LUND UNIVERSITY

Black in the Ivory Tower

The Subversiveness of Black Women at Lund University

Elsa Mertala

Master of Applied Cultural Analysis
Department of Arts and Cultural Sciences
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Supervisor
Emma Eleonorasdotter

Abstract

In Sweden the research about Black people's experiences in academia is quite limited, because of a self-image that is colourblind which prevents the acknowledgement of Black existence (practice, thought, bodies). This thesis is a cultural analytical attempt to contribute and widen the research field of critical studies in Swedish academia, through exploring Black female's emotional and body experiences in the spatiotemporal space of Lund University. More particularly, this thesis is built around fieldwork and six participants that either work or study the university. Furthermore, theories of orientation and Narratives are applied; by doing so it examines Black women's geographies via past, present, and future. Deploying a Black feminist lens on Black women's accounts, the thesis argues that their mere existence is a subversive practice in the academy. The use of queer phenomenology and Black feminist theory make the negotiation Black women endure in Swedish academia visible.

Meanwhile, according to previous research, conditions stemming from colonial structures and Swedish exceptionalism, try to uphold the Ivory Tower as it is, thus (in)directly control the practices, thoughts, and bodies of Black women. Under these conditions, the participants orient towards the possibilities of a community. Where even the smallest (non)-verbal dialogues could make them feel less lonely and validate Black existence. Moreover, Black women are forced into the margins as their bodies could be a threat to the social order in Swedish academia. To acknowledge these structures, this thesis suggests a form of shared burden to not only talk about marginalised groups in academia but also talk about institutionalized Whiteness in the space. To get a deeper understanding of how bodies are oriented in academic settings. Furthermore, this thesis advocates for further research on this subject to continue to widen the field of critical studies in the Swedish academy.

Keywords: Academia; Black women; labour; subversiveness; Lund University; Swedish exceptionalism

Abstract (Svenska)

I Sverige har forskningen om svartas upplevelser i akademin varit begränsade, på grund av en självbild som är färgblind och som förhindrar erkännandet av svartas existens (praktik, tanke, kroppar). Denna studie är ett kulturanalytiskt försök att kunna bidra och bredda forskningsfältet för kritiska studier i den svenska akademin, genom att utforska svarta kvinnors känslomässiga och kroppsliga upplevelser i Lunds universitets spatiotemporala rum. Studien bygger mer specifikt på fältarbete och sex deltagare som arbetar eller studerar vid universitetet. Vidare, så tillämpas teorier om orientering och Narrativ; således kan svarta kvinnors geografier via dåtid, nutid och framtid undersökas. Genom att använda en svart feministisk lins på svarta kvinnors berättelser, hävdar studien att svarta kvinnors existens är en subversiv praxis i akademin. Användningen av queer fenomenologi och svart feministisk teori synliggör den förhandling som svarta kvinnor utsätts för i svensk akademi.

Tidigare forskning menar att villkor som härrör från koloniala strukturer och svensk exceptionalism försöker upprätthålla 'the Ivory Tower' som det är, och på så sätt (in)direkt kontrollera svarta kvinnors praktiker, tankar och kroppar. Under dessa villkor, orienterar deltagarna mot en sorts gemenskap. Där även de minsta (icke)verbala dialogerna kan få dem att känna sig mindre ensamma samt bekräfta svart existens. Vidare, tvingas svarta kvinnor ut i periferin eftersom deras kroppar kan vara ett hot mot samhällsordningen i svensk akademi. För att erkänna dessa strukturer föreslår denna studie en form av delad börda, alltså att inte bara tala om marginaliserade grupper i akademin utan också tala om institutionaliserad vithet i rummet. Detta för att få en djupare förståelse för hur kroppar är orienterade i akademiska miljöer. Följaktligen förespråkar denna studie för ytterligare forskning inom det här ämnet för att fortsätta att bredda fältet för kritiska studier i den svenska akademin.

Nyckelord: Akademin; svarta kvinnor; arbete; subversiv; Lund universitet; svensk exceptionalism

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1. Introduction

3 years ago, when I was studying at University of Amsterdam, a guest lecturer visited to discuss about *ethnic and racial identity politics*. The lecturer explored issues of decoloniality, historic narratives, the Eurocentric canon and activism. This made most of the class listen intently. He used his own experiences to personalize the narratives and explore problematic structures within institutions and society, as both individual and structural. To connect further with us as students, he moved the conversation to his own experiences with the school system and the academy in the Netherlands. He tried to illustrate several structures that uphold a societal system that diminish the presence of Black bodies, and an academic system gatekeeping them. These structures were visualized through milestones as class pictures, and by every picture that was shown, less and less Black people[1] were in them. Till eventually, he was the only one left.

This lecture was impactful and personal, as it illustrated a system which erased Black people and voices within the space of academia. That story reconciled with other Black students in that classroom, and it did not matter that we came from various Western countries because the experiences told by the guest lecturer were felt. His story, body and emotions were similar to others in that room. This was also the case for me.

bell hooks (1994) believes that the academy is a space of possibility, yet it could also, as the guest lecturer described, withhold various obstacles for some.

> The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994, p. 207)

Education means the act of teaching knowledge to others and the act of receiving knowledge from someone else. It contains complexities of an intimate, not fixed, relationship between educator and learner as it needs engagement from both to accommodate successful knowledge production. Furthermore, Sara Ahmed (2012) argues that in academia bodies flux between different positions where some bodies are seen as the inhabitant of certain time-spaces (belonging) and others as being out of place (not belonging). This could further be explained through the system of *meritocracy* which academia is built upon (Saxonberg &

Sawyer, 2006). Meaning that in academia individuals should be regarded based on their merits (educations, skills, abilities). However, Malone (2012) and Wolgast and Wolgast (2021) argues that although meritocracy might be considered as fair, it disregards factors such as race, gender, and class. Individuals do not have the same opportunity to obtain the same education, skills and/or abilities due to their position. Instead, meritocracy illustrates an injustice foreground that (re)produces relations of inequalities because of the belief that the differences of positions of power are meritocratically deserved (Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021, p. 59; Malone, 2012, p. 166). Consequently, those who are disadvantaged in the system might feel out of place because of their struggle and failure to obtain these merits.

