



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES (CES)

# NO PLACE LIKE HOME

## Urban housing inequality in Gothenburg through an intersectional lens

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## Abstract

In the past ten years, the amount of migrants that have travelled to Sweden to make it their new home has increased at a geometric rate. Whilst the number of those searching for housing has increased, the amount of new construction or available housing has not managed to meet this need. Sweden has the largest homeless or precarious housing population in the Nordics. Immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are often excluded from an equal chance at tenured housing that their Swedish peers have access to. The second largest city in Sweden is considered to be one of the most segregated in Europe due to these housing practices against immigrants. The question is, what further complexities and barriers are faced by these immigrants, due to layers of marginalisation? In order to seek the answers to this question, I have held both a focus group and one on one serial interviews with immigrants who have been in Sweden for less than a decade. These immigrants came from a variety of diverse backgrounds, from ethnicity, to race, to gender, to religion, to disability status. I have broken down the housing crisis as it stands, and discussed intersectionality as an analytical tool in order to contextualise the results of the interviews. The results were codified through Adams (2015) and Creswell's (2014) conceptual framework for approaches to interviews, and then recorded accordingly. The results demonstrated that the barriers were mutually built, and that many immigrants experienced them based upon multi-identity affiliation, and thereby unique oppressions that must be considered in order to fully address a solution.

**Key words:** Immigration, intersectionality, racism, misogyny, misogynoir, xenophobia, tenure, insecurity, ableism, accessibility

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# Introduction

*“Identity can’t be compartmentalised. You can’t divide it up into halves or thirds or any other separate segments. I haven’t got several identities: I’ve got just one, made up of many components in a mixture that is unique to me, just as other people’s identity is unique to them as individuals.”*

-Amin Maloof (2012)

An international migrant is a person who is living in a country other than his or her country of birth (UNDES, 2016). Immigration can present itself in many forms, from a migrant who moves for leisure, work, vacation, or education, to ones who migrate out of need. Immigration due to need can present as the asylum seeker who has left their country and is seeking protection from persecution and serious human rights violations in another country (Amnesty International, 2021) or a refugee who has fled due to the risk of human rights violations (ibid). Despite the reasons for migrating being for benefit, migrants are still some of the most vulnerable members of society (UNDES, 2016). When it comes to integrating into a society, housing is one of the first needs that should be met. Where you will live, especially when immigrating to a new country, is part of your security.

As of 2022, immigrants make up 1.9 million of the Swedish population, or nearly 20% (Statistikmyndigheten, n.d.). Despite making up one fifth of the populace, immigrants in Sweden are far more likely to be part of the housing precariat. As Clair et al (2019) and Listerborn (2021) define it, housing precariousness is the state of uncertainty which increases a person’s real or perceived likelihood of experiencing an adverse event, caused (at least in part) by their relationship with their housing provider, affordability, or security of their home, and access to essential services. In this way it not only acknowledges housing insecurity, but much like Knutgård (2018), it raises the issue of those without housing tenure or contract.

When considering the housing market in Sweden, it is important to keep in mind that there is already a housing crisis present, and one which has been increasing at a geometric rate for the past few decades (Tyrcha, 2020). As the population has grown, both through an increasing birth rate and the incoming migrants, new housing construction in Sweden has not been able to keep up. This has created a unique situation in their rental market, with a queue system and secondary housing markets (ibid). These have acted as a bandaid to the problem, and created further barriers to equal housing access. Whilst there are vulnerable members of Swedish society that are represented by the housing precariat, there is an overrepresentation of immigrants (Bask, 2010).

The addition of layers of marginalisations produce multiple hurdles for immigrants to access safe, tenured housing in Sweden. As housing is considered to be a human right by the United Nations (OHCHR, 1991), any barriers to housing should be studied in order to be combated. To more thoroughly address the problem, the use of an intersectional lens when examining these barriers is vital. Collin’s (2019) intersectional framework will be utilised to analyse the data in this master’s thesis. More research is needed, specifically in regards to larger slices of the immigrant population and in different cities, in order to highlight this issue at every possible angle, and thereby confront housing inequality as a complete problem.

## 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this Master’s thesis is to analyse the unique ways in which immigrants are malaffected by the housing crisis, specifically aimed at finding out the ways in which they are excluded from equal housing opportunities due to their marginalisations. This was achieved via the focus group and one on one interviews of immigrants of colour in Gothenburg, who had lived in Sweden for ten years or less, specifically in the Gothenburg metropolitan area. The results of this research is intended to contribute to the literature, by demonstrating ways in which this problem of urban housing inequality malaffecteds

those with multiple marginalisations.

## 1.2 Research Question

*In what way do multiple marginalisations of immigrants create further barriers to accessing safe, tenured housing in Gothenburg?*

## 1.3 Social Justice Terminology

**Marginalisation** is the process of placing someone in a powerless or unimportant position within a society or group (Merriam-Webster, 2014) or the enforcement of their placement there. Visible minorities, many of whom are new immigrants, point to racism and discrimination as factors leading to their marginalisation in society (Jenson, 2000). Discrimination, prejudice, and oppression are the enforcement tools and measures used in marginalisation. These can be prejudicial service practises, discriminatory comments, or restriction of access, to name a few.

**Racism** is a historically rooted system of power inequities that targets based upon race; it privileges white people over people of colour (NEA, n.d.). This definition of racism is utilising the social justice definition of power plus privilege, as simply viewing it as discrimination based upon race is not fit for purpose, and when used, can tend to muddy the waters in the European context. It is racism on a systemic as well as local level.

**Misogynoir** is an axis where social inequalities toward being a woman or woman/femme aligned and being black combine. Black women experience a unique and extreme form of marginalisation that is named and addressed in this way. Misogynoir is a word used to describe how racism and anti-Blackness affect black women's experiences of misogyny (Salam, 2021).

**Ableism** is the hatred of, or discrimination against those who have some form of disability (NEA, n.d.). This can include visible and invisible disabilities, and conscious or unconscious prejudices. It can be anything from neurodivergence to a physical disability that causes this bias or discrimination, and it can be anything from a prejudiced attitude toward a disabled person, or a lack of accessible space.

**Xenophobia or Xenomisia** is a prejudice against or a discriminatory dislike of those who are not part of the main culture, or whose who have immigrated (NEA, n.d.)

**Precarious** is being a member of a housing precariat, for the context of this paper. As Clair et al (2019) and Listerborn (2021) define it, precariousness is the state of uncertainty which increases a person's real or perceived likelihood of experiencing an adverse event, caused (at least in part) by their relationship with their housing provider, the physical qualities, affordability, security of their home, and access to essential services. In this way it not only acknowledges housing insecurity, but much like Knutgård (2018), it raises the issue of those without housing tenure or contract.

**Tenure** is, with regards to housing, the ability to remain in a secure housing location for an extended period of time, without threat of removal. This refers, in this context, to those who have received a first hand contract and have the ability to decide when they wish to leave their housing, even having the ability to remain lifelong.

**Testimonial silencing** is the quietening or overt silencing of marginalised voices by those with privilege (Dotson, 2011).

## 1.4 Placement

This research belongs firmly in the Department of European Studies, as the placement and treatment of immigrants in the EU is a key dilemma. Housing is considered a human right by the United Nations (OHCHR, 2009), thus the issue of urban housing inequality in Europe has been coming to the forefront. Discriminatory housing practises and barriers to accessing safe and tenured housing should be studied, to provide greater security to the most vulnerable in European society. As such, the housing crisis in Sweden is already of particular note, especially as it has occurred for decades to a starker degree as time flows forward. This master's thesis seeks to contribute to the literature and to address blind spots in Swedish urban housing inequality.

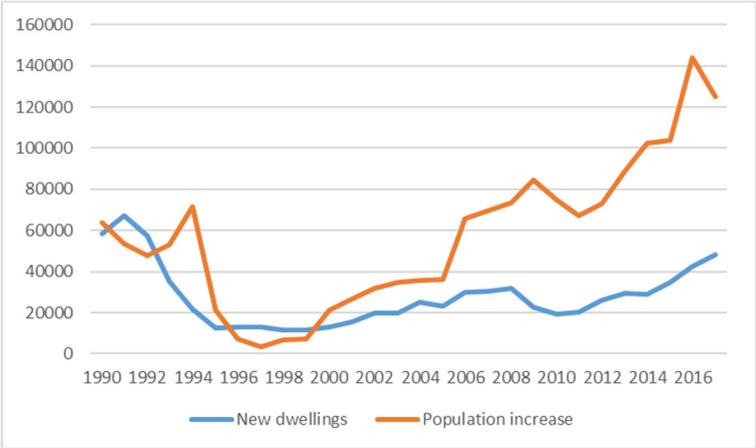
# Background

## 2.1 Swedish Housing

Significant research has been conducted on the relationship between immigrants in Sweden and the Swedish housing market and deficit (Saiz 2007, Degen, Fischer 2009, Gonzalez, Ortega 2012, Tyrcha, Abreu 2019). 255 of Sweden’s 290 municipalities now report a housing shortage (Boverket 2019, Boverket 2020a, Boverket 2020b), and as such, it is considered a countrywide crisis. Roughly two decades after the end of World War 2, still feeling the economic effects and the resettlements, there was a programme in Sweden, called Miljonprogrammet, which was meant to create more housing for lower income individuals along the outskirts of major metropolitan areas (Vogel, 1992). This programme led to new builds between 1965 and 1975, and was intended to give greater housing access, and mitigate immigration due to conflict (Lindvall, n.d.). During the 1970s, with interest rates far below inflation, incentivised tax deductibility, and very generous loans, construction moved away from Miljonprogramm and began to focus on detached housing, and the building of a suburb for the middle class Swedes (ibid). As the cost of a mortgage was below the cost of rent, this created a focus on the build up of the metropolitan suburb, whereas the Miljonprogramm areas fell to the wayside.

