



**INSTITUTIONEN FÖR
GLOBALA STUDIER**

THE COMMUNITY CENTER STRIKES BACK: Everyday Strategies to Manage Prejudice and Discrimination in a Swedish 'At-Risk' Neighborhood

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Bachelor thesis in social anthropology

Bachelor Thesis:	15 credits
Programme and Course:	Bachelor's Programme in Social Anthropology, SA1511
Level:	First Cycle
Term/Year:	Spring/2024
Supervisor:	Lisa Åkesson
Examiner:	Simon Larsson
Word Count:	10 272

Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my supervisor, Lisa Åkesson, for her invaluable guidance and support over the course of my fieldwork and the writing of this paper. Furthermore, I would like to thank my dear friends and family for putting up with me and supporting me throughout this process, thank you for helping me keep my sanity.

Finally, and most importantly, I would like to especially thank my wonderful participants, who bravely and open-heartedly shared their lives, experiences, and stories with me. I am incredibly grateful for the experience you have given me and that you allowed me to write this thesis. Thank you for everything.

Jag vill rikta ett särskilt stort tack till mina fantastiska deltagare, som på ett modigt och öppenhjärtat sätt delade med sig av sin vardag, sina erfarenheter, och berättelser. Jag är oerhört tacksam för den erfarenheten ni har gett mig och att ni möjliggjorde arbetet med den här uppsatsen. Tack för allt.

Abstract

In recent years, Sweden has seen a rise and normalization of racializing discourses, particularly focusing on at-risk neighborhoods (*utsatta områden*). Therefore, this paper aims to answer how the subjects of such discourses perceive and navigate them in their everyday lives. This is explored by following staff members at a public community center located in an at-risk neighborhood in Sweden, using methods of participant observation, alongside semi-structured and informal interviews. The material was gathered over six weeks at the beginning of 2024. The findings suggest that the neighborhood is subjected to territorial stigmatization, which causes participants to experience prejudice and discrimination. To manage, participants exercised primarily three forms of strategy: strategies of avoidance, strategies of humor, and strategies of resistance. While some strategies are seemingly passive, they are deliberate and provide participants with a sense of agency. Furthermore, the everyday resistance performed at the community center suggests that systems of power may challenge themselves by facilitating engagement that (in)advertently resists them. Simultaneously, the lives and goals of residents and participants should not be reduced to simply responding to prejudiced narratives—rather their lives are comprised of their own meanings, relations, projects, and desires.

Keywords: Territorial stigma, Agency, Strategy, Everyday resistance, Humor, Avoidance, Racialization

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1. Introduction

In the fall of 2022, a new right-wing government led by the Moderate party (*Moderaterna*) took office in Sweden. The debates leading up to the election endlessly circled around criminal gang activity, centering primarily on their prevalence in *utsatta områden* (roughly; *at-risk neighborhoods*, my translation), and have continued since (see Andersson et al., 2023; Sveriges Radio, 2023). Over the course of this development—perhaps most notably since the refugee influx of 2015, along with the growth of the far-right party, the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD)—the popular explanatory models for this violence have come to primarily consist of the vilification and blaming of socioeconomically marginalized groups, namely, immigrants (see e.g. Norocel, 2017, Schierup & Ålund, 2011). All of which has been followed by several policy proposals and implementations, such as visitation zones¹, that risk infringement of human rights and are considered to discriminately target already marginalized populations (DO, 2024).

While the stigmatization and discrimination of marginalized populations is hardly new, their prevalence and normalization have become particularly salient in recent decades, with similar developments across the global north (El Tayeb, 2008; Gusterson, 2017; Silverstein, 2005; Shoshan, 2020). All while the perspectives of those at the receiving end of such narratives remain relatively absent in public discourse. Therefore, I find anthropological engagement with these issues to be crucial, not least in the Swedish context where anthropological accounts are close to non-existent. Particularly since the anthropological ability to comprehend and convey complex social realities can provide nuance to topics that are otherwise oversimplified.

This paper constitutes my humble contribution to this field and presents the findings of the fieldwork I conducted at a community center in an at-risk neighborhood at the beginning of 2024. In the presentation of my findings, I initially discuss how my participants perceive and experience the effects of stigmatizing narratives about their neighborhood, to then examine how participants use strategies of avoidance, humor, and resistance to navigate these narratives. But first, I will declare the aim and research questions this paper seeks to answer.

¹ Now referred to as ‘safety zones’. Demarcated areas where police are allowed to search anyone—including minors—without a founded suspicion of crime (Tanaka & Lund, 2024).

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

In this paper, I intend to examine how stigmatizing narratives seep into the daily lives of residents in an at-risk neighborhood. I will explore this through the lens of the staff at a public community center in an at-risk neighborhood called Älvby². More precisely, my aim is to answer the following: how does the staff at the community center perceive and navigate prejudice and discursive narratives about Älvby? To investigate this issue, I have developed three research questions, of which the first two constitute the basis for the third, and perhaps most crucial, question.

- How do participants describe the circulating prejudice and discursive narratives about the neighborhood?
- How do participants perceive and experience the consequences of these narratives?
- What strategies do participants employ to navigate these narratives and their consequences?

1.2 Background

Älvby is a neighborhood located in a mid-sized municipality in Sweden, it was primarily built during the 60's and 70's. Aside from the identical apartment complexes, Älvby is abundant in green areas and is surrounded by forest. The neighborhood is classified by police as an *utsatt område*, or at-risk neighborhood. At-risk neighborhoods are areas demarcated by police, defined by low socioeconomic status and the significant local influence of criminals (Polismyndigheten, n.d.).

As for demographics, Älvby consists of a majority immigrant population, specifically around 76%—including second generation immigrants³. In comparison to the general population living in the municipality, the prevalence of poverty, crowded living, unemployment, and low levels of education are higher in Älvby. For instance, about 36% of households in Älvby have a low disposable income (compared to 15% in the municipality),

² Pseudonym.

³ The following numbers are collected from a municipal knowledge base on Älvby, consisting of data from 2018. The statistics are based both on SCB (statistiska centralbyrån) and surveys conducted by the municipality and its partners. As the municipality's and Älvby's real names are mentioned I have chosen to present the data without revealing my source, to protect my participants.

which corresponds to 42% of the households of immigrant backgrounds. In other words, the neighborhood faces significant socioeconomic challenges.