Furthermore, academia is an institution that for certain people is an undiscovered terrain, but for some people it has become part of their everyday life. However, academia is a space that condition those who enter. These conditions could be further explained through an intersectional lens, where an individual's position in a context is interpreted as based upon categories of gender, class, race, religion, age, and disabilities. For example, these categories engage with each other and affect individuals in various ways. In this interplay, relations of inferiority and superiority are constructed and re-produced by actions and structures, unconsciously and consciously, explicitly and implicitly (Crenshaw, 1989).

Therefore, there are several groups that are being affected negatively and positively by a variety of conditions determined by relations of power in the academic space (see Ahmed, 2012). Regarding the Afrodiasporic people, who span the globe, the social and political geographies conclude that they are moving through academic structures of interpersonal racism and discrimination. Hence this is a global matter, where structural inequalities hinder and affect their experiences of higher education (Ahmed, 2012; Navarro et al., 2013).

In the context of Sweden, speaking about these experiences is arduous. Many researchers argue that Sweden's self-image is characterised by systemic repression of its racist history and position itself as a form of utopia in relation to other countries (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005; Habel, 2012; Alm et al., 2021; Jämte et al., 2020). There are also researchers that argue that Swedishness is reliant on this assumed supremacy, as well as a view of European racism being, wrongfully, overshadowed by racism in the United States (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005, pp. 9-10; Kamali, 2005, pp. 29-30). This image also imbues institutions like the academy (Habel, 2012; Osman, 2021). Followingly, those who raises their voices about

structural racism and discrimination will therefore be a threat to this image of Swedish exceptionalism, as it undermines an image that is both national and international (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005; Osman, 2021). However, Sweden is not an exempt from the structural and institutional racism and discrimination permeating Western societies (Kamali, 2005, pp. 29-30). In a report from the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention (Brottsförebyggande rådet) about reported hate crimes to the police in 2020, 55 percent of all hate crimes in Sweden had xenophobic and racist motives, and 15% of those had afrophobic motives (Brottsförebyggande rådet [BRÅ], 2021, pp. 32-33). Wolgast et al. showed that Afro-swedes are more vulnerable in the labour market than other groups, resulting in lower pay, higher rates of unemployment and less career progression (2018). Consequently, there seems to be reasons to urgently find ways to deal with racism in Sweden, but if racism is not recognized, such work will be made more difficult. An example of such a clash between non-racist self-image and the work against racism is described by political scientist Jan Jämte, sociologist Jasmine Kelekay, and criminologist Leandro Schclarek Mulinari. They argue that in the case of Black Lives Matter[2] (BLM), critics have claimed that BLM is an imported political trend from the United States that is not applicable in Sweden (Jämte et al., 2020).

> The self-image, which is often described in terms of Nordic or Swedish exceptionalism, includes that Sweden is seen as a moral superpower in the world and is reflected both outwards towards the outside world but also inwards towards the Swedish society. […]. But when Black Swedish activists mobilized to show their solidarity with Black Americans and the BLM movement, and to use the movement as a driving force to shed light on anti-Black racism in Sweden, then the tone changed. (Jämte et al., 2020, p. 372, *my translation*).

Moreover, this tone of change became critical of BLM more specifically that the demonstrations were pointless because, according to the critics, there is no structural anti-Black racism in Sweden. This critique or denial of racism in Sweden could, according to Jämte et al. (2020) be a consequence of the self-image. Then the question arises, whether racism has any place in academia? At Lund University, in a student nation, a slave market was held in 2011 where three participants in blackface[3] and chained were sold by their "slave trader" (Haraldsson, 2011). This scandal was never mentioned during my time at the university, rather it was brushed under the carpet. Nevertheless, what has been brought up here from various standpoints is an image of a "colour-blind"[4] and naïve Sweden, which makes it demanding for non-White people to get their experiences acknowledged. However, as my own experiences and the guest lecturer at Amsterdam University (and many others) described, this is not just a race issue but also a question of gender.

Anthropologists Tami Navarro, Bianca Williams, and Attiya Ahmad (2013) argues that women of colour (WOC) have been seated in the periphery of academia, through disparaging and dismissive representations of WOC. Academia, according to them, has historically been racialized and gendered, and this positions Black women in a particular way (Navarro et al., 2013; Ahmed, 2012). Meaning that Black women's experiences differ in relation to White women as well (hooks, 2015b, p. 32). They further argue that Black women are being the antagonistic as they must justify their presence in most academic settings, as their positionality of gender and race differ from the assumptions of whom can and should claim academic space (cf. Messner, 2000, pp. 459-461). Navarro believes that White men encircles the idealized embodiment of an academic position in the West, and Black women become its counterpart (2013, pp. 453-454). She further argues that being part of that counter-reality reminds coloured women that "this space is not made for you." (Navarro et al., 2013, p. 454). Therefore, the point of departure based on these arguments, is not exclusively that Black women seem to encounter hindrance surrounding the academic life but also that their mere presence in such a place is subversive.

1.1 Aim and Research Questions

In this thesis, I employ a Black feminist perspective to explore how Black women's experiences of embodiment and emotions are narrated at Lund University. Black academics here comprise of people who identify as Black and belong to the African and Black diaspora who are either students or work within the academy. This encompasses various forms of movements within this certain space. When referring to this space, Lund University, it is both real and imagined, abstract and concrete (Soja, 1996). Thus, how practices and thoughts are part of the lived experiences of Black women.

Furthermore, the aim is to investigate bodily and emotional experiences of Black women in a Predominantly White Institution (henceforth in this thesis I will refer to the abbreviation PWI). More specifically, how does the female Black body move through the spatio-temporality of Lund University, and which factors are at play when those bodies act and engage within those boundaries. Moreover, this thesis examines how space and body affect one another. The questions could therefore be framed as follows:

- If the Black female body is a subversive practice in academia, how is it narrated?

- What forms of negotiation are at play when Black women move through the space of Lund University?

- What impact do spatiotemporal structures (historical and current) at Lund University have on Black women?