The market segmentation that occurred due to this change of pace (Andersson et al 2010) has been a noted cause of the shrinking of the rental market, with a drive for available flats and homes for sale rather than for rent. This has greatly contributed to the gentrification of previous Miljonprogramm areas, as citizens with tenure have been more likely to afford them (Andersson & Turner 2014). As demonstrated by Emilsson and Öberg in the below chart, the housing market has been unable to keep up with the population growth (Nissanka, 2021)..

**Table 2.1, Growth of population in Gothenburg vs. new dwellings (Emilsson & Öberg, 2021)**



Public and private rentals are still considered the norm in much of Sweden, especially in the poor and working class areas (Andersson et al 2010; Lind 2015; Öresjö et al 2005). As such, housing in Sweden is considered to be a unique market, as the ways in which one must search for and acquire housing is not common compared to other western countries. It is built upon a universal housing policy, with rent controls, municipal based housing, quality control, and an integrated rental market (Bengtsson, 2013; Grander, 2018). This is intended, without means testing, to create a more even, or egalitarian playing field in the rental market (Granath Hansson and Lundgren, 2019). Yet, there is a black market for long term leases in Sweden for rental apartments, due to the high competition and difficult queueing system (InterNations, 2022). First hand contracts, or contracts directly from the owner of a flat, are often found through the housing queue. Some queues are run through municipalities, and others are run by private companies. You can go online and enter multiple housing queues, including ones for specific groups, such as for pensioners, for students, or even for youth. Some queues do require you to pay an

annual fee in order to maintain your place in the queue, but others are free. The availability depends upon the area in which you reside. As you remain in the queue, you accumulate points, which makes you a more attractive applicant.

Once you enter the queue, you can look at apartments that are currently available, or that will be so in short order. Any apartments that the applicant likes the look of, they can register their interest with the company. The company can then select from a pool of those who have registered their interest, in order to offer a viewing. Afterward, they may check in on your application, to ensure that you meet all credentials, from your personal number, or personnummer, to proof of sufficient income and/or an employment contract so they can ensure that your rental payments will be remitted on time (InterNations, 2022). The average amount of time that an applicant must wait to receive an offer for a first hand contract varies greatly depending upon their location, but first hand contracts are often the most stable form of housing, as many individuals have the ability to remain there for years, if not for life (Tyrcha & Abreu, 2019, Tyrcha, 2020). This is the security of tenure, which is something that secondhand contracts cannot guarantee (Statskontoret, 2017).

Second hand contracts are often less stable, and are subject to stricter regulation (Tyrcha, 2020). These contracts, referred to as 'andra hand', can be found through the sublet markets. Sublet markets are available either by word of mouth, or, most often, on a variety of websites from Blocket Bostad to even the Facebook Marketplace, or multiple housing Facebook groups for students, immigrants, ex-pats of specific countries/regions, or Swedish nationals alike. The availability and trustworthiness of these sites is not as regulated, and oftentimes there are warnings to not put forward a deposit without a contract. These sublets are often highly insecure, and lead to short term contracts of either a handful of weeks up to a year, and may not be legal (Listerborn, 2018). They may also be kept in a state of disrepair, with no guarantee of the landlord being responsible for upkeep (SOU, 2017).

## 2.2 Housing for Immigrants

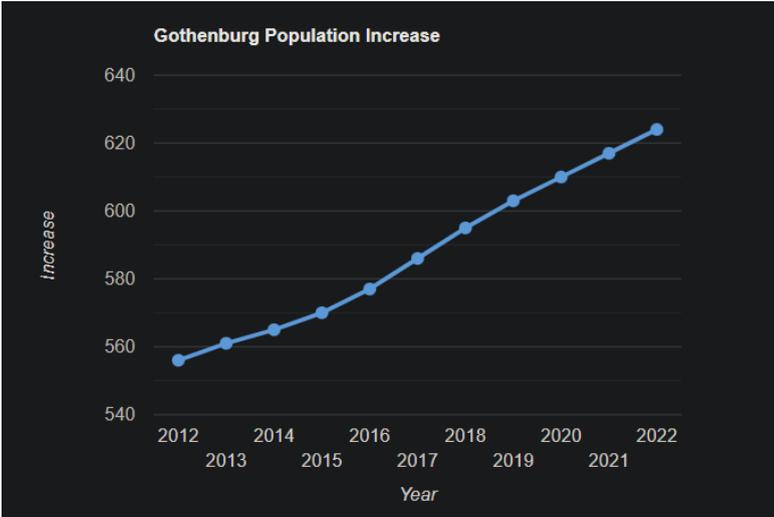
High income countries such as Sweden host two thirds of all international migrants worldwide (UNDES, 2016). Housing for refugees is an emergent integration issue in Sweden, and has been noted by the Swedish Prime Minister, Magdalena Andersson, as one of the key ways Sweden has failed to integrate the vast numbers of immigrants it has taken in over the past two decades (Reuters, 2022). Whilst Sweden has seen a medial flow of immigrants over the last twenty years, there was a distinct increase due to the Migration Crisis in 2015, leading to the penning of a Settlement Act in 2016. This made it mandatory for municipalities to receive a specific number of refugees, and to ensure accommodation (Emilsson & Öberg, 2021). As this has brought the responsibility for housing down to a local level, many concerns have been raised by Integrationsverket with regard to the high amount of ethnic and socioeconomic segregation seen in Swedish municipalities with regard to housing (Integrationsverket, 2003). Whilst investigation into the policy has demonstrated that all municipalities have taken in a roughly equal share of refugees (Osanami Törngren & Emilsson, 2018), only around half of the municipalities have been shown to offer permanent housing solutions to the refugees (Länsstyrelsen, 2018; Boverket, 2019). The local governments continue to push, or "steer" the refugees and immigrants into certain areas, strongly upholding and contributing to the current segregation (Edin et al., 2003; Zenou et al., 2006; Åslund & Rooth, 2007). The main arguments toward continuing to steer these refugees into certain areas of cities were to do with the legal status of the migrants and their lack of personnummer, the lack of resources that these migrants have or have access to, and prioritisation of living areas in the city, so that they do not become vulnerable (Borevi and Bengtsson, 2015; Myrberg, 2017, Bråmås, 2006). These have been found by Borevi and Bengtsson (2015) to argue against giving migrants the same access that Swedes would have to the housing market.

As such, those with a migratory background are more likely to live in overcrowded, unsafe, or unsatisfactory housing conditions than those with a Swedish background (Nissanka, 2021; Statistikmyndigheten, 2018), and in fact, are more likely to be too many people to a corridor room, or a studio/junior one bedroom flat to be in compliance with a fire code. In fact, some have been noted to live five or six to a room (Dickson & Goarant, 2016). A look on Bostad Bolaget, Facebook, BostadDirekt, or other sites, and you can find a slew of korridorboende, or corridor rooms. These are rooms down a hallway in a home, often with the landlord living in the same home. Those who accept those rooms often pay 2000-4000 Swedish crowns per month, and must follow the rules of the household set by the landlord. Regulations and transparencies to prevent these vulnerable renters from being taken advantage of appear to be difficult to enforce in this subletting market that immigrants most often find themselves in (Clair et al., 2019; Desmond, 2016; Dorling, 2014; Roy, 2017).

### 2.3 Housing in Gothenburg

Gothenburg is one of the most segregated cities in Europe (Thörn & Thörn, 2017; thelocal.se 2016; Reuters, 2022, Östh et al 2015; Tunström & Wang, 2019). A large part to play in this is how the housing market functions in the second largest city in Sweden. The average waiting time for a first hand contract in the housing queue in Gothenburg is between 3.5-6.5 years (Hansson, 2019). As the second largest recipient of refugees and immigrants in Sweden, this makes for quite the difficulty. The population of Gothenburg in 2012 was 556,629. The population then increased in 2013 to 561,195, in 2014 to 565,806, and in 2015 arrived at 570,454. As such, it had enjoyed an average variance of roughly 4,000 per year, but with the Migration Crisis of 2015, this would change, and the numbers would jump (Statistikmyndigheten, 2018).

**Table 2.3 Gothenburg Population Increase**



The above chart demonstrates that after the migration crisis, the city saw a consistent increase of over 5,000 per year, despite the stagnation of the new housing construction sector (Nissanka, 2020). This was not helped by a noted rise in house price index, of over 6% in 2019, 6.3% in 2020, and another in 2021 (Delmendo, 2021). 15% of those who are considered to be homeless in Gothenburg have a migrant background (Knutgård, 2018, Kauppinen et al., 2016).

Andersson et al (2010) noted that the ethnic and migratory segregation was a salient feature of all large Swedish cities. This comes directly into conflict, in Gothenburg, with the presence of its universities with larger international student programmes, from the University of Gothenburg to Chalmers. Whilst the universities may be able to assist with some housing, most of what they can assist with are smaller rooms, during the school year only. As they not only serve undergraduate programmes, but also

Master's and Doctoral studies, the lack of family style housing, and the precariousness of the lack of year-long leases is a notable one. As such, many have been known to dive into the secondary or even tertiary markets, from sublets to AirBnBs to couch surfing, all without true security or stability to ensure their education. As such students are among Gothenburg's large immigrant sector that remain in either crowded housing conditions, or who live outside of the city and must pay, and time budget in order to commute (Boverket 2015; Myrberg 2012). For example, in Trollhättan, which is a 39-45 minute train ride from Gothenburg (or an hour by bus), the average monthly cost of a pass through Västtrafik would be 1870 Swedish crowns<sup>1</sup>. If one can prove they are a student through Mecenat<sup>2</sup>, they can pay the youth fare of 1405 Swedish crowns per month, but the extra cost, along with time budgeting, makes living in the city far more attractive. When the cost of a ticket is brought to mind, it can seem to even out the higher cost of housing and rent, despite larger accommodations with lower queue time being found outside of the city (Emilsson & Öberg, 2021).