As part of public health promotion, the municipality opened so called *meeting places* or community centers, targeting socioeconomically vulnerable areas. The intention was to create spaces where locals could become informed and strive towards independence, while also promoting socialization and societal participation. In Älvby, the community center serves as a social hub, with many regular visitors, and hosts a variety of events and routinely houses local organizations for meetings and activities. The community center consists of several subsections: a library, culture school (*kulturskola*)⁴, meeting place, and youth center (*fritidsgård*)—my focus being the meeting place and the youth center. At the meeting place, locals can access citizen service (*medborgarservice*), where staff members provide information and assistance with for instance job applications, contacting government agencies, filling out forms, or other tasks. At the youth center, tweens and teenagers usually come to spend time with friends and youth leaders (staff) after school. There are several amenities available for the kids to use, such as board games, ping-pong, an art studio, and a gaming console.

Generally, staff members form close relationships with regular visitors and are invested in the neighborhood. In addition to their work, some staff members have personal ties to the neighborhood as residents themselves. Some also have their own stories of coming to Sweden as immigrants. Thus, while staff members are meant to serve as support for locals, many of them share similar experiences and struggles to those of the visitors. Furthermore, the staff who are not personally tied to the neighborhood in this manner have instead usually worked there for many years, some for up to a decade or longer. Thus, they too generally form close-knit connections with residents and the neighborhood. Overall, there is a sense of trust, even kinship, between staff and visitors. Indeed, relationships are at the core of the work at the community center.

2. Prior Research & Theoretical Concepts

In the following sections I will present central concepts and theoretical perspectives that relate to my study, as well as discuss prior research in this field. The first section will discuss processes of racialization and how these relate to discourse and current societal trends. The second section

⁴ Offers free drop-in activities, such as drawing workshops, as well as paid classes (e.g. in music).

will focus on defining and discussing agency, covert forms of resistance, as well as the concepts of strategy and navigation.

2.1 Crafting the Other: Racialization and Discourse

The (critical) study of race and racisms is broad and spans across various disciplines, it is indeed far too rich to be justly portrayed in this overview. As such, I have decided to focus on a particular concept within the social study of race, namely, *racialization*. Racialization can be understood as an essentializing and naturalizing process which constructs particular bodies as (racially) *Other* based on characteristics of social personhood, such as ethnicity, class, gender, and kinship (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017; Silverstein, 2005). Importantly, racialization is an embodied experience (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2017) which shapes the manner individuals navigate the world and engenders significant material consequences (Dick & Wirtz, 2011).

However, the categorizations made through racializing processes are also fluid and relational. For instance, factors such as class mobility, assimilation, and integration may de-racialize othered immigrants and declare them as idealized exceptions (Silverstein, 2005). Another example is the plasticity of *whiteness*, that some groups previously considered *Other*—such as the Irish—have now come to be included within the frame of whiteness (Silverstein, 2005). Thus, how one is racialized shifts over time.

Furthermore, the construction of otherness also extends into physical spaces. Wacquant (2007) describes how specific areas can become contaminated with otherness, and is designated for ‘untouchable’ populations, through *territorial stigmatization*. This is described as a form of advanced marginality that is enhanced through denouncing discourse in both everyday interactions and broader communication channels. Such stigmatization awakens a sense of aversion in the majority population, which translates to shame in residents who may therefore attempt to distance themselves from their neighborhood. Importantly, Wacquant (2007) points out that regardless of whether these prejudiced perceptions are true, the conviction that they are results in real social implications. Additionally, territorial stigma can be exercised politically to justify the application of ‘special measures’, as the stigmatized area is deemed uncontrolled and lawless (Wacquant, 2007). As such, I find the concept of territorial stigma to be of relevance, not only in relation to my specific field, but also in deciphering the broader Swedish discourse on at-risk neighborhoods.

As indicated, discourse is a central element to the construction of otherness and processes of racialization. Discourse falls into the anthropological study of language, which

emphasizes how language mirrors and constructs social reality, while it is itself shaped by sociocultural elements (Ahearn, 2001). Some anthropologists have specifically paid attention to how racialization is executed through discourse. For instance, Dick and Wirtz (2011) speak of *covert racializing discourse*, where a symbolic issue, such as crime or religion, acts as a placeholder for race—thereby enabling a sense of plausible deniability, effectively removing and delegitimizing race as “a salient form of social difference” (Dick & Wirtz, 2011, p.6). All while further establishing certain racialized groups, places, practices, and so forth, as Other and thereby as inherently dangerous (Dick & Wirtz, 2011).

Furthermore, De Koning and Vollebergh (2019) accentuate how discourse and racialization become embodied. By conducting ethnography in diverse urban neighborhoods located in Amsterdam and Antwerp, the authors conclude that the *icons*—archetypes of regular people, such as ‘the young male immigrant’, ‘the autochthonous citizen’, and ‘the leftist elite’—produced through discourse permeate the lives of citizens and their positioning towards each other. Not only in their reading and navigation of the world, but also in their perception of self, even if their own experiences may oppose such essentializing narratives (De Koning & Vollebergh, 2019). In relation, Thacker et al. (2021) discuss how counselor educators of marginalized identities negotiate and undermine their marginalized, e.g. racialized, identities in the workplace. Such identity negotiation was more frequently performed when experiencing a lack of power, for instance when being subjected to discrimination. The manner of negotiation was found to be contextual and relational, responding to “interpersonal interactions or norms modeled by individuals within an environment” (Thacker et al., 2021, p.104). Overall, these examples highlight how discourse and processes of racialization materialize and come to shape the conditions surrounding us, as well as infiltrate our sense of self and others. Hence, these perspectives become important instruments for analyzing my material.

Finally, anthropologists along with other scholars have observed a revitalization and normalization of racializing discourse, with particular focus on European (and generally Western) anxieties over migrants and racialized *Others*—Muslims in particular—posing a threat to the social order and European (or Western) identity (El Tayeb, 2008; Gusterson, 2017; Silverstein, 2005; Shoshan, 2020). In correlation, El Tayeb (2008) notes the rise of a new “ethnicized underclass” (p.664) who are perpetually marked as foreign, regardless of citizenship, thus placing them in an indefinite state of uncertainty and alienation. The same trends can be observed in Sweden, where the national sense of identity linked to ideals of

openness and equality has shifted towards restrictive migration politics, hostility, and fear (Schierup & Ålund, 2011). These trends provide valuable context for my study, particularly as it is set in a stigmatized at-risk neighborhood and are thus important to comprehend my material.

