves in dominated positions in the struggle for legitimation in one field tend also to find themselves in subordinate positions in other fields." (Swartz 1997, 130)

[5] "Bourdieu nominated four forms of capital; economic (money and assets); cultural (e.g. forms of knowledge; taste, aesthetic and cultural preferences; language, narrative and voice); social (e.g. affiliations and networks; family religious and cultural heritage) and symbolic (things which stand for all of the other forms of capital and can be 'exchanged' in other fields, e.g. credentials)" (Thomson 2008, 69). (See Chapter Three)

[6] Bourdieu (2000, 170), defines symbolic violence as "...the coercion which is set up only through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator...when their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator, which, being merely an incorporated form of the structure of the relation of domination, make this relationship appear as natural."

jobs. In this work, I describe the struggle in each of these three fields as being over the symbolic resources of recognition and acceptance.

A second invariant law is that the field is inherently hierarchical. According to Swartz (1997, 120), a field is "a spatial metaphor" that "suggests rank and hierarchy". As such, "interactions among actors within fields are shaped by their relative location in the hierarchy of positions" (ibid, 120). Fields are both sites of resistance and domination, which are relationally linked to each other (ibid, 121). Fields are "structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions based on types and amounts of capital" (ibid, 123). The struggle for position pits those in dominant positions "who are able to exercise some degree of monopoly power over the definition and distribution of capital" against those in subordinate positions "who attempt to usurp the advantages" (ibid, 124). Bourdieu believed that events in adjacent fields and events external to fields including demographic change, such as immigration I suggest, could bring about change within a field (Thomson 2008, 74). To Bourdieu, this opposition occurs "between the established agents and the new arrivals in fields (Swartz 1997, 124), who utilize different types of field strategies, such as conservation and succession[7]. Conservation strategies are utilized by individuals and groups who are in dominant positions in the field. Succession strategies are utilized by new entrants, such as immigrants, who attempt to obtain dominant positions in a field. Succession strategies challenge the legitimacy of the dominant group to define the standards of the field (Swartz 1997, 125). However as Thomson (2008, 73) points out, "even though a field is profoundly hierarchized, with dominant social agents and

[7] He also discusses a third strategy of subversion. "Strategies of subversion are pursued by those who expect to gain little from the dominant groups." (Swartz 1997, 125) This category may be attributed to radical groups who are not a subject of discussion in this research.

institutions having considerable power to determine what happens within it, there is still agency and change." According to Bourdieu, "the game that that occurs in social spaces or fields is competitive, with various social agents using differing strategies to maintain or improve their position" (Thomson 2008, 69). As such, cultural capital can be exchanged for a change in position and thus for positional power.

Place and Position

I use 'placing' to refer to the selection and movement of identities, or markers of identities, into categories of an individual's understanding and choosing. These categories both implicitly and explicitly involve notions of belonging. Also in 'placing', individuals "are crafting social structure in each interaction in order to establish, disrupt, or maintain relatedness" (Kingsolver 1992, 131; cited in Sawyer 2000, 41, note 33). As Lena Sawyer (2000, 41-42) has summarized, "migrants not only encounter, but negotiate, the whirl of a historically-grounded national classificatory system that seeks to push them into "ready made" identities within a national social hierarchy of categorizations." Black American women in Sweden are often placed incorrectly as African immigrants and refugees. They are then positioned lowly in the social landscape. Black American women do not wish to be a part of this dialectic of (non)belonging between white Swedes and immigrants. They wish to be placed and actively engage to place themselves as outsiders, as 'Americans' who in Sweden are popularly considered not to be 'immigrants' and are granted a high social positioning. Since some positions may be restricted based on individuals meeting specific criteria, one may self-position by identifying oneself as belonging in one group or category, in order to embrace or reject particular expectations associated with that group. Either opportunities or barriers are derived from specific locations in social fields.

Cultural, social, and political meanings are attached to positions (Davies and Harré 1990), which both affects and is affected by personal experience and subjectivity (Holland and Leander 2004, 137). The positions "may be seen by one or other of the participants in terms of known 'roles' (actual or metaphorical), or in terms of known characters in shared story lines", such as with interactions of black and white Americans, "or they may be much more ephemeral and involve shifts in power, access, or blocking of access, to certain features of claimed or desired identity, and so on" (Davies and Harré 1990), such as black Americans experiences with Swedish attempts at placing. There can be considered "a number of dimensions of 'individual differences' in positioning." (Langenhove and Harré 1999, 30). Just as social class, gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, religion, etc. "intersect to produce multiple positions, so they intersect to produce diverse possibilities of racialized positioning." (Phoenix 2005, 108)

> There is a general agreement that the local accomplishment of positioning means that each interactional situation allows the possibility of different positioning. This is partly because people will have experiences of various other people attempting to position them in very different ways. Since people are not 'social dopes' or ciphers, but practiced at social interaction, each interaction allows opportunities for taking up, ignoring, or resisting particular positions. This opens up the possibility of contradictions in positioning with people being positioned differently in different interactions and, sometimes at different points in the same interaction. (Phoenix 2005, 106-107)

I suggest that individuals or groups can be positioned differently within different fields. Positioning involves a sense of location and flexibility (Phoenix 2005, 107); it is also something that can shift within a field, and shift when moving among fields. Individuals enact agency in that they can take action to position and/or reposition themselves in social arenas/fields. This can be done through the activation of capital. However, the repositioning must be recognized by those in power. The activation of capital must be

accepted[8].

Positioning oftentimes occurs discursively[9]. For instance, there is interactive positioning "in which what one person says positions another" and reflexive positioning "in which one positions oneself" (Davies and Harré 1990). Individuals "position themselves and others as they explain, defend, abandon, or entrench their own positions and resist or take up the positions others produce for the them to occupy" (van Langenhove and Harré 1999). However, I also point out that positioning also occurs through gazes, stares, touch (and more broadly although not discussed in this research, through policy and legislation). Positional identities, as discussed by Holland (1998, 127) "have to do with how one identifies one's position relative to others, mediated through the ways one feels comfortable or constrained, for example to speak to another, to command another, to enter into the space of another, to touch the possessions of another...". In this research I illustrate these different positioning media.

Since "social experience is a fundamental source of social knowledge" and individuals "are never indifferent, abstract, objective recorders and analysts of social events" (Cowlishaw 2004, 68) it then becomes apparent that one's past experiences readily influence their current perceptions. Black American women have a multi-faceted

[8] It is of note to recall that individuals as differently situated actors not only may or may not perceive an act of positioning based on differences, but also their desire and ability will differ as well. "First, people will differ in their capacity to position themselves and others, their mastery of the techniques so to speak. Secondly, they will differ in their willingness or intention to position and be positioned. Thirdly, they will also differ in their power to achieve positioning acts. While the first two variations are individual attributes, the latter is social." (Langenhove and Harré (1999, 30)

[9] Within intentional positioning, there are three orders. "First, there are discursive practices in which people position themselves, position others and are positioned by them." "Secondly, there are the discursive practices in which acts of positioning of the first kind become a topic or target…" for example interviewees' analysis on conversations. Thirdly is how I as the researcher position informant discourse about positioning. (Langenhove and Harré 1999, 22-23)

historical record of being positioned and struggling to position themselves in America. In Sweden, I suggest that most black American women are content to position themselves on the outside of the Swedish field of struggle between white Swedes and immigrants. They activate capital to exit that tension. Whether in the US or Sweden, positioning is not always necessarily intentional, but can be perceived that way depending on the individual subjectivities of either person involved and on the outcome of the person's sense-making process.

Sense-Making

In this research I discuss how Black American women make sense of their experiences in Sweden and of their sense of changing positions within and among fields. Sense-making is an effort of reflection, of situating one's experiences in space and time. Individuals consciously reflect and theorize to gain understanding as they situate their experiences in the web of past understanding of social interactions. Sense-making is the process of understanding the 'why's of an unsettling, novel, or ambiguous situation of interaction. Sense-making is the process of creating understanding and attributing meanings to such interactions and situations. Making sense of something is about looking back and developing reasons for past interactions and events (Endsley 2004). Sense-making is a cognitive process of growth and learning in which frames or mental models of understanding are stretched and reshaped. It has been theorized by Klein et al. (2006) as an active process of simultaneously trying to put new and ambiguous information into an existing frame or mental model and also adjusting the frame to fit around the new information. These models inform an individual's sense of place in the world, position in a field or one's very identity.

Sense-making takes place both within individuals and groups. Within groups (cf. Chapter Five), sense-making is a process of collaboration and questioning in which out of different individuals' perspectives and varied interests some sense of shared understanding is created. In this research, black American women who are themselves differently situated actors bring in different histories, yet may use similar techniques to make sense of encounters and interactions. As a part of what I argue are their lives in transnational fields, they often use sense-making processes developed in one location (their location of origin) to understand their interactions in another location (their location of current residence). They also employ disparate techniques to position themselves, if they choose to do so at all. Sense-making is "a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events)" (Klein et al. 2006, 71). Finally and most basically, as Patricia Hill Collins (1987, 1316) succinctly states, "when you make sense of something, you succeed in understanding it."

Intersectionality

How someone makes sense of something and assumes and understands one's position in a social field is heavily influenced by what is known as intersectionality. Intersectionality theory is an "analysis claiming that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape Black women's experiences and, in turn, are shaped by Black women" (Collins 2000, 299; cited in Patricia Collins – Intersecting Oppressions, 7). Intersectionality is a theoretical lens which puts in focus the roots of different kinds of inequalities. It also explains differences between and among individuals (who may have one or more social categories in common) with respect to how they differently take in

information (what they choose to see, hear and ignore), how they differently process and react to a situation, and how they later on differently make sense of it.

[One's] "social nearness or distance to another changes as the matrix of domination shifts, depending on which scheme is salient at any given moment" (Patricia Collins – Intersecting Oppressions, 10). Differently situated actors experience challenges in varying forms and in varying intensities. Thus one can understand the different ways that women react to situations and understand them. It causes them to see place(ing) and position(ing) differently and act on them differently. Intersectionality explains people's diverse responses to common challenges (Patricia Collins – Intersecting Oppressions, 4). Every individual "stands at a unique matrix of cross-cutting interests. These interests and the diverse responses they motivate are defined through such social positions as race, class, gender, sexual identity, religion, nationality, and so on." (Patricia Collins – Intersecting Oppressions, 4). Therefore, as Collins (2000, 26) points out, "even though individual black women may respond differently, based on different cross-cutting interests, there are themes or core issues that all black women can acknowledge and integrate into their self identity. The very processes of self definition are run via fluid and mutually influencing social categories. Intersectionality is another way of understanding how inequality (in society) is a result of the interactions of those constructed and intersecting social categories. Intersectionality theory (Crenshaw 1991; McCall 2005; Collins 2000) sheds light on why some people are placed outside the boundaries of belonging, are identified and categorized as different (from the accepted norm), sometimes become marginalized, and end up occupying a lower social position (Collins 1986).

African Diaspora Studies in Europe

This research also connects to a broader body of African Diaspora studies (Gilroy 1987; Hall 1990; Brah 1996; Brown 1998; Hesse 2000) and more specifically contributes to the branch of African diaspora studies focused on Europe. The term diaspora is traditionally used "to refer to those people who have migrated and who retain important economic, cultural and ideological connections with a homeland and a community outside the national borders of their present country of domicile. This sense of belonging also usually entails the memory or actual form of collective suffering and/or exclusion" (Tololyan 1996). This is the form of diaspora that is connected to the forces and legacies of colonialism, which is a focus of much of the anthropological research on black populations in Europe. Tina Campt (1993, 2003, 2005), has studied the long history and deep roots of the black German population in Germany. Jacqueline Nassy Brown's (1998, 2005) research has investigated why and how black identity is constituted as the mutual opposite of English and British identities (Brown 2005, 291) in Liverpool England, a city with one of the longest-settled black populations in the UK. Philomena Essed (1991) has studied the accounts of black Surinamese women in the Netherlands. Asale Ajani has studied racialized criminalization of African female immigrants in Italy (Ajani 1999, 2000, 2002). Jacqueline Andall (2000) studied how African women working as live-in domestics live under specific forms of social marginality yet challenge the ideology surrounding the Italian family. Kesha Fikes (2000) has researched the experiences of Santiaguense women in Portugal. Raymond Codrington (2006, 300) in his research of West Indians in London has studied how they "as a part of anti-immigrant

discourse became racialized in a particular way that conflated race with cultural and economic inferiority"[10].

One theme that appears in these works is how black people in Europe commonly appropriate black American expressive styles, discuss the black American experience, political history, and culture in order to understand, and explain their own. Black America has a hegemonic status/position in the black diaspora, particularly with regard to identity and what it means to be black in a white nation. Black America has had a formative influence on racial identity in these black populations across Europe given the global dominance of black American culture compared to other black cultures worldwide (Campt 1996; Brown 1998, 2005; Sawyer 2000; Brown 2005; Codrington 2006). Black Americans are often an object of discourse, yet rarely are the subject in this area of research. My research focuses on the experiences of black Americans in a European nation to see what they draw upon to help them understand their experiences.

This research among black Americans in Sweden, also contributes to New African Diaspora research. The vast majority of literature on the African diaspora has focused on migrations associated with colonialism and slavery. As Koser (2003) emphasizes, without disregarding the historical and psychological significance of slavery for contemporary African migrants, new diasporas, in contrast, focus on recent African (and African diaspora) migrations. They do not focus on the colonial dispersal instigated by slavery and other colonialist practices. In using the term 'new', the concept of 'diaspora' has been widened, to include not only involuntary and catastrophic dispersal from an original

[10] In Codrington's research, black residents were stigmatized for their association with or origin from "cultures of deprivation", and for being 'bearers of specifically black cultures' which were viewed as "by nature unlike the British" and thus not belonging and instead "threatening the English way of life" (Codrington 2006, 301).

homeland, but also voluntary expansion from a homeland (Koser 2003) or as I add here, from a primary diasporic location. The new African diaspora focuses on the recent, "post-colonial migration of African and African descended peoples and the particular dynamics of the experiences that shape their lives in the new environments in the developed societies of the West (mostly the United States and Europe)" (Koser 2003). Koser contends that the African diaspora, just like other diasporas, have assumed a 'new' power or impetus, as they interact with the process of globalization and assume a transnational character (Koser 2003) in which connections to locations of origin are maintained or re-established. In fact, these transnational identities and activities are beginning to be explored. Lena Sawyer's (2000) research has examined how people "of African ancestry" in Stockholm attempt to practice belonging and incorporate themselves into Swedish society. These are individuals who arrived in Sweden within the past thirty or forty years from Africa via adoption, through immigration or under refugee status. Sawyer analyzes the role that race is argued to play as a criterion of belonging in Sweden. By contrast, my research depicts the contentment of black Americans, who do not appear to seek Swedish belonging, to place themselves as entirely external to that field of struggle in Sweden.

In recent years there has been increasing popular and academic discussion about whether or not, as a result of the large and rapid intake of immigrants, racism exists in Sweden and if Sweden has become a racialized society (Sawyer 2000, Pred 2000). In recent years, the media has portrayed a sharp rise in charges, denials and discussions about the existence of racism in Swedish society (Norman 2004, 204). This has been simultaneously, and in part, both caused by, and a result of conversations taking place among the public. This is from the rise in press about everything from Swedish reactions

to immigration policy, to individual reactions and attacks on immigrants themselves. The word 'racist' in Sweden has very negative connotations and the vast majority of Swedes would not identify themselves as such, regardless of their opinions on immigration and the changing face of the nation. To some Swedish researchers and many Swedes as well, "racism has a more restricted meaning, assuming the adherence to an ideology or doctrine that hierarchically valorizes 'natural groupings'" (Norman 2004, 205). The average Swede considers 'racists' to be those who "adhere to racist ideologies and organizations" and are as a result, "set off as largely isolated groups or persons" (Norman 2004, 210), for example neo-Nazis. For politicians, the very thought of appearing racist is very undesirable. As a result, politicians are deliberate not to make "hostile or 'prejudiced'" statements. "Culturalist references" (cf. Stolcke 1995; cited in Norman, 2004, 214) are now more acceptable and widespread and do not threaten the Swedish tenet of tolerance.

While the existence of "true racism" in Sweden has been denied by politicians (and also by most everyday Swedes), the existence of foreigner hostility has not been denied (Pred 2000, 83). Says Norman, "Swedes in general will avoid the term race" (2004, 210) but they do "tend to classify immigrants, refugees, and foreigners into different cultural categories according to cultural perceptions of phenotypical variation or physical appearance, such as 'Arab-looking, black, Indian, Korean', and the like" and it is "in combination with culturalist assumptions about *how they are* that evaluations and rankings become noticeable which also may end up having stigmatizing effects" (Norman 2004, 210).

> As a result of mass-media attention, the notion of cultural distance has been legitimated and sustained by a series of public opinion surveys conducted periodically by academic "authorities" since the mid eighties (Westin [1984, 1987],Westin and Lange [1993]). As a result of their questions, the authors have been able to claim that Swedes feel themselves in close "cultural proximity" to their fellow Scandinavians and people from North America but at a "great cultural

> distance" from Iranians, the Chinese, Ethiopians, and other nonwhite non-Europeans (cf. Tesfahuney [1998], 92). (Pred 2000, 67)

According to Pred (2000, 67), such studies have been used to "justify specific policies and pieces of legislation aimed at the 'immigrant problem'". In other words, cultural differences are given as the cause of difficulties for refugees to join Swedish society. Norman, however, warns that discussing difference through cultural terms "should not be dismissed as purely manipulative, for it also concerns good intentions" (Norman 2004, 214).

Some vocal academic researchers have been quick to point out that culture is not entirely separate from race and feel that the popular culturalist discourse in fact is an attempt to present a new face to an old paradigm. According to Pred (2000, 66), cultural racism is now the most common form of racism in Sweden. He defines it as a condition…

> wherein negative ethnic stereotyping leads to racist effects, to discrimination and segregation, to marginalization and exclusion; wherein skin pigment, hair color, and other bodily markers are unreflectedly translated into highly charged cultural markers; wherein outward biological difference and cultural difference become automatically (con)fused with each other and entire groups thereby racialized… (Pred 2000, 66)

The rhetoric of cultural racism in Sweden appears not only in popular discourse but also in the political arena—among Social Democrats and Conservatives, among those on the left and the right, among political and intellectual circles (Deland, 1997; Ålund and Schierup 1991, 83; 1993, 106–7, cited in Pred 2000, 67) as well as the general public. However, in Sweden the right-wing groups are the most vocal in proposing that "integration is impossible because of cultural differences and higher immigrant birth-rates which threaten social stability" (Deland 1997, 51). Pred (2000), Deland (1997), and others argue that cultural proximity has replaced biological hierarchy as a tool for and understanding, rationalizing, and explaining inequality of different immigrant groups in

Sweden. As Stefan Jonsson (1993, 273) a Swedish scholar stated, "What was yesterday called racial hierarchies is today called cultural differences" (cited in Sawyer 2000, 17). Pred argues that, "…Otherized populations are spoken of in terms of their cultural distance, in taken-for-granted terms that negatively situate them in a metaphorical space, in unexamined terms that say degree of civilization falls off with distance…The hierarchization of all Others" (Pred 2004, 81). In this view, culture is the problem and the barrier.

Cultural racism, in common words, can be characterized in the view that "their cultures" are the reason why refugees are in marginal positions in Swedish society. Some say terms like immigrant hostility is a way to water down or cover up what is really cultural racism as it "partially detoxifies or defuses" it and makes it "less explosive", "cleaned of any association with 'real' or 'classical' racism" (Pred 2000, 83; Norman 2004, 205).

> Ethnicity, culture, and refugeeness came to resemble irreversible (natural) traits, setting groups of people off from others and placing them in a subordinate position. From that point of view, these varying expressions could be conceptualized as racism even if they were not based on a racist ideology and even if they were unintentional or simply well-meaning. …but referring to forms of racism (such as 'cultural racism') highlights the common and more sinister tendencies to reify and naturalize cultural differences and subordinate social positions. (Norman 2004, 225)

Citing Philomena Essed ([1991], 45), Pred (2000, 66) reiterates that, although "cultural racism in Sweden is often unreflected, or without conscious intention, makes its practitioners no less racist. That which yields racializing or discriminatory effects is racist."[11] Nevertheless, others disagree that there is racism, and instead insist that there is only cultural difference and immigrant hostility. A number of academics for example reject the term cultural racism, which, like racism is linked to right wing extremism.

[11] In this dissertation, I discuss aspects of this as being more of an exercise of placement and positioning and a display of power by those who do so in the process. This may be done through acts that are malevolent or beneficent but nonetheless, the placement and positioning still occurs.

"There is a strong aversion to the notion of cultural racism even in Swedish academic discourse" (Pred 2000, 82). The debate continues.

In this study, the goal is not to draw conclusions on whether or not Sweden is a racist society. The goal is not to determine whether or not the encounters that my informants experience really are racially motivated, or whether or not my informants are 'correct' in their interpretations of their own experiences. I present these experiences to reflect the diversity within this population and to develop a framework within which one can try to understand why and how these different perceptions exist. The focus of this research is to explore how these women's sense-making of and reactions to events of living in Sweden, appear to be shaped by their intersecting identities and subjectivities crafted in their social fields of origin, with which they still interact while in Sweden. I am concerned with how black American women perceive both their interactions with different populations, and changes in their positioning, as they navigate multiple social fields that span Sweden and the US.

Population, Location, and Methods

Sweden has a national population of over 9.2 million of which over 13.4% are foreign born. This is slightly larger than the percentage of foreign born in the United States. Black Americans[12] form a very small part of the 15,301[13] Americans living in Sweden (2004 Statistiska Centralbyrån / Statistics Sweden). On one hand, they are a part of one national group ("American") that is accorded high status (Brady 1989; O'Dell

[12] In this dissertation I use the term Black American as it was the preferred identifier among the majority of interviewees. Some of them had a Caribbean ancestry and did not identify as strictly African-American.
[13] This number represents only U.S. born American citizens resident in Sweden. If Swedish born children of Americans are included the number grows to 16,789 (Statistiska Centralbyrån / Statistics Sweden).

1997). American hegemony in world economy, politics, and culture are well known. Sweden poses no exception. In fact, Sweden is often described as one of the most 'Americanized' countries in the world. In Sweden in 2002, when I asked a Swede during a conversation if Americans living in Sweden are considered immigrants, she replied with a chuckle, "No, they are considered Americans!" That Americans living in Sweden form their own category apart from 'immigrants' in Swedish popular opinion had also been concluded by Brady (1989: 2). On the other hand black Americans are also a part of a 'racial'[14] group ("African") that has been stigmatized as immigrants (Sawyer 2000; Statens Invandrarverk 1983; Wagner and Yamba 1986; Pred 2000; Ålund and Schierup 1991). The word 'immigrant' or 'invandrare'[15] has negative connotations in Sweden. The word comes attached with a host of imagery –poor, refugee, foreign, dark, drain on national resources, etc. While immigrants and refugees from various European counties have their own assorted challenges in Sweden, Africans in particular tend to be stereotyped negatively as immigrants regardless of their financial or educational background. Following an increase in immigration from non-European countries, coupled with an economic crunch, tolerance for immigrants in Sweden has become strained (Ålund and Schierup 1991; Daun et. al. 1992; Deland 1996; Modood and Werbner 1997). Sweden, as it was for those first groups of artists, musicians and deserters in the 1950s and 1960s no longer exists. What are black American women experiencing in this changing multicultural national landscape? How are they placed and positioned in

[14] "Race" is referred to in this research only as a popular social construct.
[15] According to researcher Charles Westin [2006], "In popular discourse, 'immigrant' no longer refers to a process of migration but to persons of non-Nordic origin… Today, authorities avoid the term 'immigrant', using instead 'persons of migrant origin' in official discourse."

Sweden and how do they place and position themselves among different populations in these social fields? How are they making sense of Swedes and Sweden?

The research question of how black American women are placed by white Swedes and how they place themselves in this new location, specifically looks at the dynamics of this American racial hierarchy of belonging and seeks to understand what shift or reevaluation (if any) occurs within black Americans when outside of the local U.S. context or, in other words, when relocated from one racialized context to another? What tools do they use to place and position themselves in this new land? This internal questioning takes place in a different national setting, in which Americans are numerically a small minority relative to the Swedish population and also smaller than the combined African immigrant population. Sweden has no significant colonial history yet a distinct racial hierarchy of belonging of its own (Sawyer 2000). With this in mind the experiences of black Americans are discussed in light of those of white Americans and of Africans there as well. What is revealed or challenged (if anything) about race and national belonging based on perceptions and interactions (or lack thereof) of black Americans with white Americans, Swedes and Africans in Sweden? Since, extremely little anthropological research has been conducted on black American populations outside of the U.S, this research attempts to address some of these questions.

As I have discussed, black American belonging in the US is not unproblematized, unqualified or unquestioned. Black Americans living in Sweden are linked simultaneously to more than one nation. In leaving the U.S., they have left a nation where they do not form the majority population and where notions of national identity and belonging are already racialized and de-centered (Williams 1989; Collins 2001). Is there

a sense of belonging to the U.S. and/or Sweden and if so, what form(s) does it take? Oftentimes, the awareness of trans-locality stimulates the desire to connect oneself with others, both 'here' and 'there', who share the same roots (Gilroy 1987, 1993). This is often achieved through the physical creation and/or imagining of community. Have they created some sense of community with white Americans, each other, or other immigrants? Has residence in Sweden strengthened or loosened ties of belonging to the U.S? What are their experiences when they visit the US? In particular, how do they interact with relatives and cope with family expectations? As a part of this, I consider practices that go beyond official belonging (i.e. voting, citizenship) (Hage 1998) to include other performative/participatory practices/acts such as how partnering and family ties may influence belonging with respect to the U.S. and/or Sweden.

The extremely limited existing social science research on Americans in Sweden has focused on the experiences of white Americans (Brady 1989). Meanwhile the few general published accounts about or including black Americans in Sweden, focus entirely on the experiences of the Vietnam deserters when they arrived in 1960s (Boggs 1979, 1987; Davidsson 1971; Hayes 1971; Whitmore 1971) (cf. Chapter Two). Since then little has been written about the broader population of black Americans that has lived in the country over the decades. This study is the first written research focusing on black American women in Sweden.

The bulk of the fieldwork was conducted over the course of 12 months in Stockholm, the capital city of Sweden, which hosts most of the nation's black American population. When I first became interested in this topic I was immediately faced with the problem of how to find people with whom to speak. I knew no one in Sweden. I

contacted the Chair of the Anthropology department of the local university in Stockholm. He quickly put me in contact with an African-American colleague within his department. Through her, I made contact with a second key colleague, both of whom became an invaluable part of my project, and a small number of African-American residents in Sweden during my site visits in June 2000 and July 2002. Also, I independently found interviewees through online searches. Three of my interviewees were identified through my participation in an on-line community for Americans in Sweden. Only four interviewees lived outside of the greater Stockholm area. One interview took place in Kiruna a small Swedish town north of the Arctic Circle. I utilized the snowball method to locate and contact interviewees for two reasons: 1) the large size of the city of Stockholm (pop. 1,872,900[16]) and Sweden in general, relative to the very small and scattered population that I interviewed and 2) the official number of black Americans in Sweden is unknown since no ethnic/racial information is collected from American citizens there by the Swedish government. My own estimate, based on informal interviewing, places the number of black Americans in Sweden between 150-300 individuals.

I conducted twenty in-depth semi-structured open-ended interviews with black Americans[17] in Sweden. Initial informants came from contacts established in prior visits, American organizations, and on-line internet communities. Subsequent interviews were conducted with individuals identified by initial interviewees. Although I did speak with

[16] 2004 data from Statistika Centralbyrån/Statistics Sweden. This number represents the population of the greater Stockholm area.
[17] Information on those informants included in this dissertation appears in the Appendix.

black American visitors, this project did not include visitors or tourists[18]. Interviewees had to have a permanent place of residence in Sweden[19]. Black Americans are here described for the purposes of this research as those individuals who self-identify as African-American, black American or American of African descent, who are eighteen years of age and over, and who were raised in the United States. Length of residence in Sweden for these women ranged from two years to over forty years. In course of field work I spoke casually with white Americans, black American men, and Swedes although none of these are counted among the formal interviews.

I focused on examining accounts of everyday experiences of informants. Since constant observation to record the women's everyday interactions was of course not feasible (they were working professionals in an urban environment), I decided to solicit information on their based on their memories, opinions and beliefs. Given my research design and time constraints, semi-structured interviews were the primary data-gathering method. Interviews were conducted in addition to repeated informal interviewing. Therefore, follow up correspondence to some interviews was by telephone and e-mail. While the large majority of in-depth interviews were conducted in person, three were conducted entirely via telephone and/or e-mail with those who live in distant parts of the country. I conducted simple observation of the environments in which I spent time and the social interactions taking place within them. I also conducted participant observation in that I catalogued my own experiences as a black American woman living there. I

[18] I have made one exception to this. I've included some comments of one of the women who participated in the group discussion. She was not a permanent resident, but visited Stockholm regularly on business trips. She was also born in Cameroon but had lived many years in the U.S. and also identified as an 'African-American'.

[19] I did make one other exception by interviewing a Black woman who was born Guyana but lived in the US for twenty years (and gained citizenship) before moving to Sweden. This woman identified herself as a Black American and also as Guyanese.

attended formal events organized by American and International organizations. One of my informants organized a get-together of black American women at her home, which I was gratefully allowed to record for inclusion in this project. I participated in the monthly meetings of one of the book clubs within one such American organization in Stockholm. Including me, five of its ten members were black Americans. I also regularly took part in formal and informal get-togethers, parties and holiday celebrations. I created and ran a 'Dining Circle' social club during my stay within the local international researchers' organization. Through these different activities I had a chance to socially interact with a number of interviewees multiple times.

I decided to focus on the female population for three reasons. First, no published literature exists on the experiences of black American women as a group in Sweden. Black American introductions to France and Japan were borne out of World Wars and military deployment and were thus overwhelmingly male in their demographics. Women, for the most part, arrived later but research has not focused on their experiences. Second, I found black American men much more difficult to talk to during my fieldwork in Sweden. Either they were afraid to talk to me (due to fear of who might see any information they shared with me) or I heard things (alcoholism, drug use) that made me afraid to talk to a few of them. The men seemed to have something to hide, where by comparison the women were much more open and eager to talk about their lives in Sweden. I did succeed in interviewing a couple men but it was clear during the interviews that they were still holding back quite a bit from me (a young female interviewer) and were not going to reveal the type of information that I sought.

And thirdly, as Hill Collins argues, "…black women are uniquely situated in that they stand at the focal point where two exceptionally powerful and prevalent systems of oppression come together: race and gender" (Patricia Collins – Intersecting Oppressions, 1). This focal point is described by intersectionality theory, which encourages that "understanding the social position of black women ought to compel us to see, and look for, other spaces where systems of inequality come together" (ibid, 1). The relationship to the US among black Americans is diverse as the individuals themselves. The female interviewees in this research come from different backgrounds of geography, class, age etc. Individuals have their own unique sets of experiences and different perceptions of those experiences that are influenced by their individual backgrounds. Just as there is no singular black American experience in the U.S., there is no singular black American experience in Sweden. The people I speak to are subjects and not objects in this research and speak in their own words. In valuing polyvocality, I use extensive quotes from interviews. Again, this study is the result of exploratory research, and is not intended to be representative.

Overview of Chapters

In Chapter One, *Positioning the Field*, I pose the major research questions, situate them in current literature, and describe the methodology of the research. In Chapter Two, *A History of Americans and Africans in Sweden,* I provide contextual background by summarizing modern (post-1950) immigration patterns into Sweden and describing the impact to Swedish society, locating the positions of American and African immigrants in this history and providing a brief historical account of the black American presence in

Sweden. In Chapter Three, *Making Sense of Swedes and Sweden*, I use a metaphor of the human senses to help describe how black American women "make *sense*" of their encounters with Swedes and Swedish society. I describe their experiences of being positioned by white Swedes and I discuss how they, in turn, attempt to position themselves with respect to the white Americans and black Africans in Swedish society. In Chapter Four, *Americans and (Other) Immigrants,* I discuss the interactions of black American women with white American women and fellow black Americans as it relates to their experiences with the groups in the U.S. I also take a look at the women's interactions with other immigrants of African and Middle Eastern backgrounds. In Chapter Five, *A Conversation among Women*, I sit in on a conversation among black American women in Sweden describing their experiences and trying to 'make sense of it all'. In this chapter, I show how the women interact with each other, how they analyze themselves and the situations they have encountered; and I describe the tools and mechanisms they use to do this. In Chapter Six, *Crossing Borders, Shifting Values,* I discuss the unique challenges these women face, when they return for visits to the United States. I end with a discussion of citizenship and belonging and a consideration the women's practicing Swedish ways of being and American ways of belong in transnational social fields.

CHAPTER 2 TWO: A HISTORY OF AFRICANS & AMERICANS IN SWEDEN

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Americans in Sweden

In the decades around the turn of the twentieth century, over one million Swedes, about one fifth of the population, emigrated to the U.S. to begin new lives. Even today, many Swedes, when asked, can still talk about distant relatives in the U.S. Over the subsequent decades, Sweden became a very Americanized nation. Swedes supported the United States during World War II, drove American cars, and watched American movies (O'Dell 1997). Today, American holidays such as Valentine's Day, Christmas (American-style), and even Halloween have taken root in Sweden. In the future it may not be unusual to see Swedes celebrating Thanksgiving. However, one divisive issue between the nations historically has been that of racism. Swedes vehemently opposed what they saw as racism in the US, and other parts of Europe. Swedes were hit back with the charge that the criticisms they had made of other countries were hollow ones since they lived in a relatively homogeneous nation, in no small measure because of their own selective immigration policy. Sweden in recent decades took up the gauntlet and struck a chain of events that would change the nation forever.

Meanwhile, as late as 1980s, there were no major studies of American immigrants in Sweden. Brady's (1989) survey-based sociological study was the first one. Americans were neglected in Sweden's immigration research, according to Brady (1989) because they were not considered to be one of the "visible minorities" since the tendency in

studies dealing with immigration in Europe, and Sweden in particular, was to focus on 'problem immigrant groups' The underlying assumption of this rationale was that Americans as a group were assumed to be all white.

Because of Sweden's history of emigration and family ties, their belief in the American dream, and love of American cultural products, Swedes held Americans living in Sweden in high regard. Moreover, Sweden and America are both modern Western countries with a high standard of living. Furthermore, opposed to a mass immigration of poor groups, American immigration to Sweden has been made of financially stable individuals and thus was non-threatening to Swedish society. Most Americans living in Sweden are college educated professionals, as opposed to manual laborers and blue-collar workers. Americans went to Sweden because of marriage and romantic relationships with Swedes, career and work assignments, adventure, family ties (reunite with Swedish ancestry), and to pursue education (Brady 1989).

(White) Americans are indeed a part of the immigrant 'elite' in Sweden (Boyd 1998), as they are a group of voluntary immigrants, educated and financially secure. Boyd found that when compared to other groups of immigrants (ex. Turks, Finns and Vietnamese), Americans used the local language more frequently as did their children. This is of course linked to available resources such as time and money, prior education etc. Americans come from a country equal to or superior to Sweden, economically, technologically and militarily. Not surprisingly, Brady concludes that,

> …first-generation American immigrants are externally, but not internally acculturated; that for most they are structurally as well as maritally assimilated; that they have taken on a participatory, but not an historical identity with the Swedish people; and that they suffer very little discrimination in Swedish society. ... in other words, on the basis of this study is reasonable to conclude that there is a strong tendency towards the assimilation of American immigrants into Swedish life (Brady 1989, 79).

In other words, “externally acculturated” white Americans blend into the Swedish population, experience little discrimination and have a strong chance of assimilating into Swedish society. In the 1980s, 293 male and female Americans living in Sweden surveyed by Brady[20] (1989, 90) felt that they were treated the same as a native born Swede by Swedish employers, fellow employees, government offices and bureaus, in restaurants and on public transport. Seventy-five to ninety percent of them responded that they felt treated “better” and “much better” than other immigrants including Africans, Greeks, Turks and even Finns. Would that still be the experience of Americans today? In particular, would that be the experience of black Americans? Would black Americans also suffer little discrimination? Would black Americans be able to assimilate into Swedish life?

There is also discussion about whether or not Americans are considered “immigrants”. In the course of my research I found that while it is commonly realized and known by white Americans that they are technically immigrants, they are cognizant of the fact that they are not regarded nor addressed as such in common Swedish parlance. The Swedish woman, who told me that Americans are considered Americans, encapsulated the idea. Sometimes Swedes will refer to Americans or other English speaking westerners (Brits, Australians etc) as “guests”, which is an interesting term because it does imply not only the temporality with which Americans may come and go, but the word ‘guest’ also implies that the individuals are welcome to their society, while seeming to imply that the other “real immigrants” are not. Thus, the small body of published literature in this area shows that white Americans hold a high status in Swedish

[20] Paul Brady’s 1989 dissertation surveyed 293 first generation American immigrants aged 16 years and over who were resident in Stockhom.

society.

Africans in Sweden

Over the past 30 years, Sweden has become an increasingly multicultural society. Over 1.1 million of the 9 million inhabitants were born outside of the country. And 800,000 Swedish born persons have one or both parents born outside of the country (Bunar 2007). This came about rapidly through massive immigration of recent decades. The modern era of Swedish immigration began during World War II in the early 1940s when, throughout that decade, Sweden took in war refugees from neighboring countries (Jederlund and Kayfetz, 1999; Swedish Institute, 1999). It was in the period after the war that immigration picked up from countries farther away (Swedish Institute, 1999). The 1950s and 60s saw a sharp rise in labor immigration particularly from Finland and Southern Europe (Jederlund and Kayfetz, 1999). In the 1950s, roughly 10,000 people immigrated to Sweden every year (ibid.). In the 1960s, an estimated 30,000+ people immigrated every year (ibid.). During that time refugees were relatively few in number.

By the 1970s, large scale labor migration from Europe effectively stopped, meanwhile the number of refugees entering Sweden grew significantly. Immigration more than doubled between the 1970s and 1980s (Jederlund and Kayfetz, 1999). Beginning in the mid-1970s Sweden's modern immigration policy was formulated in response to these early populations of refugees from third world countries and asylum seekers from Southeastern Europe. The policy was comprised of three parts: Equality, Freedom, and Solidarity. Equality referred to the assertion that immigrants should have the same opportunities, rights and obligations as native born Swedes (Jederlund and

Kayfetz, 1999; Swedish Institute, 1999). Freedom referred to freedom of culture and meant that immigrants should be allowed to choose to what extent they wished to learn the Swedish language and adopt a Swedish cultural identity. Solidarity meant that immigrants should cooperate with Swedes to solve mutual issues of concern. This policy was crafted before even larger numbers of immigrants and refugees entered the country. All too soon the "freedom" objective would become a major point of contention in a changing Sweden (Jederlund and Kayfetz, 1999).

In the late 1970s and 1980s, Iranians, Iraqis, Chileans, Argentineans, Peruvians, Kurds and Eritreans were the new refugees that were now in Sweden. Eritreans were the largest African[21] population in Sweden at that time. Gambians soon became the second largest population numbering an estimated 500-600 individuals. Kenyans and Tanzanians, mostly males, arrived in Sweden in the 1970s as a result of special economic programs between these nations and Sweden. As such, these men often were students with privately sponsored education stipends (Yamba 1983, 30). There was also a population of activists from South Africa and Namibia and students from Liberia. These early African groups, still a relatively small population who for the most part spoke English and soon learned some Swedish, were well tolerated within Swedish society – in part because Swedes viewed them as interesting and exotic. However there were reports of African male students being given notices to watch their behavior with Swedish females (Hughes 1971). Nonetheless, they kept a hardworking studious profile and interacted socially with Swedes. In 1983, Statens Invandrarverk (S.I.V.) released a book entitled, *Afrikaner I Sverige* [Africans in Sweden] to introduce the Swedish people to the African newcomers, to help them understand the Africans' experiences in their

[21] Written records of Africans and Afro-Caribbeans in Sweden date back to the 1300s (Diakite 2005).

homelands and in Sweden, and dispel some misconceptions and myths about the African continent and its people.

When Gambians arrived in the 1980s, the social climate of Swedish tolerance began to cool (Yamba 1983, 30-31). Unlike the Eritreans who were identified as political refugees, granted asylum and given financial assistance from the government, most of the Gambian men, who arrived on tourist visas, received no such benefits and were on their own to find a way to stay in the country. This made them desperate to "get attached" (marry Swedish women in order to gain permanent legal status in the country) in order to start new lives in their imagined Scandinavian paradise (Wagner and Yamba, 1986). Men who could not "get attached" before their permit expired were deported to Gambia. Men competed fiercely over Swedish women in certain night clubs, leading to fights (ibid). Cases of black people being arrested for fighting each other in the streets and for committing other crimes were becoming common. Unfortunately their desperate behavior and activities in trying to remain in the country created a negative public image of Gambian men in particular and black men in general (Wagner and Yamba 1986, 206).

The African students and other black people who had been in Sweden for several years were resentful of the negative attention that the Gambians were drawing to black men. Before the Gambians arrived, black people would greet any other black person they happened to see on the street, but the activities of the Gambians put and end to that (ibid, 207). Black residents stopped acknowledging each other, stayed away from certain night clubs and avoid fraternizing with Gambians for fear of getting caught in a police raid and further antagonizing Swedes against them as black men (ibid, 207-208). They suggest that given that Gambians had developed a bad reputation among Swedes, at least some of

them tried to pass themselves off as black Americans in an attempt to avoid bad treatment by the Swedish population in general and to garner favorable attention from the Swedish women in particular (ibid, 211-212). As a result of their criminal activities, Gambians were at the bottom of the immigrant acceptability hierarchy at that time and at the bottom of the black population hierarchy, at least until they were replaced by a larger population of African immigrants.

In the early 1990s, Sweden accepted over 170,000 war refugees from the former Yugoslavia (Jederlund and Kayfetz, 1999). In the mid-1990s through the early 2000s, Swedes accepted nearly 50,000 East African refugees from Somalia and Ethiopia (ibid.). These two groups continue to form the majority of the African population in Sweden. Unlike the male West and Central Africans that came to Sweden as students in the 1970s and 1980s, East African refugees who came later in the 1990s onward, came as intact families (Jederlund and Kayfetz, 1999). Moreover, they for the most part did not know English and did not intermarry or intermingle with Swedes, which led to further alienation and segregation in Swedish society for black inhabitants in general. The refugees and other immigrants who settled in Sweden were unprepared for a society that had a difficult time integrating them into its housing market, labor market and educational system.

Sweden developed its 1975 immigration policy during a time of national prosperity. Thanks to the output of the labor migration in the previous decades, the economy at that time was strong and only forecasted to grow.

> During the 1970s immigration contributed some SEK 6 billion annually to the public coffers, because the immigrants of that period added to the country's output mainly by working in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Today the situation is the opposite. Net compensation to immigrants via transfer payments such as social assistance, housing allowances and

> unemployment benefits totals some SEK 20 billion per year. The explanation is simple: unemployment is high among today's immigrant groups, many immigrants have taken early retirement, and there is large-scale dependence on public benefits. The image of immigration has been affected by these developments. When the Swedish economy is weakening, unemployment is rising and the influx of refugees is meanwhile growing, it is easy for people to become dissatisfied with the situation. In the early 1990s, a reaction against immigration policy, but also against immigrants already living in Sweden, began to emerge. Like so many other countries, Sweden went through a debate on racism, xenophobia and the meaning of a multicultural society. (Jederlund and Kayfetz 1999)

With an increase in immigration and refugee intake, the economy declined and hostility increased toward the immigrants who were felt to be living on welfare and draining social benefits. There is a significant *främlingsfientlighet* [hostility toward foreigners] that has developed in Sweden as a result of this economic situation. Sweden continues to struggle with this anti-immigrant hostility, most of which is not visible or physical, but rather is everyday, undercover or institutionalized (Bunar 2007). As Pred (1997) describes, the Swedish labor market had been 'radically reshaped' since 1990. Because of a recession and other fiscal crises, the nation has changed from being in a state of "structural over-employment" for many decades where more jobs were available than people able to fill them, to one of sudden and continuously high unemployment.