These questions try to encompass various experiences of Black women's testimonies, from lived to memorised and perceived to experienced. From the specific perspective of applied cultural analysis, I attempt to contribute and widen the research field of critical studies about the academy in Sweden. This is possible through Narratives[5] which are constructed in dialogue with Black women working or studying at Lund University. Narratives can create new knowledges and a counter-reality to hegemonic understandings of space (Amoah, 1997; R. Delgado, 1989). I will also follow what Collins argue in her text, that this thesis "is not an exclusionary identity politics, merely a Black-women-centred one." (Collins, 2000, p. 224). Therefore, talking and exploring Black women's lived experiences is not about delve into suffering (cf. poverty porn[6]). This thesis is rather constructed with the ambition to move Black women's experiences from the margins to the centre of knowledge production and let their stories be told by and for them – thus amplifying their voices outside and inside the academy.

1.2 Positionality of Black women

The Black woman is positioned in a complex system of gendered, raced, and sexual dynamics (Benard, 2016), this has led to varied positions depending on the contexts. From their experiences being excluded from the feminism movement (de los Reyes, 2011; Lorde, 2007) and academia (Ahmed, 2012; hooks, 2015b) to being policed and scrutinized as "that kind of woman" (e.g., angry, disruptor) (Benard, 2016; Ahmed, 2012; Navarro et al., 2013, p. 454). Rarely has the Black woman been in the centre of the scope in a positive manner. These fixed views imposed on Black women are hurting their existence in the social world. Therefore, conducting this study and writing these stories I did not want to (re)produce these negative stereotypes nor convey essentialist accounts of a homogenous Black womanhood. Having these thoughts throughout the process of conducting this study, the effort is to centralize the participants where their experiences and reasonings become - partial and situated - interpretations of the social world they engage with.

1.3 Disposition

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The introductory chapter has outlined the field and the relevance of the specific purpose and questions of this study, to illustrate a basic understanding of the construction of Blackness and Swedish exceptionalism. The second chapter gives an overview of the theoretical framework and previous research. The theoretical framework operates as both theory and the epistemology underpinning this study, therefore affecting the methodology and research. The third chapter presents the methodological framework used to derive the findings, specifically Narratives, interviews, fieldwork, and autoethnography. Accordingly, the methods require the researcher to examine ethical considerations and to be transparent and reflexive, to understand the complexities and intersections of human beings in a social world. In the fourth chapter, we are deep diving into the space of academia and contextualise it further, particularly regarding activism, spatiality, and temporality in academic settings. Moreover, I outline the construction of Lund University through time, and how concepts such as Swedish exceptionalism and Swedishness could describe functions in the Swedish academy. In "Displacement of Black bodies" there is a shift to explicitly investigate the lived experiences the participants described. Some of the findings have been divided into three dimensions: (1) the construction of Blackness, and that further relates to (2) the issues of loneliness and representation in academia, and lastly focus on (3) the ambiguous position of both feeling that you belong and not. The sixth chapter explores strategies and labour through concepts of intimacies, subversiveness, adapting, and erasure. Lastly, the concluding chapter highlights the main points made through the thesis, as a springboard to the applicability of the findings and indications for further research. As a result, the thesis offers to forth bring insights and solutions to the questions raised.

2. Overview: theoretical framework and previous research

In this part of the thesis, an overview of theoretical framework and previous research is examined and presented to understand the complexities of Black womanhood in academia. In order to do this, I will both formulate the theoretical framework used in the study and delve into previous research in this field. Furthermore, this section discusses concepts and thoughts surrounding spatiality, temporality, embodiment, and emotions. To examine these aspects, I start from a thinking with Black feminist scholars within various disciplines: Patricia Hill Collins - sociology, bell hooks - English and ethnic studies, and Sara Ahmed - race and cultural studies (although philosophy inspires her work). In this section I derive from the idea

- coined by Patricia Hill Collins - Black feminist thought to understand Black women as agents. I will also examine Ahmed's (2006) concept queer phenomenology, more particularly on body, space, and orientations. From the insights of Black women's geographies, I will explore the movement of the body within a certain space, and how it orients away and towards objects and subjects but also how it gets pushed and conditioned in the same space.

2.1 Black Feminist Thought

In this study, Black feminist thought (BFT) provides both a theoretical and epistemological understanding, to examine and critique the knowledge production in our social world. Although, Collins (2000) constructs this framework in the context of the United States and Black women's (un)paid work, it entails crucial thoughts that could be used in the context of Swedish academia as well. Furthermore, the model of BFT has also engaged other scholars (see West, 2019; Love & Evans-Winters, 2014).

BFT encapsulates Black women's everyday life, community, and society. West argues that Black women share a 'common bond' amongst them which is expressed in how they are exposed to racism, classism, and sexism (2019, p. 546). However, women are not a homogenous group as they will perceive and respond to oppression differently, which partially depends on categories such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, class, and religion etc. This also follows the idea of intersectionality (Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1989). Furthermore, BFT is not excluding the valuable contributions from other thinkers to develop, as it is not constructed in a vacuum (Collins, 2000, pp. 17-18, 32-33).

Irma McClaurin (2001) draws from the discipline of Black feminist anthropology and create a form of alternative activist practice, similar to BFT. She argues for understanding Black women's lived experiences through both practice and thought as it encompasses a larger scope of the lived experience:

> An embodied, positioned, ideological standpoint perspective that holds Black women's experiences of simultaneous and multiple oppressions as the epistemological and theoretical basis of a 'pragmatic activism' directed at combating those personal, individual and structural and local and global forces that pose harm to black (in the widest geopolitical sense) women's wellbeing. (McClaurin, 2001, p. 63)

She sees this understanding of Black women's positioning as the collective standpoint of being a Black woman in society. The multiple oppressions might vary geopolitically, but

there is a continuance of racialized and gendered structures. Therefore, Collins (2000) and McClaurin (2001) argue for the importance of an intersectional focus to understand Black women's standpoint, as intersections position us differently. Nevertheless, standpoint theory has also historically been critiqued for essentialism, that although standpoint theory challenges essentialism, it also relies on essentialism. Moreover, that standpoint theory reduces knowledge to individual experiences, as a matter for individual voices to assert their knowledge superior to others (Edwards, 2014). To acknowledge that all individuals have several social identities that constitute their being, there needs an understanding of these positions through the interlinking system of oppression. However, this does not mean that all experience oppression. Furthermore, we should not, and cannot, examine categories such as gender, race, and class as separate systems bur rather explore these conjoint systems that affect one another – constructing our world (Collins, 2000, p. 203).