## 2.4 Housing as a Human Right

The right to adequate and safe housing represents a base for social, economic, cultural, and human rights within a country (OHCHR, 1991). In the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations noted that this was part and parcel to the right to an adequate living standard, and the safety of each person. This was further cemented in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (OHCHR, 2009). Access to safe, secure housing can affect an individual's health, and the general state of well-being. Their quality of life and their access to other measures to improve life and health increase with safe, secure housing access (WHO, 2018).

Sweden, despite being renowned for being an egalitarian social democracy, has the highest amount of homelessness out of all of the other Nordic countries, and an even higher amount of those experiencing housing precariousness. Sweden has reported that they have 3.3 homeless persons for every 1000 persons. This, in comparison to Finland, which reported 1.3 homeless persons for every 1000, Denmark, which reported 1.2 homeless persons for every 1000, and Norway, which reported 0.75 homeless persons for every 1000, demonstrates the crisis Sweden has with housing that is not shared with its neighbours (Knutgård, 2018). Of those who are homeless, 43% of men and 48% of women were born in another country, and over half of them have resided in Sweden for more than 5 years (Ibid). But even this does not highlight the issue with second hand contracts that permeate the Swedish housing market - the lack of tenure and precarity can be seen in how those who disobey or upset their landlords can be evicted without the involvement of an agency, with no legal fallback (ibid).

Sweden's population increase has not been counterbalanced by a growth in the housing market (Nissanka, 2021), and the amount of those who live precariously, be it the over 40% of the vulnerable who live without a secure contract (Knutgård, 2018), or those who live in hotels, Air BnBs, corridor rooms in strangers' homes, or in illegal sublets whom the HOA, or the private organisation that manages an apartment or housing community, was not made aware (Listerborn, 2018) can be considered human rights violations that are being ignored.

## 2.5 State of the Art

As has been earlier noted, there has been research and attention into the matter of urban housing inequality in the Nordic region (Saiz 2007, Degen, Fischer 2009, Gonzalez, Ortega 2012, Tyrcha, Abreu 2019) and some attention has been given to the fact that there is inequality and segregation

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<sup>1</sup> As found on <https://www.vasttrafik.se/biljetter/periodbiljetter/zon-abc/> .

<sup>2</sup> As found on <https://mecenat.com/se>

occurring on a systemic level (Lindvall, n.d.; Vogen, 1992; Thörn & Thörn, 2017; Östh et al 2015; Tunström & Wang, 2019). There has been attention given to the vulnerable whom are most ill affected in this case, those being those with severe housing insecurities or the homeless (Knutgård, 2018), and those with a migratory background (Andersson et al 2010; Clair et al., 2019; Desmond, 2016; Dorling, 2014; Roy, 2017) and even how those of a migratory background have affected the housing market directly (Tyrcha & Abreu, 2019, Tyrcha, 2020). There have been mentions of how racism or xenophobia may have played a part in housing inequality (Borevi & Bengtsson, 2015; Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2008) but there is a blind spot in the literature when it comes to the discussion of the intersectional experiences of those most malaffected by urban housing segregation in Sweden. Where there is a discussion that highlights the added layers of ableism, cultural intolerance, racism, misogynoir and how it shapes this situation for the most vulnerable. As Sweden is considered to be highly progressive in anti-discrimination, the need for research that highlights the multi-layered complexity of the problem and how it can adversely affect marginalised communities in a variance of ways, it was vital to utilise an intersectional lens.

# Conceptual Framework

## 3.1 Intersectionality

“Intersectionality” is a term considered to be coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in her article, “*Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics.*” Although it should be noted that the idea behind this term was discussed fervently in prior scholarship. This term is used to describe the experience of multi-identity oppression, or the places wherein your marginalised identities can converge to create a unique form of oppression. Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013) describe intersectionality as an analytical sensibility whose meaning emerges through use. It gave birth to new terminology, such as heteropatriarchy, cisheteronormativity, misogynoir, and more, used to describe when two forms of oppression intersect, and identify the oppressing factor.

Each category that can be addressed in intersectionality holds distinctive structural foundations for social inequality (Collins, 2019). It identifies the main system or factor that causes the oppression, such as capitalism for classism, or white supremacy for racism, and the patriarchy for misogyny, and homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia, which are recycled elements of the aforementioned, although sometimes are referred to as homomisia, bimisia, or transmisia. It can similarly address the way that the world is formed and acts with solely non-disabled people in mind, such as ableism and audism. It is important to note that intersectionality is able to not only bring forth the way that these different identities intersect, but it is able to do so without interfering with the research, scholarship, or definitions that each identity already has within their praxis (ibid).

As noted by Crenshaw (1989), there is a strong need to consider multiple forms of identity and how they affect one, when pursuing research in the social world. As Chela Sandoval states in “*Methodology of the Oppressed*” (2000) intersectionality is a shift in the previous views of power structures. It is no longer viewing oppression as a vertical structure wherein the worst disenfranchisement is at the bottom and the complete lack exists atop, rather it is a horizontal scatter plot of identities that interconnect and relate to the centre. This is why it is described in many cases as an “intersection”, “marginalisation to centre”, or an “interstice” (ibid). It is also famously coined, by Gloria Anzaldua in “*Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*” (1987) as a borderlands, or border theory. These concepts are found in multiple other works (Andrén, 2017; Larsson & Spielhaus, 2017; Järlehed, 2017), utilising the concept of intersectionality as a metaphorical device to explain the realities of how these identities shape the way marginalised people move about the world.

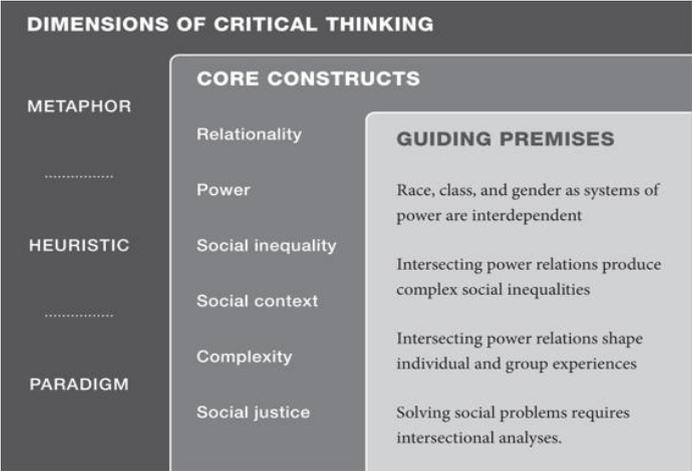
The core constructs of intersectionality, as described by Collins (2019), are relationality, power, social inequality, social context, complexity, and social justice. All of these systems of social inequality are both interdependent and independent, the effect of which is diverse in each human being it impacts. To make it plain, they exist both as different marginalisations, and can come together to form varying combinations dependent upon the marginalised community memberships of each individual. In this master’s thesis, the term ‘minority’ shall not be used due to its tendency to be inflammatory, but the placement of each respondent discussed as a member of multiple identities that experience marginalisation, discussing the discriminatory enforcement of said marginalisation, will be used. This is why the term ‘marginalised groups’ is used by this researcher. When addressing the testimony of the interview respondents in research, it is important to not only highlight the complexity of the situation, but to be knowledgeable and appreciative of how these intersections create this person’s life experiences. This is why Anzaldua (1987) utilised the concept of a borderland, to call on intersectionality’s concept of travel, but also to push forward diaspora, and the concept of being policed.

As noted by Crenshaw (1989, 1991), where these different social inequalities and identities converge, such as classism, misogyny, anti-black racism, and xenophobia, a lack of intersectional lens when

looking to resolve the problem are only of limited help. These multifaceted aspects of social inequality, from the burdens of poverty, bigotry, and lack of job skills or the time to dedicate to a job often combine to create severe housing insecurities (Crenshaw, 1991). When utilising intersectionality as an analytical lens, the researcher addressing their own privilege, and being careful and respectful when entering a space that is normally reserved for those who are marginalised is vital. To ensure that marginalised voices are raised above the researcher’s own, to not speak over them, and to not participate in nor create an atmosphere of testimonial silencing (Dotson, 2011). The identification of the respondent as a knowledgeable source, and the recognition and treatment of their experience as factual will give their voice credence.

As noted by Collins (2019), “Metaphoric, heuristic, and paradigmatic thinking map the ways that people enter into, respond to, and shape intersectionality as a form of critical inquiry.” In other words, in order to properly utilise intersectionality as social theory, one must follow one of the three, or perform a combination, in order to properly follow it as praxis. In this master’s thesis, the term ‘minority’ shall not be used due to its tendency to be inflammatory, but the placement of each respondent discussed as a member of multiple identities that experience marginalisation, discussing the discriminatory enforcement of said marginalisation, will be used. This is why the term ‘marginalised groups’ is used by this researcher.

**Table 3.1: The infrastructure of intersectionality (Collins, 2019)**



As a metaphorical device, it provides the cognitive architecture needed in order to more easily explain how power dynamics come into contact with social inequalities and marginalisations. It provides a framework to discuss the variances in the marginalised experience, such as enforcement of marginalised status through discrimination and prejudice, and also provides a means with which certain inequalities can be noted and addressed that may have been missed when solely considering each marginalised identity in exclusivity (ibid). Social metaphors provide evidentiary support to theory by modelling nature (Harding, 1991), and by giving a complex idea the ability to be broken down into concepts that may be more readily understood.