> Since 1993 unemployment has persistently hovered between 12 and 14 percent. It is the migrant and refugee population…[that has] borne the disproportionate brunt of this brutal transformation. While unemployment figures for Swedish citizens generally have been in the vicinity of seven percent; those for residents holding Danish, Norwegian or Finnish citizenship have been around 12 percent; those for all inhabitants of non-Nordic origin have been in the range of 25 to 28 percent; and those for the population of non-European nationality have fluctuated between 37 and 45 percent, with some groups far exceeding that latter improbable level. In addition, while the work-force participation rate for the population as a whole dipped from 86 to just under 75 percent between 1990 and 1994, that for all resident migrant and refugees tumbled more precipitously from 74 to 48 percent. At the same time, labor-force participation for those classified as non-European fell to just under 30 percent, with that for those of African birth bottoming at 19 percent. Unable to find work in large measure because of their racialization, non-Europeans…find themselves further demonized and discriminated against, further the target of resentment. (Pred 1997)

Early labor immigrants were well tolerated because they were small in number, provided specific services required by the Swedish government and contributed to the economy of Sweden. By contrast, among Swedes harboring immigrant hostility, refugees are large in

number, not working or paying taxes, culturally very different from the Swedes, not learning the Swedish language, and are drawing public assistance funded by Swedish tax payer's money. These Swedes interpret what is happening as the withering away of their old age pensions to pay immigrant and refugee *bidrag* [welfare]. Immigrant burdening of the Sweden's economy at taxpayer expense is the source of much of the anti-immigrant hostility. Current academic and popular debates attempt to tease out if this hostility has economics, culture, or race at its root.

The unemployment rate for African immigrants, and African refugees in particular, in Sweden is extremely high. Like other immigrants, they must gain language skills and Swedish education certificates/degrees to have any chance of gaining employment. However, even if they do accumulate language skills and Swedish qualifications, they still face difficulty entering the shrinking job market given the Swedish cultural preference for group cohesion and similarity among employees. Those few fortunate Africans who do manage to find employment, oftentimes do not get "bumped up" to a permanent job like others working there do after a certain amount of evaluation time. Oftentimes, Africans work at a place full-time for years without being offered a *fast job* [permanent job], while white Swedes get bumped up after a few months. The government continues to try to encourage companies to hire more immigrants however its effectiveness in doing so is questionable.

Today's Swedish public scoffs at the old immigration policy as mere words. The average Swede feels overrun and taken advantage of, both by the immigrants and by their own government. It appears that in Swedish public discourse one camp of Swedes much prefer that their taxes go towards helping refugees get started with their new lives there,

instead of to someone born and raised with opportunities in Sweden and in fact feel proud that their nation is fortunate enough to be able to help a lot of people both in Sweden and from around the world. On the other hand, a seemingly larger camp of Swedes blame the Swedish social system and the politics behind the social system that they feel allow foreigners to collect welfare, get an apartment and free furniture etc, while Swedes struggle to get any help from the same social workers. They worry about proposals to give money to companies who hire immigrants when they themselves struggle to find good-paying employment.

It can be argued that Swedes see this non-European immigration as being as much of a threat to Swedish identity as to the Swedish economy. In fact, that rules governing who is a Swede and who is not, have gone through a series of changes. At one time, if the father was Swedish, then the child was Swedish. Later, if either parent was Swedish, then the child was Swedish. Now both parents have to be Swedish in order for the child to be Swedish. Those who are born in Sweden to non-Swedish parents are considered to be 'second-generation immigrants'. In public discussion, Swedes claim that they are having difficulty interacting with immigrants because of Sweden's homogenous past. Some academics question the nature of this homogenous past and point out that practices and discussions relating to race are themselves not foreign to Sweden, which they claim has its own national history of racialized exclusion.

> "…ideas about race and the occurrence of racialized practices are not new to Sweden. Forms and processes of exclusion on more or less explicitly racist grounds are part of the Swedish modern nation-building project (Broberg & Tydén 1991, 1996). The classifications and subsequent hierarchizations of peoples according to ideas about biological types or races have been both a way of marking boundaries in relation to internal Others, like the Sami, Gypsies, Travellers (*tattare*), and to 'foreigners', such as Jewish groups. Racial ideas became widespread, and gave antagonism towards immigrants and foreign peoples a new power in the early 1900s. The different discursive and practical endeavors to homogenize the Swedish population have contributed to the image many Swedes have tended to endorse, that Sweden is culturally and ethnically

homogeneous (Löfgren 1993).” (Norman 2004, 206)

Moreover, Sawyer (2002, 17), Pred (1997) and others show that Sweden does have a historical ‘interaction’ with Africa and Africans. Sweden did have, albeit temporarily, forts on the west African coast during the days of colonialism. Also, Swedish naturalist Carl Linnaeus and others helped to develop a hierarchical schema of race, culture, development and purity that situates Africans and Europeans (particularly Nordics) in diametric opposition to each other, with Europeans positioned the top of this hierarchy and Africans placed at the bottom (Sawyer 2000; 2002,17). Although Swedes have had no experience interacting with Africans in person, they have a history of perceptions of Africans and their place in the world.

I draw on Lena Sawyer’s discussion of Africans in Sweden, and the Swedish words *neger* and *svartskalle* to further support the assertion that with regards to Africans, Swedes have historically and continue to place Africans as the ‘other’ against which incomers are measured and placed. Some claim that the word *neger* was used commonly in the Swedish past and still means nothing more than ‘Negro’ meant as it was used in the American past. However, in Swedish society, the word *neger* has a history of usage in a way that depicted black people negatively. As Sawyer (2002) points out, *negrer* were depicted in popular Swedish literature and correspondingly in the imaginations of the people as “primitive, childlike/unintelligent, wild, undeveloped, and unmodern in the popular social imagination” (ibid, 20). Due to this association, some see the word as being offensive and similar to the American word ‘nigger’. The term *svartskalle*, translated literally to mean ‘black skull’ is derogatory term used by some Swedes used to describe undesirable immigrants and Swedes of immigrant background of any background (Sawyer 2000). It is interesting as to why the term is specifically developed

as ‘black’ skull as opposed to some other descriptor. Sawyer (2000; 2002, 20) asserts that the term serves to “mark” certain immigrants and Swedes of immigrant background “as marginally belonging to the Swedish community and as members of ‘inferior’ economic, cultural, and racial groups…” In Swedish usage of *neger* and *svartskalle*, “colonial meanings of blackness function as a code for all that does not meet Swedish middle-class, white standards of cultural normalcy. Here racial meanings are accessed to "blacken" certain Swedes and to mark their peripheral belonging to the national community” (Sawyer 2002, 20).

Even so Africans remain “Othered” no matter how long they’ve been in Sweden. Swedes of African descent are still asked when are they going home and told what good Swedish they speak (Sawyer 2000). Black people are stopped, searched and asked for documents when entering Sweden, whether by bus, train, plane etc. These incidences keep them conscious of their marginal status and placement outside of the natural fabric of folk who belong to the land. It serves to make them feel unwanted, unaccepted and not welcome. Africans are a heterogeneous group with their own histories. According to Sawyer (2002, 21), despite this fact, Africans in Sweden face a number of forces that attempt to “homogenize” them into disempowered and marginal subjects within the Swedish society. …Categorizations such as ‘immigrant,’ ‘refugee,’ and ‘African’ are in the Swedish context culturalized terminology that are often used to rationalize Africans (as well as other racialized immigrants) economic and social segregation”. Immigrants of European background can visually blend into the Swedish population, which leaves the ‘foreign immigrants’ to be singled out to be the literal face of the nation’s immigration

problems. Sweden, as a result of rapid immigration and refugee intake has had a resultant increase in crimes against immigrants (Bunar 2007).

Nowadays, in the mid 2000s, despite the massive increase in refugees from East Africa over the previous 15 years, black Africans only comprise a relatively small percentage[22] of total immigrants in Sweden. They appear, however, to be one of the most visible with regard to media attention. With the exception of famous black American entertainers who happened to be performing in Sweden at any given time, the vast majority if not all of the remaining depictions of people of African origin on local newspaper covers were complaining of a racist encounter they had suffered through. These depictions further marginalize and almost criminalize black people. Positive stories about black persons in Sweden did not seem to exist, unless the individual was an entertainer. Rarely if ever was there a person of Asian or Middle Eastern descent depicted in such articles.

Stories such as "Chefen kallade mig för jävla neger[23]", and "Entrévard riskerar atal for diskriminering[24]" took headline news in some of the smaller newspapers in Stockholm.

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[22] Nowadays, the biggest immigrant groups are from Finland (250,000), Iran (80,000), Iraq (70,000), Bosnia (60,000) Serbia and Montenegro (50,000), Turkey (40,000), Poland (40,000), Somalia (35,000), Germany (35,000), and Chile (30,000). Finns, Norwegians, and Germans came in the 1960s and 1970s. The others were refugees that came within the past 30 years. (Bunar 2007, 179, note 1).

[23] "Getty: 'Chefen kallade mig för jävla neger'" *Stockholm City*, 9 February 2004, p. 3

[24] "Entrévard riskerar atal for diskriminering" *Lokaltidningen Mitt I Östermalm*, 12 June 2004
The door guard/Maitre D) refused restaurant entrance to two *mörkhyade* (dark complexioned) men but let in two *ljushyade* (light complexioned) men who were all in the same party. The guard claimed that he is himself of immigrant background and only stopped the two dark skinned men because they looked too young to come in.

For instance there was the case of Francis Abedi, from Kinshasa who was attacked after protesting to two police officers who had just taken his picture while he stood outside of a grocery store waiting for a relative. The cops pushed him to the ground and hit him with hand batons and sprayed his eyes with pepper spray, while ignoring the gathered passersby yelling for them to stop because Abedi had done nothing wrong. Abedi charged, 'Det är för att jag är svart, så klart. Om jag var svensk skille inte ha fotografade mig overhuvudtaget, de skulle inte ha jagat mig."[25] [It is because I'm black for sure. If I were Swedish they wouldn't have photographed me, they wouldn't have hit me.] One well known case during 2004, received front page coverage on Stockholm newspapers, as well as television news coverage. Two women of African background charged an upscale Stockholm restaurant with racial discrimination after they were "kastade ut" (thrown out) by the coat-check. Reports varied as to whether either word 'nigger' or 'neger' was hurled at the women by the man, but that will be resolved in court because they soon hired a lawyer and sued the restaurant for damages. This case also made headlines in part because women tend to much less often be the target of discrimination and racial attacks. Headlines aside, violent attacks on Africans remain relatively rare. Africans in Sweden do not face any form of persecution, but most do experience institutionalized[26] and a subtle kind of "everyday racism" (Essed 1991). What are the experiences of resident black American women when set against this backdrop of Sweden's changing immigration patterns and policies? In a nation where white Americans have high and

[25] "Polisen slog mig för att jag är svart" *Metro*, 19 December 2003

[26] This is slowly changing. In the national election of 2001, the two first sub-Saharan Africans were elected to the Swedish Parliament.

preferred status while Africans have a low undesired status, where do black American women fit in? How are they placed and how do they place themselves in this new field?

Black Americans in Sweden

Although records of individual black American contact with Scandinavian shores stretch back over 100 years[27], most contact between black Americans and Swedes, at least until the 1950s, took place on the ground of ideology. Swedes, by the time of WWII had become acquainted with the plight of black Americans inside the U.S. through published literature.

> Sweden's was virtually a blind admiration [of the US], and when the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal published his classic two-volume investigation of the position of the Negro in American society, *An American Dilemma*, in 1944, it created somewhat of a Swedish dilemma. This homogenous society with no experience of race conflicts found prejudice incomprehensible, and heartily condemned it in other countries... If Swedes had a race prejudice it tipped over, in fact, in the other direction into a romanticized sympathy for the "poor mistreated Negro." (Link 1971, 43)

It was war that brought thousands of black Americans to Europe. While there, they were able to openly fraternize with European women and live a lifestyle of relative personal freedom. A sizeable number of those men, when released from military service returned to Europe to resume the lives to which they had grown accustomed. It was in the 1950s and 1960s when Sweden, specifically Stockholm and Malmö (a small Swedish city on the

[27] "At the end of the 19th century, persons of African descent were still curiosities in Scandinavia. In the 1890s, William S. Brooks, an unmistakably black American, undertook an adventurous voyage to the land of the midnight sun. When his ship docked in Gothenburg, a crowd of Swedes rushed on board to gaze in wonderment at Brooks. He was lionized. He was followed wherever he went on the ship. It was the same for the duration of his stay in Scandinavia. Swedes scrutinized him eagerly to determine if he was actually black or had been blackened for the occasion. Questions asked of Brooks frequently centered on his physical characteristics. Why were the insides of his hands white and the outsides black? Why was his hair so kinky? Ignorance of black anatomy was equaled by ignorance of black history and geography. Most of the Scandinavians Brooks met did not even know that there were people of African background in America. They thought he had to be from Africa. Apparently, the King of Sweden was as curious about this rara avis as his parochial subjects were, for he granted Brooks a royal audience." Brooks (1899: 31-35 as cited in Weisbord, 1972: 473-4)

border with Copenhagen, Denmark), accepted the immigration and/or self-imposed exile of an estimated 100 or so (Diakite 2005) black Americans. These expatriates were varied in profession (mostly artists, musicians, athletes, and writers), but all cited greater freedom as their reasons for leaving the United States and going to Sweden (Dunbar 1968; Weisbord 1972). Substantive published information on this group is sparse. Suspicious about the amount of information U.S. officials could gather about them, they didn't speak much to the press and kept a low profile.

The black American population grew in the late 1960s and early 1970s when over 800 US military personnel (deserters) and civilians (resisters) and others sought asylum in Sweden (Boggs 1979; Boggs1987; Davidsson 1971). Between 25% and 40% of the military personnel were black Americans (Weisbord 1972). The percentage of black Americans among the other groups is unknown. The deserters and resisters along with some members of the Black Panthers and others were also granted permission to stay in Sweden. While there Black Panthers and SKAN-SNCC[28] organized political demonstrations against the US involvement in Vietnam (Link 1971).

Despite Sweden's long standing admiration of the U.S., the Swedish people became increasingly disapproving of U.S. foreign policy as well as the U.S.'s own civil rights problems. According to Link (1971, 44), not only did Swedes see the Vietnam War as "an industrialized white nation dropping bombs on a non-white nation", Swedes also had a negative opinion of the fact that black Americans figured disproportionately high among the Army ranks fighting the war (ibid., 44). Moreover, Swedes, a people from a small nation, also disliked large nations invading and attacking what they viewed as

[28] SKAN-SNCC was the Scandinavian branch of the American Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee.

fellow small nations (ibid., 44). An uncomfortable political frost began developing between the two nations when Sweden started giving asylum to American Vietnam war deserters and resisters. Sweden was also the first western nation to officially recognize North Vietnam (ibid., 44). Swedish education minister Olof Palme conspicuously participated in a candlelight parade in Stockholm with North Vietnam's ambassador to the Soviet Union to protest America's involvement in the war (ibid., 44). Following this, the world tour of the American Apollo 11 astronauts noticeably skipped Sweden (ibid., 44). Several months later, Sweden declared that it would send $45 million in aid to Hanoi (ibid., 44). The U.S., in reply, shut down the American consulate in the Swedish city of Gothenburg (Link 1971, 44).

The anti-American policy, anti-Vietnam war climate in Sweden became so tense that in 1969 the then American Ambassador William Heath was called home "for consultations" (ibid., 44). The American government, was not without a response to the Swedish criticism of its policy and Sweden's very public harbor of American war deserters and resisters. One year later, in 1970, amidst rumblings about potential American activity in Cambodia, President Richard Nixon appointed black American Jerome Holland, 54, former president of Hampton Institute in Virginia, as Ambassador to Sweden (ibid., 44). At the time of his appointment, Holland[29] was described in a 1970 Time magazine article as "several thousand ideological parsecs away from any Black Panther" and an "almost evangelical integrationist…in an age of restive black-separatist movements" (HP-Time.com 2008 [1970]).

Many Swedes welcomed Holland's appointment, although many others were skeptical of his selection, as were the resident white and black American protesters there.

[29] Holland in 1969 published the book *Black Opportunity*.

That did not stop the American government from trying to paint a calm picture for the world to see. “Because Ambassador Holland is black”, an American embassy official in Stockholm stated to inquisitors in the fall of 1970, “the issue of race has lost a lot of impact here” (Weisbord 1972, 485). According to Link (1971, 45), Sweden’s “standing bunch of regular demonstrators were wary. Just to make sure everybody knew they weren’t to be won over so easily, they dubbed the Embassy ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ Countered a White House aide, ‘Who did they expect, Eldridge Cleaver?’” In fact, Ambassador Holland’s welcome was not entirely a warm one. In front of the rolling press cameras, a young Swedish demonstrator, Nils Norland, managed to maneuver past airport security and ‘greet’ Holland with a shout of “Go home, murderer, you are not welcome!” as Holland and his family exited the plane and began a descent to the tarmac. According to Link, Swedes watched this moment several times in their homes as it was played repeatedly on Swedish television (ibid., 45). Link gives an account of Ambassador Holland’s first days in Sweden:

> One morning soon after arriving in Sweden, Holland rode in the customary carriage to present his credentials to the King. The police on duty reported that a few stray demonstrators had called “Yankee, go home!” but had been kept at a distance. In the afternoon Mr. Holland gave his first press conference. He said that on his way to the Palace he had been called “nigger, nigger, nigger.” He said he hadn’t objected to the demonstration at the airport the previous day, but that this was a demonstration not against America but against him personally because of his race. Then in a program that was televised that same evening he said he had been called “nigger” at the airport. He said that he didn’t mind demonstrators carrying signs but: “When I walked down the steps and this young man took it out of that context and said, ‘Nigger, you are not wanted here!’…he then moved into a racist type of thing.” … There has been much discussion of these discrepancies. (Link 1971, 45)
>
> The Swedish public was nonplused. The word “nigger” was simply not in the Swedish vocabulary. There are many Negro Ambassadors and other diplomats in Stockholm from African countries. There has never been the slightest hint of a demonstration against them or any other Negro in Sweden because of race. A black diplomat living in Stockholm comments on Jerome Holland’s experience: “Swedish accents are difficult to understand at first. Perhaps Mr. Holland was listening unconsciously for such a word and thought he heard it. Perhaps he was prepared to hear it. Sweden is not always spoken gently to the ears.” (Link 1971, 45-46)
>
> Despite the confusions and contradictions, after having talked to the Ambassador and press attaché at the American Embassy, the Swedish Foreign Office, police, press and TV people, I believe Mr.

> Holland did hear the word "nigger," and that he heard it from American Negroes, Sherman Adams, Bill Nelson, Ray Jones and others. Thus it is ironical that American Negroes, who are here precisely because Sweden is so hospitable to them, manage to give Sweden the reputation in the U.S.A of being inhospitable to Negroes. When Sherman Adams realized this, he made a public apology, but it was too late. Once such sensational news spreads around its denial is drowned in the uproar. (Link 1971, 45)

The Ambassador did not let this rocky start shake his confidence. Holland was soon proactively dispatched to cities and towns around Sweden to meet and discuss political issues with the people. Among the people he met and spoke with were young NLF[30] demonstrators, which his predecessor had not done. At one meeting in Sundsvall, Sweden, the representatives read him a laundry list of perceived American moral failings with regards to the plight of the Vietnamese and black Americans. They expressed to Holland their belief that the Vietnam war was a racial war, that the American treatment of black Americans was something approaching genocide, and that white supremacists in the US were comparable to Nazis in Europe (Link 1971, 47). They continued questioning him as to why black Americans were oppressed and blocked from decent employment. Holland spent extended time explaining and assuring them that "there were Negroes in all walks of life in America" (ibid., 47). "I'm an ambassador," he told them, "and this is considered a good job" (ibid., 47). However the job didn't last very long. Holland resigned from his post in 1972, two years after first arriving, to pursue other professional opportunities in the U.S. There has never been a black American ambassador to Sweden before or since Holland's appointment.

Meanwhile, all was not rosy on the Swedish homefront. Although Sweden's harbor of American deserters and resisters received large amount of press showing them settling in and enjoying their new lives (Nilson 1968), the land of the midnight sun, according to

[30] The NLF, the National Liberation Front, was a Swedish organization that led one of the largest anti-Vietnam War movements in the West.

Vernon Boggs[31], was not turning out to be the paradise on earth for the deserters/resisters, that it was portrayed to be. And Sweden found the new incomers to not all be the noble and honorable ideologues that they painted themselves to be. Unbeknownst to most, not just American war deserters and resisters entered Sweden in the late 1960s. A number of shady individuals falsely represented themselves as resisters in order to enter Sweden, not uncommonly to avoid some criminal charge (Boggs 1987, 249). Case in point, according to Boggs (1979, 67), in the mid-1960s a some of the black American former G.I.s who had returned to Europe, got involved with drugs and prostitution there, creating "an informal international network of vice and crime" in major European cities like Copenhagen, Denmark and Frankfurt, Germany. These men quickly became pimps and hustlers. Within a few years authorities noticed "an alarming rise in drug abuse and narcotic-trafficking throughout Western Europe" and "brought about massive police actions to check and control the rise in crime" (Boggs 1979, 67). These police interventions and sexual attractions that the men and Swedish women had for each other were the major forces which brought black players and hustlers to Sweden during a four year period, 1968-1971 which simultaneously coincided with the deserter's arrival (Boggs 1979, 68). Thus, some of the deserters[32] and their Swedish girlfriends sought identification with these men and women and got involved in their life of 'vice and crime' (Boggs 1979, 98-99).

The deserters greatly enjoyed their first weeks in Sweden thanks to a lack of segregation laws and overt racism they endured in the US. They experienced sexual

[31] Extremely little research exists on the experiences of Black American deserters in Sweden during the 60s through the 1980s. In this section I rely heavily on the written research description of Vernon Boggs and the accounts of the men whom he interviewed. Others accounts may exist.
[32] The deserters appeared to be all male. There are no records of female deserters (Diakite 2005).

freedom in that they were pursued by and were able to pursue Swedish women, but after some time, the enjoyment of it wore thin and the gritty reality of life in Sweden set in. Weeks turned to months with no improvement in their situation. To these men, in short, "living in Sweden as an alien was an unpleasant experience…" (Boggs 1987, 245).

> Whenever an American serviceman sought political asylum in Malmo, he was required to go to the Foreign Police and register. He was interviewed, given lodging at a local hotel until his application was reviewed by the Immigration Office, and provided with tickets for lunch and dinner at a local restaurant. Then he received a weekly sum of money, $5.00 - $20.00 from the Welfare Bureau for toilet articles; money for cigarettes and entertainment were not allocated, and in addition, he was not legally permitted to work. At the Rex Hotel, he was required to leave his room no later than 8 a.m. and could not return until late in the day; visiting privileges at the hotel were never granted. He was required to eat at certain times during the day at two local restaurants, and if he came late, he missed his meal. He was also required to study Swedish in a crowded classroom with other deserters. (Boggs 1979, 70)

According to Boggs (1987, 245), the government had no real systematic policy to help the men become integrated into Swedish society and what policies did exist were executed poorly. The deserters were never given full 'refugee status' and thus were not given monthly stipends but instead small amounts of pocket money, hardly enough to start a new life (ibid.).

The rules and restrictions, coupled with "long waiting periods for residence and work permits seemed to them to indicate callousness, if not downright indifference, toward their situation" (Boggs 1987, 245). Furthermore their low levels of education and language barriers added to the frustration. Others "had unrealistic expectations of the host society and abused the few privileges they were granted" (Boggs 1987, 249). Within a few months of arrival some of the men were already engaging in criminal activities. By 1970 a number of them had been arrested for committing crimes throughout the country (Boggs 1979, 99). Many of those Americans accused of criminal activities, blamed "demeaning" and "unsympathetic" Swedish policies for their problems (Boggs 1987, 245). They felt that the living circumstances they were required to put up with, the

isolation, the rules they were forced to comply with, the restrictions from work and lack of other rights granted to residents drove them, otherwise law abiding men, to a life of crime. Add to this situation the presence of the black pimps and hustlers from Germany and Denmark and the allure of fast cash. Those that had entered the military with criminal backgrounds had no difficulty going back to a lifestyle, "that encouraged them to 'hustle, chase chicks, party, and smoke dope'" (Boggs 1987, 247). It should be pointed out that not all the black deserters engaged in criminal activities.

On the other hand, according to Boggs (1987, 247), the deserters themselves "did little to further the assimilation process, and in many cases they actively resisted efforts to integrate[33] them into Swedish society". For them, to thrive in Sweden they needed Swedish language skills and specialized labor skills, both of which, the deserters were unable or unwilling to acquire. They viewed the desire to learn and practice speaking Swedish as "a lack of pride of one's own heritage" (Boggs 1987, 246). They also refused to do what they considered to be menial jobs that may have at least eased their financial situation. The attitudes of black men in particular have been influenced by their experiences in the U.S. This attitude toward Sweden and Swedish society was influenced by the "individual pathologies" of many of the men (Boggs 1987, 247). As years went by, the stress of living in "an all-white...country in which they were treated as outsiders" caused the men to suffer an unresolvable cultural clash (Boggs 1979, 99). The web of life to which they'd grown accustomed to the U.S. was out of order for them in Sweden. As

[33] During this time deserters formed Stockholm and Malmo chapters of the American Deserters Committee (ADC) "which had as one of its aims helping the deserters to improve their economic stability and to adjust in Sweden" but unfortunately they were not successful in their mission. Both the ADC and the Swedish branch of the Black Panther Party which sought to help American deserters in Sweden "began losing their significance in 1971 since American deserters were being convicted of felonies and were being deported." (Boggs 1979, 71).

Ernest Dunbar (1968, 16-17) postulated, some black Americans who move to other nations find "that years of conditioning, the defensive maneuvers, the peculiar mechanisms of survival learned in America have proved impossible to discard," even in a society where they may no longer be appropriate. Therefore the men's inability, and sometimes unwillingness, to integrate into Swedish society plus their affiliation with pimps and hustlers and prostitutes caused them to quickly become marginal men in Sweden (Boggs 1979, 99). These "individual pathologies" may have included the racial baggage of moving from one marginalized identity to seemingly another.

By 1974, a small but highly visible number of black foreigners had been convicted of drug-trafficking and pimping, which created a 'Swedish dilemma' (Boggs 1987, 99). Sweden needed to solve this growing problem without appearing racist or appearing to renege on their promise of asylum (Boggs 1987, 99). According to Boggs, Sweden reacted "racialistically" (Boggs 1987, 100) by making Black Americans the icons for all deserters. Swedish leaders created a public outcry for the men's deportation with assistance of the media and its coverage of these trials. In one illustration given by Boggs (1979, 73), one day a black deserter was arrested at the Malmo airport after putting a knife to his Swedish girlfriend's throat, entering a plane and demanding that he be flown to the U.S. . He was diagnosed as schizophrenic and quickly deported after his conviction. This episode was one in a chain of events that precipitated a negative Swedish public opinion of the deserters with the active complicity of the media. As opposed to the 1960's when the Swedish press had been sympathetic to their plight, the press began portraying the deserters as criminals and ingrates (Boggs 1979, 73). The Swedish public reacted by openly considering whether or not the deserters should be

deported back to the U.S. (Boggs 1979, 73). Sweden, “a social-democratic country which was reported to be racially-tolerant, quickly proved to be inhospitable to the influx of black foreigners particularly the deserters” (Boggs 1979, 68).

Before 1975 the Swedish press refrained from revealing the race of a defendant when criminal cases were described; but in 1975 this was changed. By the end of 1976, “it had been made clear to the public that black American pimps constituted a severe threat to Scandinavian women, and Swedes in general” (Boggs 1979, 100). Thus the police stepped up their efforts to remove black foreigners from the criminal circuits. The negative press assisted in creating “ a ‘reverse’ social contagion process” inside the prostitution subculture (Boggs 1979, 100). With negative public opinion, the black American men had become openly stigmatized and even more marginalized. They lost status within their own circles. The prostitutes no longer protected the men from the police as they had done in the past. By this time the Vietnam War had ended and the drug scene was growing rapidly. The popular thought, according to Boggs (1987, 247), was that deporting them was the lesser of two evils when compared to the prospect of “subsidizing” them and their lifestyles indefinitely with monthly welfare payments. The police cracked down and were ultimately able to get a substantial number of Black Americans deported, which ended the presence of black pimps in Sweden by 1978 (Boggs 1979, 100). Americans who sought asylum in Sweden began leaving as early as the mid-1970s, some by choice, and others by force. Their departure from Sweden was a result of ineffective assimilation policies on the part of the Swedish government, coupled with the Americans’ own unwillingness to make themselves a part of society and their inability to cope with life in Sweden in general (Boggs 1987, 248). From 1967 to 1973,

almost 800 American military deserters and draft resisters sought asylum in Sweden. By 1984 only about 50 of them remained in the country (Boggs 1987, 248). Today there are only a few Black American military deserters still living in Sweden (Diakite 2005).

Overshadowed by the Vietnam War deserters in the 1960s and 1970s were dozens of ordinary individuals who came to Sweden to reasons as diverse as themselves were, many taking advantage of Sweden's tuition free university system which afforded them a college education that would likely not have been available to them in the US (Diakite 2005). Many had difficulty gaining employment even when they held the appropriate Swedish University credentials[34]. A small number of Black Americans opened various businesses in Sweden (stores, shops, clubs, agencies, stands) from the humblest to the swankiest, but they failed because of the inability of the owners to break into and network with the Swedish business alliances. At the close of the 1970s, "it was clear that no amount of African American money, time or energy enabled their enterprises to flourish in Sweden" (Diakite 2005) at least not for more than a few years. In short, Black American men in Sweden in the 1960s and 1970s struggled to make futures for themselves and some, like the asylum seekers, ultimately left after prolonged difficulties in getting established.

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a description of the history of the Black American population in Sweden and to show how published historical accounts of Black Americans in Sweden are almost exclusively about men. Through the 1980s and 1990s, Black Americans (male and female) continued to enter Sweden. In the following chapters, I look at the experiences of Black American women in present day (early

[34] Diakite (2005) tells the story of one young prospective African American teacher with a Swedish masters degree in education who, when interviewed, was asked if he could teach dance.

2000s) Sweden including their interactions with Swedes, other Americans and other immigrants in a new post-immigration, multicultural nation. Next in Chapter Three, I begin with a discussion of some of their encounters with Swedes and with positioning in the Swedish field.

CHAPTER 3 THREE: MAKING SENSE OF SWEDES AND SWEDEN

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In this chapter I describe how black American women make sense of Swedes and what I identify as the Swedish social field. Loosely using the human senses as a frame, I discuss the women's experiences with (in)visibility (*You're from Africa, right?*), language and communication (*Vad? Jag kan inte förstår vad du säger*), touch (*They want to touch you*), and understanding (*Well then, you understand*) as they relate to their (mis)placement and positioning by Swedes. I also illustrate their use of sense-making techniques developed in their social field of origin. I argue that Sweden constitutes a distinct social field in which black American activate the cultural capital of their American nationality to garner better treatment, avoid negative treatment that is meted out against African immigrants and refugees and thus (re)position themselves in this field.

I argue that black Americans activate cultural capital in the form of performance of their American background to reposition themselves in the Swedish field of national acceptance and thus gain improved treatment from Swedes. A field is a multifactoral social space and system of social relations, in which individuals and agents place and position themselves and others via interaction according to a set of rules unique to it. An individual's position in a field is the outcome of the confluence of the field's rules of interaction, the agent's sense of these "rules of the game" and the sum value of an

individual's various forms of capital (economic, social and cultural). An individual can move to new position in the field with a successful activation of capital.

Cultural capital began as a "theoretical hypothesis" for Bourdieu (1986, 47), to "explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes". Cultural capital as a concept typically has been used, following the original research of Bourdieu on school and educational systems. However, it also has been used to frame other types of research. For instance, Emirbayer & Williams (2005) used Bourdieu's theories of field and capital to study the relationships interactions in homeless shelters while Ghassan Hage (1998) used the concept of cultural capital to study the role of race in Australian national belonging.

There are three forms of cultural capital: embodied (ways of thinking and behaving that are developed over a long period of time), objectified (material goods which display cultural knowledge and taste) and institutionalized (degrees and other kinds of official qualifications (Bourdieu 1986, 47). Embodied cultural capital is a way of behaving that is shaped through a long term socialization process that enables individuals to have a positive outcome in a new environment (for example, ranking higher in national acceptance) than another individual without that background. The value inherent in embodied cultural capital comes from the investment of resources and time to develop it, and from the fact that it cannot be given away or transferred like a material good (Bourdieu 1986, 46). As Bourdieu (1986, 48) states, it "must be invested personally. [I]t cannot be done at second hand…"

In society, individuals act in ways that serve their own interests. One way they do this is by activating capital acquired in one field to get a favorable result in another field.

For instance, Black American women may use their American nationality as cultural capital to avoid (mis)identification as African and any undesired treatment that may come with it. Black American women in Sweden have most (but not all) of the cultural capital associated with Americanness – including speaking fluent American English, coming from middle class backgrounds, having family and friends in US, and having the undifferentiated American cultural markers which provide Black Americans some privileges and opportunities in Swedish society. However, they may have difficulty successfully activating their capital or may find that the exchange rate on their capital is lower than that for white Americans because they are not white. Black Americans, despite having access to high status, also can face exclusion based on their racial background. The theoretical concept of capital is a useful one, not only for examining class struggles, but also for struggles for legitimation and other forms of inequality and which result in inclusion and exclusion.

"You're from Africa right?"

Themes of (in)visibility, (mis)placement and positioning permeated the women's discourse. Given that black American women have a long-standing history of being seen and not seen, placed and misplaced by white Americans in the U.S. in a multitude of contexts, it was therefore not surprising that many of their perceptions (whether conscious or unconscious) of encounters in Sweden would be couched in such terms. My informants shared similar accounts of their early days in Sweden. Most were, in fact, a little nervous about moving to Sweden. They wondered what life in a Scandinavian country would be like for them as Black women. They were nervous about the prospect of encountering racism or some act of racial violence. However, they soon found that

apprehension to be quite short-lived. They described their first days and weeks after arriving in Sweden as vacation-like. These were the days in which they enjoyed a kind of tourist status as they explored the country. After a while however, as they had more encounters with Swedes in public venues, they began to notice that they are first identified by Swedes (to which they were unknown) as African. They are (mis)placed within the realm of Swedish immigration/cultural politics and positioned lowly. Although they try to place themselves as Americans, as outsiders, as 'guests' (which automatically raises their positioning), they sometimes are not able to or may even choose not to do so in any given situation. It is important to note that this (mis)placement is not always hostile, nor is it always with harmful intent on the part of Swedes. However, it usually appears based on the assumption that they represent some kind of burden. As such, they perceive a distance, which I suggest is the distance of positioning. Henrietta, a large dark skinned[35] woman from New York City in her thirties with a soft smile and a direct sense of humor told me of encounters that occurred soon after she arrived in Sweden.

> Even in the City (Stockholm) I had this man walk up to me. I don't know why, but he walked up to me and said, "You're from Africa right?" And I said, "No". And then he just started going off on where I could get a meal, and I could do this and I could work here or there. I'm like, 'Yeah ok sure, bye." As if I actually needed this information. [Henrietta]

This Swedish man visually evaluated her, made an assumption of her origin based on her appearance, and attempted to place her with his opening words. Although she replied that she was not African, the man continued, perhaps out of disbelief, to inform her of where she could get help to feed and provide for herself. Encounters like this not only openly

[35] It may be noted here that age, dress, skin complexion, features do appear to influence the type, degree, and frequency of positive and negative encounters with white Swedes. As one black American woman told me "*utseende* matters" (looks matter) in Sweden. The women with whom I conversed and spent time, in Sweden range from very light to very dark, twenties to seventies, thin to large. Although I mention this again briefly in Chapter Five, these issues will not be a focus of this research.

mark the women as the other, as not belonging, but also places them as refugees - as poor and unemployed. In this manner black American women begin to learn the Swedish social field, with regard to where certain players are positioned and who has the power to position them. This is a "micro-level" example of what Hage (1998, 48) describes as the "spatial dimensions of nationalist practices", or in other words, encounters which mark national territory and the belongingness of those who inhabit it. From repeated personal encounters and through discussions with Swedes, the women begin to learn and understand not only that there is a Swedish field, but that it is hierarchical in nature.

> Because everybody always says, 'Oh well you're from the United States. We know you're not... you're fine.' Well what do you [they] mean? 'Well you don't come from Russia or one of those poor countries.' I could have been poor in the States… [Delilah]
>
> I think black Americans rank higher in the Swedish 'social order' than most black Africans and people from the Arab countries do… [Odele]
>
> A black person is a black person… You are an immigrant... And being black you're always at the bottom of the immigrant list. [Carol]

Growing up in the U.S. may provide the women with a preliminary framework for understanding the dynamics of interaction which they observe in Sweden. They learn that Swedish society has its own issues about race and belonging (Sawyer 2002, 2000; Pred 2000). They start understanding the position of the different groups and where they as black women fit in.

In July 2003 near the time of my arrival in Sweden, an opinion article appeared in the newspaper Dagens Nyheter entitled, "Taxis turn down (the) dark-skinned: Swedes accused of not welcoming tourists[36]." In the article, written and signed by several representatives of different Swedish tourist boards and associations, they make a plea to

[36] July 12, 2003 on page 4 of the DN Debate section, The letter is signed by: Karl-Erik Strand, Sveriges Rese- och Turistråd (Travel & Tourist Board) Mats Hulth, Sweden's Hotel and Restaurant Owner's Association, SHR Nils Carlsson, Svensk Turism, Jan Gunnarsson, Den svenska värdskapet

the Swedish people to be more tolerant of dark-skinned visitors. Part of the letter specifically references black Americans.

> Now the truth is that not everybody who visits or even lives in Sweden is equally welcome. Our prejudices or negative attitudes spoil part of our guests' or newly arrived Swedes' experiences of our land. One example is how skin color can affect their chances of entering a place of public entertainment… Sweden's travel and tourist board in the USA has repeatedly received calls from black Americans who did not feel welcome in our country, either as vacationers or in business connections. A very successful businessman with African American background even went so far as to leave Sweden three days ahead of schedule because he felt badly treated…We have even carried out brief interviews with taxi drivers in Stockholm. Forty percent say that they are reluctant to pick up people with dark skin color after midnight.

The letter, written in English, goes on to encourage Swedes to be more friendly and welcoming to tourists of all colors to help the economy. It is interesting to note that there is not more of a push by the authors to encourage all Swedes to treat all people who reside in Sweden better. Instead they single out that Swedes should instead be more considerate of dark-skinned tourists, especially for example black Americans who hold American dollars. Public discussions such as this open letter only confirm to black American women that the reasons why some groups have higher status and/or receive better treatment in Sweden are multifactoral.

By sight alone, almost all of the black American women with whom I spent time and interviewed clearly stand out phenotypically from the classic definition of a Swede. As such, they have at times received cold treatment in public places from negative visibility and it catches them off guard; so off guard that they are not able to place themselves properly, or perhaps not at all. In such encounters, white Swedes may not have known where my informants were from, but they believed they knew where they were not from [Sweden]; and that is where the placement begins. See Sawyer (2000, 2002) for a discussion of the racialization of Swedish belonging. This, they believe,

occurs through stares and comments that impart to the visual object that they do not belong, are foreign, other, and not welcome.

Michelle is a tall, brown-skinned woman in her thirties from New York state who has lived in Stockholm for six years with her Swedish husband, whom she originally met in the U.S. She described to me one such incidence of placement.

> I was visiting my father in law. He lives in a swanky building over in Östermalm and there's this old lady and she sort of looks and me goes, "Who are you? What are you doing here?" (imitates woman's voice nasal, snobbish and repulsed sounding). You know things like that just kind of throw me off. And I told my father-in-law, who was also insulted. And I actually answered this woman who I was going to go visit like a fool! (laughs) I was so taken aback I actually answered her; 'Oh I'm going to see my father-in-law Sten Svensson' (imitates timid voice). (chuckles) When I got to his place I told him about what happened.
>
> So the next time my father-in-law sees this woman she gives him some total lie story. She totally lied. She was like, "No I just thought she was so cute" (imitates woman's nasal voice). You know like total lie! (laughs) So, that, I've experienced. But I actually get kind of a warped pleasure sometimes when I'm going someplace and I know I'll be the only black person. I think it's funny. Like when I go to things with my husband at the bank. He works at [a large financial institution]. I think it's funny. Like, 'I'm going to be the only black person. That'll be fun.' I mean I can't say that it's been bad. I mean, you have your instances but it hasn't been that bad. I really don't even think about it so much anymore. I don't. [Michelle]

Michelle perceived the Swedish woman's questioning of her presence there as an indicator that she did not belong. It marks an exaggeration of difference, a type of objectification. The question "Who are you?", accentuated the color and origin difference between the two women. The question "What are you doing here?" indicated to Michelle an assumed difference in class. In other words, to Michelle it meant that she as a black woman needed a reason to be there, since she obviously did not belong in that "swanky" building in Östermalm. A well-known technique of 'othering', to make one aware of their difference, is the act of staring, thereby holding a person under the gaze of evaluation and placement. Michelle remarks that she was "taken aback" as an explanation for why she explained her presence there for this woman's evaluation and approval. She felt that in the US, such an encounter would rarely have taken place. Michelle was off her game

because she was operating in the mindset that she carried in the U.S. Many times, especially in the early years, the women seem to unconsciously confuse American rules of interaction with those in Sweden, in part because the societies look so similar on the surface. So when they experience negative encounters, they experience genuine shock at the behavior. Michelle actively attempts to counteract these negative encounters by taking pride in her presence at all-white social events. She takes pleasure in dispelling stereotypes and uses these social events to enlighten Swedish assumptions about black people in general and black Americans in particular.

There are instances where the women have encounters of negative visibility and/or misplacement that are so brief or indirect that they cannot respond or place themselves properly. When Patricia, a deep brown skinned woman in her forties arrived in 1999 from New York state to live with her Swedish husband, she was the only black person on her street.

> When I came here in 1999, a neighbor's daughter, she was about fifteen or sixteen had a birthday party. My husband was on our roof. And the girl's boyfriend or a guest shouted up, "Sweden for the Swedes!" My husband ignored it. The boy shouted again, "Sweden for the Swedes!" My husband didn't respond, didn't look. The boy yelled even louder, "Sweden for the Swedes!" My husband came down from the roof and told me that he'd lived here in this area for over 30 years prior to [my] arrival and [he'd] never had that experience. I had just moved there. And I said, "Honey, I'm sure that was meant for you and for me and I'm glad you didn't address it." But if I were there, I would have addressed it. I'm like, do I need this? What was this kid thinking? What is it that I have come here to take? What does he think of me? Does he know anything about me? No. Do I want to stay and put up with this the rest of my life? No. So see, there is always something to remind you … [Patricia]

> Just recently, as I approached the condominium where I live, I was stopped by the driver of a vehicle used to transport severely handicapped people from place to place. He did not know the door code, so he looked hopefully at me and asked with a smile: "Do you work here?" I doubt that he would have asked a white person that question. I was in a fairly good mood that day, so I answered gently, "No. I live here," and let him in. Foreigners are frequently and unexpectedly, but not always intentionally, reminded in small ways like these of their "foreign-ness," of their supposed "different-ness", of their "place." It becomes tiresome. A sense of humor and a thick skin are helpful, but now and then one really becomes weary of it all. [Odele]

Patricia's encounter of the neighbor shouting "Sweden for the Swedes" is another micro-level example of nationalist practices (Hage 1998, 48) which seek to proclaim themselves

'real' Swedes who have the power to determine who does not belong and who should leave. Since this was directed at her husband, Patricia could not respond. She could not place herself as an American 'guest' who had not come to 'take' anything, and it upset her. She expressed frustration that no matter where she lived (US or Sweden) that there were always going to be reminders of the fact that she looks different than the people around her and is therefore "undesirable". Odele, a woman in her seventies who has lived in Sweden since the 1960s, and Patricia are both frustratingly aware of their supposed 'place' and position as black women in white societies.

The flip side to this negative visibility is negative *in*visibility where informants have discussed being othered, ignored, devalued, and looked through by white Swedes.