Collins argues that the mere presence of Black women is being a form of resistance, as they embody traditions of activism. Meaning that when Black women are in spaces they have historically been restricted from they will successfully embody activism. She further argues that there is a relationship between thoughts and practice as they inform one another through dialogue. Dialogue is seen as a tool for Black women to assess knowledge claims, to further validate their lived experiences (Collins, 2000, pp. 260-261). Moreover, BFT have influenced the methodology by using methods like Narrative and storytelling as tools to understand the knowledge production of Black women's standpoint. Thus, Black women are known as agents of knowledge and their lived stories and experiences become functions of meaning-making devices (Collins, 2000, pp. 266-270).

BFT as epistemology has also impacted the ethical considerations and the research process, through careful reflections of ethics of care and accountability (Collins, 2000). An ethic of care made me aware of my embodiment of personal emotions, empathy, and experiences in relation to the study. As a result, I avoided a distanced position as a researcher. Through an ethic of care and accountability, I carefully considered how the portrayed image of their Narratives was constructed because of the sensitivity of the subject. I also constructed the thesis from the perspective of a multi-targeted audience (O'Dell, 2017), meaning that it needs to be accessible for various people, not only for people within academia. Aside from this it also encouraged me to treat the participants as someone close to me (mutual trust and respect), thus genuinely engaged with them as participants and researchers. Both me, and the

participants embodied this form of care through our conversation as we shared this common bond that helped us understand each other.

2.2 The orientations of the stranger

> The woman of color isn't a real scholar; she is motivated by ideology. The woman of color is angry. She occupies the moral high ground. The woman of color declares war by pointing to the complicity of white feminists in imperialism. The woman of color is racist (and we hurt, too). The woman of color should be grateful, as she lives in our democracy. We have given her the right and the freedom to speak. The woman of color is the origin of terror, and she fails to recognize violence other than the violence of white against black. The exercising of this figure does more than make her work: it is a defense against hearing her work. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 162)

Ahmed brings up various lived experiences for coloured women in academia, how she is perceived, how she thinks, how she acts, how she should NOT act and so forth. Her body, not her, is up for display for people to judge and force into position. Ahmed means that there are already some determined ways of how these women's lived experience should be (2012). While me and the participants treated each other with care, there are situations when Black and POC women are walking into a space where they and their bodies are treated as contrary to care, more specifically as a stranger.

Ahmed believes that in talking about the stranger our minds move towards the idea of the unknown, more particularly the assumption "that the stranger is simply *any-body* whom we do not know" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 22). However, Ahmed moves away from that and argues that the stranger is *some-body* that has been recognised in the space as familiar but is a body that is somewhat out of place. To facilitate an understanding of these embodiments of bodies, the process needs further explanation, Ahmed writes: "bodies materialise in a complex set of temporal and spatial relations to other bodies, including bodies that are recognised as familiar, familial and friendly, and those that are considered strange" (Ahmed, 2000, p. 40). Meaning that the stranger is not unknown, but known, as someone who does not belong. Therefore, when bodies are materialised, they are conditioned by temporal and spatial structures of other bodies and space.

In certain spaces some bodies are seen as the rightful occupant and others as strangers, this is a process through the social and bodily space. Meaning that the strange body is not fixed but produced in encounters with other bodies. This implies a certain proximity between non-strange bodies and strange bodies (Ahmed, 2000, 2012) Moreover, the importance of

proximity to 'the ideal occupant' in the space, could be seen in other cultural symbols such as the principle of the brown paper bag. Kerr argues that principle is categorizing people based on their skin complexion (colourism) and depending on the complexion's proximity to the paper bag it signifies degrees of acceptance and access. If your skin complexion is the same or, even lighter than a paper bag you will gain a certain position (2005). Although the paper bag might not be visual as a symbol or signifier anymore due to changes in race discourse, Wilder argues that the notion of skin complexion in relation to human value – which has been consolidated – has led to a social belief system, systemically ingrained in society and people (2015). Therefore, there is a societal continuance of categorization and significance based on skin complexion – a continuum spanning from Black to White (Kerr, 2005, p. 272). Collins also means that there have been issues of dividing Black people, which have treated Black women differently. She argues that institutions controlled by White people have been less discriminatory for lighter-skinned Blacks than for darker-skinned (2000, pp. 91-92). Therefore, in relation to this study, colourism may affect the way the participants' experience Lund University and how they are perceived and treated.

Furthermore, as the stranger fluxes in the space through this imagined spectrum of familiarisation, from being out of place to belonging (thus, not being materialised as a stranger), it also creates a consciousness through the experiences of *orientation*. Ahmed (2006) uses queer phenomenology to understand how Whiteness becomes constructed through racialization. The concept of orientation is essential in this exploration of becoming. Ahmed writes "[o]rientations involve directions toward objects that affect what we do, and how we inhabit space. We move toward and away from objects depending on how we are moved by them" (2006, p. 28). Meaning that bodies become situated in space and time, through these orientations. Within a space there are lines to follow or depart from, and bodies can either orients to follow or deviate from lines (queer lines) (Ahmed, 2006). The lines could be understood as norms and depending on what orientations the body has made will determine what is within reach, can be reached, and lies in front of the body. Ahmed believes that Whiteness orients bodies which affects the spaces they can inhabit (2006, pp. 121-126). Furthermore, the availability of a space affects the orientations of bodies, and if bodies feel comfortable and at home they can extend in the space. The accumulation of these extensions could therefore determine the orientation of a space. In this case, Lund University withholds a complex system of temporal and spatial spaces where bodies orient differently depending on the relation between other bodies, spaces, and objects.

2.3 Entanglement of bodies

I have examined how the body materialises in the social world – as entities in flux, conditioned by other bodies, history, temporality, and spatiality. However, space as such has not been addressed yet in this thesis. There are countless ways of understanding space, for instance Lefebvre argues that individuals are merely conscious about the space they move in instead the bodies orient us. He means that individuals will not be conscious of the movements until they have already been made (1991). However, Ahmed argues that being a Black person in a predominantly White space generates an acute consciousness. Because the Black body is somewhat inhabiting a form that is not the same as the other bodies repeated along the space's lines (2006, 2012). Consequently, space here is viewed as lived, and not merely abstract (Puwar, 2010). Space becomes an arena of multiple encounters involving sensuous connections, imagination, and bodily affect. This encapsulates emotion, body, and mind as a central part of the lived space. Moreover, space is not fixed but constitutes a site entangled in cultural and historical specificity. For that reason, Black women move through academia, a space that belongs to a certain social and historical context, that has a constant impact on their body, mind, and emotions.