2.2 Agency and Everyday Resistance

Agency is a well-established concept within anthropology and has thus also been defined and applied in a variety of ways. In its most basic form, agency can be described as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001. p.112) and should be understood as culturally and contextually dependent. Throughout this paper, my use of *agency* will draw on practice theory, which recognizes that agents are shaped in relation to pre-existing social structures, on which their agency is thus contingent (Ahearn, 2001).

Furthermore, the concept of agency has often been correlated with, or equated to, resistance, for instance in feminist and activist theory. While agency should not be reduced to resistance, which is only one out of a plethora of agentic modes (Ahearn, 2001), agency does have an important role to play in our understanding of resistance, not least due to its relation to power. For instance, Ortner (2006) identifies two distinctive, yet intertwined, modes of agency, 1) an agency of power, and 2) an agency of projects. The two modes highlight different power relations and intentions, with agency of power being structured around a dynamic of domination and resistance, favoring and being moderated by the dominant party. While an agency of projects instead seeks to pursue what is desirable and meaningful, where “[p]eople seek to accomplish valued things within a framework of their own terms, their own categories of value.” (Ortner, 2006, p.145). Here, resistance may take the form of protecting and nourishing such projects, particularly for marginalized groups (Ortner, 2006).

As for defining resistance, it can be generally understood as opposition to, or the challenging of, dominant systems of power (see e.g. Ortner, 2006; Sorensen, 2008). Additionally, resistance should, much like agency, be understood as complicated. Particularly as resistance may be coupled with ambivalence and social complexities, influenced by asymmetrical power structures, intricate histories, and culturally specific contexts (Ortner, 2006). While many have focused on overt forms of resistance, such as protests and activist movements (see e.g. Chenoweth et al., 2017), this paper will instead center on more covert forms. Perhaps one of the most notable anthropologists of this field being Scott (1985), who in his study of Malaysian peasants introduced the concept of *everyday resistance*, broadening the

common understanding of resistance to encompass seemingly trivial everyday acts that in various ways undermine and challenge systems of power. On a similar note, Sharp (2007) questions the notion that resistance must be violent and instead highlights nonviolent resistance that may take the form of disobedience and stubbornness. An example of such covert resistance can be found in Sorensen's (2008) exploration of humor as a resistance strategy, where humor mobilizes and creates solidarity within resistance movements, as well as 'turns oppression upside down' by e.g. ridiculing those in power. In essence, covert forms of resistance should not be undermined, particularly since they teach us about the complex dynamics of resistance and power as they permeate our everyday existence. As noted by Abu Lughod (1990), by examining *all* forms of resistance, we can further uncover the dynamics of power. It is through this lens I will understand resistance as I proceed with my analysis.

Another related concept is *strategy*. Compared to ancillary concepts like *navigation* (see Vigh, 2009), strategy emphasizes a more active and intentional operation, striving towards certain outcomes (see Sorensen, 2008). I would argue that strategy thereby highlights the agent and recognizes its ability and effort to influence, (re)create, and negotiate, to obtain their goal. Whereas *navigation* instead poses the agent as a reactant, constantly adapting, judging, and acting in relation to the motion of social life and its structures (Vigh, 2009). While both concepts are useful, they describe and highlight distinctly different facets of human agency. As such, I will use the concept of strategy to refer to the way agents resonate and operate, particularly in situations of conflict or distress, to actively overcome or manage such instances and strive towards goals. Whereas navigation will instead refer to how agents act relationally to their social reality and conditions. That said, it is worth mentioning that in practice, the two often intermingle—for instance, the strategy of an agent may also incorporate forms of navigation.

3. Material and Methods

In the following chapter, I will address the material of this study as well as my chosen methods for data collection, namely participant observation and (semi-structured and informal) interviews.

3.1 Field and Participants

My material consists of qualitative data collected at a public community center in Älvby, Sweden, between the 23rd of January and March 1st, 2024. Although I initially was introduced to all the different sections of the community center, the study was eventually limited to the youth center and meeting place, primarily as I found these to be the richest in staff-visitor interactions and served functions of interest for the study.

The participants of this study are made up of the staff members at the community center, with a primary focus on those specifically working at the youth center (the youth leaders) and meeting place. However, as the community center, and thereby the work of the staff, is centered around the visitors, a few of them also ended up being included as participants in the study, although not to the same extent as staff members. Throughout the rest of this paper, mentions of the participants will refer to the staff members of the community center, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

3.2 Participant Observation

I spent about six weeks at the community center conducting participant observation, which entails becoming integrated with the field, building relations with participants, and overall examining the everyday practices and meanings of field (Emerson et al., 2011). This included following and socializing with staff members by participating in daily activities, such as socializing with visitors, joining staff meetings and workshops, and aiding staff members with simple work-related tasks (such as registering visitors at an event). As some activities or meetings were not always suitable for me to participate in, due to e.g. confidentiality, I coordinated and planned my fieldwork together with my participants. This also allowed me to be informed about what activities were happening and would be interesting for me to participate in, thus providing me access.

I primarily documented field observations by hand in a notebook and occasionally digitally on a computer—for instance during staff meetings where staff members would also use their laptops. The notes were taken openly at the time of observation, aside from moments when note-taking seemed inappropriate—for instance if it interfered with an ongoing activity—in which case documentation occurred soon after the observation was made to recount it as accurately as possible (see Emerson et al., 2011).

Overall, the primary gain of participant observation was the formation of relationships with participants. Regularly spending time with them built trust and made them more comfortable to share their perspectives. Additionally, the method allows a better grasp of the field, revealing the minutiae that is otherwise difficult to perceive. On the other hand, some issues could not as easily be explored through participant observation alone, which led me to interviews.

3.3 Interviews

As a complementary method, I turned to semi-structured interviews, where an interview guide consisting of pre-decided themes and questions is used while still allowing room for participants to steer into other topics or perspectives (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). As such, the method provides more comparable answers while simultaneously providing insight into new potential areas of interest. Thus, the interview guide functions as support, yet is not strictly followed (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). The interviews were conducted individually with five staff members of different professional roles, all interviews turned out to be about one hour in length. My interview guide covered themes related to the neighborhood's reputation and associated discourse, issues concerning the work and relations at the community center, and (local) political influence over the community centers operation. Over the course of the study, my focus and research questions have shifted, hence some of the themes explored in interviews (especially pertaining to political influence) are no longer particularly relevant.

One of the primary upsides to semi-structured interviews is that they quickly provide a greater understanding of participant logics, convictions, attitudes, and experiences, as well as the workings of the field (Fontein, 2015). While some data might not have been included in the end, the interviews still allowed me important insight that elaborated my comprehension of the field and participants.