Intersectionality can also be used to shift the paradigm within a specific scholarship, to call out the places where previous or traditional frameworks are no longer effective (Collins, 2019), or where blind spots have occurred due to lack of consideration for the multiple axes of oppression a group being researched have faced. To address a problem on a local, regional, or even national level would require an intersectional lens (Collins and Bilge 2016) or the problem will be unable to be seen in full, and thus go improperly addressed, or harmfully so. The creation of new jargon alone is proof that intersectionality has many a time before shifted the paradigm and rendered less critical previous research. As a heuristic device, intersectionality can be used as a practical rule of thumb for rethinking

and reshaping the way that marginalisation and oppression should be contextualised and considered in scholarship (Collins, 2019).

Intersectionality's metaphoric and heuristic thinking provides important conceptual tools for problem solving (Collins, 2019). In this paper, I shall be addressing xenophobia, racism, and ableism, and how they further create barriers to secure and tenured housing by marginalised people in Gothenburg.

# Methodology

## 4.1 Qualitative Approach

As this research was undertaken with the goal of best understanding the ways in which an immigrant's identity has complicated housing for them in Sweden, I felt that the qualitative approach through the utilisation of semi-structured interviews, both focus group and serial one-on-ones was the most appropriate. This was done both to ensure the comfort of many of those being interviewed, as the most vulnerable were able to have the presence of their peers and a trusted educator, but also due to not being alone in answering questions that may be considered invasive.

Qualitative theory is utilised as a broad explanation for behaviour and attitudes, and can thus be used to best assess social research, parsing situations, experiences, and needs (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research similarly provides an orienting lens for identity inclusion in research, making it ideal to use alongside intersectionality as a framework (ibid), and permits a transformative perspective that can create the paradigm shifts that intersectional frameworks can incur.

A semi-structured interview is one which does not have a rigid structure, but does have an interview guide with some key questions, used to move the interview along and gather key data points. The lack of rigidity allows for the respondent to contribute outside of what the interviewer brings to the table, and thus allows them to shape the data around the respondent (Creswell, 2014). These interviews make the researcher a key instrument in gathering the data, analysing it, and putting it into direct context (ibid).

Semi-structured interviews allow one to add depth to their interviews, and to their research (Adams, 2015). They allow one to probe further into topics with individual group members, and to ask deeper questions. They also permit one to create a focus group agenda, or to probe further on the discussion held within a focus group. As a semi-structured interview allows one to be a bit more liberal with the interview, it was important to follow Adams' suggestion to begin with easier questions. I began with an opening question poised to set the interviewee at ease (Adams, 2015; Creswell, 2014) and worked in the smoothest fashion from there. It also provided ample ability for the respondents to go off on tangents and bring to focus their first thoughts, and what was important to them (Bryman, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews permit the interviewer to go with the flow of the respondent, and to not apply undue pressure to them unnecessarily. As such, this was my chosen method, in order to ensure that the diverse perspectives of each respondent could be heard, and properly examined. It permitted, with some guidance, for the respondents to share their ideas in an unconstrained manner. It also provided the ability to use a more natural setting, that of a classroom where they often congregated to commune with one another about their experiences in a shared space. The ability to speak directly to the respondents, to observe their behaviour in their space as an invited guest, is one in which qualitative research was the best course (Creswell, 2014).

## 4.2 Interviewees

Those who were interviewed for this paper were all immigrants save for one, most of them people of colour. Ten of the respondents were from a Swedish as Second Language class, or Svenska som andraspråk/SAS class in outer Göteborg. There were ten in the Svenska som andraspråk class that were willing to speak to me. The respondents needed to be highly diverse and variant based upon the direction of my research, and thus this class worked well.

Seeking a perspective of selective migration as well as necessary migration, I interviewed refugees as well as those who migrated by choice, whether for family reunification, socioeconomic reasons, political reasons, or just pure desire. One of the other interviewees was an American that had planned to relocate to Sweden, but was put off by their struggles with finding housing while they lived in

Sweden. Another was an American who had moved for work and had experienced a strong housing disparity due to disability, experiencing cultural intolerance. The final interviewee was from the United Kingdom, who had moved to Sweden with her Swedish husband. I interviewed her Swedish husband as a control, to see how his wife’s experiences had impacted him, and how he viewed the situation as a native.

Those whom I interviewed were required to have been in Sweden for long enough to have experienced difficulty in acquiring housing, but to not have experienced this difficulty for longer than a decade of time. This condition was selected to maintain focus on current conditions in Sweden. Those who have been in Sweden for over a decade are more likely to have integrated on a level to have their own form of social safety net, inclusive of an understanding of housing.

**Table 4.2: Summary of the interviewees, identified by their country of origin, and separated by their time in Sweden, and which interviews they were a part of.**

Interviewees				
#	Country of Origin	Time in Sweden	Focus Group	One on One
1	Somalia	1.5 years	Yes	Yes
2	Vietnam	10 years	Yes	No
3	Iraq	9 years	Yes	No
4	Syria	7 years	Yes	Yes
5	Iran	4 years	Yes	Yes
6	Palestine	8 years	Yes	Yes
7	India	5 years	Yes	Yes
8	Egypt	2.5 years	Yes	Yes
9	Kurdistan	1.8 years	Yes	Yes
10	Somalia	8 years	Yes	Yes
11	United States	Less than 1 year	No	Yes
12	United States	5 years	No	Yes
13	United Kingdom	5 years	No	Yes
14	Sweden	Native	No	Yes

### 4.3 Data Collection

The primary data was collected in a focus group interview held in a Svenska som andraspråk classroom, with the first ten interviewees. I had wanted a diverse pool of respondents, in order to ensure that I was hearing from varied voices of those affected, and not implying that it was an issue experienced by one group. I reached out to multiple immigrant centres, charities, and Svenska som andraspråk classes using social media, and finally received a positive response from one. There was a guidance from the teacher that they would not be required to speak to me and that I may arrive to the class to find this situation.

The number of interviews were limited due to time frame, but those that were conducted gave key insights into the research question. Two pilot interviews were conducted in order to test the interview guide and to test whether they allowed for freedom of conversation. The participants in these pilot

interviews were other students who had been living in the Gothenburg area for less than one year. Their answers were not considered nor recorded for this thesis. During these pilot interviews, the questions were analysed and discussed for whether they were easily comprehensible for those whom English is not a native language, for whether they may feel too invasive, or whether they did not spark thought or conversation. Adjustments were made due to language barriers, confusion about academic language, and repetition. One question was considered to be too indirect, and this referenced discrimination in a more clear manner to ensure that it was understood.

Following Creswell's approach (Creswell, 2014) I created an interview protocol for asking questions and recording answers during the interview. I prepared a paper with all of the questions ahead of time, in Swedish, per the request of their educator, as while many spoke English to varying degrees, this was a class wherein Swedish was being taught as a second language, and could count as an exercise. Each participant in the focus group received one to fill out, as well as to discuss. As part of my semi-structured interview, I had prepared 7 questions on the sheet, well within Creswell's suggested 5-10 (ibid). Everyone was able to eat, in order to create a more relaxed atmosphere, and the initial questions were poised to start a comfortable chat, and build rapport (Adams, 2015). There were questions and discussions that were not recorded before the interview began, as they were discussions about the food provided, and favoured items to eat, that did not have any bearing on the interview outside of building confidence and comfort in the respondents.

I asked the focus group how they felt most comfortable with my recording of their interviews, and quite a few were uncomfortable with the thought of being recorded. As such, I used handwritten notes, often in a shorthand in order to record it. I recorded a one on one interview with another respondent, but that was compromised due to the device being broken, so I utilised my handwritten notes taken during the interview. I tried to avoid using anything easily lost after that, so I recorded the field notes as early as possible after each interview.

I did ask probing questions in order to hear more about some responses, but found that the classroom setting did provide some confidence to those being interviewed. Interviewees were also happy to encourage each other to tell me things after a while, sharing looks and building off each other's answers. I took handwritten notes over the course of 45 minutes, and then spoke to the individuals for a ten minute post interview, wherein I got clarification on anything needed to the level of comfort of each respondent. These interviews were serial one on one interviews, with the interview protocol as structure. There were two respondents who did not come with me, due to religious reservations of being alone with a woman who is not family.

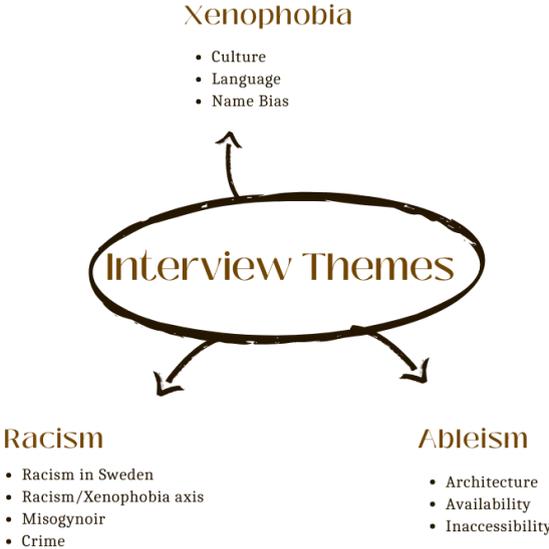
The one on one interviews of those who were not part of the focus group were conducted at varying places, dependent upon the comfort of the respondent. The American respondent who remained for less than one year had a quick zoom interview with me, and did not feel comfortable being recorded. Before the interview, we began a friendly discussion about American pop culture. Once the respondent was comfortable, the interview began. The second American was met for an interview at a coffee shop. As the respondent and I both come from a Hispanic background, we began the interview by chatting in Spanish. Any questions or clarifications made during the interview were done in Spanish. The British respondent and her husband were interviewed at their home, and we began the interview by discussing unrelated topics until a rapport had been built. None of the extraneous data was added to the interview notes.