> The pointedness of the way some Swedes ignore you…I'm thinking of one neighbor in particular. It used to drive me crazy. We would pass by each other and I could feel in her body language that she was very resentful of me. So after five years you learn to ignore that kind of behavior, but I can't do it everyday. It's very oppressive to do it everyday. I said to my husband, coming to Sweden has re-awakened in me things I thought I had outgrown, the kind of negativity, the kind of fear, the kind of anxiety… and all this in terms of because you're black. If I were white I'm sure I wouldn't be feeling these things. You feel like you always have to be ready, to prove…again back to the posturing, to prove that you are worthy, that you have value. It takes effort. [Patricia]

In two societies that may appear to be so similar on the surface, it appears that encounters and interactions that Patricia experiences are reminding her of those in the U.S. Also her reaction to these encounters are the ones that she learned in the U.S.; the ones the thought she had put to rest when she left the U.S. She is learning about and adjusting to a new social field. Patricia feels that by ignoring her, this Swedish woman was refusing to see her, which is itself another form of placement and positioning, in the sense that individuals avoid things that are unpleasant. She is weary of feeling like she has to prove her worth and value to the Swedes; to prove that she deserves better treatment.

Sometimes perceptions of negative visibility and invisibility occur alternately in the same encounter. American status is not a shield from all bad treatment. There are

times when even after the women's American citizenship is known, they feel that they still receive negative treatment based on looks. This was evident in particular among accounts of searching for employment. Lisa is a brown skinned, curvy, petite woman from Texas who came to Sweden seven years ago after marrying her Swedish husband, Isak. Her experience exemplifies this treatment.

> I sent my resume to a lot of companies…they were looking for people in the biotech industry and that you could speak English and read English.... Sent in my resume. Got interviews (snaps fingers) oh yeah. I talked to a couple of people on the phone and they were like, "Yes. You sound perfect blah blah blah. Come in." So I go in. They see me and I can tell right there that it's not what they were expecting because on my resume it's Lisa Jones Larsson, I guess the last thing they thought of was a black person. And I could tell from their faces. And one guy called my name out three times. I'm the *only* person in the waiting room and I'm standing up, you know, and he's looking around [saying] 'Lisa Larsson?'
>
> (gasps and laughter)
>
> And I go up and I'm like "I'm Lisa Larsson". He's like, "Really? Ohhh…" [in a clearly disappointed tone]. I'm like, 'Ok, nice to meet you too' (sarcastically). And then half of them sat there were decently polite like, "Oh we'll call you". And I was like, whatever. And the other half tried to explain. Like "Well yes, you know, everything looks really good. You'll be perfect for this job but…we don't really know if you'd fit in because everyone is Swedish and we don't want you to feel uncomfortable because there aren't any other people that look like you." I mean, like they were caring about *my* feelings. And if *I* would feel comfortable in that work situation.
>
> And I said, 'I really don't have a problem with that I've dealt with this my whole life, working with a group of people that probably don't look a lot like me. I really don't have problem with it'. And he's like, "Well in Sweden we like to have everyone fit together in a group and we really don't want to add someone to the group that maybe will feel left out or whatever". I mean those were the excuses I got. And I go back to Isak and I was crying and like, "I can't believe people are so closed-minded…" It's a stupid reason to give. It's like maybe you should hire more people so that nobody will feel uncomfortable. I mean that doesn't make any sense and it's a cop-out. [Lisa]

She goes from being negatively invisible (in the waiting room) to being negatively visible (in the interview). She felt that the Swedish interviewer could not see past her color. Cultural capital is the ability to, in any particular social setting, comport oneself properly, know and appropriately enact the rules of interaction, and possess a cultural awareness that is valued in that space (Lewis 2003,170). Lisa uses her American upbringing as a form of capital intended to show her closeness with dominant standards and culture in Sweden, thus setting herself apart from other foreigners. Lisa's American

upbringing and her ability to work with people who “don’t look a lot like [her]”, did not outweigh her undesirable physical difference to the interviewer. This encounter shows how an individual’s race or ethnicity can interfere with their ability to activate their cultural capital.

The Salon and the 77 Bus

Mindsets and subjectivities frame black American women’s sense making of encounters in Sweden. A black woman’s subjectivities are informed by both her individual family upbringing and life experiences, and also by the collective effect of growing up black in a racialized society.

> In the States we don’t know how to maneuver without race. We don’t. I don’t know how to tell a story for example. For a very long time I didn’t how to tell a story unless I described the characters to you in terms of white or black. And why? So that you would understand why someone did something that they did. [Gabriele]

Being raised in such an environment influences how they interpret encounters. It figures prominently in their perceptions of these events and in their understanding of the actions of those involved. This happens when black American women are trying to learn the Swedish field. Perceptions of these subtle distinctions between social fields are important. Perhaps a particular feeling of being ‘too visible’ or pinned under the gaze of others in a particular environment may in fact be simple curiosity. They do question themselves about potentially ‘reading too much into things’. Are they analyzing a situation with a mindset that is out of context in Sweden? Patricia is made very uncomfortable by the stares of Swedes, especially in small towns where there is not likely to be any diversity. She begins to question herself.

> I’m still uneasy about traveling to new parts of Sweden. I’m ok with Stockholm, but when I get to a new town my first thought is, are there any black people here? Now what kind of a life is that? That’s my first thought, because they are going to stare at you. And not just the staring at you, it’s the…that you don’t feel welcome. You don’t feel at ease. And that’s the key. If you could feel at

> ease it would be all right. But there's still concern as to whether or not you're welcome. And that's frustrating. [Patricia]

Even before arriving in Sweden, a few potential black American immigrants write to the major online forums for Americans living in Sweden to find out about the 'racial climate'. "How are black people treated there?" they ask. These kinds of questions regarding acceptance and safety were never posed by anyone other than black Americans. Can I go there? Is it safe? How will people treat me? These are questions that black Americans have learned through the generations as a tool for self-preservation when traveling around the U.S. It is therefore not surprising to see that some take this concern with them to Sweden.

Sometimes encounters in Sweden can strike a nerve and reveal very personal insecurities that women may have about themselves. It may hit on a very basic and fundamental assumption rooted in racialistic beliefs regarding race, gender and beauty. Patricia describes an unsettling experience at a Swedish hair salon.

> First of all in the US, you'd probably get sued if you were to be a little careless in your handling of a member of a minority group. So certain things wouldn't fly. Here in Sweden they have no clue of that, so they'll say insensitive things right to you that they wouldn't normally make to a white person, to a white Swede. So they are careless that way sometimes. Like the experience that I told you about at the hair dresser where this woman rushed over and cautioned her student, not to cut my hair too short because I "had fought long and hard" to get the length of hair that I had. Now she felt ok saying this. She felt ok saying this before her entire class. There was no embarrassment.
>
> She didn't mean to hurt me. But she…I would say she was in her fifties, chances are that she's never been to the US and certainly she has no awareness as to the hair culture and the money that the black beauty industry brings in. She has no concept of a short black haircut and how gorgeous that looks. What she saw in this community was what I saw when I first came here and saw black (African) people here. I thought, oh my god. Everyone was wearing these long braids and weaves. It distresses me because I feel exposed as a black person when I see another black person on the *tunnelbana* [subway] when the weaved hair has lifted and then you see all the stitching. These people [white Swedes] are seeing this too. [Patricia]

Black women in the US have a historical, guarded sensitivity about hair and skin color in particular and race and beauty in general. She is concerned that Swedes' own beliefs about race and beauty may be being confirmed when they see black women with weaves.

Patricia told me of seeing a newspaper article soon after she arrived in Sweden that had been written by a black woman about a little black girl in Sweden who only wanted to play with white dolls. She explained to me that although she was well aware that such things exist in the US, she pointed out that it is something that is no longer seen on a regular basis. “So in a way,” she says “Sweden is like the US, a long way in the past.” This is one way in which Patricia perceives and makes sense of the similarities and differences in the Swedish and American fields and their rules of interaction. Patricia imagines Sweden to be like the US, pre-Civil Rights movement. She blames a lack of political organization and leadership among immigrants to influence white Swedes’ behavior. “This would never have happened had I been in the States” she remarked, “because I would have been at a black hair salon and that experience would never go down, so it’s not surprising that I was at a loss of words for that woman”. While racialistic beliefs appear to cross borders and span fields, how they are expressed may vary according the unique rules of interaction in each field. It was the violation of American field rules of interaction that left Patricia speechless and unsure of how to respond.

As in Patricia’s case, some self-questioning can result from being blindsided by an unexpected encounter, a lack of awareness of the Swedish field, and an expectation of American rules of interaction therein. Other times self-questioning can result from knowing about the Swedish field, issues of immigration, the treatment of immigrants and perhaps reading too much into encounters that may not have anything to do with her background. Yet the self-questioning exists for the women regardless, as they struggle to

make sense of these encounters and to understand what role their own subjectivities play in their interpretations.

One sunny afternoon I was on my way to meet an acquaintance for lunch in a part of town (Stockholm) with which I was not very familiar. Before having lunch together, we decided to meet at her place of employment, which was in a large business complex. I entered the #77 bus assuming, of course, that its route would take me to my destination. When the bus made an unexpected turn I realized that I had gotten on the wrong bus. Oh no, I'm going to be late, I thought. Late indeed, as it appeared that the bus was now heading toward the highway. Where was this bus taking me?! There was another woman on the bus who appeared to be in the same situation as me and she asked the bus driver about it from her seat up front. He was very gruff in his reply. She was a woman around fifty years of age and of Asian ethnicity. She got up to talk to the bus driver. Immediately I got up to join her. Since I had been seated in the very last row I had to walk the length of the bus to reach them. As I walked toward the front, I met the bus driver's eyes in the rear view mirror. His fiery hot glare at me told me immediately that this was not going to be a pleasant encounter.

Now was not the time for me to struggle with practicing my Swedish. I quickly stated to him (in English) that I was in the same situation. He tensely turned around and said to me in English, "the best thing for you to do…" And I thought great he is going to tell me exactly how to get to the place, so I can get away from him. He continued, "is to look" he dragged his eyelids down, rolled his eyes and then turned back and pointed to an area above the dashboard "at the number on the bus before you get on!" He said this very loudly and condescendingly and I felt like a five year old being chastised for an apparent

lack of literacy and common sense. “But I thought this line went to the complex that’s why I got on”, I replied somewhat defensively. He continued yelling some other things, but at this point I was not processing his words because I was in such shock at his behavior.

I instantly started thinking about how this scene must look to the others behind us. This woman of Asian-descent and I were the only two non-“Swedish-looking” people on the bus. We were the only two who mistakenly got on the wrong route and it seemed to me that we were being dressed down rather loudly about our lack of intelligence for the rest of the passengers’ viewing entertainment.

The other woman continued to talk to him in fluent Swedish (albeit with an accent) saying how we had made a simple mistake and it was our fault as if to placate him. It was not working however. He remained visibly angry. I wanted as little contact with him as possible and stood near the door, hurt, embarrassed, and poised for escape at the next stop. Could he not see that I was an educated person who did not need him to give me lessons on how to read!? At this point we were a good ways away from where we got on. We got to the next stop and the woman (who coincidentally was also going to the same complex) told me that the place was not too far away if we walked and to follow her. She smiled and told the bus driver goodbye and thank you as she exited the bus. I skulked off without a word mostly angry at myself because I had not the quick wit to tell him off on the spot.

Her ‘shortcut’ consisted of scrambling across the highway, on foot. As we weaved our way across streets with no sidewalks and under overpasses while dodging cars, we chatted in a mixture of Swedish and English. “I’ve lived here for over 40 years” she said,

"probably longer than that bus driver has been around. And I can tell you, that man was not nice". She continued, "He was not a typical Swedish person. I was trying to be nice to him by talking to him" she said. 'To show him' she seemed to imply. She wanted to show him that she was not an illiterate refugee who did not know how to use the city busses. She wanted him to know that she had lived in Sweden long enough to learn Swedish and that taking the wrong bus was a simple mistake. In a way we both wanted the same thing, to be recognized as individuals not as a stereotype. "But he was not a nice man" she said again. "Definitely not!" I huffed. We continued chatting while she led me to the complex. With a cheery wave and a smile, we both went our separate ways.

Was the bus driver's attitude triggered by our backgrounds? Was he just a mean busdriver who snapped at everyone, or was he a good guy who simply had a bad day? Why did I jump to the assumption that his anger had to do with our backgrounds and perceive that we were on display in a racial manner? Was I reading too much into the situation? Was I reading too much into the other woman's reaction and behavior? Was she trying to position herself by speaking Swedish to get some better treatment from the driver? Why did she still feel the need to point out her forty plus years of residence in Sweden? This type of self-questioning is quite common among black American women seeking to make sense of the Swedish social field and their place with in it.

"Jag kan inte förstår vad du sager." (I can't understand what you are saying.)

For those living in cities, my informants usually felt no immediate or urgent external pressure for them to speak Swedish at the moment they arrived in Sweden. It is relatively easy to get around in Stockholm speaking only English when doing day to day tasks. If married, their spouses and in-laws usually speak at least some English. Those

lucky enough to secure employment sometimes get jobs in international work environments where they can also speak English. Almost all of the women develop a set of English-speaking international friends. The ability to speak English freely is a luxury that they appreciate. However, even that ability has its drawbacks that become apparent after a while. Henrietta and others expressed weariness of having to change the way they expresses themselves in order for Swedes to comprehend them. She misses the ability to "talk slang" and use figures of speech. She is tired of explaining the things she says and rearranging her sentences "because by the time you do all that it just doesn't make any sense anymore." Henrietta's comment refers to not only to Americanisms in speech but also specifically to black English or culturally understood ways of communication specific to Black Americans, which draw from shared understanding and history.

When talking with Swedes, Black Americans often feel like they are translating their English. Nikki is a thin, petite, easygoing and friendly woman in her thirties with brown skin and short bob haircut. Originally from Ohio, she has lived in Stockholm for two years with her Swedish husband whom she met while working in Germany. Nikki's husband's friends speak English she told me, but they do so a bit reluctantly because it is a second language for them. As a result, she says that she is "always very quiet around them" and "not quite myself."

> Yeah, I say they [her husband's Swedish friends] spoke English. But I had to speak much slower and clearer. And I had to think about what I said because I couldn't use too much slang and things like that. Because then you'd have to explain it. Yeah, so I guess you do lose a bit of your personality that way. [Lisa]

> [The Swedes I know], they might think that they're my friend, but I don't think that I'm theirs. Because I talk in a different way and I might joke with them or something like that. But they don't want to joke, so it breaks my rhythm. So therefore you have to think all the time, am I offending this person, or something like that. So because of culture…It's not because of anything negative about the person. It just prevents you from being totally relaxed. [Phoebe]

Not only is there a feeling of personality loss when one has to try to speak another language such as Swedish, this feeling also occurs when one cannot fully express themselves in their own language. When they have to adapt their speech to be able to communicate with others, it can cause them to question themselves.

As time goes by however, there is a growing pressure to learn the language. One source of this pressure comes from spouses and in-laws. They found that using English all the time even among Swedish family and friends was only tolerated for so long. As Lisa remarked, “they enjoyed having us over and speaking English, (whispers) in the beginning (chuckles)”. Swedish is needed to survive in the country long term. Another source of pressure often comes from public encounters that encouraged them to learn the language to be able to express themselves in Swedish. In this case the motivation comes from a desire for independence; a desire to be able to get around on one’s own and speak for oneself should a situation arise. Also, more practically, they needed the language to gain employment and to communicate on that job on a day to day basis. They want to get out into society, get into the culture and gain acceptance from the Swedish population by learning and speaking the language. Several women expressed the view that, in the US, if an immigrant attempts to speak English, they gain points of acceptance for the effort. They expected a similar response for their attempts to speak Swedish. Eagerness to learn, individual personalities, and resources influenced the rate in which they did learn the language.

They were aware of and desired to break stereotypes about black people’s perceived lack of facility with the Swedish language. When a person lacks mastery of a language they are often viewed as less intelligent by members of that society. They find

that in Sweden, to white Swedes, African immigrants are not assumed to speak Swedish**.** Delilah, from Michigan, is a fun, athletic, and outgoing brown skinned woman in her thirties with an easy laugh and long flowing braids. She has lived in a small town in northern Sweden for two years with her Swedish boyfriend whom she met online. Since her arrival in this town above the arctic circle, she has learned the Swedish language and gained employment as a dance teacher at a local school. When I asked Delilah if Swedes are surprised that she speaks Swedish, she replied:

> All the time. My favorite is the stores. When you go into the line and they look really quick [like] 'Oh no! Immigrant!' And they get that 'Oh no! immigrant' look. [They think,] 'Should I point to the price or should I try and say something?' And I'd just look at them. And they'd look at me… And I'd look back (chuckles). Eventually they say it in Swedish. And I answer them back in Swedish. And they just go, 'Ohhh! [Whew!]' (laughs). All the time. Or the younger ones just look at me and start blurting out English right away. "Here's your receipt!" 'Thank you!" I don't even let'em know [that I speak Swedish] [Delilah]

When they get out into the general public, they find that they are placed incorrectly. They are not first identified as American or tourist speaking Swedish but as an immigrant or refugee. Struggling with the Swedish language can seem to confirm their placement as refugees. When Lisa lived in Uppsala, a large college town north of Stockholm, she did encounter some resistance and 'bad' behavior when she attempted to practice speaking Swedish in public.

> Lisa: … like bad in a way that people were rude when I spoke. Like I would go into some of the shops or something and I'm standing in line with some pantyhose or something and maybe I have two of them or something. And they're like, "Ska du köpa båda eller?" You know, like "Will you buy both of them?" And I'm like, "Ya, jag vill" [Yes, I want to.] And I'm trying to speak Swedish and thinking, 'oh I'm going to speak Swedish.'
>
> And I guess I was not pronouncing the words correctly or whatever. And people were just really rude like in their attitude and in their mannerisms and were like, "Vad? Jag kan inte förstår vad du säger." ["What? I can't understand what you are saying."] And then you're repeating it… And I would be almost in tears because I'm trying to practice and they're not being very… And then I would just think, forget it. I'm going to say it in English. And I would say it in English. And this happened at least four or five times that I can remember in different places, and it was [with] mostly middle aged Swedish women… And then, when I spoke English it was like, "Ohhhhhhh. Are you American?" And I'm like, "Yeah" and they're like "Ohhh Ok". And it was like a complete attitude change.

> So I just started going into shops like [thinking that] I'm not going to speak Swedish. They're going to treat me like I'm an idiot or something. And so I spoke English and I got better service. And I got to get away with stuff. Like, it says on the receipt that I couldn't return something. And I'm like, "Can I return this?" And they're like, "Ok."
>
> (chuckling)
>
> And I know that I can't, because it says so on the receipt. But I'm just like, I'm just going to play Stupid American. And they're like, "ok". Isak refused to go in the store with me. I'm like, "Don't go in with me." Because if they see me with a Swedish guy, they're going to be like, "You know better!" [Lisa]
>
> (chuckling)

Through such encounters, black American women discover the value of their cultural capital. Some women, such as Lisa, immediately begin to use it to their advantage. As Bourdieu (1986) has theorized, one form of cultural capital is having membership in a particular group or association, since individuals in this group can utilize the (prestige) of that membership to achieve certain goals. They can present themselves as embodying particular modes of behavior, norms, and values in order to gain recognition, respect, and sometimes special treatment (Bourdieu 1986). I suggest that American nationality and upbringing is a form of cultural capital in Sweden. Given that white Americans have such a high status in Sweden compared to African refugees and immigrants who have a low status, I argue that black American women in Sweden learn to recognize and activate their cultural capital to avoid bad treatment. Swedes place them into a different category. Over time, the women become more cognizant of the larger mechanisms in place with regard to a racialized, hierarchical Swedish social field.

Activating embodied cultural capital is not only a way to gain advantages in a field. It is also used, in this case to avoid negative treatment. In these encounters, they strategically use their capital to get a preferred result. Phoebe is a woman in her fifties who lives in the middle region of Sweden with her Swedish husband and children. Here she describes how Sweden appeared to change for her over the years.

> And also at the time in 1983, I was kind a novelty as a black person because there weren't that many black people. And something about that kind of appealed to me. I kind of felt [like] yeah this is nice. They treat you really good. Black American especially. I learned later on that that was what the novelty really was. They were curious about things and it made me feel just kind of special… That was in 1983. Then I came back in 1990 and it was kind of a different thing. [W]hen I came back in 1990, there had been a lot of immigration here in Sweden. So then you were not so special anymore as a black person. You were just another black person. What I found out when I got back was that if you speak English, then they realize that you are an American and you still got some of that special treatment. But in general I didn't like it because I realized that it was a bit of discrimination if you are a person of color. [Phoebe]

Activating this capital does not come without a price, which is the tinge of guilt at the perpetuation of negative treatment for African immigrants. By accepting preferential treatment, it makes some women feel as if they are in some way complicit with the continued bad treatment of others. In other words, the "special treatment" they receive is not all that comforting in the long run because, they recognize, someone who looks like them is still being subordinated. Phoebe's experience demonstrates how cultural capital is activated and not spent like hard capital. Embodied cultural capital, by nature, can never be depleted. It can only lose value in a given field (as influenced by other forces). Phoebe found that when she returned to Sweden in 1990, she had become just another black person and found that she still received some "special treatment" but not as much as she did before, prior to the increase of African immigration. The influx of Africans and other immigrants was a factor in the devaluation of her cultural capital as the exotic black woman that she enjoyed in the early 1980s.

My informants realize that it is their very facility with the English language that sets them apart from most other immigrants. They realize, new status notwithstanding, that resentment, inequality and hierarchy still exist. In new situations they will have to keep placing themselves indefinitely with every new person they meet.

> Oh, I mean people change immediately. When I'm walking down the street I'm just an ordinary black person. But you start talking to someone and all of a sudden my value just went up. I'm not a 'them', a refugee, anymore. [Now] I'm worthwhile. But I don't find it very comforting. I tell Swedes… I was recently talking to a Swedish professional. And she tells me, "But you're so

> skilled. You're so talented. Why aren't you working in your own…?" I said to her, "You can say that now because we're having a discussion, but when you see me walking down the street, all you see is a black person. And in your mind I am from some struggling African country and I'm living on *bidrag* (welfare)." So it's not reassuring to me when my value increases only after someone speaks to me. And it will take a long time I think, for anybody with my skin color to walk down the street and [unintell]. But this is something that I would like to push into the heads of all these black people here who think they are so accepted by these Swedes. It's a myth. [Patricia]

They learn that speaking and explaining themselves in English gains positive treatment and good results. However, she offers a bit of sober criticism. She perceives this acceptance to not be full acceptance, but a conditional acceptance based on speaking American English and American upbringing.

On the other hand, they learn that speaking very good Swedish can potentially gain them more acceptance among Swedes. Delilah's Swedish boyfriend Hasse owns a small store in the small northern town where they live together.

> There was a guy that came into the store, someone that Hasse had known for a long time. And he said, "Hey Hasse. I don't like this thing about you being with blacks" and 'blah blah blah. And Hasse never told me. And after a while he finally told me. And I said, "So I don't care what he says." And he [Hasse] says, "I don't care either." But the same guy, I didn't know it was him at the time, he came up to me and starts talking to me in Swedish. And I was speaking to him back, you know, speaking back to him. And he's like, "Well, how long have you been here?" He said, "You already speak Swedish. You're doing this. You're doing that…" I'm like, "Yeah". And Hasse's like, "Oh by the way, that guy said this to me…" So yeah, I'm glad that happened. (chuckles) I'm very glad I got to talk to him. Cuz I guess he thought I was just some stupid idiot who just came here to sit around on their welfare. I don't know…. [Delilah]

It was not surprising to me that the women evinced such sensitivity about the thought of being perceived as an idiot, or lazy person who came to Sweden to 'sit' and collect welfare checks. There a history of racialized sexism in the US popular imagination regarding black women and welfare. In addition to that historical American context, in Sweden, since the influx of refugees from the Middle East, Africa, and other places, there is a special distaste for unemployed black people in Sweden given the current national economic strain (cf. Chapter Two). Black American women in Sweden are far from being homogeneous. They have individual personalities and backgrounds and as such, they

activate their capital differently (more or less effectively) or may choose not to at all. In this case, Delilah's excellent knowledge of Swedish and her full-time employment disarmed the man of his assumptions. Delilah single-handedly changed the man's attitude about her, not with American capital but with Swedish capital and Swedish 'ways of being' (cf. Chapter Six).

There appears to be an almost antagonism among many Swedes towards accented or otherwise imperfect Swedish. Broken Swedish is linked with negative perceptions of the speaker such as being considered uneducated and less intelligent. Almost all of my informants, when in the early stages of learning Swedish, opt out of receiving rejection and bad treatment in certain situations by selectively speaking English. Most of the women were greatly reluctant to endure the crawling stages of learning Swedish. Along with the standard trepidation that all immigrants face when confronted with learning a new language, there is another aspect that may be particular to black Americans. This may in part be because of the history in the US of black Americans having the way they speak English criticized and belittled which was linked to various racial ideologies. As a result black Americans may avoid any risk of being judged in Sweden.

> Initially when I came to Sweden I wasn't so aware of it – the distinction –American and black. But some of my close friends from different parts of Africa, they kind of enlightened me. My experience is that if you're black here in Sweden, you're already looked upon - like in most places in the States as well- as being different from the majority. And you are treated accordingly. You're not treated equally I think. There is some discrimination. But if you speak and they find out that you are from America, you're treated a little bit better than if you don't speak. And my experience is the more I learned Swedish, the worse I was treated. And usually in most countries, it's the other way around. The more you understand the language, the more you try to acclimate to the culture, the better you are treated.
>
> [But in Sweden] people didn't realize… they thought I was a refugee. They didn't realize that I was from America, so that kind of stunted my growth in getting into this culture. Because I didn't want to be treated like crap. I wanted to be respected. So if I would go into a store and the people would look at me and they didn't want to wait on me… You know, [if] they kind of took their time, like they do with most of the immigrants, I would speak English and they would run over and give me a hand. [Phoebe]

Activating embodied cultural capital is not only a way to gain advantages in field; it is also used, in this case to avoid negative treatment. Speaking clear and fluent American English, functions as a form of "linguistic capital" (Bourdieu 1990,114) itself a type of embodied cultural capital that the women activate. In these kinds of encounters black Americans learn quickly of the advantages of differentiating themselves from black Africans in Sweden.

Historically and still today, immigrants to the United States soon learn that it is advantageous to distance themselves from African Americans (Kasinitz 1992; Waters 2001; Collins 1998; Charles 2003; England 1998, 2006). For example, for those from the Caribbean, "distancing themselves from US blacks by highlighting a Caribbean ethnic identity constituted one strategy" that somewhat shielded them from the second-class treatment received by African Americans, "but it did not guarantee first-class treatment" (Collins 1998, 11). "Like other black immigrants, Garinagu often seek to avoid the low status that assimilating to African-American culture carries with it" (England 1998, 27; 2006) and Haitians do as well (Charles 2003, 174). In "*Being Black Twice,*" Carolle Charles (2003, 172) discusses how Black Caribbean immigrants to the United States "have as cultural baggage meanings of blackness informed by participatory experiences in their countries of birth." Given that "historically in the US, blackness has been a central metaphor for otherness and oppression" (Charles 2003, 172), Charles bluntly asks, why would one want to be move from the bottom of one social hierarchy to the bottom of another hierarchy? One of the purposes of migration is to improve one's station in society. The tendency is to differentiate oneself if possible to minimize harsh treatment and maximize preferential treatment. I argue in this research that in Sweden the method

of differentiation used by black Americans comes from the activation of cultural capital, one form of which is the ability to speak American English.

A conversation I had with Nikki and Lisa illustrates how confusion over how language can be both a bridge and a barrier. Sometimes it is difficult to know when, in any given encounter, a failure of Swedish comprehension is normal or if it has become a tool of othering. We were talking about the difficulties of practicing Swedish in public when Nikki described how, in the US, when she hears someone struggling to speak English, even if it is not pronounced well, she can still understand what they are saying and she listens. But in Sweden, to her, that does not appear to ever happen. Said Nikki, "If you don't pronounce it perfectly, they're at a loss. You can say it ten times. And they just don't hear it." Lisa believed the argument that, as Americans, they are used to diversity in the US. They are used to hearing people from different countries speaking English and as such are used to hearing English not pronounced perfectly. She believed that Sweden's longstanding homogeneity explains why Swedes apparently have difficulty understanding imperfect Swedish. Nikki disagreed and thought that Swedish society had been changing so much that the people have had enough time to adapt. They both had frustrating and embarrassing interactions of repeating words and phrases and not being understood, which made some of them not want to speak the language in public. They sometimes wondered if a Swedish person repeatedly pretended not to understand them. In other words, are the Swedes in these encounters behaving this way on purpose "to other" them or to otherwise make them feel "othered" and remind them of their low position? The women in turn question themselves. Were they really not speaking the language clearly, or was someone just trying to be mean in an indirect way?

Some view language more defensively. Some are highly reluctant or not willing to go through the "crawling stages" with the language, during which they try to communicate and fail. Patricia was fearful to travel on her own on public transportation for months after she first arrived in Sweden out of fear of being in a situation where she would have to speak Swedish. She did not want to be treated like a child or an ignorant person.

> I think it's the language thing. It's the newness of the language and the inability to communicate at your own level. I have a Master's degree. I've given presentations. I've written articles. I've had a whole and complete life before I came here. But when I came here…which is one of the reasons why I don't speak Swedish. Because I don't have command of it at the same level.
>
> I'm embarrassed when I hear some non-Swedes speaking Swedish… Because in my mind I think they are perceived in the way that I think that people would perceive me –like you're incompetent, [like] you're definitely an *invandrare*. You are no longer on an acceptable intelligence level because you are struggling with the language. Your pronunciation of it wasn't correct. The whole interaction is different. You can see it in their behavior. There is a tendency…I've lived here for five years so I don't know if you've seen this. And I don't know if they mean to, but it's something I've put a stop to. They have a very condescending manner sometimes.
>
> You know, they'll pat you [like a child] and reassure you like 'It's okay. Du pratar bra svenska [You speak good Swedish]." Or when they speak Swedish very, very, slowly to you. No, this not when they are being kind or sensitive. And this is not necessarily when they are being reassuring. This is when the disparity is created. You are now down here and they are up there. I don't like that. So I'm like, no you're going to speak English to me, because I 'm not an idiot and I won't be treated as such. And I don't like the condescension.
>
> So once I've mastered the language, really mastered it…then surely I would speak it all the time. I'm starting to feel comfortable in it now. I can talk to my Swedish friends and we can make jokes and laugh. So my fear has subsided now – my fear of being on my own – because I know the language now. I can understand. I can communicate. I can talk back. I can fight back. You know, they can't say something to me anymore and I don't know if it's kind or rude. [Patricia]

Patricia says that she can now speak the language with at least basic proficiency. She can read it and write it but she still will not speak Swedish except as an option of last resort. It appears to be the primary weapon in her "defense mechanism", because English is "the power language". As a part of protecting herself, she says, she "make[s] it a rule to speak English". Especially in situations where she feels slighted or insulted. She told me proudly of an incident where after repeatedly being bumped (pushed) with carts in supermarkets, she called back one Swedish man and got an apology from him after

explaining what had just transpired in firm English. For some black American women, or at least sometimes, speaking English serves as a shield in a way that it is likely not to be for white American women.

The informants now speak Swedish with varying degrees of comfort and fluency, but it often took several months before they were confident enough to begin speaking the language in public. They usually started out by practicing in safe environments such as among in-laws, friends of their husbands and co-workers, and always with their encouragement before progressing to talking in public places like stores. The main motivating factor in language acquisition as seen above was independence and security. Henrietta's negative encounters with Swedish speaking people undoubtedly played some role in her desire to learn the language. Michelle found learning the language to be part of the excitement of moving to a new land. She was very proactive and adjusted fairly quickly. Her Swedish acquaintances were very encouraging in her practice of Swedish. She did admit that when she went out to public venues it was a struggle, but she downplays these encounters. In fact, she does not care to use English now because she is fluent in Swedish.

> I wanted to practice so I spoke. I spoke to people. I think socially people were so cool about it. They thought it was wonderful that I was learning the language and whatever I said was fine. I think when I went to shops and stuff it was ok but it was a struggle. It took longer. I think the people in the shop would much rather have turned to English to make it easy for them and for me. … Nevertheless, I did know that certain environments like certain shops, if I wanted to get good service it was just better if I spoke English in the beginning. But not anymore. I don't do that anymore. Now I don't care. [Michelle]

She is practicing Swedish ways of being. Michelle owns and co-operates a small boutique in Stockholm that she opened with the help of her Swedish husband and a Swedish friend. She makes a point to approach customers in a very friendly and outgoing manner, to the point where she had a customer tell her how pleasantly surprised she was with her

friendliness because in most other stores people were not friendly. Dispelling stereotypes is very important to her.

> I don't know why, but I feel this kind of responsibility. Being in a boutique, and being open and friendly and they see, this is a person of color, you know a black woman from America who has learned Swedish and who's going to plow her way through speaking it even though she may make mistakes. I think that's only a positive. But that's what it takes. I think you have to swallow a lot of your pride. You have to be willing to make a fool out of yourself, to laugh at yourself….I don't know it's a very complicated situation. [Michelle]

Like immigrants to any other country, they experience the self-consciousness that goes with speaking a new language. The complication may come from the fact that black Americans are resistant perhaps to swallow their pride given their history of treatment in the US. It is not easy for black Americans to stumble in speaking to white people. Historically, due to different education systems, and differences in access to said systems, among other larger structural inequalities, many black Americans had not possessed a firm command of standard American English and instead spoke variants of black American English. As a stigmatized group, their ways of speaking were stigmatized and ridiculed as well. Sensitivity about this was passed down generationally. Although things have changed greatly in modern day America, that sensitivity remains. So once again, there is the weight of the American historical context coupled with the present day immigration / cultural politics in the nation and the assumptions that go along with that which make practicing imperfect Swedish in public a humbling experience.

As time passes and the length of their residence in Sweden increases, facility with the language improves. Many also learn that there is an upside and a downside to the process. The upside of the process of learning Swedish is that they gain insight into the culture and learn compassion for others when it comes to problems with communication. As a result of this, they can reflect on changes in their own interpretations of encounters with Swedes.

> Something else that I thought was racial but I know longer think that. I think it was poor social skills. A neighbor who lives on our cul-de sac, they are nice enough when they see me there or in our backyard, but in public they wouldn't say a word to me. And this happened the first two years that I was here. And I was really really hurt and offended by it. They wouldn't acknowledge me or say hi. They would just go by. And I thought my husband was making excuses for them. He would always tell me, "Perhaps they didn't see you." And I'd get really angry, of course they saw me! Don't tell me that nonsense. But I came to realize that all the insecurities about the language that I had, they had it too. How were they going to speak English to me? These were older people. I mean forty and up. Now they have to speak English to me *in public*. So the same fears that I had about speaking Swedish, they had about speaking English. None of us thought that just a simple 'Hej!' would have been enough. [Patricia]

As she learns more about Swedish culture, Patricia is giving incidences like these more thought, and looking at the situation from the Swede's point of view, before assuming that an act occurred because of race.

A downside of the process may be that there is a possibility of losing some of themselves, their personalities and how they communicate with others (cf. Chapter Six). Gabriele is a confident and articulate woman in her thirties with brown skin and long dreadlocks. Originally from New York state, she met her Swedish husband while living and working in France for several years. She has lived in Sweden for two years and is now expecting her first child. Gabriele felt that the Swedish government is very concerned with the nation's international image. To her, Sweden does not want to appear intolerant or racist in the eyes of other nations, so she believes that national officials tell immigrants that they will not force Swedish on them. However, she believes that everyday Swedes, including employers, do not share that view and demand a mastery of the language because, she felt, in reality one's access to power, employment, and education lies in learning the language. Most importantly to her, she felt that within the language is encoded the culture and the key to understanding the Swedish culture is in fact to learn the language. For instance, she described to me her aggravation with having to do most of her Swedish speaking in passive tense as opposed to using active

constructions like she would in the States. And her understanding of that, impacts how she thinks and how she interacts with people. She feels that very much unlike her experience living in France, learning the Swedish language pushes a certain cultural mindset into her in a form that she is not willing to accept. (DT refers to the interviewer.)

> I won't be in any culture where they pressure you to assimilate. Because I just think that …that's one of the hardest things that you can ask of somebody who's coming from outside of their culture. I mean, your parents are in you. Their history is in you. …You ask somebody to assimilate; you ask them to deny…even personality. That's what I felt here. That's what I was getting very angry about here. That even my own personality was coming into conflict with the norms of the culture. And then I started to really hate them. Because then you start acting insecurely about everything you do.
>
> DT: for example?
>
> Maybe I just offended them by what I just said? Or, you starting speaking in the passive like 'I don't know, perhaps. What do you think? Do you think?' or 'Shall we go to this, or…?' You know, like everything about you is on hollow ground and they live that way. They have a word here ***lagom***. You know what that means? Mediocre! (laughs) It means 'middle road', 'sittin' on the fence'. (chuckles) I can't imagine raising my child to aspire to that! That's like the complete antithesis to anybody who's been raised in the States. [In the States] you're supposed to be the best! What, you're not supposed to be the best? As the average American, you can dream. You can dream.
>
> I [the average Swede] aspire to fit in. I [the average Swede] aspire to not rock the boat. To not stand out. Then they have the other thing called ***gentelagen***. And this is a word that they whisper. …That word means – the hammer hits the nail that sticks up. …I can't adapt to that. How do I tell my Caribbean parents, that background –anyone from that background – that I don't want my child to excel in school, that education is not the only way? I mean anyone with immigrant parents knows that they like made the whole boat trip so that you could get some fantastic education and so that you could excel to be whatever you wanted to be in life and definitely be a cut above the rest. And all of a sudden, everything I know… I can't even talk out loud here about wanting to find the best midwife, because they're like 'Why wouldn't you be happy with what everybody else has?'. Those sorts of things really… And the thing is, you don't question the system. You question yourself. Why do I want that [eg. to have the best midwife]? Maybe I'm being wrong. Maybe I'm not tolerant. Maybe I'm not…whatever'. And you're never feeling secure. These are the things that I would say stand out more as differences, or as an "ism", than I would say racism. Those smack you so hard in your face, much more than like, a rude salesperson. [Gabriele]

The attitude with which an individual approaches learning Swedish often can provide insights into their adaptation into Swedish society. Some women are more enthusiastic about becoming fluent and make strides to learn the language quickly, seemingly impervious to the negative encounters and other bumps along the way. Other women are

more reluctant to learn the language, whether it be for ideological reasons or because of repeated negative encounters in public have made them hesitant to practice the language.

"They Want to Touch You"

One summer day while on a site visit to Sweden before I began my fieldwork, I was walking on the campus of Stockholm University on my way to the library. I was on a paved walkway that cut across a field and connected the dormitories to the main campus. As I passed the slight bend at the midpoint of the walkway I could now see a guy on a motor bike racing around on a moped at the end of the path straight ahead of me. Ahead of me on my left was a white girl, Swedish I assumed, who was walking towards me, going in the other direction on the path. There was no one else around. The motor bike guy zoomed straight down the path narrowly missing hitting the other girl as he sped past and behind me.

I continued walking. I thought he was just practicing stunts on his motorbike and was not very good at it, almost running me over. What a jerk! Then he turned around and passed me again. Then, the second time he came up behind me very close and with his hand, grabbed my behind and then sped forward up the pathway. Ugh! Asshole! I thought. I could not believe what just happened.

I continued walking. My thoughts were racing as I struggled to make sense of what was going on. Was his grabbing me a harmless compliment? Was it an act of sexism, racism, both? Was I in danger? Was this common in Sweden? What should I do? Should I do anything? Was I reading too much into this? With my thoughts awhirl, I reached the end of the pathway, crossed a small road and finally reached the edge of campus. At this

point the guy was gone and there was no one else around that I could see. So as I walked along the narrow corridor between buildings towards the main campus, I decided to go to the library and put the incident behind me.

I heard the sound of the bike again. Suddenly, from behind me he zoomed past and stopped a ways in front of me. Turned back and through his helmet, looked at me while laughing. This erased all doubts of his motives. I was angry but not incautious. I knew that engaging him in a physical confrontation would not be to my advantage. I continued walking toward him. I wanted to curse him out but I simply did not know how to do so in Swedish. For some reason, I assumed that he would not understand an American tongue-lashing. What would be the point of telling him off if he could not understand it? He seemed to be looking for some reaction from me and by screaming and making a scene it would only have added to his entertainment. I decided to play it cool. I didn't know what to do, so I flipped him off, or at least I tried to. But I ended up putting two fingers up instead of one. He found that amusing as well, quickly nodding his head back with laughter before speeding off again.

I continued walking toward campus. All of this action, questioning, and reaction happened in the span of only a few seconds After I made it to the library, I stayed there for a while, researching, picking up books and reading, or at least attempting to. Some of my concentration was spent trying to make sense of that weird scene. Looking back on it, it seemed as though he was initially targeting the other girl who passed me on the pathway. But when he saw me, he decided that I'd be a more 'fun' target. It was just so out of nowhere, that I was not prepared for it.

Later, upon walking back to the dorm via the same narrow empty passageway between buildings, I immediately noticed a Swedish-looking guy with collar-length blond hair staring at me and smiling proudly and mischievously. I didn't want to believe that this could be the same guy. Not again! He was walking directly towards me. I prepared myself for a confrontation. At just that time a groundsman driving a large, slow moving maintenance vehicle appeared behind me. The guy at the last second changed direction and walked past me. I continued walking across the field back to my room quickly, but cautiously. Later as I thought about the guy I saw walking past realized that I had seen him a few days prior on campus and even remarked to myself that he was an attractive guy. The realization made me shudder.

Black American women in Sweden struggle with the analysis of these kinds events in which the motives of the other people are not always so clear cut. They also ask themselves if the attention a compliment or an insult? As Philomena Essed might ask, are these incidences of racist sexism or sexist racism?

> I don't know if white Americans have the same experience. I don't think they do because no one has reported that to me that they have. But I feel that as a black female, Swedish men feel that it's ok to touch you. And I'm very disturbed by that. I was attending a function this past week. I had to take one man's hand… I picked it up from my arm and moved it to the table. I've gotten very assertive (chuckles). Because you first get here you're very shy and you think you've misunderstood… But after a while you figure things out. There's a lot of this [demonstrates stroking of arms]. It's a chance to touch you. But I notice that the same touching is not visited upon white women.
>
> And my [Swedish] husband kind of warned me about this. But it's the value or lack of value rather of black women and of minority women... It's big here. They're so far behind in terms of diversity issues. I think that they think that you're grateful --and of course perhaps some refugees are grateful to be here -- because they have helped you, they have *saved* you. And that they are better off than you are. And again this wouldn't fly in the States. If some man tried that [over there] he could get hurt! (chuckles) But some of these people here have no clue. So they think it's ok to touch you and they think really that you should be grateful. And part of this is, they see us as more accessible than white women, because we're so grateful, because we have nothing. And they assume, 'Yeah she's black. She's going to be thankful.' [Patricia]

Older Swedish men are especially noted for this type of behavior. One view as to why, that was told to me, is that back when these older men were young, there were not many

black people in the country, so the chance to talk to or touch a black woman has always been exciting to them. On a few occasions, older Swedish men, in their sixties or seventies approached me and made comments about my appearance. I was complimented on my attractiveness and how I walked! However such behavior was not exclusive to older men. When approached by Swedish men closer to their own ages, my informants do wonder if the compliments or touching could be harmless yet genuine attraction. One major criterion that they use to discern the difference between real attraction or sexist racism is whether or not the Swedish man would behave with a white Swedish woman the same way. In other words the man must approach them in a way that they would approach a white woman. If they do not, then it is not genuine attraction.

It was widely believed among my informants that the media plays a substantial role in shaping Swedes' preconceived notions of black Americans, particularly for the younger generations. While the older generations know something about the American civil rights movement, the younger people know about black Americans mostly through popular culture and its concomitant stereotypical images that they see on television and in movies. In one respect there is a Swedish fascination with popular culture, music, art, fashion, etc., as it relates to African-American culture. On the other hand, there are also presented a multitude of images about black American criminality, poverty, and hypersexuality. Real cross-sections of everyday black American culture(s) are rarely if ever portrayed on Swedish televisions (or American ones one may argue). These representations are virtually invisible. A few of my informants told me of instances where they were identified or addressed according to media-created, stereotypical images of black American women. As was Michelle, they may be asked questions about whether or

not they grew up in “a rough area” in the US. Or they may be addressed (by younger Swedes) with excessive American urban street slang to match their supposed ghetto origins. In such instances, they position themselves by educating their Swedish acquaintances about what is real about black Americans and what is a stereotype.