Ahmed (2000) argues that through the conditioned space our bodies can become strangers or as Puwar (2004) would call them 'space invaders'. Several scholars argue that when Black women move through academia they become these roles, as trespasser or intruders – almost as dangerous forms of invaders (Ahmed, 2000; Henderson & Jefferson-Jones, 2020; McCoy, 2021). Is the academy then just for certain bodies? If so, is the reason for this based on the academy's history? Cultural anthropologist Bianca Williams has researched about Black women's racialized and gendered experiences in Jamaica and the United States, with a focus on strategies and well-being. In an article Williams looks to the origin of these academic institutions:

> Academic institutions, particularly the predominantly White institutions at which I have taught and earned degrees, were created by men who could not fathom that one day I, a woman of African descent, would be standing at the front of the classroom. (Navarro et al., 2013, p. 454)

Williams illustrates what she means is the historical framework the academy is based on. She argues that the space is not made for those deviating from the White male – especially Black women who are far away from this "ideal candidate". hooks argues that within the feminist movement Black women's experiences have been used to validate theoretical claims but have

been excluded from actually create and define theory (2015b, pp. 31-33). Following these arguments, a Black woman seem to be someone who should rather be researched than being the researcher. Furthermore, could then the academy be viewed as anachronistic, which Jönsson mean is a word that describes that the past is affecting the present because the space somewhat still belongs to the past (2013, p. 115)?

Navarro et al. writes that Black women are, consciously and unconsciously, contesting the idea of whom belongs in the space (2013). Meanwhile, Ahmed argues that Whiteness enters a room through the history of arrival – meaning that Whiteness in some spaces is assumed to be there and those who do not fulfil those expectations might be viewed as strangers (Ahmed, 2012, p. 67, footnote 5 in conclusion). However, as Blackness, Whiteness is a complex concept that entails various intersections (e.g., gender, sexuality, religion, disabilities, and class) that has an impact on accessibility and power within the academy (see Crenshaw, 1989). Thinking through Puwar (2004), White bodies seem to become somatic norms and non-White bodies become out of place. Ahmed builds on that argument further, that "[a]n institutional norm is a somatic norm when it takes the form of a White body" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 38). Meaning that there are explicit rules or norms that systemically uphold the idea of the "assuming (White) body" through sanctions and accolades without this idea becoming explicit. Thus, being someone averting from that idea and taking up space (only through mere existence), they are not just being a stranger nor space invader. They are also (un)intentionally forcing this idea to be explicit and acknowledged.

Judith Butler argues that gendered behaviour are acts, performances, which encapsulates discursive productions in a tangled social space (temporal and spatial). This acknowledges the idea to subvert from those, fragile, identities (e.g., masculinity and femininity) (1990). Both in Butler's case and in the case of Black women in academia, there are roles which have certain expectations to become true and the way to fulfil those expectations is to be regarded as 'natural'. A Black woman is not assumed to be a professor nor someone expected to be on the premises of academic space (Ahmed, 2012; Navarro et al., 2013). The Black woman is not merely subverting from what society believes a Black woman should be, but her existence can also damage the system that supports White intellect and advancement within the Ivory Tower[7], (in)directly. This have been argued through thinkers like Ahmed and Collins – as they claim that Black women occupying space in a PWI may reveal structures of Whiteness that upholds certain bodies and knowledges.

2.3.1 The construction of class

In order to be in academia, the person has to have access to the space first. This moves further into a fundamental aspect when exploring the academic space and its bodies - *class*. Wolgast and Wolgast states that when it comes to stereotypes in relation to class, people become classified in a social status hierarchy which is based on various signals, e.g., appearance, how people speak and social behaviour etc. (2021, p. 35, 55). They follow the idea of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) thus the class society is not lived in a vacuum but is integrated with other social structures. Wolgast and Wolgast argues that there is a relation between class and competence (ability to do something successfully), where a person's socioeconomic status would indicate how competent that person is. They further claim that as the Swedish class society becomes more distinctly characterized by race, the assumption then is that "racialized characteristics (such as appearance, linguistic style, clothing style etc.) also functions as class signals that activate stereotypes about competence. These processes can then in turn have effects, for example in situations related to selection, recruitment, and internal appointments (Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021, pp. 34-37, 55). Beverly Skeggs also notes how class status signals respectability, meaning that the middle-class, unlike the working class, can deliberately present themselves in a non-respectable manner and will not get judged in the same way. Because their bodies and the way they move within the space, already send out strong signals about their middle- or upper-class affiliation, which is the definition of respectability, according to her (Skeggs, 1997, 2004, pp. 39, 119-124). Both respectability and competence here work as an indicator for a person's position, how they will be perceived and approached. However, women of colour might get access, and through the process accumulate some relations to competence and respectability – as a form of a class journey (see Skeggs, 1997). Still, academia simmers with structures that uphold certain bodies as strangers and others as inhabitants. Skeggs mean that this is the result of "the practices and knowledges by which we 'know' in the academy are generated from positions in historical and contemporary bourgeois relations" (Skeggs, 1997, p. 19), which mainly was White men but also women. As already concluded, Black women's bodies therefore becomes subversive when they occupy space.

Chantiluke et al. (2018) argues that some academic institutions possess a White and elitist status, and Malone (2012) views meritocracy as racialised, gendered, and classed (see also Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021) – both could illustrate the opportunities to be and move freely in

that space. Lund University being a prestigious university in Sweden also attracts many people, thus generally making it harder to be approved for admission. The Swedish Higher Education Authority stated in their report from 2021 that 32% of all professors are women and 68% men (Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2021, p. 6). Although it has become more equal since 1997 when the recruitment goal of gender equality started, it is still unequal. Amongst researcher and teaching staff at the universities, 37 percent had a migrant background – including people born abroad or born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents. 74 percent of them had an employment called 'merit employment' (meriteringsanställning), which is a temporary employment to give doctoral graduates the possibility to obtain merits (Universitetskanslersämbetet & Statistikmyndigheten, 2021, pp. 36-39; Universitetskanslersämbetet, 2021, p. 84).