## 4.4 Interpretation

All interviews were recorded by hand for the comfort of the respondents, who for a variety of reasons, did not wish to have audio recordings of themselves. The notes on the interviews and their transcription from my notebook happened as early as possible, to ensure that the data was clean, and the memory of anything necessary for the recording was fresh (Bryman, 2014). Any questions or clarifications not discussed during the interview were not raised further.

The responses of each interviewee and a summary of their experiences were considered, analysed, and codified to find and divide them between the main themes of the research. To do so effectively, I followed Creswell’s (2014) method of codification. Any repetition was cast aside as needed. The results of the interpretation are noted in the chart below.

**Table 4.4; Description of codification and separation of themes.**



Xenophobia was selected as a clarifying codification, as each of the respondents were immigrants or the partner of an immigrant, and thus this was a part of their identity, undivorceable from their discussed experiences. Racism was selected as 13/14 respondents were people of colour, and race was a major part of their described experiences in the interviews. Working with the material that I was given by the respondents in our interviews, I felt that sex itself was not its own category, but rather used in tandem with the experience of race, and so I highlighted misogynoir, or the axis of where race and sex meets for black women. Ableism was similarly selected, as it was in the experience of multiple respondents, and had to do with the physical nature of the housing provided. As the physical nature of the housing was considered, it did add another layer to the discussion – it wasn’t just communication, landlords, HOAs, or even bureaucracy to sort. It was the way that architecture itself could be a form of discrimination. Class was not selected in the codification process due to a perceived lack of content.

As each category was codified, the different means with which the axes of identity and the experiences of those within them were able to be discussed. Under each category, I highlighted situations wherein the axes can present – for instance, the way that lack of language access works to gatekeep immigrants of colour, the way that misinformation about crime is used to target immigrant men of colour as sexual predators, or the way that disabled immigrants of colour must go without accessible housing in their receiving country due to a lack of availability. Whilst these categories may be seen as separation of experiences and identities, they were used to simplify a more complicated cognitive architecture via a heuristic, and to demonstrate the ways that these systems of prejudice and marginalisation are interconnected. For instance, whilst name prejudice was discussed under xenophobia, it still could be pinpointed as racism, religious intolerance, or cultural intolerance as much as prejudice against national identity or perceived documentation status/citizenship.

## 4.5 Ethics

As this research is not medical or experimental in nature, and does not involve ionising radiation, conducting a clinical trial, the use of human material in a biobank, utilisation of genetic resources or associated traditional knowledge, dual-use products, handling of personal data, animal research, or human research (vr.se, n.d.), it was not registered with Vetenskapsrådet.

In order to ensure the comfort of those that I interviewed, I took down the interviews in the way that they requested, upon asking. Due to the group nature of the data collection, I had decided that if even one person was not all right with being recorded, it would not be done for any. I did advise them that they would be completely anonymised, and in order to best assure that, I did not request their names, only their countries of origin.

As some discussions were of a delicate nature that could be related to mental health or trauma, these questions were led almost entirely by the interviewee, and I checked in with them repeatedly on how they were doing, and their comfort level. All parts of the interview shared were with express permission. A trusted person was present in the classroom at all times.

## 4.6 Trustworthiness

Concepts of reliability are not always in consideration when looking at qualitative research, such as that undertaken by this thesis. As has been suggested in Bryman (2014), reliability is a bit different when considered in a qualitative study versus a quantitative, and thus the term 'trustworthiness' is used in this master's thesis. The four main criteria of trustworthiness, as described in the Bryman Method, are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Relevance is considered to be a more unspoken criterion.

Credibility asks how credible the findings are, based upon the diversity of sources and sampling, and thorough explanation of research procedure. The credibility is considered to be fulfilled in this master's thesis, as the interviews were able to positively contribute to the research, and be further contextualised in the conceptual framework. Credibility was further created in this master's thesis with a thorough background of previous literature, and transparency of practice. Transferability refers to whether the results are able to be applied to other contexts, or 'transferred'. This was achieved as, due to the analysis method being one with strong roots in social justice, it would be easily referenced.

Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of findings - whether they are properly detailed, and able to be followed. This was partially achieved by this master's thesis, as whilst there was transparency of every step, when doing social research, the opinions of the respondents may vary, which does affect the research at hand, as they respond to their life events in real time. Confirmability is a question of bias, whether the researcher has placed their views too heavily into the research, and affected the results. Using checks and balances, I made certain that any bias did not enter in to this master's thesis. None of the questions asked during interviews were intentionally guided to force an opinion, and all were recorded as spoken. Relevance refers to current social applicability, and based upon the current social climate with regards to immigration, integration, and discrimination, it is the belief of this researcher that this master's thesis is highly relevant.

## 4.7 Criticism

As thorough as the background literature intended to be, there were some pieces that came from more than a decade prior, that, whilst they supported an issue with a long history, did not have all of the current facts at play. These were thoroughly checked and only parts that were current and accurate

were used, with the exceptions of any historic discussion. This was necessary due to the blind spots in the literature previously discussed, and reflected the need presented by the text. There was a distinct blind spot in the literature with regards to accessibility and housing in Sweden, that was unable to be fully addressed by this master's thesis, although there was an attempt by the researcher to do so. Misogynoir did not appear in any of the Sweden-based research, and thus this was addressed in this master's thesis as well.

The amount of respondents was not as high as previously intended, and in order to research the topic more thoroughly in the future to attempt to replicate, it may be more interesting to do more focus groups with more participants. Due to the time constraints, there was a lack of ability to gain a larger sampling. The ability to bring an interpreter, for a funded study, may lead to a level of comfort where the respondents share even more detail, as some in the group were reticent and still had some reservations. Whilst the group was extremely diverse, which was intended by the researcher in order to prevent any biases or dismissals of the research as pandering, there may be a difference in responses if the group was from the same background, or in the same age group. There may have been changes if the group had been in Sweden for less time, or for longer than a decade.

There was not an inclusion of those immigrants who came from other Nordic countries, nor was there an inclusion of those from EU countries, due to a perceived easier time in transferring and finding housing. The research may have benefitted from a larger sampling of Swedish partners who had experienced the difficulties alongside their migrant partner. One was utilised in order to place some of the issues into context. There were many respondents that referenced an inability to receive a response from andrahand subletters due to their names not being Nordic. While it may have added benefit to the research, due to the scope of this master's thesis, an experiment to verify this information was not possible.

The low number of respondents does mean that whilst this can be considered transferable, it does not present a significant slice of the population, and thereby its transferability, whilst existent, is not of a high percentage.

As the respondents did not highlight their working lives, or finances beyond hotel costs, I did not originally consider class as an axis to discuss and further analyse. This is something that could have been investigated further, and how it connects with their identities as migrants of colour. Due to time constraints of the classroom time given and using the respondents as lead for the interviews, this was not as deeply delved into as it could have been. As this was not considered by this researcher, it can and should be considered for further research.

Due to the content of the interviews, there were multiple different levels of codification that could have been selected. Xenophobia/xenomisia was separated from Race due to wanting to highlight the name issue (which can happen with any non-Nordic name) and the religious/cultural intolerances. As one of the cultural intolerances discussed came from a person of Latin descent, and there is a significant portion of those of Hispanic heritage who are either white passing or are white presenting, it was important to differentiate.

There is some critique that labelling or categorising may go against what intersectionality itself stands for, but the need to name the axes in order to call out the powers at play is considered a vital part of intersectionality.

# Results

The results from the one on one interviews and the focus group shall be presented below. Each of the materials of the interviews have been divided into three categories, some with subcategories based upon further necessary context. Those whom were interviewed shall be referred to as R for “respondent” and the corresponding number to their entry in **Table 4.2**. Brief explanations of context are given for the quotes provided below.

## 5.1 Xenophobia

Xenophobia, also called xenomisia, is a prejudice against or a discriminatory dislike of those who are not part of the main culture, or whose who have immigrated. This was a theme that came up multiple times during the interviews, and is discussed below within the following categories: Culture, Language, and Name Bias.

### 5.1a Culture

Multiple respondents did bring up or reference culture to some degree when it came to their interactions with Swedes, and some viewed it as a barrier to their ability to have an equal chance at housing. One respondent noted that it was the difference in social structure, and whether it was common to speak to others outside of your community. For those who are coming from a more open culture wherein socialising is expected, this can make it even more difficult to navigate basic needs, such as housing, in a new country.

*“It’s the culture. It’s a very closed culture here, the way they talk and look at you.” [R8]*

This was further contextualised as making it difficult to get Swedish friends, and thus creating difficulties in having someone to vouch for you when trying to find housing. When one does not have a background in the country that can be pulled up, having a local vouch for you can be important.

*“There’s already too few. If you don’t have someone who can vouch for you, they don’t want to give you a chance.” [R9]*

A lack of knowledge or understanding of Swedish culture or housing rules did create some situations where respondents were taken advantage of by landlords, who knew that their tenants, due to their marginalised status, were in no stable enough position to say no to them for unreasonable demands. This situation was brought to light by a few respondents.

*“The landlord was always asking me for money early, though. Saying he needs more a week after I pay him... What else could I do? He would have thrown me out.” [R2]*

*“Asking for more money, asking for extra fees suddenly. And we pay them, of course we do.” [R9]*

Other respondents explained their situations with landlords wherein they were being made to pay more money, or extra fees, which they were not informed about upfront. This is also despite their landlords not upholding their responsibilities in keeping up the maintenance of the space.