Delilah has a degree in dance and performance and works in her northern Swedish town as the dance teacher at the local high school. She also stars in dance performances in the local town theatre. Because of this, she watches MTV quite a bit to keep up with the latest dance moves. When I asked Delilah how she thinks she is viewed there as a black American woman, she chuckled.

> Have you seen MTV? Because that’s how they see us. I mean I hang around teenagers mostly because of my job. And the kids’ll come up to me and do this (imitates ‘thug’ gesture) “Yo, word to ya mother! I’m a P.I.M.P!” [imitates Swedish kids]. Yeah! (laugter) And I just look. And I said, “Why...Whyyy?” [The student will say,] “Yeah, you know, but that’s the hood way.” I’m like, “No. You’re watching too much MTV. We’re not all like that. That’s an image.” And then the half-naked booty shaker women... Gee no wonder (to) the Swedish men, we’re they’re fantasy. Gosh. (chuckles) Booty shaker! [Delilah]

As Sawyer (2002, 21) points out, black females must cope with “sexualized stereotypes associated with their bodies” that are unique from those of black men. In Sweden black women are viewed as sexually exotic. In part because of this attraction and exoticism that Swedish men have for black women, Delilah describes Sweden in her experience to be a “female friendly” country. This helps her to understand and compare her experiences to those of an African male friend.

> He told me it was different for him because he’s a male and I’m a female and people see that differently. That’s true. Lawrence is (considered) more of a threat because he’s supposedly every (Swedish) female fantasy. And so they are not nice to him. And also he’s another body, who’s black, who can take a job. Granted I can do the same thing, but I don’t know, I’m more accepted because I’m softer and female. I don’t know… That’s the way they…look at it. (chuckles) [Delilah]

As is the case with African women, black American women may be more tolerated because they are 'softer', but they are also more vulnerable to sexual harassment and unwanted advances.

> (chuckles) In the beginning it was fun. I would walk… I strutted because I got a lot of attention. But after that it's like Ok, I just want to be left alone, stop chasing me. Like that man [refers to old man who kept interrupting us]. He's been in love with me forever. Everytime I come in here. He's here. [This town] is small so it's not like you can run away. [Delilah]

While some unwelcome advances may be lighthearted annoyances, others have the potential to become much more serious. Black American women struggle with the analysis of these events, they are often at a loss for how to respond or position themselves in situations where nationality is of little to no importance; when a black female body is simply a black female body. Emma, from New York state, is an accomplished professional brown skinned single woman in her forties. For Emma, who first arrived in Sweden during the 1980s as a graduate student, she also had to try to make the best of the situation.

> … [I]n the beginning all the guys wanted to meet you because you're black and therefore exotic for them. And for me the same way I feel about someone not liking me because I'm black, I don't want someone to like me *because* I'm black. So it was a little strange. But it's better to have that positive thing than to have to deal with the negative stereotypes. … I remember I stopped taking public transportation here on the weekends, because they would get drunk and then on the subway they would touch me. And I had braids at the time and they would put their hands through my hair because they had not really been accustomed to that… and touching … So when they became drunk their inhibitions were released and then it was like you were different, and then... You know, so that part I didn't really like. [Emma]

However, the unwelcome touching had later diminished when she returned to Sweden in the 1990s because by then, she says, black women were "not unique anymore". Over time, with the increase in African immigration, interest in the exotic black female body has declined noticeably, although it certainly still exists. To Gabriele, these days in the 2000s "a Swedish man here is more likely to marry a Thai woman or something like that." Swedish men are "now more in love with Asian women", says Emma. "You'll see

them with Asian women because of silly stereotypical things like passive erotic things and their being much more willing for a lot of things," she says. It appears to them that black women are being replaced as the rare and sexually exotic other by Asian women who have their own histories of sexualized and stereotypical representation. Black American women in Sweden understand that some advances may be genuine attraction while other advances attempt to place them as sexualized objects. The difficulty for them lies in discerning the difference.

"Well then, you understand."

Underlying this change in Swedish register towards black Americans versus black Africans is an assumption of racial, economic, and westernized cultural similarity between Swedes and Americans. Americans, the women believe, do not pose a cultural or a financial challenge (they do not draw government welfare benefits) to Swedes. This is in part the conceptual underpinning which allows the activation of American cultural capital by black Americans. In a micro-level analysis, everyday encounters and verbal exchanges provide confirmation of this assumption. This apparent affinity can be experienced quite directly even in the most mundane of environments.

> There was a situation when we were trying to figure out how to use the laundry room area. And I was asking the apartment rep if bleach could be used. Because, you know, I'm from New York, I use bleach sometimes. And she says, "Well you know, we don't allow bleach here. But *you* can use bleach because *we* know how to use bleach." And I'm thinking, 'We?' She's a Swedish woman. And I'm thinking, 'We?' She says, "We know how to use bleach. The others, they don't know how. They'll use it like it's soap and the whole bottle can go in there and it'll mess up the machines." She knew that I was American so she was telling me it was ok to use bleach because 'we' knew how, while those 'others' didn't. I had to call my mother. I was like, "Mama, I'm a 'we' now!" (laughs) My mother said, "What?!" I told her, "I'm a 'we'!" I used to be a 'them' and a 'they'. Now I'm a 'we'!" (laughs) [Henrietta]

Henrietta feels that the Swedish apartment representative bends the bleach rule for her because she is American, since Americans and Swedes have similarities that other

immigrants do not have. They are both used to, for instance, the same technology, devices and consumer products. Henrietta reflects on the situation with a good dose of humor, yet at the same time that simple exchange was enough to make her aware of having lacked that form of inclusiveness while in the US. Henrietta calls her mother to jokingly declare that she has 'arrived'. She has risen to and achieved 'we' status in Sweden. Now, there are other groups that are "the others". An individual, through socialization, internalizes schemes of understanding, which speak of course, not only to the everyday use of simple products, but also to a shared knowledge of rules of behavior.

While growing up, individuals learn ways of understanding and interacting with the world around them as they are socialized in a particular field. Eventually, one learns the rules of interaction in that field. If that behavior matches the socially desirable behavior of the dominant group in another field, then the individual is accepted much more readily than someone else who does not know the rules. Gabriele believes that her behavior unmarks her from the category of refugee or immigrant. She feels that she behaves and presents herself in a way that makes Swedes comfortable. She projects this through the clothes she wears, her passable facility with the Swedish language, her presence and sense of ease in certain locations and social situations in Stockholm where immigrants are rarely seen.

> As a person…I speak English and I speak Swedish, now. Not well enough I think. I would love to be completely fluent in it. I can maneuver in it, but I'm still not seen as an immigrant and I think that is because I can still culturally adapt. I think that's a distinction between…that's how they distinguish between who's an immigrant and who's not or who they instinctually give that label to. It's about how much you can adapt to their culture to their norms. The further you are from that the more you are an *invandrare* – a wander in – or an immigrant. Americans still feel like somehow we can find a common ground. They [Swedes] can understand certain things. Maybe it's religion that makes them feel comfortable. [Of Americans, Swedes think] 'they're at least Christian' maybe. I don't know. I always say to my husband for example that why don't they call me an *invandrare*? Why am I at parties and they're talking about immigrants and they're not concerned about what I think? [Gabriele]

Gabriele's experiences suggest to her that the category of immigrant may not be so much about race as it is about cultural distance, adaptability and ability to acculturate. Although she is not completely fluent in the language, she does not feel as if she is seen as an immigrant, because her behavior sets her apart. As such, to her, language is not as important a criteria or characteristic of who is considered a foreigner as compared to culture and behavior, including knowledge of shared rules of interaction.

> There was one incident where I was on a train and there were these people speaking English. There was another black person on the train listening … a couple of other black people on train. I don't know who was talking too loud and who wasn't talking too loud. But then there was this big argument between this black guy and these Swedes. And they [the Swedes] looked over at us and asked, "Were we talking too loud?" I said, "I wasn't really paying attention. I don't know." And then they went, "Wait, where are you from?" I said, "from the States". "Oh" they said, "well then you understand". And I was thinking, "What do I understand?" (chuckles) "Oh well he doesn't understand", they said. It was almost like a 'He's from Africa. He doesn't understand. But you're from the States…' What do I understand?! You know, that's where I saw differences. When they see you're from the States, it's like 'Oh! The States?!' It's almost like if you're in the States and you're some Black person passing for white. Like 'Oh ok you can come with us'. I'm like, 'yeah sure ok' (chuckles). [Henrietta]

"Well then you understand" is another example of this shared cultural mindset being the basis for different treatment of black Americans and Africans. A larger question that Henrietta's comment about 'passing' hits upon is whether or not race may play more of a role in determining who is an immigrant and in explaining immigrant hostility than may be commonly thought. Are black Americans, in activating cultural capital of their American nationality, in effect, being granted some kind of 'honorary white' status? If that is the case, then race may be a criterion for Swedish belonging and at the root of immigrant hostility. Answering these questions about race and culture in Swedish immigration is beyond the scope of this research, however an examination of the experiences of black Americans may contribute to future research in that area. Meanwhile, in all of these situations it is clear to all involved that white Swedes hold the power to determine who is accepted, on what criteria and to what degree.

> What I have found is that the fact that you come from America tends to negate the fact that you are black. To explain, I was in Stockholm visiting last week. I was in a section called Tensta, where there is a *largely* diversified population. Folks from perhaps 50 different lands or more! My friend said something about *utlänningar* [foreigners] and I said to her "But, I am an *utlänning* [foreigner]". Her response was, "But you come from America, that's different". Swedes have this thing about America and everything and everybody American, regardless of race or color. We are not foreigners, we are *Americans*. At least this is what I have found; not only from experience, but from conversation. [Margaret]

Black American women in Sweden are positioned highly by white Swedes in the Swedish social field compared to other black immigrants because of this sense of shared westernized cultural background. This is especially apparent when one considers the special relationship that Sweden has with the U.S. It is in part this similar socialization, and knowledge of the rules of behavior that reflect an American-Swedish affinity. As such, this familiarity allows black Americans to activate their cultural capital as Americans to gain favored treatment and thus change position in the field.

One may argue that some of these experiences could be shared by anyone new to Sweden regardless of race or ethnicity, meaning that what these women have experienced is not necessarily racially motivated and their interpretations of those encounters are instead due to a lack of understanding of Swedish social interaction - such as the apparent fact that Swedes are very reserved toward strangers (Bengts et al. 2003; Daun 1994). I reiterate that the goal of this study is not to draw conclusions on whether or not Sweden is a racist society. The goal is not to determine whether or not these encounters are racially motivated or whether or not my informants are 'correct' in their interpretations of their own experiences. I present these experiences to reflect the diversity within this population and to develop a framework within which one can try to understand why and how these different perceptions exist. The focus of this research is to explore how these women's sense-making of and reactions to events of living in Sweden, appear to be shaped by their intersecting identities and subjectivities crafted in their social fields of

origin, and with which they still interact while in Sweden.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that mindsets and subjectivities frame black American women's sense making of encounters in Sweden and the ways in which this manifests. First, themes of (in)visibility and (mis)placement permeated the women's discourse since in many conversations they described being publicly placed by Swedes as African. Encounters in which the women are stared at or deliberately ignored, openly mark them the other, as not belonging, and as not wanted. These are "micro-level" examples of what Hage (1998, 48) describes as the "spatial dimensions of nationalist practices", through which some Swedes seek to proclaim themselves to be 'real' Swedes who have the power to determine who does not belong and who should leave. Second, language can be both a bridge and a barrier to Swedish acceptance. They feel themselves to be placed as African and have negative encounters when attempting to speak non-fluent Swedish in public. Sometimes they find it difficult to know when, in any given encounter, the apparent failure of a Swedish person to understand what they are trying to say is a normal part of practicing a new language or if it has become a tool of othering. Through such encounters, black American women discover the value of their cultural capital by speaking English, although activating this capital does not come without a price, which is the tinge of guilt at the perpetuation of negative treatment for African immigrants. They learn that while an upside of learning Swedish is a gain of insight into the culture that allows the women to understand that any negative encounter is not necessarily racially motivated, a downside of the process may be that there is a possibility of losing some of

their identity and their personality through the change in how they communicate with others. Third, touching and other physical advances are in some cases rooted in sexualized stereotypes of black women and places them as the exotic other, as sexual objects. Modern media plays a large role in some of these perceptions whereas others have been around in Sweden centuries. And fourth, the underlying the change in Swedish register towards black Americans versus black Africans is an assumption of racial, economic, and westernized cultural similarity between Swedes and Americans. Americans in general feel themselves to be a special category and outside of Swedish immigration/cultural politics, since they feel that they do not pose a cultural or a financial challenge to Swedes. This may be part of the conceptual underpinning which allows the activation of American cultural capital by black Americans. In two societies that may appear to be so similar on the surface, the differences in rules of interaction can provide a type of culture shock. The women begin to learn and understand not only that there is a Swedish field, but that it is hierarchical in nature. They also learn that they have the power to place and (re)position themselves by activating capital.

CHAPTER 4 FOUR: AMERICANS AND (OTHER) IMMIGRANTS

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In this chapter, I discuss Black American interactions with white Americans, fellow black Americans and with other immigrants in Sweden. Again, this research does not intend to be representative of the experiences of all Black American women living in Sweden. However, because a substantial part (though by no means all) of my informants' social interactions were with other Americans and immigrants, I discuss the nature of those interactions in this chapter. In section one, *White Americans*, I describe how these black American women perceive the status of white Americans in Sweden. Using the interactions in one American organization as a point of focus, I explore why they join, their experiences in the organization, and their different reactions to and understandings of their encounters. In section two, *Black Americans*, I look at Black Americans relationships with each other. I describe how they meet each other, and how they interpret their own behavior and ways of interacting with others. In the third section, *(Other) Immigrants*, I describe aspects of black American relationships with other immigrants in Sweden, specifically those from Africa and the Middle East. In doing so, I more widely illustrate how black American women maneuver in what I argue to be separate Swedish, American and Black American fields as they manifest transnationally in Sweden. These encounters in Sweden and the women's interpretations of them further illustrate how they navigate and engage multiple social fields.

White Americans

Black American women perceive that Americans, white Americans in particular, are granted a high status in Sweden.

> The president of this organization made a speech there where he told everybody that he wanted them to remember that they were all invandrare [immigrants]. Because Americans have a tendency to think that we are not invandrare. At the time I was new and didn't really understand what it was all about. But now I see that he was correct. I think he was speaking mostly to the white Americans rather than to black Americans because, like I said, when we're walking down the street we are visibly not Swedes. There is a high handedness in some of the white Americans here that I think is only checked by the Swedes, who have a great ability to remind you that you are an invandrare, it doesn't matter what color you are. But then again, walking down the street with their mouths shut, they're fine. [Patricia]

Patricia uses the words 'Americans' and then 'we' but immediately distances herself by saying that the statement was meant for white Americans and less so for black Americans. They know that white American status is more automatic whereas theirs is more qualified since they have to make known their nationality. "Walking down the street", white Americans, by benefit of being white, they believe, do not have to experience the stares, or the empty seat next to them on public transportation or other overt acts of othering in the way that they, as black Americans, at times do. They feel that white Americans enjoy a privileged position in Swedish society and "are more readily accepted than we are, partly because they are not so clearly foreign." This was confirmed by discussions with white and black Americans in Sweden. As evidenced by Patricia's early learning experience, American clubs and organizations provide the women with insights into Swedish culture and the place of Americans in it. However they also can provide to black women in Sweden the ability to enter a slice of America -- for good and for bad.

American clubs and organizations are a significant part of American interaction in Swedish cities for some black American women (though clearly not all). In this section, I

look at the experiences of black American women with white American women by focusing on interactions in one American organization in Stockholm. I show how interactions between white and black Americans within such organizations follow rules of interaction in the US and as such, present as a physical manifestation of an American social field in Sweden. In this section I describe why they join the organization, their experiences in the organization, and lastly how they (differently) make sense of and respond to these encounters.

Black American women who join American clubs and organizations, do so for any of three main reasons. One possible reason for joining is because of difficulties in making Swedish friends. Black American women, like all American women, commonly enter Sweden with the intention of 'getting into' Swedish culture, but sometimes that proves to be more difficult than imagined. "It's hard to break into Swedish circles", I heard repeatedly. They want to make friends but have found that they really had to work at it. And for some it was more work than they had time for. After years have passed, some black American women, particularly those who are single, find they are not making inroads into Swedish relationships and turn to Americans for companionship. The second possible reason for joining such organizations is as a coping tool for understanding Swedish society. Some women, especially those married to Swedish men, sought the company of a group to help them understand the behavior of their Swedish husbands and in-laws even if only through lighthearted commiseration. The third reason for joining is because they specifically want American friendships. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, when communicating with Swedes and other English-speaking immigrants, Black American women sense that they are losing part of their personality (and perhaps

American identity) because they cannot fully express themselves in their own verbal style (cf. Chapter Three). They seek American friends to talk about things that relate to the US and to use expressions and ways of communicating that other Americans understand.

Almost all of the Black American women have white American friends or acquaintances made through American organizations or on their own. “They [white Americans] are about the same as in the States”, said Odele, “some are friendly, others are less so”. As a result of this familiarity, they believe their relationships with white Americans to be less complex than their relationships with white Swedes. However, they have found that establishing friendships with white Americans, particularly in the context of organization settings can, at times, be simultaneously less complex, yet just as problematic.

I demonstrate how many Black American women perceive experiencing acts of subordination within the organization. This sense of subordination is maintained is through perceived acts of rudeness, or insensitivity, for which the women feel that white Americans have no excuse because, unlike Swedes, Americans “know” what their doing when they say certain things or behave in certain ways.

> But I would say most of the racism or, I don’t know what to call it, that I have experienced here has come from other Americans more so than from Swedes. With the Swedes, I can perhaps create some kind of excuse for them because of their lack of exposure and poor socialization and lack of awareness as to diversity issues… But Americans… I had one American woman say to me that I didn’t sound black on the phone. And of course I had to ask her, “What does ‘black’ sound like on the phone?” She was young woman. Now I’m sure she has seen a variety of black people in different professions and classes, with different mannerisms and styles and academic levels. Still she chose to tell me… So this wasn’t about me. This was about her. Because she feels good when she thinks of black people as being a certain way.
>
> I went to [an American event] here in Stockholm. I walk in and go up to the registration desk. I’m approaching and the woman behind the counter sees me approaching and walks away and [unintell]. Another minority woman, not African-American, comes over to help me while the other woman stood there. See my reaction to that is completely different than it is to Swedes because they know what they’re doing. It’s self-importance, it’s rudeness and it’s clear that she did not want anything to do with my {unintell -black skin?}.

> Another time I was arranging an event over the phone. And the woman with whom I was talking was extremely kind and wonderful. And as soon as I got to her house and she opened the door, -I introduced myself- she just turned around and walked into her apartment. She didn't say, 'Won't you come in?' She just turned around and walked back in and left the door open. These are Americans. [Patricia]

Although she is careful not to give the appearance of jumping to conclusions about the type or cause of the behavior she experienced, she does find it surprising that any such rude behavior would transpire between Americans in another country. She seemed to expect interactions to be different in Sweden and was shocked that the American field of race relations existed there as well. Such behavior from white Americans is less tolerated by Patricia "because they know what they're doing" and by extension she and other black Americans know what they are doing when they choose to respond or not respond. The players of this game know each other well. She is discussing here that they are operating in an American field while in Sweden.

Gabriele discussed the seeming conflict that she and other black women felt of not wanting race to be the most important or primary characteristic driving their interactions with the other American women, yet also wanting some recognition of their identity and the historical contribution of black peoples to making America what it is today. When this is not recognized by the organization, she is reminded of the subordination that black Americans typically experience in the U.S.

> Well I'm kind of a shadow member to be honest. I go because Lisa's very involved in it and I'll go to her events (laughs) And…that's… and even those events…I don't have very much in common with the women in that group. I mean I'll be very honest. I wouldn't have hobnobbed with them back home and I don't plan to do it here really. And I don't want to be intolerant but, it's true. I'm not into whining about how things are not like they are in the States. Personally, I don't want them to be like they were in the States truthfully.
>
> And you can sort of feel relations-wise, we're taken out of our context in the States, but they wouldn't really want to hobnob with me either. And if they do here it makes them feel more cosmopolitan I guess. I'm probably being really unfair but…you can feel sometimes…I mean we've had enough experience in life that we can tell our social situations before they even happen you know. I think as black people you get accustomed to that. And one of the things I know is that

> when you're living abroad and you're confronted with the middle-class or the upper middle-class white woman in particular, they're really happy when the race thing doesn't come up. They really don't want to have to address that and neither do you really. One doesn't want to …you want to feel free of that to a certain extent.
>
> But…you don't want to be invisible to them to them either on that level so that they can feel really good about themselves. And when Lisa was talking about how they didn't address Black History month and so on, I totally understand her irritation because it's all over the calendars in the States for February right? And there was nothing about it in the [American organization] calendar here. But yet St. Patty's Day… I don't know how many Irish, I mean bleeding green Irish people there are in the group, but they were breaking their necks to make sure that we knew about St. Patrick's Day in March, whereas February was like the entire fucking month for Black history. You know... just those little things…
>
> And the fact that she brought it up probably pissed them off because they're like, 'Why do we have to think about this now?!'… (laughs) [They're] like, 'I thought we were free of that. Darn!' (laughs) You know, and that's the point I'm talking about. When you have to pull their card, then they get really annoyed, because they're like, 'Do we have to be all correct?' So I'm like, basically you're upset because I'm asking to be recognized here. Meanwhile, like I said they were breaking their necks to make sure we know that it's like (imitates nasal voice:) 'International Woman's Day according to the UN, it's St. Patrick's on the 17th of March and so the entire bulletin is green and we're having an entire week of green food and green beer and we're going to be Irish in empathy'. (Laughs) It's true! And there are a good number of black women in the group now. [Gabriele]

The fact that this occurs despite "a good number of black women in the group now", shows who is in control and who has to ask for recognition. Recognition is a symbolic resource (cf. Chapter One) that is often at the source of struggle within fields. Black Americans, Gabriele says, can tell their social situations before they happen, which demonstrates an awareness of the American field. She feels that black American women continue, in these organization settings, to play same the game because the rules are still set by white Americans. She is upset with the fact that she has to continue to be the one to 'adapt', to celebrate St. Patrick's Day and not Black History month with the organization, to act in certain ways that are acceptable to the white majority. "Yeah. Oh yeah. I assimilate. I adapt. So that they don't have to feel uncomfortable. It's the same thing", says Gabriele. She means that it is the same dynamic as that which she feels exists in the U.S.

In American organization settings when black American women perceive exclusion it often comes in the form of being or feeling rejected on the basis of class. Lisa described how a friend was turned off by the organization: "[S]he went to an [organization] thing once and I think she thought it was the wrong thing for her to go to because it was at someone's house… that had a big flashy apartment. And so she thought it was very shi-shi." Another woman did not join right away because she thought it was "just a bunch of housewives" and that she would not fit into such a well-heeled environment. As one Black American woman put it, the organization was "not [her] cup of tea". Here, Emma describes her experience with the organization when she first tried to get involved with it back in 1985 as a graduate student. She then contrasts that treatment with her reception these days.

> Well interactions with Americans, some of them have been weird. I remember once in the beginning…I used to make a joke that there are no other black women here except me. And actually in the beginning [it] definitely [was the case]. In the [Organization] when I first came on, there was this woman who, for the life of me, she was just so arrogant and she'd always be, "Oh what's your name?" And we would meet all the time. And she would always forget that she met me. One day I just said, "How many black women do you meet everyday here?" And it was just this type of… She just drove me crazy. I thought that these women were just really snobs. Really old, completely different from me and I just didn't see a connection there. And I was like, just because you're in a foreign country, why do you need to be friends with Americans that you wouldn't necessarily be friends with in the States. So in that sense, I just think that some of the American women were a little weird. [Emma]

Since she was a student at the time, her first experience with the organization in 1985, she pointed out to me, may have had class, social status and age dynamics involved besides race. It is said that, "people position themselves and others as they explain, defend, abandon, or entrench their own positions and *resist* or take up the positions others produce for the them to occupy (emphasis mine) (van Langenhove and Harre 1999, cited in Phoneix 2005, 105). By directly questioning the woman who she felt was insulting her; she was in effect saying to the woman, that she was aware of the meaning behind this

kind of behavior. That exchange exemplifies how she as a player in the American field, knows the rules of the game. As a result she "stopped interacting with these people" and stopped being part of the organization because "it just wasn't [her]." She left the organization and later left Sweden when her studies ended. Ten years later, she returned to Sweden to work full-time. In recent years she decided to try participating in the organization again because of her continued difficulties in 'getting into' the Swedish culture, especially as a single woman with a busy working life. Now that she is no longer a student but a practicing professional, she perceives a difference in how people interact with her once her profession is made known.

> But it's just like the same representation from home. I mean I have great American friends here as well that are white and um…nobody cares that you're black. And then there are other people that…you know. But I think the thing is also that there is a prejudice because of what I do. You know it's like "Oh?" Before, they ignored me, until they hear "Oh you know she's a scientist at [well-known research institution]". Then all of a sudden they're interested to get to know you. So there are definitely those types of American women living here, I've found. And you know, I keep away from them. So depending on if you have the right fit I think…[Emma]

She now feels that her profession and title put her in a social status that is much more acceptable. But she resents the change in register from people who carry such assumptions about her as a black (American) woman until they hear her title and profession.

Black American women respond in three main ways to this environment. They may activate American cultural capital in an attempt to gain better treatment or equal status with the women, sometimes defensively, sometimes strategically. Secondly, they may reduce participation and adopt a selective membership, that allows them pick and choose aspects of involvement that they prefer. Thirdly, they may leave and/or avoid clubs and organizations.

Emma's case illustrates the disappointment and near resentment that a number of women, who are in organizations, feel when some capital that they happen to possess such as education or job title, changes them from invisible to visible in the eyes of some of the white American women in the organization. They feel that those status markers are what make them worthwhile to get to know. At other times the women purposely and intentionally activate this capital by talking about and demonstrating certain status markers that they possess and embody to gain some favorable outcome for themselves.

> With them [white Americans] it's different [than with Swedes] because with them [white Americans] I think proving yourself has to do more with appearance, because they already know that you are American and black. They are going to judge you with different standards, standards that we know about. I mean, Swedes don't really care what you're wearing or how much jewelry you have or how rich your husband is… [Patricia]

In discussing how one "proves" oneself in different ways depending on whether among Americans or Swedes, Patricia hits on the concept that the value of capital varies by field. This illustrates that there is more than one field existing in one physical space (Sweden). Moreover, those in power set the values. Black American women, at times, feel the need to position themselves not just with respect to Swedes, but to some white Americans as well, and this is particularly evident in organization settings. They do so sometimes defensively to avoid negative treatment or dispel stereotypes. Other times they do so strategically to secure inclusion and show affinity with particular individuals or cliques. There is some reward in being accepted. Given that a sense of belonging can be thought of in terms of membership and involvement, possessing higher amounts of accepted cultural capital and positive inclusion by 'the group' in power so to speak may create a sense of belonging.

Other women like Emma and Gabriele do sense a kind of partial inclusion, partial exclusion and as a result, they react by deciding to keep a selective membership (subscriber or shadow member), where they can pick and choose the aspects of the group that they like and to which they can relate. Meanwhile, others leave and/or avoid American organizations altogether.

> No. I tried but…they weren't very friendly. (chuckles) They're not such a great… I think some of them try to be [friendly] but some of them sit on their high horse so you don't feel like you're actually part of a group. It's almost like being in a classroom and you have these big cliques all over the place. You know, I'm thinking to myself [that] grown women should be beyond the clique thing now. And consider the fact that we're someplace where this is not your home. I mean, it's where you've been living for this number of years and it's your home *so-to-speak*, but it's not your home*land*. If you created a group to feel more comfortable… they're not making any of us [black Americans] feel more comfortable. I didn't feel very comfortable so I stepped out of that. I was trying to find other stuff but I really can't find any other group. I don't have the time, so I just try to meet people as I go along. [Henrietta]

Those who avoid organizations or leave them, pursue other avenues to find American friendships in Sweden. Given that for most of my informants a large part of contact between black and white American women is through American clubs and organizations, if the American club may be thought of as an American environment, an American social field complete with American rules of social interaction, those who leave the organization can avoid aspects of 'America' while in Sweden in a way that they cannot in the States. Black American women can use cultural capital strategically to create or reinforce a sense of American community and belonging with apparent varying degrees of success. In turn, selective membership may reflect a kind of selective belonging (cf. Chapter Six). Thus, the struggles of club participation and perceptions of exclusion among Black American women may be considered to be reflective of the inner conflict of American belonging.

Black Americans

Finding and Meeting other Women

When Black American women arrive in Sweden oftentimes they develop a longing to meet other Black Americans. Sometimes it is immediate, sometimes it evolves over a period of years and sometimes a longing may never develop. An immediate desire to meet other black Americans appears to some within just a few months.

> When I first came here, I was coming here for work as well. So I had a job that I was going to. I was commuting between Paris and Stockholm. So I had friends that were through work or acquaintances like that. I have Petter's friends –cosmopolitan Swedes. They've traveled and love to speak English so I didn't have any problems. I was enjoying that sort of novelty status. Being 'the only one' [black person] wasn't so bad because I was coming in and out of that situation. But I knew that I was eventually craving something. I was craving something in common culturally. I immediately associated it with craving to be around black people. Because even in Paris… I had that too. I had friends from all over the place. But I also had cultural affiliation and that was really nice.
>
> I didn't have that here. And I couldn't see any way of getting it. My husband grew up in a very affluent neighborhood here in Sweden, in Stockholm. And there weren't any people of color there…. He didn't understand …The only thing we could joke about was, "Where are they at?" you know! (chuckles) And start counting them on the street when we saw them. What I think – what I was trying to express to him evidently was [that] I'm already starting to feel like I'm the only one and it would be nice to find community right away. But I think the frustrating thing about that was that I couldn't see how I was going to remedy that here. [Gabriele]

A number of women discussed how the desire to meet other Black Americans evolved for them over a period of years. Carol described her adjustment to a small town in Sweden as a good one. Carol is a brown-skinned woman in her fifties from Washington DC, who came to Sweden over twenty-five years ago after meeting a Swede in the US. With a husband, children and a job she had plenty to occupy her early days. However over the years she became conscious of a desire to spend time with other Black Americans.

> Between five to ten years… that's when the homesickness starts. Because in the beginning, everything is new and there's so much to learn. ..I had my children… son in '80, daughter in '84 so I was busy with them. I'd visit home every now and then and it would cure that (homesickness). But as the kids got older and… no other English-speaking people around me… I started missing the fact that… One, I was the only Black person around… I was missing the things that Black people did in the States, you know just hang out and not do anything. I missed that there were no other Americans that understood my thoughts and where I was coming from. So those were the types of things that I missed. And that started, like I said, about five or ten years in. [Carol]

For other women, a longing to find an establish friendships with black Americans never appears to develop or perhaps may be greatly delayed (over twenty years). Some black American women there want to escape the identity politics of forced association and identity performance in the U.S. that dictates that they must seek each other out and stay in a group. They may know one or two other black Americans as a result of a chance meeting or introduction, but not as a result of actively seeking out others to befriend. Most of these people are open to friendships with other black Americans, but the relationship has to be initiated on the basis of something other than a shared black American identity. They may preference their nationality and minimize their ethnic identity. They choose not to associate with other black Americans not necessarily because they do not want to, but because in Sweden, they do not have to.

Black Americans in Sweden find and meet each other in three main ways. One way is through American/English speaking clubs or other organizations. A second way black American women find each other is through word-of-mouth introductions. They meet through small informal networks of spouses, friends, co-workers, and even strangers. Patricia met the first black woman she knew in Sweden as a name contact given to her by someone seated near her on a plane. Black women also refer new arrivals to each other when they think another Black American woman may have more in common or be closer to the new person's age group. During my time in Sweden I utilized these informal networks to identify women to interview. I used them to network, and they also used me. I had been spending time with one black American woman when I had to leave to meet another woman to interview. The first woman came with me, met the second woman and gave her a contact card. A third way that the women meet each other is through chance

encounters in public places – including hair salons, places of education, shops, etc. Patricia describes meeting another Black American woman upon visiting a massage school where she was once a student. “I had asked if there were any Americans here and they pointed her [Henrietta] out to me and I left my card with my email address for her to contact me, just because she was African-American and just because she was here.”

Once they find each other, Black American women don’t always approach each other in the same way. In fact, they appear to meet each other at least two ways: among Swedes and among white Americans. As one woman said,

> I’ve met a couple that I just hear them talking… That’s because I just saw them, one of the girls… We were in the shoe store and I heard her speaking to this guy and I was like…I heard someone speaking and I turned around and I was like, oh my god, I gotta talk to this girl! (chuckles). She’s from Brooklyn or something. And she sounded like she was from Brooklyn. Yeah, I see her maybe every three months or something like that. [Lisa]

As I just described in the previous paragraph, Black American women routinely and openly pass along contact information to each other when amongst themselves or amongst Swedes. However this often changes when in American environments such a club/organization setting which I have argued in the previous section may be considered a particular physical manifestation of the wider American social field. A field is “a human construction with its own set of beliefs.., which rationalize the rules of the field behavior – each field has its own distinctive ‘logic of practice’. Social agents who occupy particular positions understand how to behave in the field, and this understanding not only feels ‘natural’, but can be explained using the truths...that are common parlance within the field” (Thomson 2008, 70). Black Americans are not only conscious of their interactions with white Americans (see previous section), but they also appear to be conscious of their interactions with each other in the presence of white Americans.

> It's funny too because the first meeting I ever went to, it was at this woman's house who lives in Östermalm in a very nice apartment. And it was me and one other black woman…and Lisa. And the three of us spotted one another. And we did the typical, *typical* double-consciousness thing where we spotted one another out, but we didn't talk to one another for fear that they [White Americans] would think there would be an uprising or something or a mutiny. So we just waited for the right time to be able to say like, "Can I get your number?" And Lisa, literally on the down-low, wrote her number out and slipped it in our hands. And I was… I really laughed to myself, because it occurred to me…why weren't we…Why didn't we talk to one another? Why did we do that?
>
> We have been living in a white country for like however many years. We should have been completely taken out of that context, but we tipped around white Americans and started acting like (whispers) 'We run at 12'. Like we're on the Underground Railroad you know. Like, (whispers) 'It jumps off after midnight. Meet at the swamp!' or something. (Laughs) I couldn't believe how she [Lisa] just slipped…(laughs)!
>
> But that's what I mean about construct. That has nothing to do with us here. We would have been at a Swedish party with English-speaking Swedes that lived in America or whatever and we wouldn't have felt that way. I guarantee you, we would have been like 'Hey! Blah blah blah'. And it wouldn't have been because we're American either. It would have been because we're not associating the construct in that sense. Maybe I speak for myself because Lisa on the other hand, does sense a *lot* more racism than I do. Although I probably think she's hitting the class issue more and the cultural one. But the way we behaved [that night] and the way we do behave in most of those meetings tells me that we're not comfortable. And *that* is racial." [Gabriele]

Members of subordinate groups often internalize particular modes of interaction which serve to reproduce and maintain their subordination, particularly in the presence of members of the dominant group. Gabriele hits upon this when she remarks that "we should have been completely taken out of that context" in Sweden and talks about the "construct" that Black Americans learned in the U.S. and appear to have brought with them which includes rules of interaction. The women actively avoided fitting the understood stereotype that Black Americans are eager to be around each other all the time and interact boisterously. Meetings that can appear normal on the surface can have other meanings and interpretations underneath to those who are a part of that field (cf. Chapter Six). White Americans there were apparently not consciously aware of this encounter but the Black American women were conscious of it. They realized and stated that they do oftentimes behave differently in front of white Americans, particularly in organization

environments. Some of this may be rooted in the historical relationship between white and black Americans in the US, but also some of it maybe class-based.

Sometimes such initial meetings can be rocky. One woman ("Geena") who wished to not to have her real name used in this particular story, told me of an encounter of what she considered to be personal rejection upon meeting another Black American woman ("Tracy").

> She's in the club. She doesn't go to a lot of stuff. She's kind of … Again, I met her…I didn't even know she was in the club. My boss's wife is an MD with a master's in public health or something like that. And I think she was looking for American MD's or doctors because she's kind of like you have to be up here [intellectually/socially] to be able to be friends with her. And I think she found ["Tracy"] and they kind of became friends. I met "Tracy" at a party… And of course you would… Like everyone [did] at the party, [I] went around and said, "Hi, my name is Geena, blah blah blah." And it just so happened that we were the only two African-American people there. There were other Americans, but we were the only two…
>
> And I went up to talk to her and she was [in her demeanor, not in actual speech] like, 'Hmmm, who are you? Why do need to come over here?' I mean even though I was saying hi to everyone else… And then my husband had ended up talking to her and saying that he was at the blah blah blah [research institution]. And so I don't think that he knew that I had already tried to approach her. And he was like, "Oh, I met this woman. She's an African-American from the US too." I didn't say anything to him. He was like, "Come over you have to meet her". I'm like, "Ok." Because I want to see what she's going to do. And he takes me over there and she's all like, "Oh hi! Oh this is your husband?" You know, blah blah blah. It was like ok, I can talk to you now.
>
> Because I mean, walking towards her, we had eye contact but it was like -- mmm, that way [motions that "Tracy" deliberately moved away from her when she approached her the first time]. So it's like, ok I'm not going to force it. And so then I spoke to her and…nothing. There was another girl there (white American) and "Tracy" was talking to her and they were making plans [to get together later for some activity] but there was never any information transpiring between us. It was never 'maybe we could get together and have coffee. I don't know. I still talk to her. I send her emails like, you're welcome to come to this or do that and she's very polite in her responses and a couple of things she's come to but there's no… And I know other people that she socializes with. And they're not… Yeah, different circles. ["Geena"]

"Geena" theorized that "Tracy" rejected her because she did not want to be approached as a black woman by another black woman in that venue [of white Americans]. Continued inability to connect to her in other settings caused "Geena" notable frustration. Although she hints that there could be some class or education based differences that explain "Tracy's" friendships with other women there, "Geena" views encounter as a personal rejection. Each person has their own disposition which is how they make sense of what is

going on around them and how they make sense of interactions with others. This perhaps explains “Geena’s” apparent dismissal of simple personality differences between the two women or some other explanation of their disconnection.

Automatic lasting friendships, they find, do not commonly manifest among black American women in Sweden. While some women expect it, others seem somewhat surprised by it. More than one woman used the expression “(moving in) different circles” to describe an unsuccessful association. Even though they do enjoy each others company – “joking around and hanging out”, very few are intimately close. While many have close acquaintanceships with each other, very few count other Black American women in Sweden among their truest and closest friends. While open to meeting and knowing more Black American women, they have become aware that having shared age, class, personality and other characteristics are of importance for maintaining friendships through the long term. As Patricia stated, “I can’t claim to have any *deep* friendships with any of them [other Black Americans women in Sweden]. And because we’re black and in the same country doesn’t mean that we have to be bosom buddies”. For many, they have retained friendships they formed back in the US through reciprocal visits. As Emma states, “ … my best friends in the States are still my best friends even though I’m here. I think it’s relationships. It doesn’t matter how far away you are if you want to make it work you’ll do what it takes.”

Although friendships may not be tight, informal networks do exist among black American women in Sweden for information, advice and support. They also do what they can to create some remembrance of the US when homesick.

> And I miss things that I associate with Black American culture that aren’t here. Like there isn’t a Black community here. When I say black community I think of my family. Because when I think about when I lived in Wisconsin, I don’t know if I was involved in a black community per se in

> the town that I lived in. Though I was part of a black university .. community. But as far as the black community in this little town of Appleton that I lived in, there was a small one. I didn't have a lot of contact with them so I can't say that… It's not like I went down to the black community and walked up and down the streets and was like 'Eh yeahhh, the black community!'
>
> But I can, sitting in Sweden, say 'the black community' and I think of my grandmother's house in Princeton, NJ where I'm going to be next week and that's were people know who I am. And people will stop you and greet you and everybody will be able to place me within a larger extended family and that's really nice. And also, just a way of talking and being. You know, barbeques and certain foods like my aunt would have fried chicken and collard greens and cornbread but it's about my family because there are restaurants where you can get that food, where here you can't. And if there were one, I'd… well you know about it. Remember when we actually tried that little…(chuckles) failure of a hybrid restaurant. [Sofie]

Some weeks earlier, a Swedish acquaintance of mine, knowing my area of research, gave me a colorful, glossy postcard advertisement that she had received in the mail for the grand opening of a "soul food" restaurant in Stockholm. I invited Sofie to check it out with me one evening. Although the décor of the dimly lit restaurant was lovely, nothing stood out as particularly African-American or 'soul food-y'. Undaunted and with still high expectations we were escorted to a table and presented with our menus. Although advertising African-American "soul food", the actual menu hinted, and the food later revealed to us that what was served there was far from authentic. It was in fact a Swedish or Euro-fusion interpretation of American soul food. We chatted and caught up with one another over quite an interesting meal. We sat identifying and placing the ingredients, while trying to make sense of the unusual combination of aromas and flavors we were taking in. The preparation of the food, it seemed to me, was symbolic of Swedish knowledge of the black American experience. Swedes are aware of some aspect of the collective history and present experience of black Americans, however, once this knowledge is translated, it is not the same. Moreover, the way in which Sofie and I analyzed the food that was served to us, was emblematic of our existence as Black Americans in Sweden trying to make sense of our experiences. Although tasty enough,

the food was nowhere near what we were longing for. Our hopes of consuming a bit of home were left unmet.

Posturing vs. Being Real

It may be argued that people sharpen themselves against others when carving out their own identity. When interacting with white Swedes and white Americans, black Americans often feel the need to present themselves in certain ways to garner particular responses. While almost all the women were in some way aware of it, some were particularly sensitive to how it impacted their lives in Sweden. Patricia describes it as 'posturing'.

> Generally here I'm seen as a sort of undesirable. I don't know about their [white American] posturing but within my own community, among the minority community I see a lot of it. And I'm one of them. I'm sure I posture too, because I too need to validate who I am. And maybe this is why I can recognize it. But what an effort and a struggle it is to have to state who you are. I think I'm over it now, but I hear it all the time. I'm really not good at the pretending. If I feel the posturing coming on I try to escape it.
>
> Those of us who live in this country, we live somewhat in pretense like in the sense of who we are, where we're from. You know people talk about their academic backgrounds and the jobs they've had, how much money our parents have…how they were chauffeured to school. And I think we pretend a lot of …and I say it's pretense because a lot of these pretenders will let their hair down. We pretend because it helps us to be somebody. Because here you're nobody. To Swedes you really don't exist here, especially if you're African-American. You don't exist as an African-American. You exist as a black person, most likely from Africa. So that's who you are. So I think in our community, I think there is a lot of posturing, because you have to find yourself. You have to place yourself. You have to be somebody. You have to be somebody with a Master's degree. You have to be somebody who lived in a certain neighborhood in the States and somebody who had these kinds of friends and who had… and of course you have to say this. But the fact that you have to say it *so often*, you really have to validate who you are a lot." [Patricia]

Posturing is roughly defined as bragging about or otherwise displaying aspects of one's background in the States to gain status among different groups in Sweden. Although Patricia was the only one to put a name to this behavior, almost all of the women I spoke with were aware of and talked about it. Without labeling it directly, what they are hitting upon is what I argue is the activation of cultural capital.

Black Americans 'posture', or activate capital, among white Americans, white Swedes, and maybe even each other (cf. Chapter Five). They emphasize their American identity to distinguish themselves apart from Africans in the eyes of Swedes, both to avoid negative treatment and gain a higher social position as Americans. They additionally gain status by presenting themselves in ways that show their possession of shared Swedish and American status markers, for example education level (degrees), a tax-paying professional life, and perceived wealth/financial stability. By contrast, Black American women can feel judged by white American women, particularly in certain settings, based on "standards that *we* [Americans] know about". In turn, they project status markers recognized in the US. When other Black American women with more capital (class, education, residence, profession) are better accepted by white Americans and/or Swedes it can lead to resentment among the others. Black Americans have a history of trying to belong to 'the club' of American belonging, traditionally using class, money and other capital to be accepted. As a result of this desire to fit in, there is a certain necessary and mindful artificiality that is brought out in a number of black American women living in Sweden who feel the need to "validate" themselves in the eyes of others. The opposite of posturing becomes, being "real". This takes the form of meeting a "real" person, a person who does not feel the need to validate herself.