These factors mentioned are a few to understand how class and access has an impact on how people are positioned. Several researchers have argued even though people might get access that does not necessarily mean that they will be conditioned the same way in academic spaces (see Skeggs, 1997; Ahmed, 2012; Chantiluke et al., 2018).

2.4 Previous research

The theoretical framework contextualised how female Black bodies are materialised in the academy, in relations to other bodies, space and time. More particularly, it has given a foreground for the previous research on race, class, and gender in academia. Most of the research on this subject, that has been the departure point here, comes from researchers active in England and the United States (see hooks, 2015a, b; Ahmed, 2012; Collins, 2000). As the previous research on Black women and women of colour in academia in Sweden has been quite limited. The research that has been conducted in Sweden about the academy have been mostly discussed rather from a perspective of *BIPOC* (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) (Behtoui, 2018; Saxonberg & Sawyer, 2006; de los Reyes, 2007). Alireza Behtoui, sociologist, argues that there are mechanisms within academia that makes it more difficult for people with migrant backgrounds to advance, gain influence, and have access to valuable networks after their PhD (2018). Paulina de los Reyes, professor in economic history, also focus on discrimination and racism but specifically at Uppsala University. She argues, similar to Behtoui, that there are some complex sorting processes that create discriminatory conditions in academia, where people with a migrant background are in an inferior position

(2007). Some other researchers have explored how categories of Whiteness and BIPOC (re)construct in Swedish society – particularly, examining concerns of power, integration, colonialism, structural racism, and discrimination (de los Reyes & Kamali, 2005; Hübinette, et al., 2012; Weisbord, 1972).

Political scientist Steven Saxonberg and cultural anthropologist Lena Sawyer have investigated if academics with a foreign background experience discrimination and which mechanism could be at play. In their text they claim that "ethnic discrimination" seems to be a sensitive issue in Swedish academia (2006). This argument connects to what some other researchers have described that the self-image of Swedish exceptionalism makes it hard to speak of race and racism in the context of Sweden (cf. Habel, 2012; Hübinette et al., 2012; Jämte et al., 2020). Both Inger Lövkrona (2016) and Saxonberg & Sawyer (2006) argues in their text that less research from the perspective of critical race studies have been done because gender issues have become more accepted in Sweden as it has a longer research tradition than research on race has. Also, that gender equality has been more discussed than intersectional perspectives on equality (cf. Alm, et al., 2021; Behtoui, 2018).

However, a few studies have been done with both a gendered and racialized perspective on the academy. Earlier mentioned Ylva Habel, have written about her experiences of teaching issues of race in the Swedish academy. She believes that Sweden's self-image complicates the academy to speak about race in class and outside of it (2012). In class Habel illustrates examples of Sweden's part in the colonial history (Saint Barthelemy and slave fort Carlousburg/Cape Coast Castle), Carl Linnaeus (racial categories) and the Race Biological Institute. She argues that this has not been easy because Swedish exceptionalism is ingrained in people. One of which she believes makes it "[…] difficult, if not impossible for a Black teacher in a minoritized position to communicate to an overwhelming majority of White colleges (Habel, 2012, p. 114).

Ali Osman, researcher in pedagogy, also draws on his own experiences more particularly on his academic journey as a Black man, and as he expressed how stigmatization have burden him repeatedly (2021). Emelie Kristofferson wrote her dissertation with a focus on racism and sexism in the medical programme at Umeå University, where she claims that female and racialized students are subjected to discriminatory treatment (2021). This previous research adds to the research that argues that bodies within academia are affected differently in the space. However, even though a few studies have been done, the research on Black women's

lived experiences at the intersection of gender, class and race in the Swedish academy is deficient. This thesis has the intent to holistically approach the construction of Blackness, class, and womanhood in Swedish society, both within and outside academia. Therefore, I need to underline the importance of an intersectional lens to understand the complexities of lived experiences and structural influences. By doing so, this thesis will be able to continue expanding the research and knowledge about Black women's testimonies, through these intersections, in academia.

3. Methodological framework and methods

With the ambition to explore and understand the experiences of Black women at Lund University this section describes the methods and the reasons behind the choices made during this study. The methodological framework here relates to the theory presented, as they have affected one another. To investigate the research questions earlier mentioned, I decided on doing fieldwork and conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews in order to understand Black women's lived experiences. As I strived not to harm the research participants, I followed the Swedish Research Council's ethical considerations and guidelines, regarding providing information about research, consent, confidentiality, and the use of the result(s) (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). Therefore, in this essay I use pseudonyms and anonymise information about for example specific institutions. Publishing this research could be sensitive for the participants because of their own relations to the institution, thus ethics of responsibility and confidentiality is essential.

In this section I start with introducing the trajectory to the field, and then go more in-depth into the field and the selection of the case study and participants. Secondly, I discuss the methods that have been used in this study, from dialogue to autoethnography. Lastly, I outline the methodological influences shaped by concerns of representation and the role of the researcher.

3.1 Trajectory to the field

In August 2021 I started a work placement at Malmö City Archive where I conducted a pre-study about an exhibition on Afro-swedes in their archives. It entailed deep-diving into their material and starting conversations with local activist, culture workers and researchers. What

I witnessed and which was explicitly described by several people was a predominantly White institution that partially still controls the Narratives of Black history in Sweden.

This work placement became a springboard to wanting to explore another institution, where I have spent countless hours at. Academia, a space that historically has been viewed as a hegemonically White institution (hooks, 2015b). As more people get enrolled to universities, there will also be an increase of non-White students and faculty members within academia (see Statistikmyndigheten, 2022). The question then is: what happens to a space that might not be catering to a certain group of people. More specifically, what happens to those who are not catered to?