It is also worth noting that informal interviews were done within the framework of participant observation. Informal interviews are conversation-like and unplanned, where participants predominantly guide the direction of the interview while the interviewer takes notes, asks follow-up or clarifying questions, and lets the conversation unfold more organically (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). These were useful to find out about interesting and recurring themes early on and had similar benefits to those of semi-structured interviews.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The primary ethical principle is, in accordance with the AAA's statement on ethics (n.d.), to do no harm. Throughout fieldwork and the writing of this paper, I have been guided by three central pillars to ensure this: collaboration, transparency, and the protection of participants.

As noted by other scholars (Sillitoe, 2012; Jöhncke, 2018), fieldwork should be treated as a collaborative effort, where all parties and their respective interests need to be considered. Because, just as conducting fieldwork is not the right of the fieldworker, the subjects of the research have no obligation to participate (Jöhncke, 2018). For this study, collaboration has entailed me being open to input from participants, creating a schedule with them and discussing how my fieldwork will proceed, offering to accessibly present my results to them, and inquiring about and considering the participants' interests. Not only is collaboration conducive to greater trust and field access, but also invites interesting new perspectives from the people who know the field the best—the participants (Sillitoe, 2012).

I have also been open about the research process and kept a transparent communication about the aims of the study, consent, and that they as participants at any time can withdraw or decline participation or specific statements from the study (see American Anthropological Association, n.d.). While building relationships with participants, I have also been mindful to keep a professional distance.

Additionally, since the field was crowded with non-participants, i.e. visitors—including minors—I was careful to focus on how staff members interacted with visitors, rather than the visitors themselves, in my notetaking and the presentation of my findings. That is, unless they were legal adults and consented to participate in the study. Just as with staff members, I was transparent with non-participants in the field about myself and my work and was open to answer any questions they might have had about the study.

To protect my participants, I have anonymized the location of my fieldwork and provided all participants with pseudonyms. Since the neighborhood's classification as at-risk makes it easier to identify, I have chosen not to specify in which region and municipality the study was conducted. Moreover, as the staff is relatively small, I have chosen to be vague about the specific roles of some staff members and have provided certain participants with several pseudonyms to prevent internal recognition (see Göransson, 2019). In some instances where I find the risk of internal recognition to be particularly high, the statements provided are more sensitive, or were given in a semi-structured interview setting where complete anonymity was

promised, I have chosen to fully anonymize the participant by not assigning them a name or gender.

Finally, to protect my material I have been careful to not leave fieldnotes unattended and not to store the material in vulnerable digital spaces, such as cloud services where data may be accessed by an external party.

4. Ethnographic Discussion

I will now present, discuss, and analyze the findings of my study. First, I will be discussing how participants perceive the prejudice and discursive narratives that circulate about Älvby and its residents; secondly, I will address how my participants experience the perceived consequences of such narratives, to then finally present three forms of strategy used by my informants to manage and navigate such effects. Namely: strategies of avoidance, strategies of humor, and strategies of resistance.

4.1 Discursive Narratives About At-Risk Neighborhoods

The community center was quiet this morning. A visitor sat reading the paper, while another watched the channel 4 news at low volume with some of the staff. In the library the books remained untouched on their shelves. Right by the library reception desk, Mirjam and I were sitting in the massive red armchairs, both of us leaning back comfortably. I spun my chair a little, dragging my feet as we spoke, while Mirjam sipped her coffee. “People have a lot of prejudice” Mirjam said. She explained that there is an assumption that the area is dangerous, that people are scared to visit. “Unfortunately, there has been a couple of shootings and so on in the area, but I, myself, have never felt threatened here. I’ve worked in other places where I’ve felt more threatened and scared.” Mirjam noted that people do not actually know the area and the people living there. “Sometimes, for example, there might be a small group of kids standing by the entrance [to the meeting place] who may look kind of tough. But once you get to know them, they’re not as bad as they look” she said and smiled widely.

Conversations like this one permeated much of my time in the field. Several participants noted that people from outside the neighborhood often perceived it to be violent and dangerous, crawling with gang members, while lacking any experience of visiting the area themselves. For instance, several participants mentioned that once they tell non-residents that

they work in Älvby they are met with shock and concern. In an interview with a participant living in a more “Swedish”, middle class neighborhood, they explained:

One of the things I find important is how other people view the neighborhood and who lives here, because that is something I experience in my personal [life], “Ugh, you work *there*? You dare to go there?” I mean people have a perception of this area that there are shootings here and there, that it’s the wild west, drug addicts in every corner...”

This depiction indicates what Wacquant (2007) calls *territorial stigma*. That is, a form of stigma which marks a specified territory as tainted, diseased with otherness, designated for populations that are deemed as outcast—typically related to poverty, migration status, and race—all of which triggers a sense of aversion towards it (Wacquant, 2007)—thus explaining the reactions participants described.

As for how such stigma is perpetuated, many participants pointed to the media coverage of Älvby as a key factor. This is highlighted in the following example from an evening at the youth center:

It was late, all the younger kids had left the youth center by now, only some of the older teens remained. The air was calm, some teens were looking at their phones while others played their regular game of cards with one of the youth leaders. I sat with Anders, one of the veteran youth leaders, together with two “former” visitors of the youth center who grew up in the neighborhood, now in their mid-late twenties. They started talking about the neighborhood’s reputation. Anders told me that when you read in the papers about yet another arrested thirteen-year-old they are always called gang leaders, “they call everybody gang leaders, how many are there, really?”

In relation, another participant highlighted how the only narrative put forth about the neighborhood is a negative one:

There are a lot of people who have only heard from the news, ... they haven’t been to the neighborhood, only heard [about it], and they have a very negative impression of Älvby... I think the media has made it such a big deal. I understand that [bad] things have happened here ... But a thousand positive things have happened, and none of you [journalists] write about it. So then of course it becomes negative...

The prejudiced narratives the participants described can be linked to a broader discursive trend throughout Sweden and the global north, which ends up vilifying and alienating certain populations and associated neighborhoods through racialized discourse and territorial stigmatization (see Buchowski, 2017; Gusterson, 2017; Mazzarella, 2019; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). Some consider this trend to signify a coping strategy, responding to contemporary issues of socioeconomic insecurity, inequality, and a lacking sense of community. Therefore, making stories of a threatening *Other*, in the form of immigrants and minorities, a soothing scapegoat (Buchowski, 2017). As such, Älvby provides us with another example of how these discourses have come to dominate Western social and political landscapes, even locally.