> I haven't met many African-Americans outside of a club setting. I met one African-American – one Black American woman, when I went to massage school here. I was having a session and she walked up to me and asked where I was from. Now she'd come here as a child but was from Chicago. She lives a ways away from Stockholm, but it was refreshing to meet her because she was *real*. She wasn't pretending to be anybody that she wasn't. She was a real rough sister from Chicago who talked the talk and walked the walk. I said, 'It's so refreshing to meet you!' She wasn't out to prove anything. She didn't belong to a club. Talking to her was like being in the States talking to a real live person. [Patricia]

This alternately takes the form of meeting someone who allows them to be 'real'.

> I haven't met that many Americans. I think Patricia was one of the first American I met and that

> was after three years. I met her last year and we spoke English all the time and it was great. Ahhh, I can speak English and I can talk slang if I want to and expressions or groan and it's understood. No explanation, you don't have to rearrange the sentence because by the time you do all that it just doesn't make any sense anymore. Now she already knew a lot of Americans that had been here already. So a few times that I had gone over…. I didn't know if I'd see them again but it was good. It was a familiarity. . [Henrietta]

In Chapter Three I described the women's need for 'real expression' and concern about losing a part of their personality through restrictions in how they communicate. In real expression, slang and other vocal utterances are understood. Both 'posturing' and being 'real' are seen as a kind of performance. What is considered posturing could be considered as 'establishing' oneself by activating cultural capital. Alternatively the same behavior can be viewed by another as classist, exclusionary or even a rejection of one's racial/ethnic identity. What is considered being real, could be viewed as a prideful maintenance of one's roots and ethnic, class identity regardless of the surrounding. Alternately, the same behavior can be viewed as playing into identity politics and stereotypes. It appears that interpretation varies with the beholder.

Black Women – Black Men

When a black American woman encounters a black American man in Sweden, two distinct responses are engendered. She either immediately approaches or avoids him. Although not representative, most of my informants knew few if any black American men and vice versa based on interviews I conducted with a couple of black American men. The men are exclusively married to or partnered with a Swedish (or other European) woman, and the women are partnered with Swedish (or other European) men. As such they tend to seek friendship among their own gender. So almost all reported encounters between women and men were chance meetings in public. One response is to approach a man who appears to be a black American. She may do this simply in an effort

to be friendly, to acknowledge him and perhaps have him acknowledge her. This kind of interaction provides her with a small sense of being back in the US, a bit of home.

> One day I was out shopping and I saw a man and I went over to him and said, "You look distinctly African-American. And he was. He'd lived here for many years. And he said, "After all these years I still have it!" I said, "Yes you do". [Patricia]

The 'it' in question may serve for interesting speculation. Alternatively, a woman may wish to approach a man she believes is a black American but is hesitant about how it might be perceived. Sofie gave me a personal illustration of the gendered dynamics of introductions among Black Americans in Sweden. Several times she has seen a black American basketball player with his Swedish girlfriend around the small town where she lives. However, she has yet to work up the nerve to approach him, especially in the presence of his girlfriend. The uneasiness comes from the fact that Black American men, because of media images, are very desirable among Swedish women. So a female approaching one of these men would likely be construed as some form of proposition. Delilah, for a similar reason, has routinely avoided black men that she has encountered in Sweden.

> **Delilah:** [W]hen I see another black person that's male... (unintel) I get nervous. Cause they look at me you know and I'm like [imitates a sharp intake of breath and look of panic], and (chuckles) 'here they come' and I wanna run away. I don't know why they make me nervous. Coming from America, c'mon, nothing should make me nervous, but...I don't know. (laughs) It's just scary. (laughs) Single black lady walking around… and a black man…
>
> **DT:** "She's mine!" (laughs)
>
> **Delilah**: (laughs) I know! (laughs) "There's one!" (laughs)

Unstated perceptions and assumptions of attraction exist when it comes to black American male and female encounters even when in reality, it may not. Regardless, this kind of attention is not always welcome and can not only be avoided indirectly through escape as I showed with Delilah, but also can be avoided directly through rejection. Lisa

describes meeting a black American co-worker whom she had only seen around her building but with whom she had never interacted.

> **Lisa:** We have a pub every once and a while at work. And he came to this pub. And Isak, he's always like…He likes to point out black people to me. (chuckles) And he's like, "Look there's a guy over there." And I'm like, "Ok, thanks honey." (chuckles) And I went over there and I'm talking to this guy and I said, "Hi I'm Lisa, blah blah blah" and the guy was like, "I have a girlfriend." (laughs) I was like, "I have a husband!"
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Lisa:** [I told him] "I just came over to say hi." I mean, I could tell the vibe that I was getting from him was like…you know… And [I] was asking him all this stuff and he's like 'I'm not…'… he wasn't into all this color stuff you know… He came to Sweden to escape that…the race stuff that goes on in the US. I don't know what he was talking about…
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Lisa:** I was just like, 'Ok whatever'. I told Isak. I was like, "I went over there to say Hi and he thinks I'm all hitting on him". I don't know, I guess it was just like [he was thinking] 'Oh I'm black, she must think (I'll be interested)'. It's really funny because I'll see him at least once or twice a week and he won't speak to me unless I speak to him. It's weird.
>
> **Nikki:** How many years has this been going on?
>
> **Lisa:** Oh he's been here for a couple of years. But he doesn't…I don't think he sees himself as…or he doesn't want to be seen as… He's not into all that black stuff…whatever that is.
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Nikki:** I don't know what that means!
>
> **Lisa:** I don't know either. He looks as black as I do so…
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Lisa:** I mean he can't be trying to pass or whatever
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Lisa:** Yeah, but I've met some people like that here…

Lisa approached him, but was not greeted with acknowledgement, only with rejection. This type of rejection is part of what made Sofie apprehensive about approaching the basketball player in her town. Rejections by other black Americans appear to cut particularly deep. However they learn that not all black Americans want to get to know each other and even if they do get to know one another, any relationship may likely not

develop into a “deep friendship”.

(Other) Immigrants

As I mentioned in Chapter Two, Americans are not widely considered by Swedes to be *invandrare* [immigrants]. They and other English speaking westerners (Brits, Australians, etc.) are considered guests. One learns that there are multiple categories of incomers to the land. There are other immigrants that are not considered to be “guests”. They are “othered” immigrants. How these individuals are placed and jockey to position themselves in the Swedish social field is full of its own complexities. Having friends and acquaintances “from all over” the world was a point of pride among my informants. It represented newfound urbanity and their freedom from American identity politics and social structure which made it difficult for them and for most Americans to interact with an international set in the US. Their friends “from all over” were English speaking people from England, Australia and many other world regions. While they revel in this freedom they also realize the limits to their international network. Most of these friends are other “guests”. Few of them have friendships with those who arrived as refugees, as will be discussed. As women of color from the United States who arrived in Sweden they are conscious and aware of the difficulties that the refugees face in Sweden.

> We have a new neighbor and they have one Swedish flag flying on the front of their (town) house and one on the back. When I came here I had never seen so many flags on houses. I asked my husband. I said, why are there all these flags? When I came in 1999, out of ten houses in my neighborhood, maybe five had flags flying, even the apartment buildings on the balconies. And even today depending on the part of town you visit, you’ll see them everywhere. My husband says well, this is a way of saying to foreigners and immigrants ‘we don’t want you here’. These are the very nationalist Swedes and this is the way they tell immigrants, we don’t want you here. I mean who wants to live with that forever? I mean this has been on the news. This is not a secret of what they mean by this.

> I've said to my husband, "I think all these goddamn refugees…", and this all started because of the refugees coming, "should put Swedish flags out". There should be Swedish flags everywhere! Oh, can you imagine being a refugee? I can go home, but these people can't go anywhere. And even though I can go home; it still annoys me when I see this type of thing. That guy has been in the neighborhood for three weeks. I've been there for five years. Now, Swedes also put flags out for birthdays and anniversaries and new births…but eventually the flag comes down. On the Swedish national day my husband and I have a flag that's as big as this table, huge. So my husband makes a point of putting it up then. But I can leave this all behind and go back home if I want to. These poor refugees can't. [Patricia]

The irony of this act is that it is doubtful that refugees have enough contact with Swedes to even recognize these supposed subtle acts of exclusion. Patricia expresses empathy for the plight of refugees. She interjects her own experience with a flag-flying new neighbor who has only "been in the neighborhood for three weeks" versus her "five years". Her length of residence in the neighborhood hood she mentions as form of capital/status, in essence, questioning his right to fly Swedish flags in the neighborhood, *her* neighborhood, after just arriving. She wants to know, who is he flying the flag for? Treatment and rejection of refugees hits close to home for her since she has also experienced rejection on racial grounds from her neighbors. She is conscious and aware of her liminal state as an, at times, 'othered' immigrant, albeit an American one. "I can leave this all behind and go back home if I want to" she repeats, seemingly to mark her options through financial power and reaffirm her difference from "these poor refugees". Yet she suggests that they unify and defiantly fly Swedish flags themselves, just as she and her husband do, in an attempt to neutralize the symbolic exclusion and simultaneously claim their own space in the Swedish landscape.

African/Black Immigrants

Black American women are conscious of their interactions or lack thereof with other immigrants (as immigrants themselves) and with 'othered' immigrants, as people of color. They have quickly learned that Black immigrants have low power or status in

Swedish society. Africans themselves are aware of this status structure in Sweden. I personally heard multiple reports of Africans trying to "pass" as black Americans to get better treatment from Swedes. Immigrants, particularly 'othered' immigrants, face housing discrimination, job discrimination from Swedes, and occasional bad treatment. Housing segregation in Stockholm visually manifests itself as well-known 'immigrant' areas of the city such as in the suburbs, outside the city center. Inside the city center, few people of color are seen on a daily basis except small numbers of tourists. Swedes and immigrants can live in two separate worlds separated only by a few *tunnelbana* [subway] stops. To my informants, most Swedes appear quite content to avoid contact with immigrants and refugees. Patricia has noticed 'white flight' or as she puts it, "subtle changes in occupancy" in her (and her Swedish husband's) neighborhood since she moved there several years ago. When Patricia arrived in 1999, she was the only black person on her street. By 2004, she clearly saw that her neighborhood was changing with the influx of immigrants and refugees.

> Every neighborhood here has a center shopping area, Hotoret. I've noticed in that shopping area that yes there are a larger number of black refugees, refugees from African countries. I don't really like these little shopping centers because it's not a mall. I told my husband isn't there a big shopping store here. On a couple of occasions I've seen my neighbors in the shopping area, but all of a sudden they've disappeared. Near these little shopping centers are usually apartment buildings that are occupied by people who don't have the economic means to buy a townhouse or a house. And I have watched the subtle changes in occupancy.
>
> So we started going to another shopping place because for me it was bigger and I liked it better. And when we went there, we started seeing our neighbors turn up there. My husband asked them, 'Oh this is where you guys shop now'. Every single one of them, bar none, has said that they no longer go to this little shopping center because it had changed in a way where it had become run down, etc. The point I'm trying to make is that, I'm seeing a shift. You know how when black people move in white people move out? I can see that shift happening since I've been here in my neighborhood. Because who's hanging out there? These black kids. Who's making the most noise? Who's swearing the loudest? Yeah…" [Patricia]

Patricia identifies this activity of "when black people move in white people move out" in Sweden, based on her knowledge of what is known as 'white flight' in the U.S. Her own

actions and participation in changing from shopping at the old center to the newer bigger one show her to place herself as closer to the Swedes with regards to taste. Although she makes a point of offering an explanation for herself, “it [the new center] was bigger and I liked it better”, she feels that there is no adequate excuse for her white Swedish neighbors who did the same thing. In doing so, she emphasizes that her change in activity was from a point of preference, while her neighbors’ change was from a point of avoidance, particularly of the noisy “black kids” hanging out there. Such experiences represent the duplicity or ‘double consciousness’ inherent in Black American women’s sense-making of the Swedish field.

Immigrants and refugees tend to live in tightly clustered neighborhoods seemingly separated from Swedish society. It reminded many of my informants of the segregation that black Americans experience(d) in the US. While some believe the separation is a result of cultural differences and are careful to blame no one, others blame residential segregation in Sweden on flawed immigration/integration policies, economic inequality (stemming largely from discrimination in the marketplace), Swedish attitudes of reserve, and in some cases hostility towards foreigners, which in turn prevents immigrants and Swedes from getting to know each other. Virtually all of the women with whom I spoke admitted that they live in predominantly Swedish residential areas and have met few immigrants and refugees.

One of the few places most of the women reported meeting other immigrants was in government required Swedish language and culture classes for immigrants -- SFI (*Svenska för Invandrare* / Swedish for Immigrants) or other similar institutions. Interacting with immigrants and refugees, particularly those from Africa proved to be

unexpected and even difficult, especially in the early days. Henrietta was particularly vocal about her encounters with Africans and other immigrants, and how differences, some interpersonal, some cultural took her by surprise.

> Now, my friends are Swedes and Africans, from Finland… My friend from Ethiopia lived here and there [in the US]. So I have a pretty good blend. I appreciate all of them, as well as the Swedish friends. To me that's a big thing, a good thing, to have the support of the people. I mean, here with Africans, there's this thing, and it was a shock to me… [Africans would ask me], 'Why are you talking to Swedes?' [I'm thinking] what do you mean why am I talking to Swedes? I'm in Sweden. Why wouldn't you talk to Swedes if you're in Sweden?!
>
> I didn't know the guy's name. This was in Comvux actually. He was from south Somalia and he was in my social studies class. We were sitting around talking and I think I mentioned the name of somebody, a friend of mine, and he asked me what nationality he was. I said Swedish. He said, "Swedish? You talking to Swedes?" I'm like, "Why not?" He said, "But you should associate with your own people." I said, "They *are* my people." I'm in their land. They gotta be my people. (chuckles) [Henrietta]

Having Swedish friends or as Henrietta puts it, "the support of the people" was very important to her because she, like other Black American women have a strong desire to get into the culture, to learn about the people and become integrated. She couldn't understand this Somali's reaction that she should not interact with Swedes. It is unclear what he meant by "your own people" – whether it was other black Americans, or other Americans in general, or others of African descent. Although she did not question him about that, her response that Swedes are her people if she is in their land, highlights the difference in perspective that Henrietta and the young Somali man were bringing to the conversation. Henrietta is a black woman from the US, a predominantly white nation who is in Sweden by choice, whereas the Somali is from Somalia a place where he has likely never had, as Gabriele described it, 'to bend' and adapt to living in a society where he does not represent the majority. Although this particular man obviously does not necessarily represent all Somalis in Sweden in his views, these isolated and individual encounters do strongly shape the women's opinions of Africans in Sweden in general and

their perceived ability to relate to them. Henrietta described a particularly frustrating encounter:

> **Henrietta**: What I got from him after talking with him a lot… I mean I still consider him a friend. I just don't agree with his societal standards, which was more so [that] everything must conform to something else, meaning he would rather have separate laws for foreigners in Sweden that the foreigners could follow, because it's too hard to follow Swedish laws. I said, "You need to go home!" (laughs) Law is law! I wanted to shake his head! What are you talking about?! (chuckles) [He would say], "No. There should be separate laws…" And there would be people who actually agreed with him.
>
> **DT:** What kind of laws?
>
> **Henrietta:** I didn't want to hear the laws! (chuckles) The fact that he stated this in the class was like … I just looked at him… I felt if I just had a slingshot or something I would just pop him. And then he's continuing and saying how we non-Swedes are trying to make a life for ourselves here blah blah blah and things are just as bad there or here. So then a couple of people who are Swedes jump in and I guess some of them took it kind of personally. And they [unintell]… situations like in Fitija or Norsborg and Holleby and those places. One of the girls said, "Wait a minute. I've been living there twenty years before I moved out and it was fine. What happened to it now?" [unintell] She said, "I lived there before. I don't have a problem with it. Why is there a problem now?" [Other people in class say] because the people don't clean it. They don't do this…'
>
> [The Somali guy] asks, "Who are *the people*? Who are these people you're blaming? Is the company that owns the place or are you blaming the people who are living there now?" He was blending the whole thing now. And then people starting bringing up, 'well what about people who pee in the elevators and do this and do that?' And he actually almost had an explanation for it. And I kinda stopped him before he got it all out because he started saying, "Well people in certain countries don't have bathrooms and they're used to going out in the yard."
>
> I said, "Excuse me; if they're used to going out in the yard then they can go around a tree. This is an elevator we're talking about here." He said, "No, but you have to understand that different cultures…" I said, "When a different culture comes to another place, to another culture, they have to learn to adapt to that culture. It's just that simple. You adapt or you go back. You can't change a whole country because *you* don't want to follow the rules." So his thing was [that] 'these Swedes don't want to help you do this, they don't want to help you do that.' I said, "Then go back to south Somalia. If you had it so good there, go back." "Oh but that's not the point" he says. I said, "Ok". He said, "Well, you'll understand later in your years." I'm thinking to myself, yeah ok. I'll understand later on. (chuckles) He was younger than me. I'm pretty sure he was younger than me. As if to say, when I get older, I'll understand. (chuckles)
>
> That was such a surprise to me that there are other nationalities that think that way. [That think] that they should have their own set of laws, and reasons to not learn Swedish. I'm like if you want it that way you should just stay where you were. And then they say, 'Swedes make you do this and they want that and this. And why must we do this?' [I think it's] because you're in *their* land, in *their* territory. They get to instruct you of their rules. It just shocks me that people come here and are like 'I don't want to do this. I don't want to do that.' [Henrietta]

Shared continent of heritage and 'race' notwithstanding, Henrietta was strong in her opposition to this individual's views. She discussed with me how she wanted him and by

extension any other refugees who feel the same way as this young man, to appreciate and respect the generous free benefits that they have been given by Swedish society (housing, money, education). Part of this viewpoint may come from her identity as a Black American. Ancestors of black Americans were brought to American shores against their will and under horrible circumstances. While, they and their descendents may have and do exercise a moral right to agitate and make demands in American society in attempts to dismantle the residual structures of slavery that function to perpetuate racial disparities, refugees to Sweden were not brought there against their will. They are not entitled to different or extra rights and privileges beyond what the average Swede has. She sees that, demanding for more beyond what they have already been given as a selfish attitude. She feels that they need to learn to adapt like all immigrants in order to become integrated and thrive in Swedish or any other society.

Given the fact that refugees and other immigrants of African descent can and often do experience discrimination in Sweden, Black Americans expect that they can relate to that struggle. They can empathize and imagine some sort of community with African immigrants and refugees in the same way that there is a unify-able black community in the States, but that is often not the case. A large majority of the women often do not operate in social circles that will bring them into contact with many African immigrants and refugees. Should they even encounter other immigrants, it does not mean that they will automatically establish friendships or even be able to relate to them.

> In my opinion, if you've met a Swede, in the States, or somewhere else in the world and you ended up here, they way our system at home works, you had to have come from a particular social situation that would have put you in contact with something like that. .. So, socially they're already starting on a different foot. And they probably have more in common with the [Organization] and the women in there who are white, you know upper middle class than they do with any other black person on the street here. It's true. And they have to be able to understand that sort of thing, to be willing to look at it like it is. That could be a hard pill to swallow perhaps.

[Gabriele]

Indeed my informants have spent time reflecting on this issue. They realize that they do not have set of friends that are as diverse as they would like. It was disappointing to them that more and better relationships had not yet been established with Africans in paerticular.

> But you know ironically, I have a lot of Swedish friends and a lot of American friends but I don't have any African friends for example. And there are quite a few Africans here in Sweden. You know where I go get my hair done; there are always quite a few. But I don't have any African friends. In spite of the fact that we're the same skin color, we have totally different experiences that has made it more difficult for us to connect but has made it easier for me to connect to my American friends be they African-American or white American. And some of my Swedish friends…you have more in common even though you're from totally different countries. And sometimes I reflect on that and think I don't have any African friends. But just because you're the same skin color doesn't mean that it's going to be easier to connect. [Michelle]

Connections, however are not desired in all circumstances. Patricia who was so sensitive about feeling that other Americans did not want to associate with her because of class and race related issues, found herself in a position of rejecting others of color who were less fortunate than herself.

> When I first came to Sweden and had to go through the immigration control because now that you're living here you have to go to make sure that your status as an immigrant…that it's kept legal all the time. So I walked into this place and I felt…. I said to my husband 'I don't ever what to come back here'. Is there anyway to do this by mail? Because it was just full of immigrants and refugees. It was full of non-white people. I guess it would be like any immigration place in the States but you're not going into any of these places in the States. But here… I said to my husband. I don't like the feeling of asking to be let in. Because that's what it is. But it's a process that you have to go through. [Patricia]

Again, this shows the duplicitous nature of being Black and American in Sweden. This shows her understanding of the field. Perhaps it was the visual representation of non-white people petitioning for entrance into a white nation that made her uncomfortable about waiting her turn in that environment. Perhaps it reminded her of own identity as a non-white American. Patricia did not like the feeling of being judged and evaluated for acceptance into the nation. She did not want to be seen or placed as an African refugee.

She sought to distance herself physically in an attempt to distance herself hierarchically or belonging-wise from the immigrants and refugees there with regards to Swedish acceptance.

Delilah, who lives in a small town in northern Sweden, found that her first and only African friend found her. Lawrence had already lived there for years virtually as the towns only black resident until Delilah and Margaret arrived; and later on refugees (including East Africans) began to be placed there by the government.

> It was funny. I was with my boyfriend and I'm walking in a store, food shopping and there is this black guy who keeps looking at me and (makes face) grinning. (chuckles) And I keep looking at him and I'm like (to boyfriend) "Do you know him?" My boyfriend said "No." So I said, "What is his problem?" He (Lawrence) comes up to me and he grabs my hand and he goes (imitates accent) "Hello! I'm Lawrence! Hahahaha!" And he was just so happy and forward. I thought he was nuts. I was like OK "Hi". And I wouldn't speak to him. But after…I just started seeing him more and more and realized he was normal (laughter) Yeah. He had been here a long time and he said that he was just so happy to see someone else black that he didn't know what to do. That's why he was so crazy. Yeah I was like 'Ohh'. (chuckles) [Delilah]

Although they later became good friends, Delilah's first meeting with Lawrence was quite uncommon. However given the small and isolated nature of the town, it was not surprising.

Many of the Black American women lamented the lack of Black solidarity in Sweden among all people of African descent. Despite the desire to be free of American identity politics that makes black association compulsory, they do long for the benefits of solidarity. Henrietta is a large woman in her late 30s with dark skin and a warm smile. She talked about her relief and optimism when she saw black people after moving to a new neighborhood in Sweden and how her attempts to establish friendships based on those shared roots led to disappointment.

> Actually when I came here, my defense mechanism came down a little bit too soon actually. When we first moved into where we are now, I was like, 'Whew!' [because now] I saw black people. You know how you go away and you see other black people and you say hello. Well, that wasn't happening. I'd walk and I'd see some black people and I'd say, "Hej." And they'd just look at me, and turn around and look and look. I had Africans who would walk by me and not even say

> anything. They'd stare and walk-off. I was in Fittija where I live and I was walking to the store and there was this man who was walking in the opposite direction. We were headed toward each other. He was staring at me the whole time. So usually if someone staring at me that long you know [each person would] say hello, nod, smile or something. I don't care [which one]! You'll never see me again, [so] it doesn't matter. He stared and stared. I said "Hello". He just kept staring and walked by. And I didn't just get that from him. I got that from the [African] women as well. [They] just kept staring at me. I was like, 'Forget y'all'. (chuckles) I just didn't talk to them. If you don't want to talk to me, I don't care. Yeah so, with the black people that are here, the defense mechanism for me became that I didn't talk to them anymore. I didn't. I didn't care if they walked past. I didn't care anymore, almost to the point where it stopped me from making friends that actually wanted to communicate with me. Fortunately that didn't happen but …
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> So when I started school, unfortunately I still had that picture so, fortunately there was a woman in my class, who now is a good friend, who was from Africa. She didn't talk to me because she was shy. And I wasn't talking to her because I wasn't sure if I should extend myself to her or not. And she wasn't talking to me so I was like 'Ok [fine]'. And it wasn't until a few months in that we started to talk. And I told her what had happened to me and why I wasn't talking. She told me 'oh, I'm so sorry. I wasn't talking because I was just so shy….' And she's from Ghana. And I asked her [about what had happened to me]. And she said 'you know, they may have been trying to figure out what tribe you're from.' I said excuse me?' She said 'Yep. They do that. They try to figure out what tribe you're from. And they can't tell. So they just look at you and stare at you.' (chuckles) What tribe you're from! (chuckles) [Henrietta]

The defense mechanism she mentions is a behavior pattern that serves to protect her from judgment, rejection and exclusion from others. She put forth a shared black identity, shared African heritage, through her appearance while trying to engage them. She assumed that she would receive a positive response, but was instead 'greeted' with stares and silence. Despite the fact that when she tried to connect with different Africans she used her shared African appearance as a black woman, when she was informed that those who stared at her were trying to identify her tribe, she found the thought absurd and humorous. Again is displayed the duplicity of wanting to be seen as black and yet not wanting to while in other circumstances wanting to be seen as black but not necessarily wanting to be seen as African. Informants interactions with Africans or attempts to can highlight the complexity inherent in their negotiations of being black and American.

Black Americans are somewhat concerned and disappointed that black immigrants have not created and utilized mechanisms of solidarity and political mobilization in the way that black Americans have in the US. These outlets afford rights and protection. As

one informant commented to me, a black person can be assaulted or beaten in Sweden and there is no outcry. People of color, especially black immigrants in Sweden are divided among their own ethnic lines/national groupings. Although efforts have increased in recent years to remedy this, the population remains splintered. The feeling among Black American women is that there is racism in the U.S. but black Americans have knowledge of their collective history that allows them to develop and utilize a collective resistance to it. They reference the fact Black Americans have their own media outlets, political influence, and influence in popular culture and public opinion etc. The women wished their fellow black immigrants in Sweden well and hoped that they would unify, gain collective political mobilization and improve their situation.

Few of my informants thoughtfully desired some sense of community with other black immigrants. Sofie has African friends although at times it has made her realize how much she misses contact with black Americans. A few other women with African friends also commented on the effort they had to make to not try to substitute them for black Americans. This would not often happen because of obvious cultural differences.

> I have friends here in Stockholm of all backgrounds.-- white, black, Swedish, not Swedish…--. So with my African friends, there are some things that are familiar, but there are some things that are very different. So I feel like I've kind of been searching for a kind of black community. And I don't mean search for in any hard way. But there is something missing by living here... So I've tried to patch together a little [black community] with lots of people... But as far as like an African-American community, no. There's no one who I could even try to make collard greens with or would know… and I miss that. [Sofie]

Africans, she discovered, have a more idealized view of the U.S., whereas with Black Americans she found that she could share a more critical understanding of the U.S. in discussions about US related topics. Although she wanted to establish friendships with other black Americans, she consciously stressed importance of having shared, age and class backgrounds. She recognizes that among black Americans there is great diversity of

class, education, looks, personality, outlook etc., yet she still longs for a black American connection. In other words, a simple meeting of black Americans does not guarantee friendship, thus reinforcing the argument that connections between black American women and others are forged selectively.

Although Sofie identified certain "meeting points" that she shared with her African friends, such as sharing an immigrant identity, she recognizes that there are limits to her ability to connect with them mainly with reference to language, looks and cultural differences. She is frustrated that despite all attempts that she could possibly make, that there are going to be cultural gaps across which they simply cannot meet. This may take the form of major rules about the rights of women and gender equality, or religion, etc., or it may appear in the form of something simple and symbolic.

> There's this Gray's American store in Uppsala. I remember for Halloween I was like, oh candy corn! They had it in the window and I hadn't had candy corn is so long. So that will be a little practice that feels like… you know… consuming candy corn. And sitting in…I was trying to tell Ahmadou [Senegalese friend] this is special candy for this time of year for Halloween and we eat this and that can feel good, but [I feel] sad that there's not someone who understands the meaning of candy corn. [Sofie]

Black American women, for the most part, have very little contact with African immigrants due to their living in different circles, with regards to culture and class. Even among women who have bridged that gap and established relationships with Africans, they are made aware of the richness but also the limitations of understanding that can transpire between them.

Non-African Immigrants

My informants reported learning early that Swedes not only differentiate between themselves and immigrants but they also differentiate among immigrants with regards to treatment and acceptance.

> I think there has been much more against Middle Eastern people and so on than black people, and especially black Americans definitely not from what I've experienced. …I had an experience with a friend that was of Middle Eastern ancestry. And we're together and they…she had these things against her while to me they were like 'oh you're American!' So it was a strange thing. So they separate even the dark people in terms of what kind of prejudice or so that's there. [Emma]

Black Americans, once their nationality is known, do enjoy certain 'privileges' that refugees and some other immigrants do not. For example, as I discussed earlier (cf. Chapter Three), they can receive much warmer and friendlier social interactions. They have more comfortable and stable financial situations and the choice to leave Sweden at any time. Moreover, as English speakers they can communicate with Swedes and function in society until they learn Swedish. And again, they have a connection to the US and the feeling of familiarity (on behalf of Swedes) that comes with it. Basically, they enjoy a higher social position than refugees and most immigrants.

Ghassan Hage (1998) utilizes Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital in his examination of migration, racism and belonging and in Australia. Deconstructing and replacing the insider/outsider dichotomy of belonging as oversimplistic and unhelpful, Hage believes that nationality is best thought of in terms of "more" and "less". Depicting the national hierarchy of belonging as a field of concentric circles, he posits that the powerful inner most circle is occupied by authentic white Australians while each subsequent ring is made up of those who are increasingly less national, less powerful and lower in status. The outsiders are not only rejected from being considered real Australians, they have to competitively place and position themselves as closely to the center as they can. They do this by individually and collectively activating various forms of embodied cultural and acquired national capital. I suggest here that a subtle contest for belonging using cultural and national capital exists in Sweden and I show how it is experienced by some black American women.

The women observed that Swedes have strict criteria regarding who is allowed to be identified as a Swede. Whereas in the U.S., Americans have a recognized history that they can link to regardless of class or skin color with everyone having a part of that narrative, in Sweden, it appear that this may not be the case. Swedes have a clear line; one is either Swedish (by blood) or not. Within the category of non-Swedes, immigrants jockey for a position closer to the Swedish center. Most immigrants to Sweden endeavor to acquire national capital (language fluency, length of residence, intermarriage, knowledge of and participation in Swedish cultural practices) and thus belonging. In doing so, they identify themselves as more national than some immigrants and less national than others. They may also be recognized by others in a similar way (Hage 1998, 52). The concept of capital is useful here to make sense of how immigrants utilize their backgrounds, whether it be white skin, western upbringing, education, etc. along with any skills they have acquired in the new field to gain a position closer to the center of the hierarchy and correspondingly more acceptance, less discrimination and better treatment. With increased status and positioning comes the ability to look down on others. This displays how those in power, in the dominant inner circle set the rules to determine who is Swedish, who is accepted, on what criteria, and to what extent.

Refugees and immigrants from Middle Eastern nations arguably have the lowest status of any group in Sweden, rivaled only by Africans. Black American women described having surprising incidences of immigrants from the Middle East trying to ‘one up’ them or displaying superior or condescending behavior. A few women reported experiencing more negative encounters with other (non-African) immigrants than with Swedes. This behavior was never encountered from an African or other black person.

Although occupying arguably the lowest status in Sweden due to religious and other cultural differences, refugees from the Middle East appear to contest their position vis-à-vis black African refugees, the ultimate racial other. It appears that immigrants themselves either subscribe to this hierarchy or have one of their own that they bring. Henrietta recounted an unsettling experience where she felt judged and rejected by other immigrants.

> There are points where you know there is something being said about you. You just can't understand what the person is saying. I was coming back from the bar or something and there were these women that are always outside. You know how you always have these women that are always sitting outside because they're always gossiping about everything. Anyway, I was outside and they were washing clothes. Everyday they're there washing clothes. (chuckles) And in my mind I'm thinking, you always see the same people every single day. You should say hello. My thoughts. So time went by. I'd say hello. And they'd just stare like I had cussed their children. And so again, I tried it again. And they're lookin' and lookin' and lookin'.
>
> And finally Erik, my husband came out with me as we were going out. And this is also when I wasn't really great with Swedish. And they were talking broken Swedish. And he heard them because he wasn't even walking with me. He was a little ways behind [me]. And they didn't know he was with me. Whatever they said or tried to say in Swedish…I didn't understand it, but he stopped. He asked them, "Do you have a problem?" And they were like, "Oh you're with her." He was like, "Do you have a problem?" He was explaining to them, "Everyday she [Henrietta] says hello to you and all you can do is talk about her." And they were like, "Oh we're sorry. We're sorry." You know, one of those 'Oh we didn't know she was with you' things. And so after that they were like "Hej Hej" to me. No, I don't need your hello now. (chuckles) They were from Lebanon, I found out later on. [Henrietta]

Perhaps the two Lebanese women were both were saying negative things about her in Swedish in an attempt to gain status, or to feel some sense of raised status within themselves, by using her as the ultimate racial other. The two women may have been showing some shared distaste in an attempt to have the power to decide who belonged or who was acceptable and who was not in that space. Furthermore they said these things within clear earshot of a passing Swede, who happened to be Henrietta's husband. Henrietta's husband's confrontation of the two women placed them as outsiders and deflated any sense of elevated status they may have felt by reminding them of who has the final authority to determine acceptance. He was also the one to tell Henrietta that the

women were speaking broken Swedish, thus placing them as non-Swedish and thus in no position to judge her. Those who neither black nor white in skin color can use the blackness of the African to emphasize their non-Blackness and thus racial proximity to Swedes. Henrietta, as well as the other women who experienced similar encounters were of the attitude, 'Who are *they* to criticize *me*? They are not Swedish. They are immigrants too'. Black American women were invariably perturbed by this kind of behavior precisely because the people committing it were not Swedes. They questioned the right of the other immigrants to treat them in that manner. They feel that Sweden is supposed to be a neutral ground when it comes to fellow immigrants interacting with each other. Said Henrietta, "Yeah, and I was actually surprised at that. I'm like, why are *you* giving me grief? This isn't supposed to happen. People from *the land* should be giving me the grief, not other people from other places! But that's how it was." The sentiment is that although they may not like or agree with it, they in some way expect to, as Henrietta stated it, get 'grief' from Swedes, since this is "their country" and they have a right to like or not like what they choose about immigrants. Even if they are themselves the recipients of criticism, native Swedes, they believe, have the right to make that criticism but not other immigrants.

The use of language as capital to gain status became a repeated theme in my conversations with my informants. While Swedish friends, in-laws and acquaintances often offered encouragement when the women fumbled while learning Swedish, in more public venues however, the women did experience negative encounters with Swedes (cf. Chapter Three). While undesired and maybe even unexpected, the women did not believe that type of negative behavior to be totally unwarranted given that they were in Sweden

and as such, Swedes are the standard bearers. What they did find surprising and unwarranted was criticism from other immigrants about how they spoke the language. Michelle commented that the people who reacted negatively more often to her "broken Swedish" in her attempts to learn the language were not Swedes but "other foreigners".

> Ironically the people who reacted mostly to my broken Swedish were other foreigners. They were less positive about it. I don't know why. I suspect…I have a feeling that it was a situation where they perhaps had been belittled for their accented Swedish and maybe they had an opportunity to belittle someone else? I don't know, but that's the vibe that I felt when I would try to speak Swedish when I would go to certain cab drivers or when I would go to Hötoret [market square in Stockholm] for example. So that was the worst part. [Michelle]

More than once I also encountered similar behavior from individuals of apparent Middle Eastern background while in shops or stands that they were running. By contrast I do not recall ever having a white Swedish person correct my Swedish. For instance, my first encounter was very soon after my arrival in Stockholm. I was in a small convenience store down the street from by apartment looking for international calling cards. After I made my request, the man behind the counter of apparent Middle Eastern origin, himself with an accent that even I could easily detect, chuckled at my pronunciation and even repeated what I had said to mock and draw attention to it before pronouncing it the correct 'Swedish' way. As Hage (1998, 52) points out "people interested in 'enhancing their national profile' are constantly converting some cultural achievements they have acquired or a personal characteristic they possess to make claims of being more of a national than, or at least as national as, others". They make these claims by highlighting their length of stay and /or their ability to speak the national language, perhaps like the woman of Asian background on the #77 bus with me (cf. Chapter Three). In Sweden, they activate these as forms of national (Swedish) capital that make them more national than others who do not possess these forms of capital.

> A visiting friend of mine [a retired black American woman who used to live in Sweden] and I went shopping for fruit at an outdoor stand here in Täby. Although we both know Swedish, we spoke English to each other while awaiting our turn. Noting this, the immigrant fruit merchant addressed us in broken English, and we replied in English to make him happy. Some weeks later when I went to the same stand alone, I ordered my fruit and vegetables in Swedish. "My, my!" he said loudly enough for others in the queue to hear. "You've been here long enough now to learn a few words in Swedish!" I couldn't resist. I replied, "Thank you! After thirty years' residence in this country I guess I HAVE had time to learn how to order fruit and vegetables in Swedish." Muffled chuckles were heard from the folks in the queue. He flushed and apologized profusely. [Odele]

Individuals participating in this contest for status and elevation in belonging invariably stress more value of certain capital that they happen to possess as being more important markers of evaluation (Hage 1998, 53). In this illustration, the merchant spoke loudly so that the others, presumably white Swedes could hear that he was praising someone else for learning Swedish in the presumed short amount of time that she had been there. By doing so he attempts to mark her as the true immigrant and by contrast, counter-position himself as more Swedish.

> Bourdieu …acknowledges… speakers' awareness of the differential social valuing of languages, genres, and styles of speaking, and he emphasizes the habitual, out of awareness assessments one makes before an during conversation: judgments of the linguistic forms that are likely to be valued, one's command over those linguistic resources, and of the social privilege (or lack thereof) that a person of one's relative position has to employ such resources. The assessment reveals itself in the way speech is marked, leading the speaker to strained, self-conscious, "correct" speech or to effortless, unselfconscious speech; to comfort or to discomfort to voice or to silence. (Holland et al. 2001, 128)

Odele's deft wielding of the Swedish language de-railed his attempt to 'one-up' her in public. She trumped his acquired national capital with her own – fluency and having lived in Sweden for over thirty years which was apparently much longer than the merchant had been in Sweden.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored how Black American women perceive their interactions with white Americans, each other and African and Middle Eastern

immigrants. They have found that establishing friendships with white Americans, particularly in the context of club settings can, at times, be simultaneously less complex yet just as problematic. Many black American women perceive experiencing acts of subordination within the organization. This sense of subordination was maintained through perceived acts of rudeness, or insensitivity or rejection because of race and class issues. I posit that they are describing that they are operating in an American field while in Sweden. Black American women respond in three main ways to this environment, by activating cultural capital to gain better treatment, by reducing participation and adopting a selective membership, or by leaving the organization altogether. I suggest that if this American organization may be thought of as a manifestation of the American social field, those who leave the organization can avoid the 'America' in Sweden in a way that they cannot in the States. Black American women seem to use cultural capital strategically to create or reinforce a sense of American community and belonging. And in turn, selective membership may reflect a kind of selective belonging (cf. Chapter Six). The struggles of club participation and perceptions of exclusion among Black American women appear to be reflective of the inner conflict of American belonging.

I showed how when Black American women arrive in Sweden oftentimes there is a longing to meet other Black Americans. Sometimes it is immediate, sometimes it evolves over a period of years and sometimes a longing may never develop. Once they find each other, Black American women don't always approach each other in the same way. In fact, they appear to be cognizant of meeting each other at least two ways: among Swedes and among Americans. I described how although Black American women routinely and openly pass along contact information to each other when amongst themselves or

amongst Swedes, they, by contrast, are not only conscious of their interactions with white Americans, but they also appear to be conscious of their interactions with each other in the presence of white Americans. When they are together, although they may not be best friends, they can express themselves as black Americans and they do find ways to experience a bit of "home" (a manifestation of the black American social field). While none of them thought that a black American 'C'ommunity existed in Sweden, the women do have some limited sense of 'c'ommunity with one another in the sense that there are small informal networks that they have which connect them.

As women of color from the United States who arrived in Sweden they are conscious and aware of the difficulties that the refugees face in Sweden. Black American women are conscious of their interactions or lack thereof with African immigrants. A large majority of the women were aware of and saddened by the fact that they do not operate in social circles that will bring them into contact with many Africans. I showed how the few women with African friends realized how much they miss contact with black Americans. A few other women with African friends also commented on the effort they had to make to not try to substitute them for black Americans. Any effort to do so, however, never went far because of obvious cultural differences, that they knew could never be resolved. Refugees and immigrants from Middle Eastern nations arguably have the lowest status of any group in Sweden rivaled only by Africans. Black American women described having surprising incidences of immigrants from the Middle East trying to 'one up' them or displaying superior or condescending behavior. Finally, I discussed how Swedes have a clear line regarding belonging; one is either Swedish (by blood) or not. In the Swedish field, within the category of non-Swedes, immigrants jockey for a position closer to the

Swedish center. Most immigrants to Sweden endeavor to acquire national capital and thus belonging. In doing so, they identify themselves as more national than some immigrants and less national than others. Black American women either speak English and place themselves outside of the Swedish field of struggle over belonging and hierarchy between white Swedes and immigrants, or if they are fluent, they speak Swedish and re-position themselves above those who they perceive as attempting to position them.

CHAPTER 5 FIVE: A CONVERSATION AMONG WOMEN

Ж Ж Ж Ж Ж

This chapter is based on exerpts of a group discussion of ten Black American women that was hosted and organized by two of my informants. Some of the women knew each other, while others were meeting for the first time. They all were aware of my research and as eager to talk about their experiences as they were to hear the tales of others. This chapter leads with the conversation as the primary text, throughout which, I intercede with comments and analysis at selected points. This chapter lets the voices of the women take centerstage. This format shows the women's interaction, personalities and style, which is usually missing from scattered snippits of quotes. I did not attempt to steer the conversation in any particular direction, I simply observed and let the conversation develop organically. My aim in this chapter is to show how the women, both individually and as a group, were processing encounters that they felt were significant to their experiences as black American women in living in Sweden. I seek to understand what sense-making tools and processes they may have brought with them from the US and how these tools and processes may inform their perceptions and interpretations of such encounters.

One way that black women (or those from any oppressed group) deal with common challenges is the creation of what Patricia Hill Collins calls "safe spaces" (Patricia Hill Collins: Intersecting Oppressions n.d., 4) (Collins 2000). Safe spaces are "social spaces

where Black women speak freely" (Collins 2000, 100) without censorship, and "apart from the hegemonic..ideology" (Patricia Hill Collins: Intersecting Oppressions n.d., 5). Black women's relationships with one another, whether informally through friends and family, or more formally through churches or black women's organizations, provide such safe spaces (ibid, 5). The safe space in which this conversation by Black American women in Sweden takes place, also provides an opportunity for the women to get validation from others and to feel that they are not alone in their interpretations of previously experienced situations and encounters. Safe spaces provide opportunities for self definition and "allow black women to escape and resist what they may feel to be "objectification as the Other" (Collins 2000, 101) – in other words, the images and ideas about black women found in the larger culture (Patricia Hill Collins: Intersecting Oppressions n.d., 5).

Although "no homogeneous Black *woman's* standpoint exists" (Collins 2000, 28) "a Black *women's* collective standpoint does exist, one characterized by the tensions that accrue to different responses to common challenges" (Collins 2000, 28). Collins points out that while there are core issues that all black women can acknowledge and relate to in their own lives, individual black women may respond differently, based on different cross-cutting interests (Patricia Hill Collins: Intersecting Oppressions n.d., 5). Not only do black women have different responses unequal treatment, they also have different perceptions of whether treatment is unequal or not. These safe spaces, then, are "spaces of diversity not homogeneity" (ibid, 5).

There appeared to be two levels of discussion occurring simultaneously in the women's conversation. Based on that discovery, I make two arguments in this chapter.