3.2 Selection of case study and participants

The purpose of a case study was to amplify Black women's geographies within a specific institution, in way to create connectedness between these women's experiences, but also with those before and after them. By focusing on a specific space, Lund University, their lived experiences could be deeper understood through the conditions imposed by the university's situatedness (e.g., spatiality and temporality). Meaning that I will be able to explore how Black women are positioned through the intersections of body, emotion, time, and space. Moreover, Lund University as a research field is interesting in multiple ways. First and foremost, it is one of Sweden's oldest universities and is one of the most renowned (Lund University, 2022a). This has led to many students, PhD-candidates and researchers around the world wanting to work or study at Lund University. For instance, 23% of the university's students are internationals, and there are exchange agreements with 640 universities in approximately 70 countries (Lund University, 2022b). This creates a complex multicultural space, which makes it interesting to investigate Black women's geographies. The concept of multiculturalism is understood through the ideas of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1990), he argues that we live in a globalised world. Therefore, he means that it is not possible to study one culture because almost all cultures are intertwined with other cultures and actors, thus we live in a complex world with relations affecting one another. Moreover, "multicultural" in this study is not a buzz word nor to reduce the experiences of marginalized people but rather illustrate a space caught in multiple entanglements of lived experiences. Thus, the experiences of academia are different and conflicting at the same time.

As a Black woman at Lund University, I had already established contacts with other students of colour at the university, but I wanted to move beyond my own constructed bubble of comfort to be able to explore a wider scope of experiences, hence not only people within my own field and institution. In order to access the field, I used various outlets to come into contact with other students and faculty members. The three main outlets were Facebook groups (Afrogäris, Malmö Intersectional), Lund University staff portal and Lund International Ambassadors. The aim was to have participants with a range of backgrounds and academic levels. As the contact initiated, I informed them about the study and their rights if they wanted to participate. This was also mentioned in the beginning of the interview. In total, I conducted 6 in-depth semi-structured interviews with Black women during February to May 2022, which were around 1h long. They were either held at Lund University or digitally. The interviews were later transcribed where I kept some of the pauses, silences, repetitions, and sublanguages etc, to add depth to the semantic content (see Davies, 2008, pp. 124-127). Especially, because the interviews evoked emotions for the participants. After approximately two months I contacted all participants for a follow-up, through mail or interview. The purpose was to give the participants the opportunity to address new thoughts and experiences that may have been evoked since the last time we met. It also gave me the possibility to explore thoughts and ideas that had been mentioned in others interviews to compare similarities and differences.

All of the participants were either in their undergrad (2), postgrad (2) or doing a PhD (2), and they identified as Black women, but they had various cultural backgrounds, nationalities (African, European, North American), religious affiliation (Muslim, Christian, non-religious) and socioeconomic status. Another important aspect is colourism (see previous discussion in 2.2), which in some ways blurs the boundaries of Blackness. Meaning that there is a prejudice or discrimination against those with darker skin complexion, both within people of the same racial group but also beyond their community.

3.2.1 List of participants

In this section the participants are presented briefly with fictitious names, age, background, and their occupation at Lund University.

Hannah, 27 years old

She was born and raised in Africa in an international setting. Before she came to Lund, she

worked for a while in Denmark and wanted to stay in the Nordic regions as she learnt some Danish. She is in her last year of master's in science and technology.

Zola, 24 years old

Born in Sweden but grew up in another Western-European country, accidentally ended up in Lund instead of Gothenburg. She is doing her master's in social sciences.

Rebecka, 20 years old

From Sweden but have lived in East-Africa as well. In her first year of studies at the university (social sciences). She had dreamt of being in a space of learning with other BIPOC's, instead she became one of the few.

Sade, 34 years old

Continued in the field of natural sciences, first her master's and now as a PhD-student. She stayed partially because of the resources and possibilities a PhD-candidate can offer here. She has lived most of her life in West-Africa.

Amara, 28 years old

She is from Sweden. Have been studying for 5,5 years in various subjects within social sciences. She loves to study but feels that the academic setting of Lund has affected her.

Miranda, 31 years old

From Western-Europe and have lived in various countries in her life. She did her master's at Lund University and after working abroad she came back to do her PhD (Social sciences).

3.3 Storytelling and Narrative as dialogue

The methodological framework is influenced by the study's situatedness, meaning it was carefully constructed with the purpose of challenging the current representation of Black women in academia through creating a counter-reality but also demonstrate the women's lived experiences as they are to "be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood." (Lorde, 2007, p. 40). Through the thinking of Lorde, I will put emphasis on the importance to speak as spoken words could give strength and connect people, and to do so even though it may be perilous but so is silence (Lorde, 2007,

pp. 40-42). Moreover, the spoken words from lived experiences being translated into a text, and then also interpreted by others, will lead to a partial understanding of those experiences (Skeggs, 1997, pp. 28-32). It could be a violent act but in line with what Lorde (2007) states, I will still argue for the words to be spoken in order to amplify the lived worlds of those being marginalized. Nonetheless, the methodological framework needs careful considerations so the translation of experiences to text will not be a bruised endeavour.

Within critical studies and Black feminist thought *storytelling* and *Narrative* has been used to challenge marginalization and act as a counter-reality to what could be seen as the status quo. Storytelling is powerful in the sense that it could dismantle the way we scan and interpret the world by these specific glasses, which are not too often challenged (R. Delgado 1989). In the beginning storytelling functioned as a way of passing on information and wisdom through generations. This oral tradition - storytelling/Narrative - has long been part of the Black culture. It has also worked as a means to create our own space of theorized existence, wisdom, and evoking knowledge in the domain space as well (R. Delgado 1989; Amoah 1997). Thus, R. Delgado and Amoah argue that the stories provide possibilities for marginalized groups to assess knowledge claims and community building. These stories circulate in the communities and create a consciousness and a form of united understanding. Following R. Delgado and Amoah, this is also why stories have such strength and the ability to be a space of counter-reality. The community has become a central space of knowledge and wisdom, where stories have been able to encapsulate struggles, silences and create solidarity among women (R. Delgado 1989; Delgado et al., 2012; Collins, 2000; Amoah, 1997). Furthermore, through the process of storytelling/Narrative, new knowledges have been produced in regard to the various ways marginalised communities create solidarity, perceive and counter-act to hegemonic understandings of the social world (e.g., culture, policies, and structures that (re)produce and sustain inequalities). Storytelling and Narrative could therefore be seen as part of the materiality of language thus part of the materialisation of the human body (affective life, social life, and political functions) (Bleich, 2013). Therefore, storytelling and Narrative as dialogue encompasses here both acts in the lived world and in the interviews/conversations. This further puts an emphasis on dialogue being part of Black women's everyday life, something that can materialize through both verbal and non-verbal dialogue in conversations and individually. Thus, this method is not just a method but also a way to create a counter-reality, in this thesis and everyday interactions.