However, some participants noted that the local media portrayal of the area has improved recently, as one participant explained in an interview:

If we look at the local media, the newspaper and the radio for example, I think it has gotten much better. Before it was usually only reported that things were bad, today it's different ... [the local paper] employed someone from another area, an at-risk neighborhood on the opposite side of town, and they usually write good things.

Here the participant attributed the more positive media coverage to increased representation from residents of at-risk neighborhoods in local media, which correlates to how participants emphasize the importance of being familiar with the area to counter negative stereotypes and perceptions. Though other participants also mentioned a decrease in media coverage and the neighborhood recently being calmer as other possible explanations.

Although there are some contradicting statements about the media coverage of the neighborhood, the participants were unanimous in the understanding that the general public has a negative preconception of the area, which participants believed to be fueled by their unfamiliarity with the neighborhood and its residents. Ultimately, the participants found that such perceptions resulted in palpable consequences for them, the community center's visitors, and the neighborhood overall. In the following section, I will address how participants experience and describe these effects.

4.2 Experiences and Effects of Prejudiced Narratives

In terms of the consequences following the negative perception of Älvby, participants mentioned the following most frequently: 1) people from other areas refrain from visiting the

community center and the neighborhood; 2) participants find that they, as well as visitors, become branded due to their connection to Älvby, which several participants perceive to result in discrimination; and 3) participants express various forms of emotional distress due to the discrimination and prejudice they, and/or visitors, face.

When asked about how prejudiced narratives about Älvby affects the community center, one participant responded: “Of course it affects us, because I remember that we have had visitors from outside too, but now hardly anyone comes.” Similarly, in my conversation with Mirjam in the library, she explained that these negative assumptions repel new visitors, especially from other neighborhoods: “We are the closest library to those living in [adjacent neighborhood]⁵ for example, but many of those who live there still choose to visit the city library instead.” Here participants highlighted that it is non-residents who seem influenced by Älvby’s territorial stigmatization, which in turn causes side-effects for the community center—such as fewer visitors.

In fact, several participants claimed that residents themselves often do not care, or are not affected, by the spread of stigmatizing narratives about the neighborhood. In my conversation with Anders and the two former visitors, one of the former visitors emphasized: “People who live here don’t care, but people outside do.” Other participants similarly stated that within the neighborhood, people are busy living their own lives and are usually not too preoccupied with how others perceive them. In the words of another participant: “[Overall] I think many people ... find that they have an everyday life where they’re pretty content ... I mean the kind of everyday life you can find anywhere.” These statements highlight the importance of not reducing the complex lives of people to their experience of otherness. Too often scholars have fallen into the trap of stripping *Others* of their agency by emphasizing the impact of colonial and racializing structures, while neglecting that their lives too are comprised of multiple social complexities and meanings that are *not* defined by a (white) oppressor (Ortner, 2006). Such over-simplifications risk further enforcing people’s state of *otherhood* and reduces them to helpless racialized objects of the Western gaze (see also Abu Lughod, 2002). While we should no doubt continue to critically examine and deconstruct colonial, racializing, and oppressive systems, it is equally important to keep these perspectives in mind as we do so.

⁵ A neighborhood more associated with middle-class populations

The second consequence often mentioned is for participants, and visitors, to become negatively branded due to their connection to the neighborhood. Specifically, they are associated with crime and labeled as immigrants (that is, in racializing terms rather than literal). Thus, it is in the interaction with people from outside the neighborhood that the stigmatization becomes apparent. As a result, people described being subjected to discrimination. Perhaps especially when it comes to the job market. As one participant stated:

These negative things have affected the whole neighborhood ... Because, if you are applying for jobs somewhere, I've also heard this from visitors, as soon as it says "Älvby" [in your job application], [it's a] no ... Why should it be like that? If a kid goes to school, does everything right, becomes branded just because they're an immigrant, just because they're from Älvby?

Similarly, as I spoke to Anders, Peter, and Eva, who have all worked in Älvby for over a decade, Eva described how prejudice makes people draw unfounded conclusions about neighborhood residents:

If you see a child going shopping for their parents there [white, conservative, middle class area⁶] many people probably think it's sweet, whereas if you see a child do the same thing here [in Älvby] there are probably some who think that the child might be used by their parents. The children here are viewed differently.

Both examples display how discourse determines our manner of understanding and interacting with the world. As demonstrated by De Koning and Vollebergh (2019), *characters* (such as the 'immigrant') and *stages* (such as the at-risk neighborhood) that are built and reproduced in media and public discourse become the template for how we interpret and interact with each other. These characters, or *ordinary icons*, are built upon an intersection of traits associated with e.g. class, race, gender, religion, and location. Thereby, the *icons* carry cultural values, positioning some icons as "deserving of sympathy and protection, while it positions others as morally suspect and in need of surveillance" (De Koning & Vollebergh, 2019, p. 399). In other words, the labelling that the residents of Älvby are subjected to can be interpreted as the application of *ordinary icons* onto the real world. Furthermore, as these icons imposingly

⁶ As described by the participant.

inform the Älvby residents who they are, the icons inevitably become embedded within their self-perception (De Koning & Vollebergh, 2019). This can be seen in the following excerpt:

As soon as you get out of this bubble, which I sometimes say Älvby is, you find out that “Ugh, if you live there then you’re not going to get a job” and so on. And then it kind of becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy! Because if everyone says that’s who we are, then that must mean it is true. That our children are dumber than others, that the neighborhood is dangerous. So, if you would speak [to locals] many would probably say that “it’s pretty unsafe”, but I believe that if you dig deeper into it, what it’s really about is that that is the perception everyone else thinks we should buy into.

Thus, whether residents contest such characterizations, which many of them do, it is undoubtedly something they are forced to navigate as these inform others’ perceptions and interactions with them. For some, the icons also become the compass for how they perceive themselves and their own neighborhood, despite having experiences that counter those narratives, as seen in the excerpt.

In reaction to these stigmatizing discourses, several participants express feelings of distress. For instance, in a conversation with Yasir, an Älvby resident and intern at the community center, he described the following:

I watch the news almost every day, but I must admit, I lose interest. I only see the negativity that the government is spreading about immigrants. It is particularly hard as a Muslim ... But the worst part is almost that you become mentally stressed. You get low self-esteem. Many people become sick from this! ... There are also some who have lost hope.