*“In the house I am in now, I pay so much money. It’s brutal, when I say “Please fix this, it’s broken!” they don’t listen to me at all.” [R10]*

*“They were charging me more for rent than the cost of rent, and they stole things from me.” [R12]*

When asked about whether it had been considered to go to complain through an official channel, or whether they had the knowledge of what rights and official channels they could use to fight this discrimination, one respondent pointed out a lack of cultural knowledge, and their position in comparison to a Swedish native.

*“We don’t know where to go, or if we do, it’s in Swedish, and it’s the Swedish person against the immigrant. Who will they believe, do you think?” [R9]*

For another respondent, their own culture was weaponised against them in their housing situation, by their landlord, who also resided in the home. The respondent lived in a corridor room inside of the landlord’s home. They described a situation where they were ill-received for her traditional cultural cuisine, and overt acts of disgust and rejection.

*“The comments my landlord made when I was in the corridor room, about how nasty my “weird Latino food” smelled.” [R12]*

The person in question, whom the respondent made clear was the only place that they had to live, and was thus in a severe power imbalance with, also made physical demonstrations of cultural disgust and intolerance. The respondent explained an instance of bullying during the interview..

*“She would ask to try my “Weird Latino food” and when I would let her, would make a really exaggerated face of disgust and ask how I could eat that. But, what could I say? I needed her house for a place to live.” [R12]*

## **5.1b Language**

For many who have immigrated to a new country, learning the language can be extremely difficult, and it can further marginalise an already vulnerable person. It can bar access to basic services that can protect one from discrimination, or help those in need for their housing. This was noted by a respondent discussing their housing authority not ensuring that their messages were understood by their tenant.

*“The HOA sends letters, they are always in paper, in Swedish. I don’t know what’s happening with them. All of the notices are in Swedish.” [R3]*

Another respondent echoed this sentiment, that there was a presumption of tenants being able to speak Swedish, and that if you could not, there was a distinct lack of resources to fall back on. As most, if not all postings with regards to housing are in Swedish, and all communications from HOAs or landlords are to be in Swedish, this is a large barrier to housing for immigrants who cannot speak it, and have limited to no access to those who can assist them.

*“They just assume you must speak Swedish, and if you don’t, they don’t care. They won’t make the effort to make sure you understand.” [R8]*

The noted difficulties even came from putting in interest for a sublet or a flat, whether first or andrahand, on any convenient site, from Facebook to Blocket Bostad. A few respondents discussed their forms being more often ignored or dismissed for either not being in Swedish, or not being written in fluent enough Swedish.

*“If they even answer you when you send in the form.” [R1]*

*“Finding good housing is hard when you don’t speak the language” [R9]*

If one is able to pass muster with their interest form on a site, sometimes the lack of ability to speak Swedish as well orally, or the use of a translation site becomes clear with a second contact over the

phone, as noted by another respondent. They noted the phone call and their lack of fluent Swedish as a barrier to housing.

*“You maybe can type well in Swedish, but they want a phone call, and you can’t.” [R9]*

The attitudes toward migrants who do not speak fluent Swedish have also been noted by some of the respondents, which have also contributed to difficulties in finding secure housing. They expressed that they have felt judged or dismissed by their lack of Swedish proficiency.

*“When you talk Swedish badly (they look at you differently).” [R7]*

*“When you don’t know how to speak Swedish, they look at you so badly.” [R10]*

### **5.1c Name bias**

When discussing seeking housing, multiple respondents mentioned difficulty in getting a response. A few even stated that they knew it was due to their name. It seemed to be common knowledge among a few of the respondents that there was a lesser likelihood of being responded to on the subletting sites, or in queues, if one did not have a traditionally Nordic name.

*“If ... your name is wrong.” [R5]*

*“I think I didn’t get a lot of responses because of my name, I heard that’s common.” [R12]*

*“Trying to get people to answer you. They don’t answer if you have a foreigner name.” [R1]*

One of the respondents tried, after some frustration with a lack of response, with a Swedish name, and received a similar result. Despite her only wanting a flat, and not honestly intending to lie to someone, she wanted to know whether or not she was receiving a lack of interaction due to her name. Whether a native Swede, or someone who looked like one, might fare better.

*“I wrote to the same person, and I used a different name. They answered the Swedish name right away.” [R10]*

## **5.2 Racism**

In this section, racism is discussed in the interviews, and separated into four sections - Racism in Sweden, in which respondents discuss how Swedish culture has overlapped with racism to create a unique form of oppression, the axis of racism and xenophobia, the axis of anti-black racism and misogyny experienced by immigrant women, and crime.

### **5.2a Racism in Sweden**

When speaking with one respondent, she highlighted the ways in which the more closed nature of Swedish culture reflects in the racism experienced by immigrants of colour. This treatment was highlighted in the discussion about housing, in the way they are excluded from housing equality.

*“Racism in Sweden.... It’s a very quiet sort of violence, one where they exclude you, won’t speak to you, won’t know you. They just let you rot.” [R10]*

As noted by another respondent, the feeling of judgement whilst trying to find housing as a person of colour was made more difficult by microaggressions. They felt racial pressures, along with an inability to complain due to this.

*“White people bearing down on you.” [R9]*

When asked for further clarification, the respondent informed me that it would take too long to explain it to me. This answer was absolutely correct, and would have been an unfair emotional labour request from the respondent.

As Nordic countries are renowned for being progressive in antidiscrimination, those who are raised in them may have a more Swedish exceptionalist view, and may be more dismissive of racist incidents that occur. The Swedish husband of one of the respondents clarified that he had fully believed, as a native Swede, that his wife would not have a negative experience due to her race in Sweden.

*“I really sold her on this idea that I fully believed, which was that there isn't discrimination in Sweden.” [R14]*

He further explained that being a witness to the discrimination his wife faced in their seeking and securing housing completely changed his worldview. Their letting agent refused to give his wife keys, or to speak directly to her, despite the conversation being in a language that she understood and spoke fluently. This was coupled with her treatment whilst undergoing the immigration process, wherein he was similarly witness to her reception.

*“I watched my wife experience it right in front of my face. The Sweden that she lives in is not the Sweden that I live in, that I lived in my entire life... It really left me feeling disillusioned... this isn't the Sweden that I know.” [R14]*

As one respondent clarified, this discrimination led to further housing precariousness, as places with tenure or even places with longer periods of renting were not giving them equal access.

*“You have to move in and then look again immediately for your next place. The places with longer times available, they don't answer for non-Swedes.” [R10]*

## **5.2b Racism/Xenophobia**

The axis where racism and xenophobia meet makes for a unique experience that shapes the experience of some immigrants. This can include a lack of knowledge or experience in words that can be offensive, or have roots in racist and xenophobic microaggressions. More than one respondent expressed concerns over this.

*“I'm already the foreigner. That's what they call you. Foreigner. But I also look so different. I bet if I didn't, if I looked European, then maybe I would have an easier time of it.” [R8]*

*“Foreign... like it's a dirty word. In my home country, if they call you that, they're usually being racist.” [R11]*

*“Notice who they call 'foreigner' and who they don't. White EU citizens? No. But a latina? 'Foreigner'. They may as well use a slur, at that point.” [R12]*

This was named as a unique form of oppression that blocked housing access by multiple respondents. They expressed that the combination of a non-Nordic name and a photo of a person of colour may have created multiple situations of not being considered or interacted with when it came to housing.

*“They won’t speak to you, when you ask for housing. They see your name or your photo and they won’t talk to you.” [R10]*

*“It’s more than just being racist... I’m not Swedish. I’m not white, I’m Islam, I’m foreign... it makes (Swedish people) nervous.” [R4]*

*“I’m not white, and I’m a foreign woman, and they really do make you feel... different.” [R13]*

R13 was directly referencing the fact that her letting agent refused to even give her the keys to her own flat, let alone actively converse with her. Her Swedish husband was the one given the keys, and continues to be the only one that the letting agent will speak with.

In another case, the landlord of R12 that they lived in a corridor room inside the home of, made disparaging comments about both axes of their identity, as a person of colour, as an immigrant, and a person of dual identity:

*“Comments about how Swedes had a long history of hygiene, compared to Americans who spread disease, or comments about how latinos like me are always migrating to the next best country, but Swedes have lived here for centuries.” [R12]*

When asking the respondents if they felt that Gothenburg was a more segregated city, all ten in the focus group answered in the affirmative, quickly. This was presented by the respondents as an obvious consequence. When discussing why that may occur, Respondent 4 stated it succinctly:

*“They (White Swedes) don’t want us.” [R4]*

## **5.2c Misogynoir**

One respondent highlighted views of her based upon the dual axes of her identity as a black person and a woman. She raised perceptions of her as ‘stealing benefits’ or remaining in poverty through repeated pregnancy. These attitudes directly impacted her ability to find housing, let alone housing with tenure, due to multiple axes of discrimination working against her at once.

*“That black women (immigrants) are just here on benefits, and we never try to work. Just have babies.” [R10]*

As previously referenced by R13, when she and her Swedish husband got a flat, the letting agent refused to have much to do with her, and did not trust her with the keys. The agent would stare through her and answer her questions directly to her Swedish husband, overtly excluding her from her own home.

*“They gave us the flat, which was all fine and well and good, but they wouldn’t associate with me. They wouldn’t accept payment from me, or talk to me, or even give me the keys! I had to call my husband to sort them.” [R13]*

Respondent 11 also referred to the misogynoiristic attitudes that she faced from Swedish people in general, and how the way she was received affected her ability to feel comfortable seeking housing, let alone moving about in society.

*“Swedes act like they’ve never seen a black woman before. They don’t know what to do. They stare at you a lot, really make you feel like an outsider.” [R11]*

## 5.2d Crime

The respondents mentioned being accused of criminal activity or of being suspected of criminal involvement many times, both in the focus group and in some of the one on one interviews.