First, relative to Chapter Three where I loosely drew upon on the human senses as a metaphor for the different pathways through which black American women gather information in order to make sense of their interactions with Swedes and understand their new environment, in this chapter I argue that the women, in this safe space, 'make sense' of their encounters with Swedes in the Swedish field through discussion with other Black American women, questioning, and consensus. I use 'making sense' or 'sensemaking' to refer to the act of understanding the 'whys' of an unsettling situation (e.g. inappropriate positioning and negative treatment). Sensemaking, which is about looking back and developing explanations for past events (Endsley 2004), occurs within individuals and among groups. In a group setting, sensemaking is a "collaborative process of creating shared awareness and understanding out of different individuals' perspectives and varied interests" (Klein et al 2006). I show how in this conversation the women not only support and affirm each other, but also how they question and critique each other's comments and assumptions in a positive effort to help each other make sense of the experiences they describe. In my analysis, I draw primarily from the works of Philomena Essed to demonstrate the strategies black American women in Sweden use to understand their experiences. According to Essed (1992), Black women living in predominantly white societies, have learned a systematic way of evaluating potentially racist events. When black women describe an encounter that is potentially racist or was otherwise experienced negatively, they almost always include five main components (Essed 1992, 216):

1. Context - describes, time, place, actors, situation
2. Complication – what action or statement was out of place

3. Evaluation – the significance of action, why the complication was out of place
4. Argumentation – a process to test the evaluation

   Inference – person's beliefs, expectations, based on knowledge of racial issues

   Comparison for consistency - experiences of other blacks in that situation

   Comparison for inconsistency – experience if the races were reversed

   Comparison for consensus - interpretations and evaluations from others
5. Decision – action taken in response to complication based on expections of results of a particular response

Black women evaluating a particular behavior (complication) in an everyday situation, use a general set of questions as a guide (Essed 1992, 1991) such as: a) Was the behavior acceptable? b) Are there any acceptable excuses for the behavior? c) Did the behavior occur because I am black? d) Is the specific event excusable? e) Is the event socially significant? If no definitive decision is made by this point, then additional argumentation follows. In argumentation, black women use particular 'control strategies' to further test their evaluations and to determine whether they are experiencing prejudice and discrimination in different situations (Essed 1992, 1991), such as: a) making inferences based on their own knowledge, opinions, beliefs or expectations in situations b) conducting systematic observation of the behavior of the people involved to test one's suspicions c) seeking the opinions of others about the offender d) comparing one's experiences to others and e) comparing one experience to other similar experiences experienced by the individual. The purpose of this section is not to show that these women follow Essed's outline and sequence exactly or all the time, but instead to show

how this process, developed during their upbringing in the U.S., takes place amongst black women and within them as they make sense of Sweden and the Swedish field.

Secondly, in this chapter I argue and demonstrate that at times, in these safe spaces, some women display cultural capital (possession of certain status markers and/or knowledge of certain cultural norms) amongst themselves. Patricia Hill Collins has relatedly written about the value of mentoring within the safe spaces of black women's circles (Patricia Hill Collins: Intersecting Oppressions n.d., 5). Such mentoring empowers black women "by passing on the everyday knowledge essential to survival as African-American women" (Collins 2000, 102) (Patricia Hill Collins: Intersecting Oppressions n.d., 5). In this section, I show how self definition and self-identitfication in this space is achieved through self positioning. Until this point, I have described how Black American women in Sweden have at times believed themselves to be inappropriately positioned in various social settings, and how they position themselves in response – which is forced self-positioning (cf. Chapters Three and Four). In this section I talk about how some women position themselves as a kind of mentor, while others take a different track, which are forms of 'deliberate self positioning'.

> Deliberate self-positioning occurs in every conversation where one wants to express his/her personal identity. This can be done in at least three different ways…of explaining personal behavior … by referring to one's powers and one's rights to exercise them, by referring to one's biography (what one did, saw, etc. and what happened to one) and by referring to personal experiences that one has had as legitimating certain claims, for example '*expertise*'. When a person is engaged in a deliberate self-positioning process this often will imply that they try to achieve specific goals with their act of self-positioning. … Paraphrasing Goffman's conception of 'strategic interaction', this could be called 'strategic positioning'. The stories people tell about themselves will differ according to how they want to 'present' themselves." (Langenhove and Harre 1999, 24-25) [emphasis mine]

An important aspect of this mentoring involves gaining authority, through known experience or status, in order to be able to give out advice. I suggest that this is done through overt positioning through the display of certain cultural knowledge as a form of

expertise. The women who attempt to take up these positions aim to be relational yet authoritative; to provide commiseration, yet offer advice. They aim to empower themselves and the others. They attempt to position themselves as mentors who are knowledgeable and understanding of their own situations and thus able to advise others. Meanwhile, the other women present attempt to position themselves not as naïve mentees, but instead as fairly knowledgeable about their encounters (able to make comparisons) and seeking mostly validation from their fellow black women in the space.

Lisa, a six year resident of Sweden, begins the conversation with a description of perceived discrimination. She opens the discussion by reflecting on her apparent ability to avoid potentially negative situations while she lived in the U.S. and how this capability has eluded her in Sweden.

> **Lisa:** Growing up in Houston, I can probably say, I wouldn't say never, but I'd say a few times I've experienced racism. And maybe that's because I knew what areas to go into and what areas not to go into or I could anticipate a situation and maneuver in a different direction. But I'd never had it like when I came here. Bam, in your face. It almost floored me. I was just not expecting it. There were times when I'd think, oh my god! Did they just say that, or do that? And in telling Swedish friends, they just couldn't believe it. They say, "But you grew up in the South in Texas." And I was like, ok, maybe it was because [in the US] I didn't get into those situations or I could feel the situation and if I knew that it could happen, I would try to avoid it.
>
> But here I never knew to expect it, so it was all a surprise when it happened. I remember this one time, well it happened to me twice in Uppsala, where I literally started crying, I was so upset. Once we were having people over…for dinner, and these were friends of Isak's [Lisa's Swedish husband]. I was buying the groceries and getting the food, and getting flowers. And I went to the store and I had these two big grocery bags with me and I went into this flower shop. And I put the two bags down on the counter and I start walking around to look at the flowers. And this person… And she, of course, she doesn't say hi to me or anything when I was in the store, she just looked at me. And then people came in after me and she was like 'Hej!' to them. And I'm like, ok, whatever. So the other people are looking at stuff and she comes back from around the counter and she's following me…
>
> [Others register small gasps, sounds of sympathy and indignation.]
>
> **Lisa:** …you know, *in a flower shop*. I have two huge big grocery bags that I've sat down. I mean am I really going to steal some flowers, grab my grocery bags and run out of there? And I'm like, okaay. So I started to play a game with her to see if she was really following me. I just went around to a couple of different places and she's just right behind me. And I'm like, okaaay…
>
> ["She didn't ask you if you needed some help?", someone asks.]

Lisa: No, she didn't ask me if I needed any help or anything. And if I turned around quickly, she'd start fiddling with something. And I'm like, okaay. So I get these flowers and I go up there and she doesn't come to the counter right away. She's just like 'la la la'. And I have to go 'Excuse me', you know, "Ursäckta", because I was taking my Swedish lessons, so I'm trying to speak Swedish. And I asked her in Swedish to help me, you know, "Can you help me please…?" And of course she acts like she doesn't know what I'm saying…

[Others register sympathy and 'I know what that's like' utterances.]

Lisa: …which I was just like, okaay. So in English I said [in a more matter of fact tone], "Excuuuse me. I would like to pay for these flowers. Would you please come up to the counter and ring them up?" And then she just looks at me and it was like the sky had opened up or something. And she goes, "Are you American?" And I just looked at her and I'm like, "What?" And she says, "Oh, you're speaking English. Are you American?" And I say, "Yes". And she goes, "Ohhhh, I really like the US and blah blah blah". And I'm thinking, ok, so before what was I?

[Others register support and 'I know what that's like' utterances and chuckles.]

Lisa: And I asked this guy at work, who was Ghanaian about it. And he said, "Yeah, that happens to me all the time, but I can't say I'm American" which …
You know, they see you as African first. And if you speak English or something, then they're like 'ohh you're American'. So then it's like, in their mind, you're up a level or something like that.

[Someone says, "It's pretty messed up that they treat Africans that way anyway – until you're American".]

Lisa: And so after that, I didn't speak Swedish again for a while because that happened to me so many times where I would begin speaking a little Swedish and, yes it was broken Swedish, but I was trying. And then I would speak English and I could just see a big light bulb comes up behind people…

Lisa shows her knowledge of the U.S. field by explaining that while there she could avoid certain locations, topics of discussion, situations, etc. She could anticipate a negative encounter and "maneuver in a different direction" to avoid it. However, in Sweden the stage was set differently. When negative encounters occurred in Sweden, she found herself unable to anticipate them. She was beginning to learn the Swedish field. Lisa's Swedish friends, aware that the southern region of the US has a history of racist/discriminatory activity, and seemed to suggest that she should be inured to bad treatment and should know how to immediately respond to it, but Lisa is learning that the Swedish field is not the same as the American field. The players involved are different, the rules of interaction are different.

Lisa provides the context of the encounter – the flower shop, and also the complication. The complication occured when the saleswoman ignored Lisa and did not greet her when she entered the shop. It continued when the woman proceded to follow Lisa around the store. As Lisa tells her story and offers her evaluation of what is happening - that the saleswoman thinks that Lisa may try to steal some of the flowers - the other black women in the room give sounds of recognition and understanding. The gasps and chuckles signify an understanding and agreement that an action was unaccepatable. Laughing indicates that shared, underlying sentiments and beliefs mark a particular action or statement as absurd. Laughing also serves a way of processing and moving on from what was at the time a very emotionally hurtful encounter. Soon, others begin asking questions. Lisa, while still in the shop, had already begun questioning the situation. She compared her experience with the white Swedish women that entered the shop shortly after she did. Lisa immediately points out that the saleswoman warmly greeted the Swedish women and did not follow of any of them around. For black Americans, being followed around a store by an employee is a well known act of discrimination and prejudice that exists in the States and that is seen in how the women vocally share their understanding of the situation. Still, Lisa wanted to verify that there was no other acceptable excuse for this woman's apparently unacceptable behavior (constant close physical proximity and undue vigilance). Lisa, conducting her own systematic observation, 'plays a game' with the saleswoman to see if she is really being followed. For Lisa, the last straw is broken when she is ignored again when it is time for her to pay for the flowers and her attempt to speak Swedish receives a negative response. In frustration she resorts to English and is greeted by an entirely different attitude from

the saleswoman. She learns that being American is more acceptable and preferred than 'whatever she was before' she spoke English. She asks a black Ghanaian man about it to get his opinion and compare her experiences to his. (This occurred before she had met any black Americans.) She learns from him that the change in treatment is more about being American than speaking English, because Ghanaians speak English but do not get preferential treatment because they are African and not American. Through these and other similar encounters, she learns that she has cultural capital (being American) that is of value.

> **Lisa:** And that's happened when we've gone to other parts of Europe where, whenever, I'm with Isak, they're really nice to us, but when I'm walking by myself… Like when we were in Portugal, I felt like I was in Pretty Woman, where she [Julia Roberts' character] goes into the store and they won't help her.
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Lisa:** I wanted some shoes and they wouldn't help me. I picked up a pair of shoes and went up to the girl, because no one would come to me or help me. I pick up a pair of shoes and tell her, "Can I see this in a 37?" She looks at me dead in the face, rolls her eyes and walks off.
>
> [Moans and gasps]
>
> **Lisa**: And I was like, ok maybe she doesn't understand. (chuckles)
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Lisa:** So then I said, "Excuse me, no portugesa", "I don't speak Portuguese, can I see these in a 37?" And she looks at me again, turns around and finishes what she's doing.
>
> ["No she didn't!", someone exclaims. Others gasp.]
>
> **Lisa:** And I'm like, oh my God. And [I] was thinking well maybe she doesn't know English. But there were some white American women who were in there who came in right when I was putting the shoes down and she went over and helped them and was speaking English. And then to top in off, I go to a coffee shop just outside. You know, just let me sit down and think about this and have some coffee. And I don't get waited on and I have to tell the waiter, "Excuse me. I'd like to order a coffee". And he says, "Yeah yeah ok". And then he goes inside the café, because this was outdoor seating, and he comes out and he has like an African woman or a black woman with him. [He] points to me like she should come wait on me. So then she comes over to my table and has complete attitude because I guess she's mad that he got her to come to my table to wait on me. And then she starts speaking to me in Portuguese and I'm like, "I don't understand what you're saying". And so she brings me a coffee and it's in a cup and the rim has lipstick on it…
>
> [Gasps. "No!", a few people say.]
>
> **Lisa:** And I was like, oh my God!

[Someone asks, “What year was this?”]

Lisa: This was two years ago, in Portugal, in Lisbon.

Lisa discusses her experiences in Portugal as a point of comparison to her experiences in Sweden. Although, she had negative encounters in Portugal as well, she found out that speaking English did not cushion her from bad treatment there. She evaluates that she was treated poorly because she is a black woman as opposed to, for example, a class based reason. She tried to come up with an acceptable excuse for why the woman was treating her poorly. For example, Lisa considered that perhaps the salewoman did not understand English. However, Lisa looked around and compared her own experience with the saleswoman, to the experience of two white American women who she discovered were also in the store. She observed that the saleswoman was speaking English to the other American women while she helped them. Lisa goes on to describe how in southern European countries like Spain and Greece she was treated poorly until she spoke English and the local people realized that she was American and therefore a tourist with money. But in Portugal, speaking English did not change her treatment. “They didn’t care”, she remarked about the Portuguese. Again, these accounts show that the value of capital varies by field and that those in power set the values. Lisa goes on to explain that her husband, who was in Portugal for business, described her experiences to his work associates one evening over dinner. The associates explained to them that Portugal was having immigration problems. People from former colonies in Africa now had Portuguese passports and large numbers of them were now in Portugal looking for jobs, and that concomitantly crime had increased. Lisa describes seeing areas where African men congregated to jump on trucks to work “just like the Hispanics do in the

States". She suspects her poor treatment in shops was because the shop clerks thought she was "faking it", and pretending not to be from one of the former African colonies. These accounts also display Lisa's status as a well traveled woman able to make cross-cultural comparisons about her experiences.

> **Gabriele:** That doesn't surprise me I had a similar experience in Barcelona on this so-called Birger Jarlsgatan[37] street where you buy all the high fashion stuff. And I was in there with my husband. A problem with a lot of those Latin countries is that there is a high immigration of women from Africa that are there unfortunately because of trafficking in prostitution. And so a black woman with a white man in that context is obviously a prostitute and it's very poorly seen in some situations. And it was very interesting because I don't think that the dynamic I experienced was because of my husband being with me but they were just aggravated in general that I had come into the store and that I was touching things.
>
> [Moaning, chuckling and head shaking]
>
> **Gabriele**: And the woman told me in Spanish, "Can you stop touching the clothes?"
>
> [Moaning, chuckling and head shaking]
>
> **Gabriele:** And I'm like okaaay. Ok, I'm not going to act crazy here.
>
> [Laughter]
>
> **Gabriele:** You know… I thought, there must be some misunderstanding. And then I thought, you know what, I'd just about had enough of this nonsense and I bought the dress...for her. I said my money is a lot more than what you're getting paid a month. I know what the salaries are like in Spain. (chuckles)
>
> [Someone asks, "You said that in Spanish?"]
>
> **Gabriele:** Yeah. I said, "I know what the salaries are like in Spain and I know that you probably can't buy this… this is for you." And that was probably the first time in my life that I'd actually experienced that. I'd heard about it in the States, but I'd never come across that to be honest. But when that happened, I was so aggravated that she did it publicly as well, because there were other people in the store. And I think pride wise, that aggravated me tremendously that I was publicly humiliated like that in that store and it took me by surprise. My husband was like, "Let's just go. Let's just go!" But I was like, "I have to figure out something to do. I need to have some kind of…you know I have to be redeemed from this. This is my pride you know". And he was like, "Well just give her a nasty look and let's go". And I was like, "No that's not going to be enough because I'm going to brood on it all day long".
>
> And I was like, what does this (dress) cost? I mean it was a good amount of money in that sense, but it really wasn't, because for me it was worth the… So I bought the dress and I was at the counter and I said, "This is for you. You can keep this". I got it in her size and was like, "This is for you. This is what happens when you let people touch the clothes. You could get something really nice if you'd behave yourself." And the insult was fair I thought if you don't want my money and you treat a lot of other people like that.

[37] Birger Jarlsgatan is a high-end fashion and shopping street in downtown Stockholm.

> You can sort of tell most of the immigrant population that's walking around in Barcelona for example. You don't see them very often in the daylight. At nighttime you see a lot of them on the street, but most of them are extremely well dressed if you look at them – the men in particular. They have a jacket, suit. And a lot of people say that's because if they are not somewhat well dressed, they can get a lot of harassment. They can actually be ostracized. It's the same way in Paris. Most of the Africans are known to be well dressed. So I think that for me to have been dressed very casually in the store, and touching things… I think they didn't want to encourage that element just walking in and around. I can only say that I've seen that in those places, but I haven't experienced it here in Sweden. I don't know what I would do with myself if I did. I would really be taken by surprise if I did.

In such encounters, some women strategically use their cultural competence, knowledge, behaviors, and preferences to get a favored outcome. However not all of the women do this and none of them do it in every encounter. Given their individual personalities and backgrounds, they thus activate their capital differently and more or less effectively. Gabriele's identification of the "so-called" Birger Jarlsgatan type of shop in Spain reinforces her higher status as a well-traveled and financially stable woman. She raises her status as she shares with the group her knowledge of Spain's local problems of immigration and prostitution. Like Lisa, she does consider that "there must be some misunderstanding", some reasonable excuse or alternative explanation for what was happening when the women told her not to touch the clothes and treated her poorly. "Aggravated" that the woman reproached her publicly, she felt "humiliated" and very visible as a black woman in the boutique. But after beginning to spend some moments considering the situation and going through the evaluation and argumentation process, she figured that she had had "enough of this nonsense" and decided to take action. She gains status with her reaction to the situation, not only by showing her as a fighter who stands up for herself, but also as someone very urbane. She showed her facility with languages in demonstrating her ability to understand and speak Spanish. Buying the dress for the saleswoman and speaking in her language shows her education, knowledge of Spanish society and economy, and her financial strength. Gabriele put the saleswoman in

her place by making it publicly evident that she did not embody any of the stereotypes that the saleswoman appeared to have of her. She also demonstrates cosmopolitan-like facility with cultures when she offers comparisons of the situations of Africans in Barcelona and Paris. Later on, in continuing to search for an explanation or reasonable excuse for the saleswoman's behavior, she does go on to consider that her casual dress may have spurred the treatment. She believed that the treatment that she received may have had class at its root. In other words, if she had been dressed more formally, then perhaps the saleswoman would have allowed her to touch the clothes.

> **Gabriele:** But you (Lisa) have had those sort of experiences in NK [department store] in the jewelry section.
>
> **Tess**: Yeah, what's interesting is that you'll be looking at a piece that's significantly cheaper than what you're wearing but you'll still get treated like crap. And I refuse to spend my money in the jewelry section of NK for that reason.
>
> **Carlita**[38]: I don't think it's because you're black. They treat everybody badly.
>
> **Tess**: No no no. I've watched them treat other people differently. I have. I've actually taken the time to stand back and observe and I've watched them treat other people differently. And every time that I've asked for an item to be shown to me, it's never been shown. Never. And I've done that not because I want to purchase it but just to see what will happen. I've done it on about four different visits. So I wouldn't spend my money there."
>
> **Lisa**: Do you think it's been just a matter of who's at the counter?
>
> **Tess**: No, it's been different people. I'm usually never here more that three weeks at a time. But this has opened my eyes quite a bit. I wouldn't move here. Not unless I fell in love with a Swedish man and stayed. But other than that I wouldn't stay here. And it's actually true about whether you are American or African, because I have tested both here. I've actually introduced myself sometimes as being from Cameroon and the treatment is radically different. And when I say that I'm an American, I'm treated with much more respect.
>
> **Patricia**: Your value increased.
>
> **Tess:** Yeah, my value increased. What I do, since I do a lot of training and development and I have to speak in front to Swedish employees, I make sure to tell them that I am Cameroonian. I make a point of saying that because I am very proud of my heritage. And then I've had questions like, "How come you're so light skinned?" Africans are really black and white teeth and kinky hair and da da da'. And I say hey, in Africa we have all…you find the white ones and the extremely dark ones. I just fall somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. So I've tested that and

[38] Carlita is fair skinned half Swedish, and half African-American woman in her twenties with wavy brown hair. Born and raised in Sweden, she identifies as Swedish.

> the moment I say that I'm African…actually I been told, I don't know whether innocently or they were being vicious I don't know what to make of it, but I've been told that Africans in this country (Sweden) are the criminals.
>
> [Others ask, "Really? Have you?"]
>
> **Tess:** Yes. I've been told that by a Swede.
>
> **Michelle:** Really? I actually haven't heard that. I heard that it was much more East European countries.
>
> **Tess**: Oh no. They've pegged actual African countries -- Eritreans and Ethiopians. And I've been told that some of the gangs are African. I'm an African. I grew up there until I was 19 years old and I never knew of gang activity.
>
> **Patricia**: Well it does actually exist, but to pinpoint the particular groups and blame it on black people…
>
> **Tess**: Yeah so it's horrible.

Tess is a light brown complexioned single woman in her forties, from Chicago who is frequently in Sweden because of her employment with a Swedish company in the US. Tess imparts a belief that bad treatment can be prevented by displays of financial wealth when she speaks of wearing expensive jewelry and still getting "treated like crap". Carlita offers an alternative explanation of Tess's encounter by suggesting that the jewelry salespeople "treat everybody badly". But Tess had already conducted systematic comparisons of her treatment with the treatment of others in line with the same salesperson. Lisa offers the explanation that maybe Tess just got one rude salesperson. Tess points out that this happened to her four times. She had compared different salespeople and how they treated her and compared other customers. She says that she began requesting to see some jewelry not because she wanted to buy them but just to see what would happen. Like Lisa, these encounters became a game to Tess. She has also compared her treatment by Swedes as a self-identified African vs. American and believed that she has been treated noticeably differently. She agrees with Patricia that her "value increased". In other words, she has learned that a hierarchy exists in the Swedish field

and that being American amounts to having cultural capital that affords her a higher position in the Swedish social field in a way that being Cameroonian does not. She purposely chooses to identify herself as Cameroonian in particular venues in an effort to educate Swedes and disabuse them of any stereotypes they may have about Africans. She seeks input from the other women when she describes being told by a Swede that Africans were the criminals in Sweden, in effect that Africans were unwanted troublemakers. "I don't know what to make of it" she says, regarding whether the person was being informative or mean. Not only did she appear to want to know if the statement was true, she also seemed to want to know how to categorize such a statement.

> **Patricia**: You know when I came in today I was actually telling Lisa that in October last year I was an extra on a TV sitcom here. And during one of the breaks, one of the extras, an old man, he was surely in his 60s, came over to me and says, "You remind me of my sister-in-law." And I say, "Oh really?"
>
> [Someone says, "Because she's black!"]
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Patricia**: Yeah, and he told me what African country she was from and he says, "The only difference is that her nose is like this [measures an extremely wide nose on her face].
>
> [Laughter]
>
> [Someone says, "He put his hands on your face?!"]
>
> **Patricia:** No. He didn't put his hands on my face. He's using his fingers on his face to demonstrate the size of this other woman's nose.
>
> [Someone says, "Well at least it wasn't your face."]
>
> **Patricia:** And he goes, "Her nose is like this and her lips are thicker." So he says, "Which part of Africa are you from?"
>
> [Laughter]
>
> **Patricia:** So I'm thinking this guy isn't going to get my entire history, so I say I'm from New York. "Ohhhhhh!!" he says, "Thaaat's whyy!!"
>
> [Laughter]
>
> **Patricia:** This filming went on for two days and on the second day he came back and said the same exact thing and I know he's not stupid. And the next thing they like to do is touch you. They like to touch you because black people, [they] don't get so close to black people so often. They

won't do it to the white Swedish woman or a regular Swedish woman, but the chance to [makes stroking gestures] doesn't come along so often.

[Chuckling and sounds of support]

[Someone says, "The other one I hear a lot is 'You're exotic looking'."]

Alicia: Yeah I get that.

Patricia: …[T]his is early in the evening. I'd left a woman in a business meeting. And I thought, ugh sweet Jesus God. He was working himself up to say something. So I get on the *tunnelbana* (subway). He said, "Uh, Hej?"

[Chuckling]

Patricia: I say, "Hej." He asks in Swedish if I speak Swedish. I speak the power language and the power language is English. I say, "Oh have we met?" He says, "Yes." So I say, "Pray tell where?" He says, 'We had lunch!"

[Chuckling]

Patricia: I said, "We did? Where?" He says, "We had lunch in Stureplan."
Jaså [Really? You don't say]. So I said, "What did I eat?"

[Laughter]

Patricia: He told me what I ate and then he wanted to know if we could have lunch again. I said ok, but I need to ask my husband if it's ok with him. He [the stranger] said ok.

[Chuckles]

Patricia: And I said, "Why don't you give me your card?" And he gave me his card. And he was a lawyer who works in the public sector somewhere. And I still have his card, so I must get in touch with him to let him know when would be a good time for lunch. You see I have no value. I have no value because I am black. I'm easy because I'm black. They don't approach white Swedish women with this kind of foolishness.

Alicia: Well maybe he really thought you were someone else because I was thinking that this was…

[Several women shout, "Oh come on! No! No way!"]

Alicia: …a story about all black people looking the same.

[A few women speak up, "Yeah, that what I was thinking too. Hmmm."]

Responding to Tess's comment regarding Swedish ideas about what and who looks African, Patricia discusses being placed as an African by her dark brown complexion and other physical characteristics. The man's reaction to her self placement as American appears to answer his confusion as to why her nose was not wider and lips thicker. When

the same man makes similar comments to her the very next day, Patricia knows "he's not stupid". In other words, it proved that what he said to her was not an innocent slip of the tongue. Immediately, she makes a comparison and says that a white Swedish man would never be that personal and direct with white Swedish woman about anything. Moreover, she interpreted the encounter with the stranger in the *tunnelbana* as a blantant pickup. "I'm easy because I'm black", she asserts. A few women thought it was simple misidentification (acceptable excuse), but Patricia and several other women did not and were adamant about it.

> **Michelle**: I feel your frustration. I can honestly say that I have not experienced these incidents. I don't know if it's because my head is in the clouds. I've been here for six and a half years and I think that I have a different kind of defense mechanism. Because I grew up in Rockland county, a predominantly white community, I was always like one of… I mean everybody knows the story. We have the same story probably. One of five, one of three, one of two or ...
>
> [Someone says, "The only one. Token."]
>
> [Agreement]
>
> **Michelle:** And I went to Columbia [University] with the same crap. And for some reason, I ended up with a Caucasian man I married, but I worked in the city for four and a half years for an executive search firm. I was the only Black person. It was very preppie, very Greenwich. I lived on the Upper East Side. I shopped at Barney's [a high-end fashion boutique]. And I put up with that BS there. I put up with those people there. So for me, New York was the big leagues. Stockholm is nothing. These people do not faze me. When they're like, 'Oh you work at [shop name] on Birger Jarlsgatan? Ok.' You know, I mean that kind of attitude doesn't faze me. I don't know. Maybe it is a bit counterproductive in my way of thinking or maybe some kind of defense mechanism, but I just think that the things that people try to throw at me here are education level or intellect level or whatever.
>
> I kinda feel that a lot of Swedes, the people that I meet who try to have attitude – I'm like, 'Well what have *you* done? What are *your* credentials to be behaving like this?' And they don't really have them. I mean you do have a lot of accomplished people here, don't get me wrong. For many of us –the people we're with [for example]. But I just think that people that I meet casually or that I meet at dinner parties, I'm not overly impressed. So I don't really…I don't feel intimidated or belittled because I don't let myself feel that way. Because I have a certain kind of confidence or a certain kind of mentality that I've built up from my experience living in New York, frankly. Because that's when I really had to deal with a lot of stuff and had to prove myself over and over again. And I don't feel that here at all. … With that being said, I'm absolutely not downplaying these incidents at all. I just have a different…
>
> **Patricia**: You just haven't encountered it is what I think.
>
> **Michelle**: Yeah, but…

[Someone says, "Maybe you just haven't noticed it." Some others agree.]

Lisa: (to Michelle) What about when you were in that store and you were looking at that purse? Remember you told me you were with Karina [daughter] in the *barnvagn* [baby carriage]...

Michelle: Yeah, but…

Lisa: You think that was more of a class thing?

Michelle: I don't know. I think … That's a good example. There could definitely be a racial component in it or it could be rudeness or bad manners. I chalk it up to 'you have bad manners'. I feel that especially now with the boutique[39], I know how you're supposed to treat customers, so for me I was like this person obviously didn't know how to do that. But now that I think about it, I wouldn't be surprised if there were a racial component to it for sure Lisa. But like I was saying, my first reaction isn't all [makes expression / this is racism] and that might be to my detriment because maybe I might be getting myself into certain encounters or will face something that will take me totally by surprise. But just to finish what I was going to say. I kind of feel that all of our presence, our individual presence, or my daughter and her *dagis* (daycare). I think they're benefiting from all of us being here in the different surroundings and different environments and when we go to parties or you go to a function with your partner and you're the only person of color in the room… You know, I think it just uplifts the room. I think it just enhances everything and just adds another dimension to it. I just feel that our contribution and our presence is such a positive that it's a learning experience for them.

Patricia: Just a short input here. I understand what you're saying here and it's a discussion for a different time in my mind, because discrimination and racism is distinct and clear and apart from bad manners. You know when people are being rude, and you know when people are being rude to you and you can compare and contrast that behavior to something else and someone else in a different situation. But I see what you're saying.

Lisa: I can see what Michelle is saying though because in some ways, in some of the situations it may be a day or two later I'll think about it and it will be like 'now was that because I was black…

[Agreement]

Lisa: … or did they think I was poor and couldn't afford it? Because especially here [in Stockholm], people look at how you're dressed. And I'm thinking, 'Ok are they treating me that way because I had on this and this or was it that they would have done that to anybody no matter what color their skin was? Sometimes it's really hard to know.

Michelle mentions her "six and a half years" of residence as a status marker of experience with Swedish society. In going for so many years without experiencing any events that she perceived to be racially motivated she offers the women, the possibility that some of their own accounts may have been cultural misunderstandings. Furthermore, she suggests that she has a successful way of shielding herself from any of these encounters. She mentions having a "defense mechanism" a way of handling living in an

[39] Michelle co-owns and operates a boutique in downtown Stockholm.

all white environment that she learned in New York that allows her to not recognize or not be affected by the slings and arrows of negative treatment. In an effort to encourage the other women, and/or perhaps gain authority through knowledge, or prestige through sophistication, Michelle describes how she developed this defense mechanism.

In describing her life in the States before she came to Sweden, her childhood in Rockland county, her college education at an Ivy League university, her high-powered job in Manhattan, her home in the Upper East Side (a very wealthy, white neighborhood in New York city), exclusive high-end shopping, Michelle's tastes openly display several markers of her high class status. Since, according to Bourdieu (1984), tastes and preferences are not a matter of choice but instead are greatly influenced, if not determined by one's access to cultural capital, it becomes apparent that she possesses dominant (cf. Chapter Six) American cultural capital and corresponding sophisticated tastes. To Michelle, New York is "the big leagues", while Stockholm is "nothing", which may have unintentionally put down the other women present who were having emotional reactions to encounters they had perceived to be negative. By comparing the two cities as she did, she seemed to suggest that in much the same way that an individual's cultural capital can hold more or less value in one field versus another field, so also can one field hold more or less prominence or value to a person than can another field.

Since she has already "proved herself" in New York, she explains that she does not allow herself to feel intimidated by the things that Swedes say or do to try to put her down in her high-class executive Swedish circles. It is obvious within their set that she and her husband are financially well-off so the "things that people try to throw" at her usually revolve around education level and occupation. She has a social science

bachelor's degree, and the fact that it is from Columbia (a status marker in the U.S.) has little value in Sweden. In Sweden, education level and discipline matter more in her well-to-do circles. She learns their backgrounds in an effort to figure out what their "credentials" are that give them the right to rank and judge her. Despite her proclaimed imperviousness to these comments and judgements, she has accumulated, in the years since she arrived, several Swedish status markers (cf. Chapter Six) that have provided her increased cachet in her and her husband's Swedish circles. She does not consider aloud that any insensitive comments she has ever received have to do with her being black in these environments. When she has experienced slights or what she may consider to be a potentially negative encounter; she is careful to exhaust all possible other explanations before considering that a behavior might be racially motivated. When Lisa attempts to remind Michelle of an encounter that Michelle experienced, she sidesteps discussing it but offers a possible acceptable excuse - "bad manners". She appears to encourage the women to consider interpersonal or cultural issues first before assuming that any given slight is due to racism.

Positioning is "a discursive practice", in that, "within a conversation each of the participants always positions the other while simultaneously positioning him or herself" (Langenhove and Harre 1999, 22). Michelle's comments about her upscale background coupled with her description of New York as the big leagues vs. Stockholm as "nothing' could have been, and indeed did seem to be, taken in different ways given the differing backgrounds and perspectives of the other women hearing it. Her comments could be interpreted as what Patricia called "posturing" (cf. Chapter Four), for instance implying that what they are going through is beneath her. On the other hand, one could hear her

description of New Yorkers vs. Stockholm residents as motivating advice that if they (the other women present) can deal with everyday racism in the US, where people know what they are doing, then they can surely get by in Sweden, where a few people may show 'bad manners' because they 'do not know any better'.

> **Gabriele**: I've really been feeling the pressure of assimilation, which is very different from the pressure of integration. Because assimilation means for me, that I have to leave something behind and like you Michelle I also grew up in an upper middle class white neighborhood, Chappaqua which was pretty lilly. And you immediately like just kind of… I had my duality. I could go to Brooklyn on the weekends with the West Indians and feel perfectly at home and then come back and just pick up where I left off. Here it is interesting because there is no other side for me to get here. I have assimilated and I can't afford to worry about that. But now I'm pregnant and I've got hormones going like crazy and I burst out crying because of anything and these past couple of weeks I've really felt like I want my friends from Paris because I can communicate with them and I don't have to explain this other cultural level. … I have tried to explain it, but there is a guilt thing for me also. Because where I live, I really don't see any people of color. And if I do, I would have to go to the kiosk somewhere. I live on {names desireable neighborhood in Stockholm}.
>
> ["Oooh", several say, sounding impressed.]
>
> **Gabriele:** I mean, there's a lot of interesting dynamics with that to begin with. Even within the Swedish population, there's certain addresses that you give and you notice, different dimensions. They have they're own discriminative culture that goes on. They claim that they've eliminated the class issue but you can really figure out when they're not happy with a difference. And they're like that with Swedish people too.
>
> **Michelle.** I met a guy who was from Huddinge. But I didn't know it at the time. I later found this out. And I asked him, "Oh, so where are you from in Sweden?" He says "Oh well you can say that I'm from Falsbon because most of my friends are from there". You know what I mean? I was like, oh my god, ugh. They feel that amongst themselves and I see that.

Gabriele also discusses her background from an upper middle class white neighborhood, but differentiates her story from Michelle's by pointing out that she had a "duality" that allowed her to spend weekends with her West Indian friends and yet fit in at school as well. Thus, she shows how she had learned to control her environment instead of letting it constrain her. Gabriele and Henrietta were the only two women, on this night, who made mention of non-dominant cultural capital (cf. Chapter Six). Gabriele feels a "guilt thing" in Sweden because there are not any people of color where she lives and she does not see any way to get to interact with them. The gulf between Africans as black people and her

as a black person is too great in Sweden, unlike in France where she had a large network of Caribbean and African friends. The other women present are vocally impressed when she mentions the part of town in which she lives, showing how Swedish status markers have weight among Americans as well.

> **Henrietta:** What did you guys do during 9-11? I actually had one of my friends say, "If people ask if you're American, don't say yes." I said, "Why not?! I'm waiting for somebody to come up…" That was the attitude I had in my head for a while like, I'm waiting for somebody to get in my face and say something stupid. So I just want to know how you guys felt. I had so many people coming up to me that in this one class, I had one guy who I barely spoke to come up to me and asked, "Excuse me. Are you from the US?" I was already so hot about it that I turned around and said, "Why?!" And whatever look I had on my face, he sat up and backed to the wall. And he was two rows away so I don't know why he... I would've had to jump... But he said, "Oh no, I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I was just asking because I had people in the States and I wanted to talk to you about it." So do you guys feel like you're more defensive now about being an American?
>
> **Gabriele**: This is the first time that I've affiliated with being American actually. Because I've been away from the States as a resident or citizen almost ten years now. I left the States pretty angry. I was in college where I was politically active and I was like, that place [the U.S.] makes me very salty. And basically, even in the States, I grew up very much in the West Indian culture. And when I came here, I still kind of affiliated with that upbringing. But when September 11th happened, and knowing that my sister was living right in the neighborhood of the World Trade Center… I don't have Americans, until I started coming to [names an American organization], I don't have them in my immediate social sphere. And I really, and I was in France for it [9/11] too, I really felt like wow, I want to be there [in the U.S.] with everybody. That's when I really felt…how much I had been trying to suppress my American side because I was so angry and bitter about what was going on there. I was trying to suppress it so much that it kind of flashed back up and I wanted to be there. I wanted to be supportive. I didn't want anybody to tell me or talk about America's politics. I was like, this is not the time for it. We are in mourning and sorrow. Now is not the time to say that we deserved it. I didn't think we deserved more sorrow that any other place suffering in the world but I truly believed, you know, just give us a break. Let's just get over this one and then you can give us the nonsense afterwards. But I honestly felt very defensive about it. Then once the heat of the moment wore off, then I went back to being more open about discussing the dilemma.
>
> But I still wanted to try to adapt. I'm under this pressure of adapting here. And I'm trying to adapt, to certain extent. But being around Americans has been a really good thing because I'm remembering to appreciate the things that are American, and the things that are Black American and the things that are ethnic American, or whatever. It's just a multi-culti thing that being around Americans, at least I can, however in the [names an American organization] it's...you only affiliate American-wise. You know, you really don't start talking about the Black experience with all these women who are like, "Really?"
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Gabriele:** And then they really look at you like, "[Imitates nasal voice] Oh my god. I hope she's not going to be political here."
>
> [Laughter]

> **Gabriele**: …and then you know, that's the end of it. But I know I went to [names an American organization] for one reason. I didn't go there for sisterhood. I went there…
>
> [Someone shouts, "For the turkey!"]
>
> [Laughter]
>
> **Gabriele:** You know! Exactly! (laughs) Actually I have my own Turkey Day. But I honestly know why I really went to that club, for a certain sense of …you know…
>
> [Several people say, "Belonging." Agreement]
>
> **Gabriele:** Yeah belonging, exactly…
>
> **Henrietta**: I didn't feel 'belonged.'

The events of 9/11 gave Gabriele a closer and growing appreciation of the U.S., which encouraged her to seek out an American organization to meet others. But she consciously only affliates to the extent that she feels comfortable, which is 'American-wise'. She does not share racial conflicts or other things that white Americans may not want to know and that she does not want them. Bringing up those kinds of issues may bring upon her, she feels, the label of complainer or militant. She and the other women did not join American organizations in any attempt to find 'sisterhood' - cultural understanding among black women - but instead she joined instead for national 'belonging' – being an accepted part of a social group, membership and social inclusion in a community or something larger than herself (cf. Chapter Six). Henrietta vocalizes her criticism of the reception she received when she sought belonging in the same organization. She represents a number of black women who did not feel like they fit into the cliques (cf. Chapter Four) that appear to be present in these organziations. This type of experience can bring back old associations from the US, in which American belonging as one big clique of which, they as black women are on the outside.

> **Carol**: I've been here 25 years and I must say that I'm also one of those Americans that have not experienced any racism since I've been here. And I know that one of the reasons for that is because I did not move to Stockholm when I got here. I moved to the north. I was very isolated up

there. I was the only Black for the longest time…

Michelle: So you had kids!

[Laughter]

Michelle: Just kidding!

[Laughter]

Carol: (Laughs) So, well I was pretty much the item of interest. Some people were interested in… there was a lot of gossip because I was the spectacle. You know, 'there goes the American'. They didn't think of me more as Black American. It was just 'the American'. And you know people were just really interested because I was American, so the Black thing did not exist. It didn't exist until I would say, in the 80s when the Bosnians came in after the war. We had a refugee camp up there where I used to work. And because of all the immigrants and because of all the crimes that they were committing, then all the immigrants were all one [unintell]. So it didn't make any difference if you were black or white. You were just an immigrant, in the negative. So in that sense, the negativity that was focused on immigrants, I've experienced, but not as being a black person. And down here in Stockholm, it was... the first thing I did was to seek out the Americans when I got down here. So I really miss that – living up in the north. But I haven't experienced it yet…

Patricia: I believe that whatever, we've experienced here, [whether it be] the social clashes or the address thing that we talked about, whether you live [in this part of town or that part of town]…all of these things are in the United States, every single one of them. I think it's new because it kind of hits you right in your face. You perhaps didn't think you were coming here to encounter this. Where people are saying things to you that they would never say back home. So it kind of shocks you and surprises you.

Carol: I think a lot the time it [bad treatment] is [simple rudeness], but not all of the time. A lot of times I think, we as Black people, not just specifically Black women, but Black people… Or like most of you have recently come from the US, you are expecting that every insult or every incident where someone mistreats you has racial inclinations. I'm guessing that probably a lot of it has to do with that (expectation of racism).

[A few people disagree. "I don't think so." "No."]

Carol: And right now in Sweden there is a lot of discussion about how Swedes are treating immigrants. That's a really big important issue today. And as an immigrant you're taking it more personal that whenever somebody is being dumb to you for whatever reason… Sometimes I'm sure it might be racism but…

Tess: Well maybe you're right but see you've lived in France (to Gabriele) and I've been there because Cameroon has this thing on with France, but in all the other European countries I've been in… My brother is married to a Scottish girl. When I go to Scotland, I've never felt my color. I've felt my color in this country [Sweden].

Gabriele: I have had a horrible experience with Scotland.

Tess: You did?

Gabriele: I will *never* set foot in that place again! They did… bad publicity for me. (chuckles) I won't go back.

Tess: … Well, my brother is brown, but let's say he's more Patricia's complexion and…

Patricia: The boy is dark!

[Laughter]

Tess: No, no, no (to Patricia). I'm saying that with good reason! I've gone there many times and spent a number of vacations there and I've never felt unwanted. I've lived in the States and when I first got there, which was in '82 I did feel ostracized. And the worst kind of…and I'll say this here. It may be… but the worst kind is when you feel it from your own people.

[Agreement]

Tess: See when I moved to the States, I had a lot of African-American women in Cameroon, who married Cameroonians way back in the 50s, and 60s and came back. I looked up to them. I called them Auntie. I looked forward to going to the country. When I got to Chicago, within three months, I wanted to go back home. I called my father, "I'm coming back…(plaintive voice)."

Gabriele: I went to Chicago too and *I* wanted to go back home!

[Laughter]

Gabriele: That is a *rough* city!

Tess: It is. It's a rough city…

[Chuckling]

Tess: I've been in the UK, I've been in Paris, but I've never felt the way I feel here. It's uncomfortable. To me, it's not… I've been the only…

Carol: Where were you? When you were in these places, were you there as a tourist or were you living there?

Tess: On occasion I was living there.

Carol: I mean were you living there over a long period of time?

Tess: One month, two months, three months…

Carol: Ok.

Tess: Ok well I'll give you an example. I've worked like you (Michelle) said; you've been the only black person in organizations and what have you… Back in October we had a huge.. rollout for [names Swedish technology company] and I was the *only*, the only person of any color. No Chinese, no Hispanic…

[Chuckling]

Tess: Nothing. And I think I called you (Patricia) and told you this. I felt… It was like all eyes were on me and I'd walk past…

Carol: They probably were.

Tess: …actually it wasn't just looking at me like… In many instances when I walked past, I felt like they were expecting me to pick up the dishes…

Michelle: Really?

Tess: … I felt that way.

Henrietta: And you were dressed up and…?

Tess: Yes I was dressed in a suit but I felt that way.