In correlation, other participants highlighted that they, as well as visitors, feel disgruntled but are unable to change the situation: “You just get sad and frustrated, why should it be like this? But I can’t change anything”, or similarly, “I believe it is accepted. How do you cope? It’s very difficult, people are openly racist here ... It is what it is.” Such statements carry a sense of lacking agency, combined with feelings of indifference and despair towards issues that appear all too great to overcome. How then, do the participants of this study use their agency to navigate and manage such overpowering struggles? This I will address in the final sections of my discussion.

4.3 Strategies

To manage experiences of discrimination and prejudice, participants employ primarily three forms of strategy, 1) strategies of avoidance, 2) strategies of humor, and 3) strategies of resistance. Although these strategies are presented as separate entities, it is important to note that participants will often alternate between or mix them.

4.3.1 Strategies of Avoidance

Throughout my fieldwork, I encountered participants who expressed a sense of indifference, despair, or a lack of agency, when facing issues of prejudice and discrimination. To further unpack this response, I have identified two levels of what I call *strategies of avoidance*: one being the use of avoidance to balance between professionalism and individual identity, and the other being the use of avoidance to manage feelings of distress.

As several participants have marginalized identities and/or are Älvby residents themselves, they are ultimately both the targets of the same discrimination faced by fellow residents but are also expected to uphold a sense of professionalism. Consequently, staff members end up oscillating between their identities as individuals and their identities as professionals. For instance, one participant, who has a marginalized identity as a non-white Muslim, mentioned how they sometimes bear witness to situations or conversations at the meeting place that can be interpreted as discriminatory or prejudiced, but feels a need to bury their reaction:

Let's say they're [visitors and/or staff] talking about a conflict ... at some point they pick a side, I mean, often it's unfortunately against Arabs or Somalis ... Like, you can see when the staff is part of the conversation that they whisper about other visitors, it's very obvious. So, I don't know ... I get angry sometimes, but I have kids back home, that's all I can say.

In the final part of the quote, the participant stresses that they find such situations bothersome, enraging even, but still refrains from speaking up because of the potential consequences of such an action. This exemplifies how participants of marginalized identities are required to compromise their personal identities and evaluate which actions, statements, and reactions, are deemed appropriate in their professional roles. This resembles what Thacker et al. (2021) describes in a study on marginalized counselors, where the participants performed a strategic,

contextual, and relational identity negotiation “as a means to cope with adversity, survive the system, or maintain the professional ideal” (p.103). Such negotiations could take both subconscious and conscious expressions. For instance, suppressing their beliefs about racial issues when in a predominantly white setting, or subconsciously avoiding stereotypical behavior associated with their marginalized identity (e.g. race, gender) (Thacker et al., 2021). Similarly, the Muslim participant from the excerpt described how they suppressed their marginalized identity as a strategy to maintain orderly relationships with visitors and co-workers, and therein preserve their professional identity.

Moreover, some participants mentioned that it is difficult to talk about discrimination with other staff members. Partially, because they might not share the same views or experiences, as one participant expressed: “It’s hard to speak [about it] here with friends or colleagues. Because some take it in a good way, others might say ‘it’s not like that!’ because they don’t experience it that way.” In this example, not addressing discrimination becomes a form of conflict avoidance, which allows the participant to ‘keep the peace’ with their co-workers. Some participants also mentioned the political tensions that surround topics of discrimination, which therefore makes them difficult to address. In an interview with one of the staff members at the meeting place, they responded: “People might be scared because they don’t know where to start ... I mean, it’s a sensitive topic. And here in Sweden there has always been—I’ve never understood it myself—this notion that you don’t talk about who you vote for.”

These examples lead me to the Swedish emphasis on conformity, as well as the related aversion towards conflict, both of which discourage overt or ‘inappropriate’ displays of emotions (Graham, 2002). Furthermore, discussions and arguments that trigger such emotional displays tend to be taken less seriously and are more frequently questioned, as they contrast the ideal of ‘neutral’ strictly factual arguments (Graham, 2002). The hesitation to address issues related to discrimination, regardless of whether you find them important or are subjected to discrimination yourself, can thus be correlated to Swedish norms of conformity and emotional control. Avoiding these discussions is therefore not only about professionalism, but also about conforming to normative Swedishness. For marginalized participants, conforming could likely also become a way to avoid further stigmatization and distress. As noted by Dick and Wirtz (2011), “one’s very awareness of racializing practices can further mark one as racialized...” (p. E6)

Furthermore, some participants found discussing topics related to marginalization and discrimination to be personally distressing, for them as well as the visitors, which is why they try to avoid it: “They [visitors] do talk to us about it [incidents of discrimination], but we try to avoid these discussions because it’s a very sensitive topic for them. ... You feel bad when you hear about these things, but you can’t change anything.” While this quote speaks of protecting others, and oneself, from emotional distress, it also correlates to a lack of agency in the sense that the participant expressed an inability to alter their situation. Although participants identified certain incidents as discriminatory, they ultimately drew the conclusion that addressing them as such is a waste of energy and causes unnecessary distress, since discrimination will prevail regardless. Additionally, conveying an experience of discrimination is often difficult as its expression can be very elusive, even if the subject immediately senses its discriminatory nature (Dick & Wirtz, 2011). Considering too that bringing such issues up may put you at risk of being questioned and disregarded due to their intangibility and affectivity (see Graham, 2002), that could potentially also factor into this choice of strategy. Therefore, intentionally avoiding subjects of discrimination becomes a way to (at least temporarily) manage, reduce, or avoid feelings of distress.

All in all, choosing not to address issues directly as discrimination, even if that is how participants understand them, thus becomes a strategy to avoid feelings of distress, as well as the risk of starting a (politically) loaded conversation, thereby also enabling them to maintain neutrality and professionalism, as well as follow Swedish norms of conformity.

4.3.2 Strategies of Humor

Secondly, participants employed humor as a strategy, often to defuse experiences of discrimination and prejudice, but also to provide themselves agency. One example of this is the conversation I had with Halima, Sima, and Yasir, who all work or intern at the meeting place’s citizen service. There had just been a workshop, held by representatives from a local staffing company, for adults in the neighborhood to learn about how to write a good job application. Once the workshop was over, I walked over to Halima, Sima, and Yasir as they chatted by the meeting place’s café, holding hot drinks in their hands. I asked them what they had thought about the workshop. Halima looked at me with sighing eyes, stating that the resumé is not the problem. “It’s enough for your last name to be Mohamed, we don’t get a chance no matter what is in our resumé. Maybe I should change my name to Mohamedsson?” she laughed.