*“They don’t want us. They think we’ll commit crimes.” [R4]*

There was a sentiment that was expressed that many Swedes will tell the same stories about crimes committed by immigrants in the focus group. One respondent brought up a story that has been recounted to them multiple times about an immigrant gang war in Malmö, which has led Sweden to crime.

*“Every time I meet a Swede, they have the same stories about more crime with immigrants, and how in Malmö there’s a gang war.” [R10]*

Another mentioned stories that the respondents had heard about a violence increase specifically because two different migrant groups of colour, ones who were on opposing sides of conflict, were moved in by each other. This was countered by one respondent, who told this researcher about having moved near one such group. There was no form of violence present from either side, however.

*“We left the conflict, we didn’t want it to continue. We kept to ourselves.” [R6]*

Another respondent discussed a story they were told about a sexual assault by an immigrant, her context being that it was common to be told this.

*“They tell you a story about someone...who was almost raped by an immigrant.” [R4]*

The same respondent mentioned being viewed as a potential criminal as a barrier that they faced to housing directly, stating that if they were viewed as a potential criminal, then they would be less likely to be considered for a home.

*“If they think we’re all terrorists and criminals” [R4]*

This sentiment was echoed by another respondent, who had been asked questions by potential landlords in the past about whether they had a criminal background, or intent to commit crimes.

*“They ask you... questions when you come to see the apartment... like if you did a crime.” [R10]*

## 5.3 Ableism

One respondent did make a point to mention how the lack of housing equality harmed her as a disabled woman. Due to many of the areas wherein housing is available not being newer builds, many of them are not accessible for those who experience physical disabilities.

*“I’m disabled, but everywhere that’s for rent in places that I can find, that might take me? None have elevators. Always on the upper floors. I cannot go up the stairs.” [R6]*

Another respondent mentioned seeing a disabled immigrant neighbour struggling due to the lack of accessibility in their flats on a daily basis. His inability to move easily in the Swedish rental market was in the forefront of the respondent’s mind, as he noted the pain experienced by this man.

*“One of our neighbours struggles up the steps every day. You can see he is in pain, but where can he go?” [R8]*

This was echoed by Respondent 6 as well.

*“Sweden doesn’t have a lot of housing that includes elevators, or that are made for disabled people, or the elderly. They just have stairs.” [R6]*

Respondent 6 expressed the difficulties with inaccessible toilets, and how it has caused physical harm to them. There is a lack of choice when it comes to housing as is, and the addition of having to struggle in inaccessible units and being unable to exit safely places another barrier to housing.

*“ It took us so long to get this place. Where can I go? Sometimes I fall. The toilet is in such a small space, I struggle to get up. In every flat is it the same...How can I do?” [R6]*

When asked about whether the place that Respondent 6 was in was safe, clean, and at a good price, Respondent 6 was very clear on the lack of safety to her, as a disabled immigrant.

*“To this day, I still don’t have a safe, secure place. To this day, I still am waiting for a home that can be mine without worry.” [R6]*

## 6.1 Discussion

In this section, the results from the interviews and the focus group will be discussed in context with the literature, and the conceptual framework.

### 6.1a Xenophobia

Xenophobia, also referred to as xenomisia, is a prejudice against or a discriminatory dislike of those who are not part of the main culture, or whose who have immigrated. Those who have experienced xenophobia have done so to varying degrees, depending upon the conditions of their migration and their own background. National, religious, geographic, linguistic, and cultural groups do not necessarily coincide with racial groups (UNESCO, 1950), and this becomes extremely clear when addressing issues of xenophobia.

From experiences of those with a Swedish last name receiving more responses from those who are letting housing than those with names more associated with non-Swedish and/or POC identities (Ahmed & Hämmerstedt, 2008) to the recent instances of right wing politicians instigating rioting due to burning religious texts associated with immigrants (Reuters, 2022), it is safe to say that those who experience xenophobia in Sweden do so on multiple levels, with variances of affect. This has been reflected in the comments made by the respondents during the focus group and in the one on one interviews, as they referenced many times when they had noticed that they were less likely to be interacted with, with naught but a name to go by.

There have been multiple instances of overt bias against those who come from a migratory or a diverse ethnic background when it comes to housing (Ahmed & Hammarstedt 2008; Bengtsson et al 2012). Whether this has been presented as a refusal to interact with those who come from a migratory

background, as noted by some of the respondents, to taking advantage of those who came from a foreign background in a housing or letting situation, to even being overtly culturally intolerant. Some respondents were able to discuss instances of being overcharged, or charged too often, and others described instances of overt bias and discriminatory comments. Cultural intolerances or ethnic discrimination is a recognised difficulty not only in securing housing, but in keeping it (Ahmed & Hammarstedt 2008; Bengtsson et al 2012). This was noted by one respondent who mentioned intolerant attitudes that were faced due to their culture, which created an unsafe living situation. Due to the lack of available housing, it was not one that could be easily removed from.

An inability to access information in their own language has proven to be another implicit form of xenophobia faced by many of the respondents. As there is a lack of housing information in languages outside of Swedish, and much of their housing information, their bills, their contracts and agreements are in Swedish, it can create further vulnerability. In many other countries, this form of access is considered commonplace, in order to ensure fairness. Crenshaw (1989) notes this as a structural problem, making it far more difficult for marginalised people to access support services, social assistance, or even to fight for their rights through the proper channels. Some respondents mentioned that they wouldn't access assistance due to the unfair slant toward the native Swedish speaker.

Many respondents made mention of the fact that their non-Nordic names were a cause of lack of interaction, or a lack of being considered with seriousness for any housing. This is supported by a field experiment conducted by Ali M. Ahmed and Mats Hammarstedt, who used three false identities with which to apply for housing. One of them was 'Erik', a Swedish man, 'Maria', a Swedish woman, and 'Mohammed', an immigrant. Each sent out 500 notes of interest for different sublets, and the results showed that 'Maria' received a 56% response rate, 'Erik' received 46%, and 'Mohammed' received only 21%. This demonstrates itself as a barrier to receiving housing access.

In summary, xenophobic attitudes from cultural intolerance, to name bias, to linguistic barriers made it extremely difficult for the respondents to find and secure housing.

### **6.1b Racism**

Racism, as described previously in this master's thesis, is a historically rooted system of power inequities that targets based upon race; it privileges white people over people of colour (NEA, n.d.). This definition of racism is utilising the social justice definition of power plus privilege, as simply viewing it as discrimination based upon ethnicity is not fit for purpose. Plainly, when discussing race in a European context, historically it has allowed for ethnicity to be used to include those of a white background who possess both power and privilege. This tends to confuse the issue. Racism is a systemic structure of white supremacy, that can lead to bias and discrimination against people of colour, whether consciously through overt acts of racism, or subconsciously, through the avoidance of names associated with ethnicities of colour or implicit judgement and bias against those of colour.

Some respondents have noted a unique quality to the racism that they experienced in Sweden, as Nordic countries do have a reputation for being more progressive, and being antiracism, or antidiscrimination in general. In Nordic countries with a historically mostly white, mostly low population, confronting issues of racism and xenophobia can be new, and the language or actions needed to prevent microaggressions against vulnerable groups may not be widespread knowledge. This was reflected heavily with some of the respondents, who mentioned microaggressions such as being blatantly ignored, spoken over, having a white person expected to speak for them, or being referred to by titles such as 'foreigner'. Respondent 14 highlighted how the idea of Sweden as nondiscriminatory clashed with the experiences of his wife. It showed him that, much as the Prime Minister noted in a discussion on integration, for many immigrants, there are two Swedens (Reuters, 2022). This thought pattern of a mostly white populace in a progressive country being nondiscriminatory is nothing new, and can be a demonstration of white privilege (Elliott, 1992).

Hübinette and Lundström (2014) have argued that there is an implicit link between structural, or systemic racism and the segregation that immigrants, especially those of colour, experience when it comes to housing. This is reflected in the segregation of Gothenburg being partially caused by Swedish tenancy in a neighbourhood dropping drastically “once the share of non-European immigrants exceeds the identified tipping point” (Aldén et al 2014). This is referred to as “White Flight” (Harris, 2001, Bråmås, 2006, Feijten et al, 2009), and as Nissanka (2020) describes, it can be a branch off of ‘white avoidance’. This was present in the interviews, with some of the respondents mentioning that white Swedes made them feel alienated, and like they were unwanted in their neighbourhoods. The feeling of being beared down upon by white disapproval was also discussed by another respondent.

There have been multiple accusations against immigrants of being the cause of a rise in crime rates, the cause of places being less safe, and for the drive down in housing costs. This is despite the fact that many of these rises in crime rates have been disproven, and those that have not been disproven have been further contextualised to demonstrate the complexity of the issue under an intersectional lens (Brå, 2017). The conflation of immigrant and criminal has also been addressed by the Swedish Police Authority in their guide about misinformation. They noted that whilst those who come from a migratory background are two times more likely to be registered as a suspect of a crime, this did not make them the overrepresented perpetrators of criminal activity (ibid).

Many of the respondents mentioned that they had been told stories that blamed immigrants for a rise in crime, and repeated misinformation about no-go zones, or gang wars due to immigrant presence in cities. This has been countered by the Swedish Police Authority, who have said that there are many vulnerable areas in Sweden with a population that is majority within a lower socioeconomic status. In these more vulnerable areas, criminals have been found acting in the community with greater frequency. However, there is no proof of any form of gang war, mafia, or demonstrated intent to recreate a power structure (ibid). This is also in spite of the fact that areas that are considered to be more vulnerable due to the presence of migrants have been such since the introduction of a low income housing project in Sweden in the 1970s (Tyrcha & Abreu, 2019), and that housing prices, while affected by immigrants’ presence, are not directly caused by them (Tyrcha, 2020).