Michelle: But do you …? I hear you. You just... I hear you. And I'm not going to analyze because I hear you. But I'm just thinking, when I've been in those situations, I don't even pft!, I don't even really… Like for instance my husband works at [a large financial institution] and he's had a couple of functions at [unintell] including clients and executives together where I'm in the same boat as you and I'm mingling with these people or whatever. And I can't explain but I don't feel that same kind of energy. And that's not to say that it's not there. But is it something perhaps that we need to turn it around into our advantage?

Tess: You can sometimes. But sometimes it's very hard to do. But like I said, it's the first time I've felt it. I've never ever… I mean I have… I mean I'm kind of a mutt. Is that what they call it in the States? I have all kind of relations. I'm part German and I go to Germany and I don't feel that. I go places…

Odele: Oh I've had it in Germany…

Here Carol lays some blame at the feet of the women. Carol shows her status by stating her length of time in Sweden (twenty-five years) and explains why she has never experienced any negative or racist encounters. She explains that this was because when she arrived in Sweden in the 1980s, she lived in a small town where there were no other Americans or English speaking groups around (unlike Stockholm) so she had to learn the language, get a job and integrate quickly. Although she does discuss experiencing general immigrant hostility when the size of the immigrant population suddenly increase in her town, she is convinced that it had nothing to do with her race. Here she displays that, as a fully integrated person, she knows Sweden well enough to know the difference. In saying, "most of you have recently come from the U.S.…expecting that that every insult has racial inclinations", Carol informs them of her belief that a lot of what they are experiencing is not because of what's really there, but what they are perceiving and expecting to be there because of mindsets forged in the U.S..

A few of women speak up to disagree, perhaps feeling judged. Others say nothing; either because they agree with Carol or are considering the possibility of her words. Tess discusses her experience in "other European countries" including France, Scotland and the UK as points of reference, implying that she is cosmopolitan enough to know that something is unique about Sweden and as such, she does not jump to conclusions regarding negative encounters that she encounters there. Carol questions how long she has been in these places, implicitly suggesting that maybe she has not been in these other places long enough to learn the field, to know what is really going on around her, and to know what she is really experiencing.

Tess also mentions color and the prospect that people darker skinned people meet more problems in Sweden. Although I never asked any of the women about the role of complexion and appearance directly, while looking back at my interviews and notes, I did notice that the lighter complexioned women did report less or non-existant negative encounters while the darker complexioned women had more overtly negative encounters. As one light complexioned woman put it during an interview; "*utseende* (looks) matters". How one looks: skin color, complexion, features, clothing, etc., matters. The farther one appears outside the Swedish norm, the more of a target they find themselves for negative treatment.

> **Tess**: Let me ask you ladies this. I know some of you have spouses here so if you were to set the spouses aside for a minute, what are some of the things that make you want to stay? I'm trying to find it, because I stay here for two weeks and I'm like 'I gotta go'.
>
> **Michelle**: The only reason I stay here is my husband. I love my husband. I love the life we have. I'm taking in all the positives and benefits of raising a child here etc. But yeah, I could go back and live in the States. I often say, if heaven forbid we were divorced, I would find it almost impossible to stay here.
>
> [Someone says, "Oh that's too bad."]

Michelle: No it's not too bad. I'll tell you why. Because I miss being away from my family. That's a very big issue for me

[Agreement]

[Someone asks, "Does your family visit you?"]

Michelle: Yes, they come visit once a year and I go back to Rochester but I miss... I miss that they don't get to see my daughter so often. There really is nothing more complicated or deeper than that. My roots are over there. My family is over there.

[Agreement]

Gabriele: I didn't realize how important that was to me until I went home and the day I had to leave I was crying and crying…

[Agreement]

Alicia: Yeah I do that every time I go home. And it takes me like two to three weeks to get… Because I'm like what the fuck am I doing here? What am I doing with my life?

[Scattered discussions]

Carol: I have to leave now but I just want to say to everyone, learn Swedish and learn about Swedes. Because if you don't you'll stay where you are now thinking that everything is because you're Black or because you're an immigrant… Learn about Swedes. Like you (Gabriele) said about walking down the street and smiling at someone, I do that all the time and I say Hi. When I'm standing at the bus stop and I see someone that takes the bus with me everyday, I strike up a conversation. And they are so friendly. Once they get over the shock of your actually speaking to them and being friendly… then it's like you're just a regular neighbor. They talk to you.

I mean if I was very conscious of me being Black, then I probably wouldn't stand beside a Swede and say 'How are you doing today?' I wouldn't if I felt that insecure about me being the only Black person around. I've had to deal with that for quite a long time of being the only black person, of being on display because I was an American. The first company that I worked for… They would take the press there and say, 'Oh and here is our American!' And it had nothing to do with anything other than the fact that I was American. Now of course, being an American, I've been able to get jobs and I've been able to advance but I also put a big effort into learning Swedish.

Odele: I also have a postscript to add to that. You have to remember that most Swedes are very shy. It's not a myth that Swedes are shy and the avoid controversy, it's true. So you have to give them the benefit of the doubt. It's not always that they are drawing away from you because you are what you are…

Michelle indicates her unwillingness to live in Sweden if she and her husband ever separated. When one of women says, "Oh, too bad", Michelle quickly corrects her and states that her words were not a statement of resignation or an indicator of failed adjustment, but instead just that she has placed life in Sweden as lower on her priority list than spending time with friends and relatives in the U.S. Her position in the Swedish

social field is of lesser importance than her position in other fields. The two longest residents of Sweden in the group Carol (over twenty-five years residence) and Odele (over thirty five years residence) offer a few words of advice to the others. In her attempt to help encourage the other women, she almost chides them when she posits that if they do not learn about Sweden and Swedes, they will “stay where (they) are now”. Again, Carol displays her knowledge of Swedish ways of being (cf. Chapter Six) by showing her knowledge of the field, how to interact with the Swedish people, and how to speak the language. Both women stress in their own ways, the importance of taking the time to not only learn why Swedes act the way they do, but also why they as black American women react they way they do.

According to (Langenhove and Harre 1999, 22), “whenever somebody positions him/herself, this discursive act always implies a positioning of the one to whom it is addressed. And similarly, when somebody positions somebody else, that always implies a positioning of the person him/herself” (Langenhove and Harre 1999, 22). Carol’s comments were taken in different ways by different women. Some women vocally disagreed, while others were silent either due to agreement or ponderment. Gabriele, in a later conversation that I had with her, admitted that she agreed with what Carol had said during this discussion, but didn’t vocalize anything to that effect because she “didn’t want to come off like that”. It seemed to me that while realizing that Carol had good intentions with her tough-love advice, Gabriele did not want to position herself and others as strongly and differentially as she believed Carol had. She wasn’t sure how to give similar advice in a way that would not be misconstrued as judgemental. As someone who spent many years living outside of the US, she empathized with those women who had

also expressed difficulties interacting with Swedes, since she realized that for them it seemed to be their first time living outside the US, and as such they were more vulnerable to forming misinterpretations. In fact, below, after Carol's parting words and Odele's additional advice, she immediately steered the subject in a new direction, one that was less divisive.

> **Henrietta**: (In reply to Odele's statement about Swedish shyness) That also gives them the reputation for their drinking.
>
> **Odele**: Yeah, they are more friendly then!
>
> **Gabriele**: I have to give a brief anecdote about drinking parties and Swedes and embarrassing situations. It actually was Swedish women and myself. There had been some people who had been at the party a lot longer than I had. I had come a bit late. I was on a different time…
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Gabriele:** So I arrived and sat down and was chatting and so on. And the evening progressed and people got more and more loose and comfortable. And two of them I know very well and they're very good friends of mine. And it was very interesting. We started talking about the islands. And one woman was saying oh how much she loved Barbados, because that's where my family is from, and how the men were so beautiful and so on. And I was like, oh yes, and so on. And then…(sigh)…the familiarity started…
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Gabriele:** You know, the girl conversation started with other men there, with Swedish men there and I was starting to sweat like just don't ask me anything else about the intimacy of black men and then they came out…the question. *The* question…
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Gabriele:** …about the size of… the virility of…black men in comparison to white men. I could not believe it! I could not believe that I found myself... after umpteen years... in that position… with my husband there and all these other… At first I was… It came out and I think they got really shocked that it came out themselves. So at that point when I saw their reaction, I didn't, you know, want to draw attention to that. So I just kind of 'Jaha, uhh, hhmm', and finagled my way out of it and everybody got back to decorum, but that was a really shocking moment where I realized that in the States, I'm almost 100% without a doubt that that kind of situation would never have come up. It's not because they're so racially and socially educated in the States that that would not happen, but because we have a history of guarding ourselves on that. We know the politics behind the discussion. But that's what gets me about here. You can't follow the rules to a certain extent. I mean if they even knew on what level, they had completely blown the top… And [my Swedish husband] and the guys are looking at me like…
>
> [Chuckling. Someone says, "…like 'Share. Do tell!'"]

> **Gabriele**: Well actually my ex [boyfriend] that I left for Petter [Gabriele's Swedish husband] was African so I'm sure he was like, 'Yes, pray tell do share!...'
>
> [Chuckling]
>
> **Gabriele:** No, but, it was really really fascinating and at that moment I think I kind of understood that I really need a different filter here. And I'm glad that I didn't make a big deal out of that. Because what am I going to say and am I going to get angry and flip out? At the time I just turned red. That was the most embarrassing situation I've ever encountered actually.

Gabriele does not describe this "girl conversation" as an episode of racism, but instead one of culture shock. The jolt she experienced was one of realizing that she was in a new social field. She was in Sweden and not in the U.S. As she she put it, "That's what gets me about here. You can't follow the rules". As Bourdieu discusses, the field is a social space where a kind of 'game' is played with known rules and known players. When one is playing the game and the rules and field are known, one feels 'at home'. Gabriele experiences this shock is because she realizes that not only have the rules have changed, but so have the players.What looks similar on the surface (American society and Swedish society) are not so underneath. Her desire for a "different filter" in Sweden was perhaps to aid her in anticipating, evaluating and interpreting situations. Gabriele told me later on that when she was put in that situation "in front of all these white people" (she did not say Swedes) she felt quite exposed and angered because what they said was so personal in nature. "If they were American", she snapped her fingers, "the debate could start off and we're on the same foot because we know that one. And I could be like, 'I can't believe you would bring up this blah blah blah'. But here I'm off-balance because I'm like 'Wait a minute! You have that stereotype here too?' (laughs)" She is showing her awareness that in the U.S., black and white Americans know the 'rules of the game' (ie. how to interact, what's out of bounds, etc.) but she's learning that Sweden is its own field.

> **Patricia**: You know the word I'd like to see neutralized is the word 'nigger'.

Odele: Oh, I think it's impossible to neutralize that word.

Patricia: Did anyone read this article about these African women who were forcibly removed from this restaurant…

Odele: I read about that. I say we should go there.

[Several people say, "No. What happened?"]

Patricia: ...and called 'nigger' with their hands held behind them?
This happened before but they're back in the news now describing what happened. … I think there are two sides to every story and I don't think they were behaving badly. They were there for dinner. They went in before the coat check had opened. Later on the coat check was opened and they were asked to take their coats out. They claimed they were almost done eating and getting ready to leave said one coat check guy. The next coat check guy comes and says, "I should never have let you niggers in."

[gasps]

Patricia: ….and that kind of talk.

Henrietta: Uhuh! That's where the suing for the 100,000 crowns comes in.

Gabriele: But still, whatever they did, even if they stole something…

Patricia: Whatever they did, they used the trigger word. They used the word that is often used to minimize you or dehumanize you, humiliate you and make you feel unwelcome.

Gabriele: But there's also a generational thing with this word. Because back before the 50s…there was this revolutionary thing going on with the Social Democrats. So someone who says *färg* [colored] is of an older generation. So if somebody's using *neger*…

Odele: It's not *neger*. It's nigger.

Gabriele: Yeah, unless they are 80 years old and have been isolated to a specific situation it can only mean something disrespectful.

Odele: Not the word *neger*. No, I don't think so…

Michelle: N-i-g-g-e-r were talking about, not n-e-g-e-r.

Gabriele: They said nigger not *neger*?

Patricia: Yeah!

Gabriele and others: Ohhhhh!

Patricia: (to Gabriele) Ah see your face! (to Odele) But still Odele, I think *neger* in 2004 doesn't have the [unintell] to nigger.

Gabriele: I think there are people that don't know.

Lisa: Some people don't know...

Odele: One of my husband's relatives that I've known for the last 30 some odd years used the word *neger*. He doesn't discuss race very often, but this time he was talking about something and

he used the word *neger*. I said, "I know you've always been taught that this is the correct term but I prefer you say black." He said, "Well I didn't understand that it was offensive in any way." He said, "The last thing that I want to do is hurt your feelings." See? But it is a generational thing…

Gabriele: Yeah it's the same way with the word *färg* [colored]. It's a much more dated term.

Michelle: I've gotten the direct translation. Like with my daughter in *dagis* [daycare], I've had other parents tell me, "Oh there's another child here who's colored." And the first time I heard it I was like, "What?!" And I was applying a rationale from the States to something that was totally wasn't similar [here in Sweden].

Patricia: I was having this phone conversation. Someone called my house and I said, "Hello". They had heard that my husband had gotten married and had married this person who had come over from NY. And she said to me "Är du en *neger* som Cyndi Peters?"

[Gasps]

Tess: I just heard *neger*. What was that?

Odele: She asked if she was a *neger* like Cyndi Peters.

Patricia: I said, "Excuse me?" I said, "Who is Cyndi Peters?" And she was surprised that I didn't know who Cyndi Peters was. "Men hon är en *neger* som du." [But she is a *neger* like you.]

Henrietta: Like we all know each other!

Michelle: Cyndi Peters is a famous singer here.

Odele: I used to be asked if I knew Lena Horne and Ruby Dee.

Patricia: They assume that I know her because we are both black and from New York.

Michelle: That is rude. That is a rude comment.

Patricia: I agree that there is rudeness… and there is racism.

At this point the conversation breaks up and the women begin mingling and later begin preparing to leave. This final discussion of nigger vs. *neger* is symbolic. The confusion between those two words is, I say, symbolic of the surface similarity of social fields and potential racialised discourses that exist in the US and in Sweden. Their attempts to separate the two words and two concepts prove difficult in large part because, as they soon learn, things so similar on the surface, may (or may not) have entirely different roots, orgins and meanings underneath. Telling the difference becomes part of the challenge of the game.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated how black American women make sense of their experiences in Sweden by using various 'control strategies' (Essed 1992; 1991). One strategy is a type of interrogation in which they question themselves (using comparisons, etc.) and also seek the questioning and advice of others. This is how black women learned to maneuver in the U.S. (Essed 1991). Most of the women continue to use the same framework to understand what they perceived to be negative encounters in Sweden. They do so to make sense of the Swedish field by helping them to determine if a negative encounter was due to race, class, or simply a cultural misunderstanding. I also have illustrated how some[40] women display status among each other even in well-meaning attempts to offer advice and encouragement. Mentorship is often a part of interaction in what Hill Collins identifies as safe spaces for black women. A few women's displays of American dominant cultural capital and status markers indicate an attempt to show a familiarity with white Americans of a certain class background and thus intimate an advantage or enhanced ability for people of that background to cope with life in Sweden and succeed. These displays served as ways for certain women to gain the authority to give advice to others. Women who displayed Swedish ways of being, including markers such as length of residence and language fluency, etc., intended to show a knowledge of Sweden as different from the US (different field) and thus showing

[40] People have different levels of mastery of the techniques necessary to position themselves and others as they choose (eg. "conversational dominance, conversational charisma") (Langenhove and Harre 1999, 30). Addtionally, individuals will have different levels of "willingness" to position and be positioned (Langenhove and Harre 1999, 30). Those who had lived in Sweden for longer periods of time where more likely to actively participate in this strategic positioning. This may explain why all women did not participate.

to the other women present that old ways of thinking and of perceiving interactions may not serve them well in Sweden. For black American women in Sweden, making sense of it all will require a greater knowledge of Swedes and of themselves. My Chapter Four discussion of how Black American women in Sweden interact with other Black Americans in Sweden, along with my illustration in this chapter of the interactions and interworkings of a safe space, offer glimpses of a third field, the black American field, which I continue to discuss in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 6 SIX: CROSSING BORDERS, SHIFTING VALUES

Ж Ж Ж Ж Ж Ж

This chapter is divided into three parts. In part one, *Finding and Losing Black Community,* I discuss the experiences that the women have with black American identity politics, prior to and since moving to Sweden. I also introduce a third field; what I call the black American field. I describe their concern about losing their connection to the black community (as they define it) and ultimately to their ethnic and cultural roots.

In part two, *Black Field, Black Capital*, I discuss the women's experiences returning to the US to reconnect with those roots. Black American women, in various forms and degrees, struggle with reconciling their lives in Scandinavia, and their European spouses and partners with the black cultural codes with which they grew up. I show how they directly struggle with those cultural codes when they revisit the United Sates. I explain how yearly trips back to the U.S. require more and more 'adjustment' and 'transitioning' on their parts as time goes on and their residence in Sweden lengthens. I describe some of their interactions among family and among members of the general public.

In part three, *Swedish Ways of Being, American Ways of Belonging*, I discuss how Black American women have become active participants in Swedish society, yet reserve a sense of belonging for their American roots. I describe both their participatory practices to make a way of life for themselves in Sweden and the practices that reflect an emotional sense of belonging to the US.

Finding and Losing Black American Community

All of the Black American women with whom I spoke, mentioned in some form the 'black community' in the States. They did not just reminisce about the personal parts they remember fondly that reflect what black community is to them, but they also talked about the part of the larger, more public community that is restrictive about who is included and excluded. They also talked about the freedom they feel with regard to the absence of the restrictive aspect in Sweden. Thus, they can define entirely what black community means to them and choose to associate with other Black Americans or not. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, for the first time they felt allowed to not interact with other black Americans (since this association is more forced in the U.S.) and/or to interact with white Americans to the extent they wished.

I use 'black American field' in this context abstractly as a blanket term given that there are multiple black fields in the U.S. In the black American field however, African-American cultural markers dominate at the top and serve as the standard, while black Caribbean, Afro-Latino, and African markers are much less recognized, if at all. African-American culture dominates the black community in the US. In the black American field, which is a non-dominant field, African American cultural capital is the 'dominant' capital within it. Gabriele, one of several women with Caribbean parentage, spoke at length about her experiences navigating her own cultural background among black Americans in her New York neighborhood.

> For example my parents being Caribbean, there was quite a cleavage between the so-called immigrant culture that's black and even the African-American culture, which is…. And those things I felt also, that culturally I couldn't fit in to that. There were maybe only three other black families [in her neighborhood] and they were all African-American and I didn't have that much in common with them…initially. So I found that there wasn't very much you could find in common with people. You had to really give in to their side or you weren't going to have a relationship at all. So there was a very big pressure to assimilate. [Gabriele]

The behavior she had to exhibit in order to gain inclusion by her schoolmates felt very restrictive to her with regards to her personality, behavior, and cultural roots. She had to like the things they liked, act the way they acted, talk about the things they talked about and value the things that they valued or she faced exclusion. This valued behavior takes very specific forms. Although these forms may vary by age and class, they nonetheless do exist and are distinguishable from non-valued behavior.

Alicia is a young, trim, and genial honey colored woman with light brown curly hair who came to Sweden "for the hell of it" two years ago. After she joined an organization for Americans in Sweden, Alicia was happy to meet and make friends with several black Americans. In fact, it was through the organization that she met all of her black acquaintances. Most interestingly she shares that she has far more black friends in Sweden than she ever did in the States. She recounts that she never had a single black friend growing up and in college she had one black friend who was an African international student. But now in Sweden, things have changed for her.

> So now I've got a handful of black friends and I feel quite proud of it and tell my family about it quite often. 'Yeah –I- got- *black* -friends'. (laughs) [I'll] send them pictures, [and say] 'Those are my *black* friends!' (laughs) Yeah, so it's only in the last couple of years that I've sort of been *allowed* to identify with that part of my culture more, because growing up I certainly never did. [Alicia]

Alicia, who has one black parent and one white parent, grew up in a "white and Mexican" suburb in California were there were few black residents. In fact, there were no black students in her high school during the time she was a student there. Things changed when she went to college, but not for the better.

> In college, there certainly was a black community and it was a very strong black community, but I think I felt a bit discriminated *against* almost. Like I wasn't black enough for them. Because they were very much took a lot of pride in their black heritage and wore it on their sleeve as a badge practically and so I felt I'm not black enough for them. My family always teased me and they're quite right about it. They'll tease me and call me 'White Girl' and say like that I don't have any rhythm. I don't know anything about R&B and hip-hop' and things like that. I don't know the

> slang. My sister does though. My sister's got unbelievable rhythm. She's got her finger on the pulse when it comes to music and the slang and hip-hop and I just don't…
>
> Here [in Sweden]…I think it's more about being an American (first) and *then* it's about being black. And so it just makes it easier I think to have black friends here. And it's nice because…I mean I don't identify with everything because I feel that I'm not as dark [complexioned], but there are lots of things that Lisa or Nikki or Gabriele or Michelle will say.. where I'm just like 'Exactly!' And it's nice to identify more with that half of my background and my family. It's my dad that's black and he's got a huge family. He's one of seven [siblings] and there are lots of grandkids and so I've got lots of cousins. We go over there for our holidays and it's just like '*black culture*' because they live in L.A. And with my mom's side, it's just her brother and his family so…That's the only relatives on that side and they are very, very white. (chuckles) Yeah, so it's kind of fun because I see my family in the things that Nikki and Lisa say about their families and I've never had that before and felt really proud of that part of my culture and background. I joke with my family sometimes about the irony of it that I had to go to Sweden to find the black community. (laughs) I mean Sweden! (laughs) [Alicia]

Alicia, at twenty-four years old, was the youngest of the women that I interviewed and it is evident that youth-oriented hip hop urban culture is more integral to her definition of black community in the States. Depending on age, class status, and regional differences, these signals of inclusion and their performance vary. Most women in their mid-thirties and above had a different association attached to their discussion of with black culture, and black community in the US. Another interesting point is the fact that Alicia's sister who looks very similar to her, does have this behavior and knowledge base. The fact that the sister is included among her own set of black peers indicates that belonging to the black community does not necessarily hold skin color as its most important criterion. Unlike in Sweden, where *utseende* [looks] matters strongly when it comes to acceptance and belonging by Swedes, in the US among the black American community, appearance matters less, and is superseded in importance by behavior and performance.

As I have discussed, in the U.S. there is a certain conformity in racial politics and performance that becomes restrictive in that there are distinct markers of inclusion and exclusion. Given that cultural capital includes "having a general facility for interacting appropriately in various contexts, a knowledge of and an ability to use the rules of

engagement in particular settings, general cultural knowledge relevant for and held in esteem in a particular situation, and certain kinds of possessions or credentials" (Lewis 2003,170), it becomes interesting to examine how black American women at times grapple with a perceived lack of what can be referred to as 'black cultural capital'. Sofie is a bi-racial woman in her thirties with fair skin and dark blond curly hair.

> [I]dentity politics in the States can be hard. Like there was this woman of color cluster at this university where I was. And I went to one of their meetings and just remember feeling very uncomfortable. And a good friend of mine, from Puerto Rico, was also there. We look kind of similar. [W]e all had to go around the room and they were like, "I am a Latina lesbian black daddadaada, working class background…" It just seemed very… I don't know. It just seemed really strange that people had to position themselves…and I think positioning oneself is good but it just felt like that was the standpoint for how you would be perceived by others. And I just remember them going around the room… [I]t just felt uncomfortable for me, that setting. And I remember there were a few African-American women there and I didn't feel very accepted by them. But I think they shared a ling… a talk and a way of talking, a way of being that I had just lost or couldn't relate to. They were like "What's up girl?!" and dadada and they were talking to my friend. And I realized that I wasn't giving the proper responses and I probably seemed really nerdy and so I just felt like…you know. And so I don't know if they thought, 'She's unblack' or whatever, but I never went back to that little cluster. [Sofie]

Sofie was raised by her black relatives. To her, "People who know me, accept me and that's what's important. You find people that you're at home with. And then you find people that you don't feel at home with". She draws a distinction between her own more personal black community and a more public black community. The fact that women at this meeting were of all skin complexions, again shows that inclusion is not necessarily about skin color. Inclusion is more about performance, "giving the proper responses", and interacting appropriately in various settings. In other words, inclusion in this (non-dominant) field is about activating (non-dominant) cultural capital. The scene of the meeting seemed to be a kind of performance; a performance of community of which she felt herself to be on the outside. The degree to which individuals can activate black cultural capital in the black American field impacts their position in that field. An important principle of hierarchization in fields "revolves around the struggle between

authenticity and inauthenticity" (Emirbayer and Williams 2005, 699). Sofie felt judged as insufficiently authentic. But she feels free of that in Sweden since she is only aware of one other black American in her town – the basketball player. Her black friends are Africans and they do not judge her, because she simply is not African.

All black American women, in various forms and degrees, struggle with reconciling their lives in Scandinavia, and their European spouses and partners with the black cultural codes with which they grew up in the U.S. Sofie explained to me that she once had those signals and codes when she was a teenager and young adult, but started losing them as she grew older. She wonders what role these identity politics played in her decision to move to and live in Sweden, a white nation. Her upbringing as a black child causes this decision to weigh heavily on her, because she feels that now that she is getting older, she feels herself slipping away from that upbringing, and losing the black community and the connection to her family. In Sweden, black American women may or may not face US identity politics depending on the field in which they are operating, yet trips back to the US bring up these issues, especially when children are involved. To Sofie, a woman in her thirties, black community is not about slang, hip hop, or pop culture. It is about being with her black father's family, cooking collard greens, making cornbread, and listening to gospel music. Sofie is very close to the black half of her family and the fact that they are "not happy at all" about her decision to live in Sweden worries her. They think that she has "moved more toward the white side" she told me with concern in her voice. She is aware that grandparents especially fear losing contact with their bi-racial grandchildren who may "pass" or simply choose to distance themselves from the African-American community. Black American women in Sweden

often find that their own identity issues are magnified when it comes to exposing their half-Swedish children to their black American heritage.

Although Michelle sees her parents and other family members six weeks each year including their visits to Sweden and her visits to the US, the time is not enough. She went through a difficult period time with her first child that made her question the strength of her ties to US and the black community in general and to her family roots in particular. She worries about the geographic and cultural distance between her young children and her parents.

> And as I said we are all really close. I feel that they don't get to see my kids growing up. My daughter, my oldest, for a long time she was very uncomfortable with my parents because she didn't know them. It took her a really long time to warm up to them. And for a while, I honestly used to think that she just…was not used to black people. I really thought that! And people would say to me, 'Well you're black and you're her mother. She's with you all the time'. But I used to feel that she was so open to…like if a stranger who was Caucasian came up to her, she seemed much more open to them than if my mom came up to her. And I really started to think… Could it be that she just was not accustomed to…I don't know what it was, but it really, really bothered me. And that made it even more important that I visit there [family in the US] more so that as she gets older, she understands that aspect of her culture as well. And I think now a lot of it has to do with age. She was a bit shy and now she remembers grandma and grandpa and she sees them in pictures. So we've gotten over that phase. But I have to admit I was worried there for a while. Because I didn't get it. I was trying to find theories as to why she was the way she was towards them. And like I said I would see clearly that she would respond differently to black people and white people. So I didn't get it. I didn't get it at all! (laughs) It was really weird. [Michelle]

Sometimes the things that their children experience can be greatly magnified versions of the issues they themselves face with regard to their own connection to their families and the black American community. Black mothers are historically responsible for raising black children and for passing down heritage in the family (St. Jean & Feagin 1997), so that is an extra role that falls on women's shoulders. Black women in the United States are "more explicitly concerned about the cultural domination of their children" (Essed 1991, 199). They ask, "How can I have a child who does not grow up White? How can I build some racial consciousness and feeling for Black community?" (Essed 1991, 199) Those women with younger children struggle with these issues. Those longer term

residents with adult children born and raised in Sweden have reconciled themselves, with some sadness, of the fact that their children, like Carlita (cf. Chapter Five), see themselves as Swedish and only slightly, if at all, identify with the black American part of their heritage. Those black American women yet without children, like Gabriele (cf. Chapter Three) wonder what they will do about these issues when they do have children. As a result some question their long term plans to remain in Sweden.

Women talked about feeling "in-between" when they return to the US to visit. Friends and family also have noticed a change in their personalities and behavior. The comments that they receive about this did concern them because they seemed to feel that they were losing some aspect of their identities.

> Like my friends will notice that maybe a behavior that I had before I don't have now. I was with a friend of mine and we were driving and he says to me, 'What is wrong with you?' I'm like, 'What are you talking about?' He says, 'You behave *differently* now.' He says, 'You know how Swedes act? You act like them now!' (laughs) I said, 'I don't know what you're talking about.' He says, 'You got this look in your face. I don't know what's wrong…' And he couldn't even describe it but he just said, there was something different. He says, 'You're not the same person who left'. And I say 'No. No, I'm not the same person.' I said, 'I just think I'm a little more relaxed' And I think some of it has to do with age. You know, you get to a certain age and [unintell] and you learn to tolerate crap more. But he said, 'No, even your manner changed a bit.' [Henrietta]

> Since I've moved here you kind of wonder, 'When have I really felt like myself?' Because you're in-between worlds. I think a lot of times you can be here and idealize what it's like at home. And then you can go back home and they're not quite the way that you had pictured them. And think that people react to me a little differently sometimes. Like [when visiting the US] I've heard [that] I speak with an accent. [They ask me] Where am I from? *That* bothers me. I'm like, 'Where am I from? I'm from here!' But I guess there are certain nuances in me that I don't even notice anymore that other people pick up on that I guess you *do* acquire when you live abroad for a long time. So you feel a little bit out of place. So you're in-between in think. [Michelle]

Immigrating to a new land affects an individual in many ways. Feeling out of place is a normal emotional phase that almost all people who return home from living abroad go through to varying extents. For these women however, this shifting and in-betweeness covers a deeper fear; a fear of becoming disconnected from friends, family, and the black community (as they individually define it). They fear having to place themselves among

their own people when in the US, as doing so causes them to feel distance and exclusion. Michelle's comment points out the fact that people do often romanticize the life they have left behind after they make changes in location, class status, etc. However, this idealization may also be a way for them to avoid considering the fact that they themselves may have changed noticeably.

Black Field, Black Capital

Part of how the women mediate being Black and American in Sweden and how they perceive their experiences and interactions there is influenced by their visits to the US and re-encounters with what I refer to, very abstractly, as the black American field, a third field, along with the broader American field, the second field (cf. Chapter Four). This third field impacts them in Sweden with respect to their ability, desire, and intention to integrate into Swedish society. This manifests in the sense that the more time they spent in Sweden, the more others pointed out to them (or they themselves noticed) that they were changing the way they talked and communicated with people etc. (cf. Chapter Three). Many of these clashes involved conflict between Swedish ways and American ways of thinking and interacting that are connected to their American or specifically black American upbringing. In Sweden, valued capital from this third field (black cultural capital) is hidden, shielded from white Americans and is definitely not shown to Swedes.

Bourdieu developed the idea cultural capital to explain how "individuals' access to certain cultural signals (such as attitudes, preferences, tastes, and styles) either enables or limits their entry into high status social groups, organizations, or institutions" (Bourdieu 1977a, 1977b; Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, cited in Carter 2003, 137). However, Bourdieu himself did not limit cultural capital to European 'elite' high brow form of

expression, but instead believed that other forms of cultural capital could exist as well. Historically it has been the dominant social class that determines what qualifies as cultural capital and the various values of those forms. Meanwhile, “the multiple ways cultural resources of other groups also convert into capital are ignored” (Carter 2003, 137).

> The term "dominant cultural capital" corresponds to Bourdieu's conceptualization of powerful, high status cultural attributes, codes, and signals. Cultural capital provides individuals with an ability to "walk the walk" and "talk the talk" of the cultural power brokers in our society. Similarly, "non-dominant cultural capital" embodies a set of tastes, or schemes of appreciation and understandings, accorded to a lower status group, that include preferences for particular linguistic, musical, or interactional styles. Non-dominant cultural capital describes those resources used by lower status individuals to gain "authentic" cultural status positions within their respective communities. Different, though interconnected, these two forms of capital represent variable cultural currencies, the benefits of which vary, depending upon the field in which the capital is used (Carter 2003, 138).

According to Carter (2003, 137), “Often, scholars research the effects of (dominant) cultural capital in social reproduction across various social classes, but not the influence of (non-dominant) cultural capital on status relations within socially marginalized communities”. As such, the non-dominant form of cultural capital is often overlooked in the literature about cultural capital (Carter 2003).

Carter’s work supports my suggestion that black American women, while visiting the US, enter another set of fields and are concerned about their lessening ability to activate black cultural capital to gain inclusion as "authentic" members from other black Americans to gain inclusion in the community.

> One of the most apparent instrumental purposes of non-dominant cultural capital is to navigate the terrain of ethnic authenticity. Racial and ethnic groups create cultural boundaries to demarcate both intergroup and intragroup differences. That is, groups create internal cultural boundaries to separate the "real" ("authentic") from the "not real" ("inauthentic") co-ethnic, and individuals construct self-conscious ways in which they use "natural" and specified characteristics to signify group affiliation (Tuan 1999). As groups socially construct what is authentic, their members use myriad in-group cultural codes and signals. Hence, authenticity work requires signifiers (Peterson 1997), and these signifiers often embody non-dominant cultural capital. (Carter 2003 138)

Carter (2003) found that those who "demonstrated either a lack of appreciation for, or seemingly little awareness of, valued cultural attributes such as ... black speech codes, musical tastes, and interactional styles… and employed purported 'white' cultural markers, it cost them the status of "authentic" group membership…." (Carter 2003, 142). Activating cultural capital or failing to do so properly or at all, produces a shift along the continuum of inclusion and exclusion within the social space, the black community of the black American field.

When Black American women visit the US, they take a bit of time to adjust to the physical environment of the field. Their time in Sweden has changed them in various ways and as time goes on it becomes more and more apparent. They try to visit their families in the US at least once per year. For Sofie, her black grandmother's house is a core locality of her connection to the black community. Other women described similar experiences with adjustment whether it is at a relative's house or hanging out with old friends.

> Yeah, there is definitely a period of transition. When I go back to NJ, my aunt is well…special. She's like 'those motherfuckas this…'. (chuckles) I don't know how to explain her. Yeah, so… when I go back, she picks me up from the airport. And there'll be all these cars and she starts swearing and she's telling me all these things and she's got the gospel music in the car because she's very religious. It's just very intense and even aesthetically my grandma's house is very cramped and there's lots of things everywhere. Like the fridge is covered with a zillion magnets. [T]here's calendars and all kinds of things everywhere. My grandma's a packrat. She saves everything. But I love that house. I walk in and the smell of the house. It feels like home. And we've got the BET[41] on all the time. And you know there's a lot of commentary. You know speaking to the TV and laughing. So yeah the first day I'm jet lagged and just kinda… So it takes a day or so for me to get back into things.

> Yeah I think I probably am reserved. I mean I think I sound so… I mean I can hear myself. And slowly I'll get into talking a bit more Black English but still not like they're speaking. That's like too far a stretch… but I'm sure I probably seem very reserved because some of my friends are a bit… (chuckles). It's a bit strange really. Like they'll come over and… I find that in the neighborhood, I don't remember some of the people's names anymore there because I travel so much am I'm always meeting people. So sometimes I won't remember and some of them can get kind of angry. And people will be like, "Don't you remember me? I'm Uncle so and so. Or, I'm

[41] BET (Black Entertainment Television) is an American cable television network and channel featuring programming by and primarily for black Americans.

> Flipback! Don't you remember Flipback?' (chuckles) And I'm like 'Ok. Sorry Flipback. I didn't remember." (chuckles)
>
> And leaving [the U.S.] is really hard. I think about moving back. Because in the time that I'm there I realize that I myself have changed and I don't have the ability to be totally a part of what's going on there. And that's a loss. And I can feel a bit sad. I mean, not that I'm crying about it but I can feel it. It feels like a loss. Like, I wish I could still speak Black English. I wish I could feel… [Sofie]

After extended residence in Sweden, the concern of slowly losing one's individual personality and ties to the black community was quite common among women with whom I spoke. They spend most of their time with family so it is interactions with family that first shows evidence of the slow drift that may have taken place between them and their former lives. This evidence usually begins to appear in the smallest of ways.

> **Lisa:** I made a pie, a pumpkin pie. Yeah, normally my mom always makes these sweet potato pies and so I did my little American Thanksgiving here in Sweden and I made my own... my first little turkey and stuffing…and I couldn't find sweet potatoes anywhere. And of course I go to Gray's [American store] and there is a can a pumpkin and it has a recipe on it for pumpkin pie. I'm like pumpkin pie, sweet potato pie –same thing, you'd think! (chuckles)
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Nikki:** I can't believe you ever thought that though!
>
> **Lisa:** Why wouldn't you? (chuckles)
>
> **Nikki:** Because I don't think that way!
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Lisa:** It's just a slight difference
>
> **DT:** It's in the ballpark.(chuckles)
>
> **Lisa:** It's close! It's close ok. They're the same color!
>
> (laughter)
>
> **Lisa:** Yeah so then I made a pumpkin pie and Isak, he liked it. He said, "Oh this is really good. Mmmm. Yum yum." And so then when we had gone home [to the U.S.] for Thanksgiving I thought 'Oh I'll make my pumpkin pie and everybody will like it. And people of course they looked at it and were like…they thought it was sweet potato. And then they tasted it and were like "What's this?!" I'm like, "It's pumpkin pie". And they were like "I thought this was sweet potato. It's nasty!" They were like, "Pumpkin pie is for white people!"
>
> (laughter)

> **Lisa:** …and Isak is just sitting there looking at them laughing… he was like "I can't taste the difference. They look the same and taste almost the same." And everybody is like, "No they don't!"
>
> (chuckling)
>
> **Nikki:** [unintell] …it's a different consistency too I think.
>
> **Lisa:** Yeah I guess. But I like *both*.
>
> **Nikki:** Unlike your family!
>
> (laughter)

There is an unspoken awareness of how much residence in Sweden has changed them; not only in terms of having broader worldviews and being more cosmopolitan, but also their abilities of black community performance. Their ability to carry on the heritage, tradition, and knowledge imparted to them by their parents and generations before them becomes more of a challenge the longer they live in Sweden. Their families are excited for the opportunities they have found to live in Sweden. They view the nation not so much as a 'foreign' country on their continuum of otherness, although it is viewed as a very 'white' country. Families appeared to be very open and welcoming to the idea of their marrying a Swedish man and living in Sweden. "They're happy that I'm happy" seemed to be the sentiment of the subjects families, but undoubtedly, there are sometimes unsaid strains. Families by nature are more accepting. Since they spend a large proportion of their time with their families and friends whom they know and who know them, they are aware that they are "kind of insulated" when they go back to the States. Otherwise, when they meet black people publicly, they occasionally have to "explain" and perhaps face criticism of their inclusion in the black community and place in the black American field.

When they are with their families they have a sheltered acceptance. Their families, oftentimes, are the most important part of the black community for them. Gabriele, for

instance, like the other women, draws her "cultural ground" from these family relationships and not from hip-hop and not urban youth culture dominated public black community, on which she comments, "I don't really affiliate with it." Even if they received some criticism from black American members of the public, it is subordinate to the acceptance of their family and friends. With that priority aside, it is the reactions from black Americans that concern the women more than the reactions of white Americans, I believe, because it is the black community to which they are closest. Gabriele believed that, in the black American community, Black women who go out with or marry white men have a more difficult time than black men who go out with white women. Gabriele made this statement from personal experience because of encounters she dealt with during her many visits to the US, in which she has been questioned by black men for marrying a white man. Said Gabriele, "A brother actually said to me, 'How can you fall in love with one? How can you love that?'" The perception is that, in the black community, interracial relationships are not usually warmly welcomed. Gabriele viewed the situation this way:

> It's always been somewhat easier for them, crossing over the racial line. I mean within our community, it's probably been hell, because we have been really intolerant of that, honestly. Black women will and have given black men *hell* for going out with white women. That's just a fact. But to some extent it hasn't been as hard [for men] as it has been for us [black women] to go out [with white people]. I mean for us [black women], what is the pressure that we're carrying on our backs?! Jeez! We're like 'stopping the race from continuing'! We're threatening pure-bred everything. We're threatening so much. I mean it's so deep for us to go there.
>
> I know that a lot of black women would probably say – the ones that are living here – that they weren't so concerned about it when they're here, but they start shaking at the knees when they go home with their white husbands. And who are they worried about, white people? No, they're worried about black people. Our people are not very tolerant when it comes to these things, in the same way that we're not very tolerant about gays or anything like that. We're not tolerant of racial mixing especially of black women with white men. [Gabriele]

Gabriele equates the stigma that black women who are married to white men face with the stigma of homosexuality within the black community. Neither way of life is well

accepted. For black women, in other words, marrying a white man is negative capital. They lose position and are pushed to the outer periphery of the community. In fact that intolerance can go beyond words. Carol expressed experiencing some trepidation when her Swedish husband goes home with her to D.C. over the fear of black Americans harming him.

> What's changed is that being from Washington, I'm more afraid of going out to unknown places because you hear about crime. And another thing is that in Washington, only because it is predominantly Black, like when my husband has been with me on visits that he's been to Washington then I know that people are looking at him with a lot of hate in their eyes. So I fear for him and never let him go out by himself … [Carol]

Lisa describes some run-ins she had with black men when with her Swedish husband.

> I'm more surprised at how other Black people act when we're together than [how] white people [act], I think. Like in the States, I'll be with Isak and guys will come up to me and Isak will be sitting right there. We'll be a bar or something. And he'll be sitting right next to me. And I swear they must have seen us talk to each other. And the guy comes up and sits up there trying to talk to me and stuff and Isak will be like, "She's with me." And they just look at him [Isak] like he's crazy. And they'll be like, (to me) "Do you know him?" (I say,) "Well yeah, that's my husband!" And they're like, "Why are you with him?" I'm like, "because he's my husband!" Maybe because it's Houston, I don't know.
>
> And then when we were in New York that…was interesting (chuckles) I wasn't expecting it in New York. We were on this tourist bus. And I was the only black person on this bus. It was a nice day and it was a double-decker bus so everyone's on the top deck. And I'm sitting there next to Isak and we're going through Harlem. And we're thinking we want to get off the bus when it stops at the Apollo theatre because we wanted to walk around and do all of that. And I *heard* it was safe – that it would be ok. So we didn't think there would be a problem. But then the tour bus had stopped at this light and there was a bus stop right on the side and the side that I was sitting on was the closest to the curb or to the street. So these guys were standing there at the bus stop. It was like a group of 4 or 5 guys –black guys. And one of them, he was really obnoxious. He started yelling all of this stuff like "Why do you hate your black skin my sister? My sister why do you hate yourself?" I mean all these things and stuff. And he's yelling up to me on the bus.
>
> I mean there are *no* other black people on this bus but me. And the people, a lot of them were like German and Italian and whatever. I mean a lot of them weren't American, but some were. And the guy is like yelling all this about me hating myself and why am I with the white - why did I give myself up to the white man and all this. Because Isak was sitting there and he has his arm around me so the guy knew that we were together. And so he's yelling all this stuff. And I'm just looking at him with this big smile on my face because what am I going to say? Am I really going to talk to you [the guy on street]? There's no point. And I can see that everybody on the bus is completely horrified. And so the bus finally takes off and we were supposed to get off. And the driver asked if the next stop, which is just right past the light, if anybody wants to get off. *Nobody* gets off. Nobody says one word until we left Harlem. And after that people were talking again. Yeah, but it was dead silence until we left Harlem. …And Isak was like "What's he talking about? What does he mean 'why do you hate yourself'?" I said, "Because I'm with you honey. Because I'm not with a black man." [Lisa]

Lisa is not surprised that they react, but instead, she is surprised at how they react, because she knows the rules of the game. She knows that her interracial relationship is frowned upon. Having a white male companion cost her. In this field it is negative capital. The value of any kind of capital varies by field. In the States, these black men questioned her authenticity as a member of the black community. These incidents show them their place in the community; their place in the black American field. Such encounters clearly do not occur on a routine basis during US visits, but they do happen often enough to crystallize those unspoken rules of interaction and acceptable behavior. Being involved with or married to a person of another race is perceived as negative black capital.