The excerpt is reminiscent of what Franck (2021) observes about how migrants use humor as an agentive tool, that humor can be used to reclaim and master a situation that may in other ways be outside your realm of control. Furthermore, humor provides an arena to share information and express discontent in a more disarming and hidden fashion. It may also act to temporarily displace authority, for instance through ridicule, as well as highlight the absurdity of issues like violence or oppression (Franck, 2021). Thus, Halima acknowledged that the discrimination she and others experience in the job market is out of her control and used humor to not only voice discontent, but also to ridicule the absurdity of such discrimination. Thereby, she momentarily stripped this systemic discrimination of its authority while allowing herself a sense of agency.

Another tangible example is from when visitation zones started to be debated once again. This was in February, at around the mid-point of my fieldwork. News was coming out about how the disputed visitation zones would soon be implemented. The local newspaper even wrote about how it was likely that such zones would be applied there as well. When I asked participants about it, all the people I spoke to casually noted that police were already conducting visitations of people they considered to look suspect, and that sometimes innocent people would also be subjected to searches. As I read about visitation zones in the local paper, I asked Sima about them as she passed me by. She said that implementing visitation zones could be both positive and negative, stating that she does not think it would change much, considering the visitations that are already happening. Before she left, she laughed and told me that we have to be careful not to wear Gucci hats anymore so that police won't stop us. The humorous remark commented on a statement made by a politician who declared that people wearing Gucci hats were coded as criminals and would hence likely be stopped in the visitation zones (TT, 2024). The comment made by Sima can be understood as a humorous way to share information about what police will be looking for in terms of who to search, much like what Franck (2021) describes about humor functioning as truth-telling and exchange of information, while also providing a break from an otherwise serious topic of conversation. Furthermore, the way Sima uses humor also functions to promote solidarity (see Sorensen, 2008), in this case with me (*we* have to be careful), marking that the two of us are unified in resistance against the oppression (in this case, the visitation zones).

Importantly, this sense of humor often corresponded with strategies of avoidance, namely by expressing a sense of indifference or ambivalence towards adverse experiences—as

can also be seen in the previous example with Sima in her, and others', response to visitation zones. That is, to shrug them off by saying that it is out of your control anyway, so why bother. In the following excerpt, we can both identify how Salem—a youth leader who grew up in Älvby—and the kids from the youth center defused an experience of discrimination through humor and small forms of everyday resistance, but also how Salem then expressed ambivalence and despair towards the incident:

Once when we were headed to the mountains for a ski trip [with the kids from the youth center], there were a couple of kids who had forgotten their gloves and hats, you know, little things like that, so we stopped at a store to buy some. Immediately when we [the youth leaders and the kids] entered the store I heard them calling out in the speakers, you know “can someone come to register three.” I laughed a little because I noticed that it happened as soon as we came in. Then, two staff members started following us wherever we went in the store. As soon as one of the kids picked something up, they would ask if we were going to buy it. I was super annoyed and asked them what they were doing.

Once he finished his story, I asked Salem whether he spoke to the kids about what happened afterwards. “No, I mean, their way of showing... revenge, yes revenge, was to give them [the shop] bad reviews.” Both of us laughed a little. Suddenly Salem shifted, his face turned stern as he proceeded with a low, serious tone of voice. “I mean, when things like this happen, they might think about it but then they have to process it themselves. I mean, what am I supposed to tell them? That your whole life is going to be like this?”

By expressing this kind of ambivalence participants somewhat deny their own agency, and in so doing rest in a state of apathy towards the injustice facing them and their visitors. Within this framework, humor thus becomes one of the small tools that they can still use to exercise agency and manage their experiences alongside their peers. To finish off this discussion, I will be moving on to unpack the final form of strategy.

4.3.3 Strategies of Resistance

The third form of strategy is strategies of resistance, both by refusing to be defined by the narratives and *icons* ascribed to the neighborhood, but also by committing actions that counter them. Such resistance takes three main forms: 1) verbal contestation—participants accentuate

that their perception of the neighborhood opposes dominant stigmatizing narratives; 2) participants engage in collaborative, uplifting, efforts meant to strengthen and promote the neighborhood and its residents; and finally, 3) the everyday work conducted at the community center provides visitors with tools to navigate and challenge systems of power.

Firstly, the participants of this study quite unanimously expressed pride and passion towards the neighborhood and its locals, quick to point out their own—often more positive—perception of the area in contrast to that of outsiders. As one of my participants put it:

My perception is the complete opposite. This is a neighborhood with regular families who go to work ... I mean, people just want to live a good life, have their income, pay their taxes and rent ... Many people I've met over the years think this is a nice neighborhood, with nice apartments, close to nature, good communications, ... and so on.

In this excerpt, the participant emphasized the contrast between their own perception of the neighborhood versus that of the general public. In so doing, they provide an alternate narrative that challenges popular perceptions of the neighborhood as dangerous and criminal. As such, the statement can be considered a small act of resistance that ultimately provides the participant with their own sense of agency over an otherwise externally controlled narration.

Secondly, participants are active engagers in and facilitators of local collaborations and initiatives that serve to develop and uplift Älvby. Throughout my stay, the word *samverkan* (collaboration/coordination) kept recurring in statements made by participants, particularly as they described their work and the purpose of the community center. *Samverkan* was practiced in a myriad of ways, both within the community center between the different departments, as well as with external actors. These collaborations occurred on a smaller everyday scale, such as staff members helping each other across the boundaries of their set roles or collaborating on joint activities, as well as on a larger scale, by for instance collaborating on bigger overarching projects with other local actors. One example of more overarching *samverkan* is the following:

I was invited, together with some community center representatives, to participate in a workshop held by the community network—a collaboration where local associations, residents, representatives from the municipality, and other central actors in the neighborhood

come together to discuss and carry out developmental efforts to strengthen and vitalize the neighborhood. As I entered the “association room” (*föreningslokalen*) in the community center, I was met with rows of tables where people sat patiently, small talking as they waited for the workshop to start. Some had grabbed themselves sandwiches, fruits, and hot drinks from the *fika*-station. In front of the tables stood a couple of municipality representatives, setting up their PowerPoint. After a long presentation about what had been accomplished by the network thus far—giving examples of a neighborhood party, a local role model gala, and safety walks where residents and local actors identify needs and areas of improvement—everyone sat down in mixed groups to discuss assigned themes relating to neighborhood outreach. At each table, one person took notes while the others discussed and brought forth their points concerning which issues seemed prevalent in terms of reaching and attracting residents. Thereafter, they came up with ideas for how those issues could be solved, which were then presented to the whole group.