Other respondents named stories of immigrants being the cause of a rise in sex crimes. The Swedish Police Authority has noted blaming immigrants for a rise in sexual offences as a common piece of misinformation (Brå, 2017). The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention has explained that this comes from a change in legislation, wherein each occurrence of an offence, even by the same offender in the same situation, shall count as separate offences. For example, if someone experiences a sexual assault every day for three months, this shall count as 90 offences by the same perpetrator, not one. This has led to a stark rise in sexual offence statistics, and the legislation happened to coincide with a large wave of migration (ibid).

Xenophobic misinformation like this can and does lead to those who are among society’s most vulnerable not being considered for housing, let alone safe and secure housing. When adding an intersectional lens to this information, and considering that those whom have been accused are not only migrants, but are overrepresented by people of colour, the axis between xenophobia, racism, and this form of harm becomes clearer. It is a racist stereotype with a long history of people of colour being criminals, and when combined with their identity as “foreign” or “other”, these two forms of being an outsider create a unique axis of oppression. It is part and parcel of a discriminatory discourse that further stigmatises vulnerable immigrant populations has been growing as the population continues to expand, and this has severely damaged access to basic services for already vulnerable populations in Sweden (Andersson 2013; Hübinette 2014; Hübinette & Lundström 2014; Jørgensen 2015).

The experiences of women of colour are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and

sexism (Crenshaw, 1991). Black women experience a unique and extreme form of marginalisation that is named and addressed in this way. Misogynoir is a word used to describe how racism and anti-Blackness affect black women's experiences of misogyny (Salam, 2021). Misogynoir is able to address and name many intersections of misogyny and anti-black racism that includes the proclivity of black women, especially immigrants, to be overburdened and identified by poverty, child care responsibilities, and lack of job skills (Crenshaw, 1991). This was discussed by Respondent 10 as she described the way that she was viewed as someone who simply wanted to have children, not work, and to thus abuse benefits. Respondent 11 mentioned her own experience with misogynoir, in the way that she was alienated by Swedes as a black woman, wherein she was pointedly referred to as a racist term. Respondent 13 brought up not even being trusted with the keys to her own home, and the expectation of her white husband to speak for her.

In summary, racism added another complexity to the oppressions faced by immigrants seeking housing. From the experience of racism in a more closed cultural setting, to the axis wherein xenophobia and racism overlap to create a situation of an outsider both culturally and on sight by race, there were multiple noted barriers to finding and securing housing. Overrepresentation as suspects for potential crimes and misinformation that encouraged these attitudes, and the considerations of black women as 'benefits thieves' were considered two key reasons for 'white avoidance'. If these axes of oppression are not in consideration when addressing the housing crisis for migrants, then the entire picture cannot be said to have been addressed.

### **6.1c Ableism**

Ableism is prejudice or discrimination against those who are disabled. These can present in a multitude of ways, from attitudes of intolerance, testimonial silencing of those who are disabled, or inaccessible spaces. This is a problem in Sweden, as well as many other urban areas in Europe, as they do have older builds wherein accessibility was not a consideration during the time (Boverket, n.d.). A lot of the older builds do have a tendency to coincide with the lower income areas that immigrants, and other more vulnerable people often live.

Whilst it is noted that Sweden is compelled to follow and maintain the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and has created legislation based upon this, this only applies to new builds, or to alterations requested and funded by the HOA of a particular building of flats (Boverket, n.d.). This means that in many cases, the smaller hallways, tighter fit rooms, inaccessible toilets, and lack of elevators being changed would depend upon the HOA expressing and funding this need. Culturally, this is not a commonly considered means of housing layouts, as the urge to make the most of smaller spaces is key.

Full accessibility, as described by Wiesel (2020) includes a safe, cleared, and step-free, uninterrupted path from the parking lot to the entrance; at least one step-free entrance into the home; doors and corridors that can facilitate unimpeded movement, including but not limited to width, smoothness of floors, and the ability to open by button; accessible kitchens with lowered counters and ease of access; accessible bathrooms with handrails near toilet and bath; and the ability to use a lift, elevator, or ramp to ascend. The lack of an accessible home can not only impede key activities such as safe toileting, eating, and sleeping, but it can also have a strong impact on mental health as one is prevented from independence (Wiesel, 2020). The constant threat of injury due to inaccessibility and extra labour to utilise one's own home cannot be overstated.

When one migrates to another country, finding housing and having that security is already a vital need. But when coupled with other vulnerable identities that can make finding housing in a country with a housing crisis, having accessibility needs for your disability can make it almost impossible. As Respondent 6 mentioned, the layouts of the flats that she was able to find often made it so that she was trapped in her own home, creating further difficulties in finding a replacement home. This also caused injuries, as the homes were not fit for purpose, and lacked railing, proper size for her cane, and a safe way for her to exit quickly in case of emergency. The inability to access social service assistance made

it all the more difficult. Respondent 8 also noted witnessing a migrant neighbour in pain due to the stairs' effect on his disability, but that he was left without a choice to find a new home with an elevator for access.

In summary, the axis of being an immigrant and being a disabled person created unique barriers in finding and securing housing in Sweden, due to the high amount of inaccessible housing to be found. This has caused further injury and difficulty to those who are unable to choose alternatives. Lack of consideration for disabled people in this housing crisis will lead to solutions that exclude disabled people, and cause further harm.

## 7.1 Conclusion

The purpose of the research done by this Master's thesis was to identify and analyse the ways in which immigrants faced further complexities and barriers to safe housing due to a multi-faceted identity. This was implemented through a focus group, and serial one on one interviews, wherein immigrants with multiple marginalised identities that created different discriminatory situations. The research question asked was, 'In what way do multiple marginalisations of immigrants create further barriers to accessing safe, tenured housing in Gothenburg?'. Based upon the research and the answers given by the respondents, enough material has been gathered in this master's thesis in order to respond to this question, using an intersectional lens.

Xenophobia created barriers to accessing safe and tenured housing through multiple instances of those with non-Nordic names not being able to garner responses. Linguistic difficulties created further difficulties in achieving equal access to safe or tenured homes, as they were unable to parse documents from their HOA, contracts with their landlords, or unable to fully understand the websites and queues to access them. This was also noted as a means with which they had been taken advantage of by landlords financially or subject to a lack of safety due to cultural intolerances in their home space, as they did not feel comfortable or knowledgeable enough to access services to assist with.

Racism created barriers to accessing safe and tenured housing through implicit judgements and 'white avoidance'. Refusals to interact with those who had names associated with identities of colour were discussed, along with microaggressions against those who were able to find housing. Microaggressions are commonplace terminology, environments, or situations that, whether intended or not, communicate hostility toward marginalised groups (Nadal et. al, 2010; Sue et. al, 2007) From a refusal to trust a woman of colour with her own set of keys, handing them instead to her white husband; to referring to immigrants of colour as 'foreigner', to accusations and questions of criminal activity, this came together to create further difficulties in securing safe and tenured housing for them. Others reported attitudes of viewing black women as those who did not want to work and instead abused benefits, a stigmatisation that has roots firmly in the axis wherein anti-black racism and misogyny intersect.

Ableism created barriers to accessing safe and tenured housing as an already difficult situation in finding a home as an immigrant of colour was complicated by a lack of accessible housing for a disability. Noted points of inaccessible living were in the lack of accessible toilet and kitchen, and the inability to exit the home safely by the disabled tenant. Adding in the lack of housing tenure, which creates further pressure to find another home once time is up in a few weeks or months, and this situation is a clear barrier to safe and tenured housing in Gothenburg. This has been demonstrated to malaffected the physical, emotional, and mental health of disabled people. Considering the needs of new builds in Sweden in order to match the needs of the increasing population alongside the need to alter old builds in order to create better accessibility, the problem increases in depth. If disabled people are not considered during the resolution of this housing crisis, they will be left behind, and further harmed.

Each of the respondents were as candid as they felt that they were comfortable with, and some did mention that they felt they should simply be grateful to be away from war or conflict, despite the discrimination they were suffering. When each of the themes is considered within the conceptual framework of how they create layers in each person's lives and experiences, the considerations of how to face, name, and resolve the problem clearly cannot be done without acknowledging these layers. To simply address the problems with xenophobia, or the problems with racism will only serve to address part of a problem, not the whole. Simply looking at the ableism will not assist the disabled immigrant of colour. All parts must be considered in order to move forward.

## 7.2 Further Research

In this Master's thesis, immigrants who came from a diverse background of multiple marginalised communities were interviewed with regards to the further difficulties they face in finding secure and tenured housing in Gothenburg. Whilst Gothenburg was chosen due to its particularity as a highly segregated city in Sweden, it should by no means be the sole consideration for further study. Further research should be considered on a larger scale project, in order to garner a better reflection of the situation in urban planning in Sweden. Those who come from the most vulnerable groups must be heard and considered when addressing a problem of this nature, so that any solutions created can serve all involved.

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## Appendix

**Table 2.1, Growth of population in Gothenburg vs. new dwellings (Emilsson & Öberg, 2021)** pg 3, taken from Emilsson, H., Öberg, K. (2021) *Housing for Refugees in Sweden: Top-Down Governance and its Local Reactions*, Journal of International Migration and Integration, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00864-8>

**Table 2.3, Gothenburg Population Increase**, pg. 5, made by the researcher for this master's thesis.

**Table 3.1, The infrastructure of intersectionality (Collins, 2019)**, pg. 9, taken from Collins, P. H. (2019). *Intersectionality as critical social theory*. Duke University Press.

**Table 4.2, Summary of the interviewees, identified by their country of origin, and separated by their time in Sweden, and which interviews they were a part of.** pg. 12, made by the researcher for this master's thesis.

**Table 4.4, Description of codification and separation of themes.** pg- 14, made by the researcher for this master's thesis.