Unlike the more confrontational reactions from black Americans that they sometimes experience when in public with their Swedish spouses, they described reaction of white Americans as the polar opposite.

> But community I think... the looks on the street… I remember walking in…Petter and I were in the New York subway and New York being as cosmopolitan as it is, well blah blah blah. And we were at the Wall Street subway station, and a train was pulling in there and a lot of suits come on at that point and most of them are young white men in their suits and so on. And then you've got a few black people and so on, well actually the New York City subway is crammed with everybody, but those are the stations were, you know, white folks are on. And Petter and I were standing next to one another. I don't think people had associated us as being together or anything. And my husband is a kind of chic dresser in a way. He's kind of Euro-chic, metro-sexual whatever, scarf around and that sort of thing (chuckles) and it was very interesting because… you get the blank stares you know. When you're black in these public settings, white people don't focus on you, they don't look at you. They kind of see through you. They don't notice you. They don't look at your clothes. And when Petter took…he actually put his hand over mine when we were holding the pole, and they literally jumped. A physical reaction happened because all of a sudden, we stood so far out of a very mundane situation. All of a sudden [snaps fingers]; it was like 'Whoa'. You could literally see the white, [the] suits, they jumped. And that was a shock. That was a real shock. [Gabriele]

In these kinds of environments, such as the wealthy, white, Wall Street station environment, she feels that she is made invisible as a black woman, regardless of what she is wearing (a class marker); "they kind of see through you", she says. She only

became visible when "the suits" realized that she was with a white man, and that relationship made her worth attention. Not only was Gabriele and Petter's action a shock to the suits, but the reaction of 'the suits' was a shock to her as well in the sense that she had lived abroad for so long, she no longer expected that kind of response. Lisa, on the other hand, is "never surprised" when she encounters rude or insensitive reactions from white Americans when with her husband.

> Lisa: We were visiting Sausalito, a ritzier part of the Bay area. …There are some nice shops and things like that. And so we... we were in this store. It was like a Nordstrom's or a Macy's. I'm looking at jewelry. There's like nobody else in there really but me. And it's just the costume jewelry. And Isak's there, just standing there looking completely bored out of his mind. And this saleswoman, she's just kind of walking around just pretending that she's cleaning stuff, but I know she's looking at me and trying to see what I'm doing. And I'm like that's ok. I don't care. And she's…but she doesn't recognize me or say 'May I help you? Is there anything…' or whatever. And Isak's standing maybe where you [interviewer] are [3ft away] in relation to me, but I have my back to him. And she comes up to him and he's got bags and stuff and goes "Oh good afternoon sir, is there anything that I can help you with?" I hear this, and I'm just like 'ok bitch'.
>
> (laughter)
>
> Lisa: And then Isak just looks at her and goes "No. But you can help my wife." And the woman is like "Oh where is she?"
>
> (gasps and laughter)
>
> Lisa: Yeah! She's like "Oh, really? Oh where is she?" like that. And Isak's like (pointing), "She's right there in front of you." And she's like, "Huh? Oh!" And I turn around and say, "You know what. I don't need any help thank you". And she looked…was just like…. But I wasn't surprised. I'm never surprised.

"Just the costume jewelry", she says implying that part of the rude treatment may have been class based. It also implies that she may have expected some rude, class based treatment in a very high-end jeweler's place, but a store like "a Nordstrom's or a Macy's" didn't have enough clout to treat her that way. The saleswoman ignored her and rendered her invisible. Only when her relationship to her husband became known did the saleswoman appear to "see" her.

They feel, in these contexts, to be invisible to white Americans until their relationship is evident; at which point they may receive some better treatment. With

respect to black people, they more often have the opposite experience. They are seen and visible among other black Americans, but when their relationship with a white man is made known, they can experience a hypervisibility and be the focus point of hot stares and judgement or the reactions can be even more confrontational and negative. The women were clearly more sensitive to the reactions of other black Americans in these circumstances because this kind of criticism feels like, and may be, a form of rejection or exclusion. While having a white partner appears to be a kind of negative capital in the black American field, it may function as positive capital in the broader American field. They expect places like D.C., New York, and the Bay Area to be more cosmopolitan and accepting than other parts of the US, but have found that it is not the case.

When it is time to return to Sweden and they have to switch fields again and it gets harder each time to adjust and re-adjust. Returning to Sweden can often involve an emotional self-questioning about how far their roots can extend, and for how long can those roots can remain strong. It takes them days or even weeks to get over the sadness of separation and until their lives in Sweden return to 'normal'.

Swedish Ways of Being, American Ways of Belonging

In this section I discuss how Black American women have become active participants in Swedish society, yet reserve a sense of belonging for their American roots.

> The concept of social fields is a powerful tool for conceptualizing the potential array of social relations linking those who move and those who stay behind (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 10). … A social field perspective also reveals that there is a difference between *ways of being* in social fields as opposed to *ways of belonging* (Glick Schiller 2003; 2004). *Ways of being* refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions. Social fields contain institutions, organizations, and experiences, within their various levels, that generate categories of identity that are ascribed to or chosen by individuals or groups. Individuals can be embedded in a social field but not identify with any label or cultural politics associated with that field. They have the potential to act or identify at a particular time because they live within the social field but not all choose to do so (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 11).

As I illustrated in Chapter Three, black American women often desire to be on the outside of immigration debate with respect to being misidentified as a refugee or African immigrant. The vast majority of them do not seek to be an active part of any pan-black alliance in Sweden themselves (cf. Chapter Four), although they wish African immigrants and refugees would establish some 'solidarity' to help their situation. They are American first in this Swedish field. As such, they participate in Swedish society without being emotionally connected to it.

> In contrast, *ways of belonging* refers to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group. These actions are not symbolic but concrete visible actions that mark belonging such as wearing a Christian cross or Jewish star, flying a flag, or choosing a particular cuisine. *Ways of belonging* combine action and an awareness of the kind of identity that action signifies. (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 11)

I discuss several of these practices and actions and the women's cognizance of the meaning of those activities.

Swedish Ways of Being

In Sweden, black American women have been successful in establishing new ways of life for themselves. Negative encounters aside, they have continued to strive for acceptance from and deeper relationships with Swedes, in particular, in-laws, acquaintances, neighbors, co-workers, and friends. To do this, they have invested time in learning the language (or trying to), learning Swedish cultural beliefs and values, and establishing a position for themselves through participatory practices. This process however, takes time and is often difficult.

There was a shared sentiment among a number of women, of their experience in Sweden as a time of starting over, of having to fashion a new identity for themselves in a place where prior markers of individuality do not translate.

> I think what I suffered from most when I moved here was… [feeling] a loss of identity. I think the issues that I went through were more personal than having to do with the surrounding environment. I felt really uprooted. I felt like I didn't have any references that I could relate to anymore. All the things that made me who I was in the US, they didn't apply anymore – like job or school or friends or family or even where you vacationed or what sports you did. Things that we [as Americans] valued over there [the States] were not the same here. I think that…maybe that is culture shock. But that is what I suffered from mostly. [Michelle]

Americans want to hold on to the sense of ease with which they maneuver in the fields in which they grew up in the US, but often experience a loss of orientation in Sweden. As Henrietta commented, "…living here has been like starting a new life, like a rebirth. Starting over and taking baby steps all over again." They find that various forms of identity markers gave them a sense of self and position in the US may have little to no value in a new field such as Sweden. When individuals enter another field other than the one in which they are "at home", most markedly seen in immigration to a new land, they must learn a new set of rules, rules of social interaction, a slow and profound process that Bourdieu akins to a kind of "second birth" (Bourdieu 1990, 68).

With the help of a Swedish friend and her business savvy and financially secure Swedish husband, Michelle started her own business. Knowing the difficulty she would have on the job market, she purposely avoided the entire process of applying, interviewing, and being rejected for jobs, because she could do so; because she had those options available to her. Successfully opening and operating the boutique, she has successfully positioned and embedded herself. Her boutique gives her not just a job but a position of status. She is not simply working in a store, but instead owns and manages the store. This makes her feel more accepted by Swedes in their social set.

> And more importantly it [the boutique] established me here. As I was saying before, when I got here I felt like I didn't have an identity. And then my identity was Nils's girlfriend or Nils's wife. And you go to dinner parties and [people ask], 'What are you doing?', and you're like, 'Uh ha ha' (imitates nervous laughter). So I went through that phase, but though the boutique I had my identity. I had my own platform. I had people who now see me as Michelle from [names her boutique], that American girl who works at [names boutique], instead of Nils's wife or Karina's

> mother. And that meant so much to me and that made me feel really…integrated. After I had a child I felt more integrated into this society. And with the boutique and working… I feel working in general makes people feel more integrated into this society, because work is a big part of the Swedish psyche. If you compare to the US, [there] it's ok to be a stay at home mom. But here it's not as common and so much is intertwined with what do you do and where do you work. And you sort of have to be this worker bee and have something cooking. So whether you work full-time or part-time, I think it makes it easier…that you have some kind of work, people respect it and it makes you feel that you are doing something. But I feel that type of pressure in this society actually. [Michelle]

Michelle and other women felt a pressure to work and to not be seen as "sitting around". Unemployment in Sweden is frowned upon, and given the refugee tension in the nation; nonworking, unproductive black bodies may be especially frowned upon. A person who works, then pays Swedish taxes, and thus contributes to government welfare coffers as opposed to drawing from them. As such, work is looked upon favorably in Swedish society. Michelle put effort into establishing a new identity and position that Swedes would appreciate – business owner, Gamla Stan penthouse dweller. In addition to work, both marriage (being married to a Swede) and family formation (having children in Sweden) are other categories of performative, informal practices that reflect Swedish ways of being. This kind of informal, participatory, and performative involvement and its resultant 'integration' or embeddedness not only allows the women to avoid negative treatment and cultural politics in Sweden but to establish a firm positioning for themselves.

Yet, I suggest, how they approach non-quotidian practices such as citizenship and voting decisions can demonstrate an underlying lack of emotional connection that in turn reflects how their identities are not connected to these actions. In other words, how black American women approach these practices is indicative of the fact that they do not have a sense of Swedish belonging. All of my informants either already had permanent residency or were in the process of getting it. Immigrants qualify for permanent residency

after living in Sweden for two years. Many are undecided about continuing toward citizenship. Immigrants may apply for citizenship after an additional three years if living with a Swede (five total years) or after an additional five years if not living with a Swede (seven total years). Until the early 2000s, Americans had to give up their American citizenship in order to take Swedish citizenship. None of my informants did this, even the longest residents who arrived in the 1960s. Taking Swedish citizenship was a heavy and permanent decision about where an individual wanted to live the rest of their life. Also, giving up American citizenship in those days would have prevented their Swedish born children from being able to claim both. Now that dual citizenship is offered, some of them plan to get both. Others have no plans to ever apply for citizenship or remain undecided.

Women who either have or were in the process of getting Swedish citizenship, did so for very practical reasons, and not because of a feeling of cultural connection or sense of belonging to Sweden. Those who seek citizenship, do so for reasons that are more logical and safety related. The most common reasons given were to 1) increase chances for employment in Sweden, 2) make it easier and faster to travel around the EU (European Union), especially with children, since they can then wait in the same lines together, and 3) make it safer to travel around the world post 9/11 on a European passport.

Alternately, more emotional reasons were given by those women who did not plan to seek Swedish citizenship. “I’m not a citizen of Sweden” said fifteen-year resident Emma. “I’m so American I feel. I mean I love Sweden, but I don’t see myself spending the rest of my life here.” Some never seriously considered applying for citizenship

because as a permanent resident, they "have everything". (The main difference between permanent residency and citizenship is that citizens can vote in national elections and be present in military areas.) After seven years, Michelle also has made no move to apply for Swedish citizenship. "I don't know…" she says, "I think it's kind of an emotional thing. I'm not ready to take Swedish citizenship. I don't know if I'm going to. I'm content with having just my American citizenship." Odele has no Swedish citizenship after thirty-five plus years in Sweden. "I doubt that the general population would regard me as 'Swedish', no matter what my papers said, so I have never seen any point in applying for Swedish citizenship", she says. "... I do not FEEL Swedish....except when I arrive at Kennedy International Airport and have a look around!"

Those who I thought would be more likely to seek citizenship were those who were the most integrated (Swedish family, language skills, financial comfort and longest length of residence). However, I found that they were less likely to seek citizenship. It appeared that they apparently did not feel a need to obtain it. To them, citizenship was just paperwork. They did not feel emotionally rooted to Sweden. Among the women who did seek citizenship, one major explanation for doing so was to potentially strengthen their candidacy on the job market. Among those who did not seek citizenship, they either had permanent employment[42] or were retired. However, those who were newer to the country and/or unemployed did tend to seek citizenship.

Voting is a form of participatory involvement in which groups and individuals attempt to demonstrate some form of national investment. Most of my informants voted irregularly in Swedish local elections (permanent residents are eligible to vote in local

[42] Among those who are long term residents (over 15 years+), they secured employment prior to increased immigration and economic slowdown when jobs were less difficult to obtain.

elections only, not national elections) and some are even more reserved about participating. Although they have lived in Sweden a number of years and are opinionated about the government, they hesitate to get involved because they do not feel like one of the people. They do not feel Swedish enough. Others simply make no effort to vote in local elections due to lack of interest.

Whether they vote or seek citizenship or not, it can be seen that Black American women are not trying to become Swedish or seeking any deep sense of belonging to Sweden. They desire that Swedes view them as "people like everybody else" (Norman 2004) – in other words, people who are not Swedes, but who also are not marginalized outsiders. Since white Americans are 'Americans', people who are not Swedish, but are not entirely 'foreign' either, black American women stress their American identity to command better treatment in particular situations. They do not want to have to be positioned or have to continually position themselves, so they engage in (or strive to engage in) participatory practices, 'ways of being' (fluency in the language, residence in a 'Swedish' neighborhood, having a career etc.) that make their lives there more comfortable.

On a side note, after the rise in immigration, black Americans have faced a harsher climate as black people in Sweden in recent decades. Some of the black americans (female and male) who arrived in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s (cf. Chapter Two) have had many second thoughts about their decision to live in Sweden. They came to Sweden in protest of how they were being treated in the US. And a number of those who gave up their American citizenship in those early years now regret doing so becuase they have become disappointed in their treatment in Sweden. The special treatment they used to

receive has diminished. As thirty-five plus year resident Odele stated, “When I run into evidence of prejudice in Sweden I feel sad and disappointed. As one of my [older Black American] friends put it, ‘It seems at times that we are fighting the same old battle all over again.The only thing that has changed is the battlefield.’

American Ways of Belonging

Black American women in Sweden, share a sense of American belonging regardless of length of Swedish residence and express it in ‘American ways of belonging’. Again, by ‘belonging’ I refer to being an accepted part of a social group, membership and social inclusion in a community. National belonging often involves having a shared history and involves emotional elements such as “commitment, loyalty, and common purpose” (Gustafson 2005, 6). This belonging-ness is practiced in several ways. Many women forge a stand-in or makeshift connection to the US through participation in American organizations and concomitant informal social networks of American friends and acquaintances in Sweden (cf. Chapter Four). Participation in these organizations and in related activities creates some, albeit at time tenuous, sense of community. Community acceptance and participation, in turn contributes to a sense of American belonging. Visits to the U.S., as discussed earlier in this chapter, play a significant role in reinforcing a connection to nation, although the nature of that connection is complex and shifting on a more intimate cultural level. Phone calls, emails and other forms of correspondence fill in the time between visits. Although this kind of contact is neither direct nor physical, the information shared during these interactions plays a substantive role in their relationship to their biological, cultural and national ‘families’.

It is this sharing of routines and the activities of everyday life that maintains connections and furthers the imagination of community, which increases the sense of belonging. Additionally, my informants often routinely watch American television programs and news reports, which keep them up to date with everyday life and events there. American television shows and entire networks CNN, Fox News, etc. are available in Sweden with a basic cable subscription. It is through the American and Swedish media that they monitor American government actions and inform themselves during American campaign and election years. The fact that they continue voting in American presidential elections regardless of years of residence in Sweden, demonstrates this use of media and involvement in US society. It symbolizes their continued attention to American political and social affairs. Since they tend to feel that a lot of American news is censored, they feel, for the most part even more informed than the average American about American current events and American interventions in other nations, because they are getting information from European and American perspectives.

It was on these Swedish television sets that most of the women witnessed the devastating events of 9-11. This was a large scale national event that precipitated a re-evaluation of their relationship to the U.S. and altered the connection that even those who were among the most critical of the U.S. had to the nation. It strengthened the feelings of American belonging among all the women.

> I was quite torn. Well, I was terrified. … But I also felt there was a lot of anti-American… And I was also very critical. People in my department were very critical of the US. You know, why is it that if thousands of people can die in Iraq, no one cares and no one knows. But these are Americans so the whole world is supposed to go into mourning. And on a logical plane, I could really understand that critique and I could agree with it. But there was also this emotional reaction. So I think I had both of those. [Sofie]

> Yeah, I did [feel closer to other Americans]. And I was just completely emotional. Yeah, the comfort of other Americans definitely helped but it wasn't like being able to be home. And then again, last year on September 11th when Swedish foreign minister Anna Lindh was killed you feel

> this connection to Sweden as well, and then in just brought back all of the memories of 9/11… [Carol]

During the devastating events of 9/11, several of the women lost friends or friends of friends and were emotionally invested in multiple ways, which brought home a connection to the US. Although most of my informants did describe receiving some form of anti-American criticism about 9/11 from Swedes and/or other immigrants (cf. Chapters Four and Five), they also shared with me how they received private and public displays of sympathy from Swedes. Swedish in-laws, co-workers and acquaintances called them and offered support and well-wishes. Swedes also observed a public, national moment of silence, the emotional details of which one woman recounted to me as the act of standing outside next to her colleagues in memoriam. However, confiding their emotional stress in their Swedish friends was something that they did not feel comfortable doing since they felt that Swedes would not be able to really understand.

They had to find ways to cope with the events. For some, this meant spending more time on the phone with friends and loved ones back in the States. Patricia did not make any effort to seek other Americans in Sweden during this time. Commented Patricia, "I don't want tragedy to be the thing to bring me together with these people. So the same people that I would normally be with, I was with. But I didn't attend any service. I didn't feel any great need to bond with all of these people who weren't bonding with me before the attack on the World Trade Center. No. No need." However, for others, this meant reaching out. Some reached out to old American friends and acquaintances in Sweden. Some reached out to establish American friendships for the first time.

Michelle joined an American organization in 2001 right after 9/11. At that time she had been living in Sweden for four years. The days following those events, she described

as a time was when she "felt really isolated about being an American". After 9/11 she went though a difficult mourning period. Although she appreciated that her Swedish friends called her and reached out to her to offer their condolences, at the same time she did not feel comfortable talking about it all the time to them. So she was pleased when she met other Americans "who were at the same point" that she was and wanted to talk about it.

> And then when a lot of criticism of the US started to be voiced, that's also when I started to feel isolated. People who hadn't been there, who hadn't seen it personally were saying things, whereas I had spoken to my sister… We lost somebody who I had gone to high school with. So it was like how can you say that to the victim's families? You can't say that America brought this upon themselves. I was just so angry in that respect. That was also when I felt isolated from Europe and Sweden. And then I got a little angry because I think the whole Swedish humanist attitude sometimes is such a farce because I feel they have the luxury to think that way because they are very sheltered here. So that was hard and that's when I began to feel really American.
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> And I really went from somebody who had always been the type of person who in the US was very critical of America and certain things American to being somebody who lives in Europe feeling very strongly American. And that feeling has staying with me. I definitely feel much more American than I probably did five years ago. I mean not in a jingoistic kind of way but just sort of proud of those things that I grew up with, that I value. I value my individuality. Rather than always thinking…because here in Sweden it's very much a group mentality. And I think that's nice when you're thinking about the common good, but I think it's important to be individual too. And now that I have kids I think it's important for them to feel American as well as Swedish. [Michelle]

Michelle's experience reflects that of virtually all the women with whom I spoke, regardless of whether or not they sought American companionship in Sweden during the days of 9/11. They expressed to me that they felt in some qualitative way 'more American' – not in a way that is "jingoistic" as Michelle characterizes it, but instead much more sentimental and nuanced in that it is based on behavioral and cultural pointers with which they personally grew up and valued in the U.S.

Black American belonging in the U.S. has never been completely uncontested or unqualified. As Collins (1998, 8) and others have written, black Americans have historically perceived experiencing a kind of second class citizenship and second class

belonging. My informants told me some of their own personal stories of everyday slings and arrows in the form of acts of prejudice and job discrimination, etc., that they experienced in their lives in the US. Yet despite this, they maintain a rooted attachment to their American identities. This is because, as I introduced in my discussion of membership in American organizations (cf. Chapter Four), Black American women in Sweden appear to practice a selective belonging. As actors in transnational social fields, they can experience a sense of belonging that is based on nostalgia, memory and imagination (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 12). They can select to which aspects of America they wish to relate and attach themselves. Being American may take the form of anything from general American values such as individuality and individualism as Michelle and Gabriele mentioned, to very specific black American or familial practices such as cooking collard greens, hanging out, listening to gospel music as mentioned by Sofie, Carol, and Henrietta, along with everything in-between.

When I asked my informants about their future plans, a pattern emerged that displayed this connection and sense of belonging to the U.S. Those who had been living in Sweden less than four years roughly appeared to be more diverse in their long term plans; although most planned to stay in Sweden (or a third country) for the foreseeable future and then return to the US before retiring. Only one woman with whom I spoke, who had been in Sweden less than four years, had no plans to ever return to the U.S. Those who had been in Sweden for an intermediate amount of time five to fifteen years felt that they would stay in Sweden in the near future, meaning another five years or so but in the meantime a reevaluation of their long terms plans were likely to take place. They were ambivalent about remaining in Sweden permanently. When asked why she

does not want to retire in Sweden, Emma, a single woman and resident of fifteen years explained,

> I think it comes back to the fact that I don't feel Swedish. And even though I'm making more Swedish friends and so on, I think…when you retire you need to have family and friends. And I don't know that I'll ever feel that this is my home. I still feel that New York is my home. It's where all my close friends are and family. So for me I would want to be around family and friends. And I don't think that I would feel that I was at home here. The Swedes are very nice people but there is still a wall. You're still a foreigner and I just don't want to be a foreigner when I'm old. [Emma]

Those informants who were married wistfully dreamed of a "fifty-fifty" life where they could live half of the year in the U.S. and the other half in Sweden. Although considered ideal by many women, those with careers and children in school knew that it simply was not practical. Others have decided to stay in Sweden because their spouses would have a difficult time finding a corresponding job in, and adjusting to, life in the U.S.

Those women who have lived in Sweden for over twenty years, planned to remain in Sweden the remainder of their lives for several reasons. They have children, spouses, and/or in-laws in Sweden that they have become connected to and from which they cannot be separated. Their Swedish pension would be reduced if they left Sweden and they would not have money to retire on in the US, since they have not paid into social security for decades. The cost of health care in the US has become too high and particularly those with health problems also have difficulty traveling. Moreover, they felt that Sweden is calm and safe, preferred to an increasingly dangerous U.S. However, this decision was arrived at neither quickly nor easily and they have learned to cope with the longing that remains for the life they left behind.

I argue that among Black American women in Sweden, ties to the U.S. are weakened short term and strengthened long term. This occurs even among the longest term residents, although the nature of that connection may be unclear and complex. There

also appear to be three distinct phases of residence and adjustment to living in Sweden. In the short term, the first three to five years, there is a celebratory exploration phase. Everything is exotic and new and life is like one long vacation. During this time, the women discussed feeling free of racial identity politics and other things prevalent in the US. They felt free to express their criticism of the American government, and at times, of the American people. Ties to the U.S. loosened as they began learning a new language and culture, finding employment (those who were able to do so) and generally learning their way around in a new society. As Carol pointed out (cf. Chapter Four), "Between five to ten years, that's when the homesickness starts". During this time period they begin to realize that their parents are getting older, that they need to plan for a family, or already have children and are struggling with issues of maintaining heritage long-distance. During childrearing years for example, a parent who may have had a loose ties to the home country and home country way of life, will often pursue those connections to help in educating the children about home values (Espiritu and Tran 2002; cited in Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 21) and I would add, about heritage. In this stage of residence, there is an emotional connection, which appears to increases as time goes on even as they begin losing contact with family and friends. As time goes on, they begin a re-examination of their desire to live in Sweden as some of them sense a weakening connection to roots when they begin missing major family events such as births, deaths, etc. It seems that most who return to the US do so during this intermediate phase of eight to fifteen years. There is also the issue of feeling like an outsider to Swedes even after many years of residence in Sweden that, not all, but many women experienced. As Ruth aptly stated, "You begin with a rejection almost of your background in the effort to fit in.

Then realize eventually that no matter what you do, you will never be exactly 'insert new nationality here', so you begin a re-examination and re-evaluation of those good qualities your background brings to the picture. And you begin realizing that the differences are or can be positive. It appears to be a natural evolution of sorts." Those living in Sweden over twenty years, while well integrated into Swedish society by this point, do not experience any sense of belonging to Sweden and in fact maintain quite strong connections to the U.S. The nature of these connections tends to be different in that they may have few living relatives in the States or may not be close to those family members that are there. So the relationship becomes almost an imagined one. They may experience a connection to a 'way of belonging' through "memory, nostalgia or imagination" (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004, 12). However, they strongly self-identify as American and do not believe that they will ever be accepted as Swedish and nor do they aim to be. Overall, the women experienced looser ties to U.S. in the short term and stronger yet changing ties over time.

Conclusion

Visits to the US keep Black American women up to date about the field in which they are 'at home'. Seeing family can bring out hidden concerns about losing connections to roots and identity as a black American. Whereas spending time among family provides a very sheltered environment, in public, black American women, when with their Swedish husbands, have sometimes received negative treatment from both black and white Americans. In such encounters, they felt ignored by white Americans until their relationship with their Swedish husbands became known. At that point they usually received somewhat better treatment. On the other hand the reaction from other black

Americans, when it did occur, more likely was one of staring, judgment and even confrontation. Given that having a white spouse was viewed as a kind of negative capital in the black American field, they felt more sensitive to the rejection of other black Americans since it went to the core of their identity.

Research involving national belonging has traditionally been done almost exclusively on large populations, in which associations may be forced or assumed by sheer numbers and physical proximity. By looking at a small, scattered population such as Black Americans in Sweden, meanings of belonging can be better interrogated since people operate as individual agents and where associations and practices are voluntary. Black American women feel a sense of belonging to the US and not to Sweden, even though black American relationships with the US have not historically been uncontested or unquestioned. They have learned to value more greatly what aspects of the US that they value, while minimizing the rest. Individuals belong to social groups to varying degrees. (The women's selective membership in American organizations is symbolic of how they also practice a selective belonging to the US.) Their desire of a fifty-fifty life, in which they could live in Sweden half of the time and in the US half of the time, displays how they wish to focus only on the people and places to which they relate. It appears to represent a shift in their thinking and perceptions of belonging since they now are free to connect to those aspects of their old home, culture, roots, status markers, identity politics, etc. that they choose. This concurs with Levitt and Schiller's (2004, 19) statement that within transnational social fields "based on their particular needs, individuals strategically choose which connections to emphasize and which to let slide." Over time, black American women's ties to the US are first loosened, and then strengthened. What

helps to ultimately strengthen those connections is the fact that they have the power to make invisible to them those aspects of belonging with which they do not wish to be involved.

Black American women practice Swedish ways of being and American ways of belonging. They have no sense of belonging in Sweden, nor do they seek one. However they can gain some measure of acceptance through the participatory practices in which they engage. Ways of being include the "various quotidian acts through which people live their lives" (Glick Schiller 2009, 31) such as raising a family, working, speaking the language and making friends. I suggest that their tepid and even indifferent approach non-quotidian acts such as Swedish citizenship and voting decisions may also indicate the lack of a sense of belonging to Sweden.

Crossing borders physically between the US and Sweden, brings home the changes that happened within them while they traverse these transnational social fields. This kind of travel also brings light to the shifting values that they place on different sets of interactions. Not only does the value of capital within a field shift in value, this research suggests that the value of fields themselves may shift, with respect to the importance of the woman's position within a particular field. Fields are multiple, yet distinct. Fields are hierarchical so it is perhaps possible that one field may replace one of the other two one in importance to the woman. This harkens back to the question of belonging and where one feels 'at home'.

CONCLUSION: MAKING SENSE OF CHANGING FIELDS

The purpose of this research has been to explore how black American women negotiate being both black and American in a post-immigration Sweden. In a national framework where white Americans have high and preferred status while Africans generally have a lower and less desired status, I explored where black American women perceive themselves to fit in. I conclude that their negotiation of being black and American in post immigration Sweden is experienced through the navigation of multiple and simultaneously existing fields, in which they occupy separate and distinct positions in each through the successful activation of capital that is in their possession. They make sense of their positions in the fields and their interactions in these fields, through a specific sense making process (cf. Chapter Five) common among black women resident in white nations (Essed 1991; 1992). For the purposes of this work, I have identified these fields as the Swedish field, the American field and the black American field. These fields are transnational social fields and as such, exist simultaneously in any given physical space. In this research I discuss the American and black American fields as affecting the perceptions, sense-making, and actions of black American women who permanently reside in Sweden. They have become fields of belonging in a sense that at the heart of these fields appears to be a struggle primarily over the symbolic resources of recognition and acceptance. Here, I return to and address the two questions which have framed this study.

With my first research question, I have sought to learn how black American women are placed and positioned in Sweden, how they place and position themselves in this new location; and what tools they use to do so. In **Chapter Three**, I first explained the centrality of (in)visibility and (mis)placement to their experiences since in many conversations they described being publicly (mis)placed by Swedes as African based on outward appearance. I also described encounters where the women feel themselves to be the objects of stares or feel deliberately ignored, which openly marked them as the other, and as not belonging. Second, they are placed as African and have negative encounters when attempting to speak (non-fluent) Swedish in public. Sometimes they find it difficult to know, in any given encounter, if the apparent failure of a Swedish person to understand what they are trying to say is a normal part of practicing a new language, or if it has become a tool of othering. Through such encounters, black American women discover the value of their cultural capital by speaking American English. Third, touching and other physical advances are in some cases rooted in sexualized stereotypes of black women and place them as the exotic other, as sexual objects. And fourth, the underlying the change in Swedish register towards black Americans versus black Africans is an assumption of economic and westernized cultural similarity between Swedes and Americans. Americans in general feel themselves to be a special category and outside of Swedish immigration/cultural politics, since they do not feel that they pose a cultural or a financial challenge to Swedes. This may be part of the conceptual underpinning which allows the activation of American cultural capital by black Americans. In two societies that may appear to be so similar on the surface, that the differences in rules of interaction can provide a type of culture shock. The women begin to learn and understand not only

that there is a Swedish field, but that it is hierarchical in nature. They also learn that they have the power to place and (re)position themselves by activating capital.

In **Chapter Four**, I explained how in the Swedish field, within the category of non-Swedes, immigrants jockey for a position closer to the Swedish center. Most immigrants to Sweden endeavor to acquire national capital and thus belonging. In doing so, they identify themselves as more national than some immigrants and less national than others. Black American women described having surprising incidences of immigrants from the Middle East trying to 'one up' them or displaying superior or condescending behavior. Black American women take one of two routes. They can speak American English and otherwise identify themselves as Americans and thus place themselves outside of the Swedish field of struggle over belonging and hierarchy between white Swedes and immigrants. Or alternatively, and only if they have accumulated the Swedish capital to do so, they speak fluent Swedish and otherwise show familiarity with Swedish ways of being, to position themselves above those who they perceive as attempting to position them.

In **Chapter Five**, I showed how, in the safe space of a black women's gathering (a physical manifestation of the Black American field), some women position themselves as more attuned to Swedish ways of being and thus in a position to mentor and advise others on how to make sense of their experiences, not only as residents in Sweden, but as individuals who feel 'in-between' Sweden and the United States; and who are dealing with different kinds of connections to both lands.

In **Chapter Six**, I discussed how in the United States, with regard to the black American field, place and position are linked to inclusion and exclusion and how that is

not based on color, but performance. Having a white partner is not part of that performance. When in the US, black American women, when with their Swedish husbands, have sometimes received negative treatment from both black and white Americans. In such encounters, they felt ignored (invisible) by white Americans until their relationship with their Swedish husbands became known. At that point they usually received somewhat better treatment. On the other hand the reaction from other black Americans was one of staring, judgment and even confrontation (over-visibility). They sensed that having a white spouse could be viewed as a kind of negative capital in the black American field, resulting in wavering recognition, placement or inclusion in the field, as opposed to being labeled 'not one of us'.

To revisit (Guarnizo and Smith 1998, 24) (cf. Chapter One), it is known that "immigrants or 'bi-national subjects' may be doubly empowered, empowered in one social field and subordinated in another, or doubly subordinated depending on their historical and current societal context." I asked if the African American historical context in the US influences how black American women make sense of their interactions with Swedes and of their new lives in Sweden, a European nation; especially given Bourdieu's view of homology. Again, "homology of position among individuals and groups in different fields means that those who find themselves in dominated positions in the struggle for legitimation in one field tend also to find themselves in subordinate positions in other fields" (Swartz 1997, 130). Black Americans in the US remain in a subordinate status (Collins 1998, 3), granted not without outlets of political influence and agitation. By contrast in Sweden, it appears that they are empowered as they occupy a high position of 'American' and 'guest' and are afforded the privileges that white Americans enjoy.

However, they also feel simultaneously subordinated within physical manifestations of the American field (e.g. American organization settings). Interestingly, they find that this has as much to do with their own mindsets and modes of behavior that they brought from the US, as it does with overt statements and actions by white Americans. In sum, I conclude that black American women in Sweden occupy multiple positions simultaneously; given the multiple fields in which they operate. They occupy high status or low, are accepted or rejected, depending on the particular field through which they are viewed.

Informants appear to experience shifts or re-evaluation in their ways of thinking as they live in Sweden. They understand where they are through the lens of where they have been and assess each new situation by drawing from a pool of past experiences. They learn that they may need to adjust their sense-making processes and expected rules of behavior from US to explain interactions in Sweden. They learn that all things may not be racially motivated and that cultural similarity and affinity may instead explain some encounters. In either case, it becomes important for them to learn about the Swedish social field. They realize that they have different levels of status in different places – in transnational social spaces – and that US markers of status and position do not entirely translate in Sweden. They learn that they have high status and that someone else is the other; but feel guilt for accepting differential treatment because they know that it is at the expense of others who look like them, and thus it is not entirely liberatory. In the US they feel that they are a 'them', while in Sweden, they find that they are a 'we' – up to a point (e.g. not on the job market). Finding out that point, however, is the basis for a lot of sense-making.

My second research question asks if black American women in Sweden have a sense of belonging to the U.S. and/or Sweden and if so, what form it takes. In short, I conclude that they have a sense of belonging to the US, but not to Sweden. Following Levitt and Glick Schiller's (2004) discussion of how distinct 'ways of being' and 'ways of belonging' form an integral part of life in transnational social fields, I suggest that the women practice what I call Swedish ways of being and American ways of belonging. I also suggest that the form of American belonging is a strategically selective one.

I have found that Brady's (1989) observation (cf. Chapter Two) that (white) Americans "suffer very little discrimination in Swedish society" does not seem to be reflected among black American women who do perceive more negative encounters in Sweden. Brady's (1989) findings that white American immigrants are "externally, but not internally acculturated" does not hold for black American women who are neither externally nor internally acculturated. However, Brady's (1989) conclusion that (white) Americans are "structurally as well as maritally assimilated" and that they "have taken on a participatory, but not an historical identity with the Swedish people" does appear to hold true for black American women as well. It also meshes with my assertion that they practice Swedish ways of being and American ways of belonging.

Black American women practice Swedish ways of being. They have no sense of belonging in Sweden, nor do they seek one. However they can gain some measure of acceptance through the participatory practices in which they engage. Ways of being include the "various quotidian acts through which people live their lives" (Schiller 2009, 31) such as raising a family, working, speaking the language, and establishing and maintaining friendships and social networks. I suggest that their tepid and even

indifferent approach non-quotidian acts such as citizenship and voting decisions may also indicate the lack of a sense of belonging in Sweden.

American ways of belonging take three forms: the form of physical creation (or attempts) of community among gatherings of Americans in Sweden and visits to the US, a mediated form through the monitoring of American media, telephone and email connections to friends and family in the US, and finally an emotional, nostalgic form. Belonging often manifests through the creation of community. In **Chapters Four and Five**, I discusses how, when they are together, although they may not be best friends, the women can express themselves as black Americans and they do find ways to experience a bit of "home" (a manifestation of the black American social field). While none of them thought that a black American 'C'ommunity existed in Sweden, my informants did have some limited sense of 'c'ommunity with one another in the sense that there are small informal networks that they have which connect them.

In **Chapter Five**, my informants mentioned joining American organizations in search of belonging, with mixed results. However, as showed in **Chapter Four**, they have found that establishing friendships with white Americans, particularly in the context of club settings can, at times, be simultaneously less complex yet just as problematic. Many black American women perceive experiencing acts of subordination within the organization. This sense of subordination was maintained is through perceived acts of rudeness, or insensitivity or rejection because of race and class issues. Black American women respond in three main ways to this environment, by activating cultural capital to gain better treatment, by reducing participation and adopting a selective membership, or by leaving the organization altogether. Since this American organization may be thought

of as a manifestation of an American social field, those who leave the organization can avoid the 'America' in Sweden in a way that they cannot in the States. Black American women seem to use cultural capital strategically to create or reinforce a sense of American community and belonging. And in turn, selective membership may reflect a kind of selective belonging.

In **Chapter Six**, I explained how black American women feel a sense of belonging to the US and not to Sweden, even though black American relationships with the US have not historically been uncontested or without inner conflict. Despite this conflict, they remain attached to their American identities because they have learned to value more greatly what aspects of the US that they value, while minimizing the rest. Individuals belong to social groups to varying degrees. The women's selective membership in American organizations is symbolic of how they also practice a selective belonging to the US. They wish to focus only on the people and places to which they relate. It appears to represent a shift in their thinking and perceptions of belonging since they now are free to connect to those aspects of their old home, culture, roots, family, and status/identity markers, etc. which they choose. This concurs with Levitt and Schiller's (2004, 19) statement that within transnational social fields individuals choose which connections to hold onto and which to let go. For example, given that having a white spouse was viewed as a kind of negative capital in the black American field, they felt more sensitive to the rejection of other black Americans since it went to the core of their identity. Black American women's ties to the US are first loosened as they experience a celebratory liberation from the identity politics of the US, and then over time strengthened as major life events begin to pass. What helps to ultimately strengthen those connections is the fact

that they have the power to make invisible to them those aspects of belonging with which they do not wish to be involved.

As a part of this research I sought to find out if any shift or re-evaluation of views and ways of thinking occurs within black American women when outside of the US and if so, what is revealed or challenged, if anything. First, I discussed how individuals often fashion a unique disposition for each social field that they inhabit, which influences how they maneuver in the field. It is ingrained and "manifests itself as a pattern of practices so tuned to the rules of the game that, to be in the field and take part in the ongoing game is to feel comfortable and 'at home'" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 128). In **Chapter Four**, I described how, although Black American women routinely and openly pass along contact information to each other when amongst themselves or amongst Swedes, by contrast, they are not only conscious of their interactions with white Americans, but they also appear to be conscious of their interactions with each other in the presence of white Americans. They expected that in Sweden they would be free of certain undesirable forms of interaction, but instead discovered that the behavior was within them. They carried that way of thinking to Sweden and also played a role in its recreation there.

Second, I discuss positioning within fields and positioning of fields themselves. In **Chapter Five**, Michelle, who was quite well adjusted in Sweden, described how if it were not for the anchor of marriage, she would prefer to return to her life in the US because her connections there had become more important to her. Fields are multiple, yet distinct. Fields are hierarchical so it is perhaps possible that one field may replace another in importance to a woman. It appears that the field in which one practices ways of belonging is positioned higher in importance than the field in which one practices ways

of being. Visits to the US bring home the shifting values that they place on different sets of interactions. Not only does the value of capital within a field shift in value, this research suggests that the value of fields themselves may shift, with respect to the importance of the woman's place within a particular field.

It is the nature of exploratory research to generate ideas for further research. One such idea involves examining if the root of Swedish immigrant hostility is cultural or racial (or both as some argue). Black Americans are a particularly illustrative population on which to focus, as individuals with high cultural status (similarity) and low racial status (similarity) to the native population. Black Americans receive better treatment when their American identity is known. Is that because race is not really the main criteria of treatment it is made out to be? In Sweden, it is not perhaps just race or appearance that triggers exclusion or antagonism because, one could argue, not all black people encounter hostility (given the experiences of black Americans). For that reason, 'culturalist assumptions' about 'how they are' and cultural (dis)similarity may be in effect. However, if certain black people (e.g. black Americans) are treated better because they are elevated to 'honorary white' status, as a result of activating American capital, then race is an important factor. Addressing this question was beyond the scope of this study but presents an interesting question for further investigation. Other areas of research in Sweden could examine the experiences of black American men in Sweden today. I also suggest that anthropological research be conducted that further contributes to (New) African Diaspora studies. More research needs to be carried out involving black American populations outside of the U.S. (e.g. France, Japan, Ghana) to increase the presence of black Americans as subjects in this academic field.

Finally, I reiterate that the goal of this research has not been to draw conclusions on whether or not Sweden is a racist society, or whether or not these encounters really are racially motivated, or whether or not my informants are 'correct' in their interpretations of their own experiences. I have presented these experiences to show the diversity of this population and to develop a framework within which one could begin to understand why and how these different perceptions exist. The focus of this research has been to explore how these women's sense-making of and reactions to events of living in Sweden, appear to be shaped by their individual and intersecting identities and subjectivities which were crafted in their social fields of origin, and with which they still interact while in Sweden.

Taking a broader view, I emphasize that my informants have had very good lives in Sweden. They have friends from all over the world. Most have Swedish partners, children born in Sweden, and in-laws. They find Swedes to be a good-hearted, if shy and reserved, people. In short, they have established a new way of life for themselves; a Swedish way of being.

> So for me, Sweden is a whole lot more than…the nonsense that I encounter [here]. But sometimes I forget. I sat down and wrote a list of all the things that I love about Sweden and I was surprised that the list turned out to be so long. Because we get so wrapped up in complaining…that we loose sight of the pluses. [Patricia]

It is important to realize that they keep their experiences in perspective, both with respect to Sweden and also with an outward looking gaze to the larger scheme. As we sat in her living room, Michelle commented to me:

> For me what has been really cool is seeing how many people of African descent you do see here, much more than you would think. I just think it's interesting that we as members of the African Diaspora are not just seen in those expected environments that people associate us with. It's great when you meet other [black] people who have lived in Germany or have lived in Paris or… I mean I think that that's wonderful. Even what you're doing your [research] on here in Sweden, as opposed to perhaps [some other] place where you could have studied where black people are... I think it's nice for us to do the unexpected because that's how you shatter stereotypes and have people forced to see us in a different way. That's what I think is really important. [Michelle]

I have found in this research that seeing people and their behaviors in a different way is a big part of how they, and we all, make sense of changing fields and our place within them.

APPENDIX

Chart of Mentioned Informants

#	NAME	AGE RANGE	YEARS IN SWEDEN	MARRIAGE STATUS	REASON IN SWEDEN
1	Alicia	20s	2	Engaged to a Brit	Adventure
2	Carol	50s	25+	Married to a Swede	Marriage
3	Delilah	30s	2	Engaged to a Swede	Marriage
4	Emma	40s	16	Single	Career
5	Gabriele	30s	2	Married to a Swede	Marriage
6	Henrietta	30s	5	Married to a Swede	Marriage
7	Lisa	30s	7	Married to a Swede	Marriage
8	Margaret	50s	5	Married to a Swede	Marriage
9	Michelle	30s	6.5	Married to a Swede	Marriage
10	Nikki	30s	2	Married to a Swede	Marriage
11	Odele	70s	35+	Married to a Swede	Marriage
12	Patricia	40s	6	Married to a Swede	Marriage
13	Phoebe	50s	14+	Married to a Swede	Career & Marriage
14	Sofie	30s	3	Single	Career
15	Tess	40s	--	Single	Career

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