In this context, *samverkan* thus contributed to the construction of elaborate social networks between local actors and residents, encouraged locals’ influence, and facilitated small- and large-scale community activities and investments. Although these collaborations are imperfect and come with a plethora of disagreements, obstacles, and sometimes painfully slow progression (as noted by several participants), they also shape a sense of community and become a tool for fulfilling local desires and needs, while—advertently or inadvertently—serving as a counterforce to the exhaustingly negative perceptions that circulate about the neighborhood. Such efforts can be interpreted as what White (1986) calls everyday forms of collaboration, a complement to Scott’s (1985) everyday forms of resistance. Using the example of Vietnamese peasants, White (1986) describes how cooperation between the peasants and other social groups, like academics and workers, facilitated social mobility and effectively provided peasants with increased local influence and political experience. Which resembles how Älvby’s community network operates, as they encourage the involvement of residents and local actors of different social positions to collaboratively shape the neighborhood and gain political access.

Furthermore, these collaborations could be understood as what Ortner (2006) refers to as an agency of projects, where agents at the margins of power come to (re)formulate their own frameworks, on their own terms, based on their own desires and ambitions. Because importantly, though the participants of this study are in various ways impacted and shaped by prejudiced narratives, these do not define the projects they pursue. Rather, the projects

themselves serve to directly address issues and desires found within the neighborhood. In other words, these desires and pursuits exist in their own right and should not be reduced to a response to imposed narratives about the neighborhood.

Finally, the daily work that is performed at the community center can also be considered a form of everyday resistance, as it includes assisting visitors in their navigation of (discriminatory) systems of power. For instance, by sharing experiences and giving support, as depicted in the following example:

I sat down with Noor, a staff member working with citizen service, and a couple of adult Somali visitors, as they spoke about the migration office (*migrationsverket*). The group, Noor included, shared their own experiences of how the requirements for acquiring a residence permit (*uppehållstillstånd*) were now tougher, sympathizing and agreeing with each other's accounts. One visitor then described an issue they had encountered in contact with a government agency, due to a small mistake they had made. "Anyone can make a mistake!" Noor commented and went on to explain how crucial it was to help visitors navigate and understand the system and its requirements, especially for those lacking in Swedish skills.

The manner Noor and the visitors gathered to share and validate their experiences, while simultaneously providing information about how the system works, can be likened to Constable's (1997) depiction of Filipina maids in Hong Kong. The author describes how the maids would gather weekly to discuss their poor working conditions, express support, and importantly, spread information about worker's rights organizations. In a similar fashion, Noor forms solidarity and exchanges support with the visitors, and by exchanging experiences the group provides each other with information to ease their navigation of—in this case—government agencies.

Furthermore, participants passed on strategies to help visitors navigate discrimination and stay out of trouble. At the youth center one afternoon, a couple of police officers stepped in and made themselves acquainted with everyone. I noticed how Marko, one of the youth leaders, stiffened up while observing one of the older (non-white) teens flaunting their nicotine pouches to the officers. After the officers left, the teen sat back down with us at the card table. Marko proceeded to scold the teen, reminding them that you must be careful around police, "Don't show them [the nicotine pouches], you know they [the police] write that stuff down!" In his scolding of the teen, Marko reminds the teenager that police pay special

attention to them—thus acknowledging the racialization of the teen—and provides the teen with a strategy to avoid persecution (“Don’t show them”).

Interestingly, while staff members exhibit everyday resistance towards overarching systems of power, the community center itself relies on and is facilitated by that very system. That is, by being run by the municipality, which is part of the greater state apparatus. This can be compared to Novo’s (2004) study of governance in Mexico. In an excerpt, a government official working with indigenous migrants explained how different branches of government carry out contradictory missions, that for instance police harassed and targeted migrants, while other government branches attempted to protect them. The official stated that rather than directly opposing the government, “he organized migrants to resist government abuses” (Novo, 2004, p.360). Hence, the tools for government resistance were provided to the migrants within the framework of the government itself. Similarly, the way Marko assists the teen and provides them with tools to navigate systemic discrimination promotes everyday resistance from within the overarching system of power it seeks to challenge. Simultaneously, this illustrates the ambivalence of resistance, as participants are still reliant on overarching power structures to facilitate their engagement (see Ortner, 2006).

5. Conclusion

This paper has examined how the staff members at a public community center in an at-risk neighborhood navigate prejudiced narratives about said neighborhood. It has demonstrated that participants experience territorial stigma and discrimination in relation to the prejudiced narratives and perceptions that portray Älvby as dangerous and criminal. Furthermore, the findings show how participants manage such stigmatization by employing strategies of avoidance—to reduce distress and maintain professionalism; strategies of humor—to gain agency, community, and (temporarily) strip oppressors of their power; and finally, strategies of resistance—by collectively and individually contradicting popular stigmatizing narratives, working towards self-defined goals, and assisting each other in navigating oppressive systems.

Importantly, while the strategies participants use could be considered passive or trivial, they are deliberate methods that serve to not only endure through adversity, but to foster community and solidarity while resisting processes of stigmatization and racialization. Moreover, the strategies demonstrate how power is at times dynamic, that it can be (albeit temporarily) displaced through simple actions—such as humor—and be moved onto otherwise

(relatively) powerless subjects. As such, the strategies are significant to understand how prejudice, racialization, and stigma is managed and challenged in everyday life, and informs us about how agency can be exercised even amongst those who perceive themselves to lack it.

Furthermore, the manner everyday resistance was performed at the community center informs us about how such resistance can emerge from the very systems of power that it seeks to oppose. That the municipality, which represents a larger system of (political) power as part of the state apparatus, paradoxically operates an organization that teaches people to navigate, and to some extent challenge, that system. Hence, it demonstrates how a system of power can indeed challenge itself. Moreover, this illustrates the ambivalence of resistance, as the participants of everyday resistance are simultaneously dependent on established structures of power to facilitate their engagement.

Finally, the participants of this study remind us not to consider the subjects of oppression as strictly helpless *Others* in need of (white Western) intervention. Rather, these are people—agents—with lives of their own, guided by their own goals, relations, and meanings, enriched by their own capacities, projects, and communities. While oppressive structures do impose themselves onto people's lives, it is important to remember that not all is defined by them.

As for further research, there is still a need for anthropologists to contribute to research on the Swedish context regarding racializing discourse and its everyday expressions and effects. Additionally, this paper indicates that there is potential in further exploration of strategies of avoidance and humor, notably due to their relative absence in anthropology today.

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