Storytelling, as Narrative, demands the narrator to situate their own personal experiences within various contexts. Through the collective social-political realities Amoah writes, "Black women are informed and shaped not only by their own personal experiences, but the experiences of those around them and those that came before them" (Amoah, 1997, p. 97). Therefore, the experiences materialise in our social world (conditioned by history and societal structures). That requires the narrator to reflect upon how their experiences are materialised through structures and processes, conscious and unconscious, thus intersections of race, class, gender, histories, and politics but also how their narratives connect with their body. Furthermore, storytelling/Narrative contribute to identify individual struggles and simultaneously, by sharing, builds connections and counter-acts. Through this, both the narrator and listener, enters the 'pedagogical' space where sharing and memory prompts all our senses – in listening and reliving. This includes emotions, knowledges, silences, and identities that creates knowledges – a space of reclamation (Delgado et al., 2012, pp. 369-370). As a result, in this interaction there is a consciousness of both individual and collective vulnerabilities and agencies.

Another important aspect of storytelling and Narrative is the role of the listener which also plays an important part in the interaction with the narrator. This interaction is therefore a two-way communication because there is a crucial difference to listening and hearing (one-way communication) a Narrative. Therefore, there is an urgency for the listener to fully pay attention to the understandings the stories provide (Delgado et al., 2012, p. 368), including expressions that are not spoken (e.g., pauses, facial expressions, and silences) (Davies, 2008, p. 126). Without this element, and instead just 'hearing', there are consequences of misrepresenting the subjects and their experiences. For me, and other researchers, there is a certain responsibility to be transparent and conscious. Similar to the narrator reflecting on their experiences, we as researchers need to reflect upon our agenda and positionality that affects our understanding and abilities to listen to, and not only hear, these stories. As autoethnography and writing academic texts is a non-linear process, listening also acts as such. Listening during and after fieldwork and listening to be able to unveil complexities of those stories – how they are shared, silences, pauses and body language.

3.4 Situatedness: Autoethnography as methodology

The experience described in the introduction when the guest lecturer visited my class at University of Amsterdam three years ago later evolved to this thesis topic. As questions arose about what kind of commonalities Black women's experiences can be found to have at Lund University, where I have spent most of my years in university, I felt that autoethnography almost became inevitable to use as a method in this thesis.

Moreover, autoethnography as a method withholds both possibilities and limitations that needs further methodological investigation. In this thesis, as previously mentioned, I used Narratives and storytelling as a tool to let the participants situate and produce their own knowledge claims. Adding that to autoethnography, it meant a continuous dialogue between two people, and a shifting position of narrator and listener. What happened during several of the interviews was that the participant asked about whether I would involve my own experiences in the study, and some explicitly encouraged it. As it could be a strength for the outcome of the study. This interaction, the dialogue, became a space of connectedness through our shared experiences. For instance, autoethnography has been argued to be powerful within the traditions of Black feminism (McClaurin, 2001; Cuesta & Mulinari, 2018) due to its possibilities to "identify subtle and unspoken forms of racism that are often outside the scope of a more structural analysis of race and inequality" (Cuesta & Mulinari, 2018, p. 989). This was also noticeable in the interactions I had with other Black women. Furthermore, McClaurin (2001) view autoethnography as a two-folded endeavour, as both a style and praxis, meaning that the method is textualizing ethnographic experiences and works as a theoretical lens to interpret how we do what we do. Ultimately, this leads to a transformative ethnographic knowledge production.

Although autoethnography has been argued to work well in this context, there is an existing division between researchers who believe the method is not scientific enough and others mean it gives important aspects of researcher/research/field (Ellis et al., 2011). The method, as ethnography, withholds variations meaning that certain aspects of the method are emphasised. In autoethnography this could be on "*auto-* (self), *-ethno-* (the sociocultural connection), and *-graphy* (the application of the research process)" (Wall, 2008, p. 39), even though every aspect is part of the study here, *ethno* become essential due to the sociocultural connection between myself, the participants, the field, and Black women which are not part of the study. The connectedness makes it possible to transgress and understand these

structures in a broader perspective. *Auto*, on the other hand, worked as a transparent and reflexive component of the study rather than a dominant method. This approach made it possible for me to be open and reflexive of my own situatedness (see Davies 2008), a Black woman at Lund University. Whether or not I would use autoethnography as a method, this position has an impact on my knowledge production because knowledge is always situated (Haraway, 1988), and therefore my previous experiences and knowledges influence my choices, language, and interpretations of the material.

Furthermore, Chang (2008) shed light on the pitfalls of the method, which are somewhat interconnected with each other. These revolves around exaggerated focus on the researcher, narration, and personal memory in that sense risking to neglect analysis, interpretation, and other sources of data. But also, not being critical of the representation of oneself and others in self-narratives. To avoid these pitfalls and continue to have a reflexive process I once more emphasise the importance of a bricolage of material. Which both Chang (2008) and Löfgren (2014) urge for in order to understand the complexities in a field, where not only one method or material are controlling the focus of the study and impact the outcome. This means that autoethnography in this case is just one method within the bricolage of materials and methods.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

As previously mentioned, the ethical considerations in this study were influenced by Black Feminist Thought (BFT). An ethic of care and accountability made me aware of my situatedness, about the responsibilities to my participants and this subject. Additionally, other considerations were also important to acknowledge further.

The figure of the "researcher" in the field has been discussed extensively, particularly the position of outsider/insider (Colic-Peisker, 2004; Davies, 2008; Cuesta & Mulinari, 2018; Collins, 2004). In this study my position as part of the community, insider, was crucial for those spoken words in our dialogue to occur. The position meant that we, interviewer and participant, shared some common bonds (Collins, 2004; West, 2019). Thus, their stories did not need to be scrutinized by an outsider, instead it became a dialogue between two individuals that from the outside might be perceived similarly but from the inside could be completely different. Through listening to them with care as agents of knowledge, their stories became legitimized, and this made them share more comfortably (Collins, 2000). This

let me engage in more sensitive topics earlier because a trust was built quickly. I also talked about my own experiences to be transparent and in some instances to confirm similar structures that had been imposed on my body as well.

It could also be argued that I have an outsider position as well, because as a researcher I needed to distance myself to analyse the field and the Narratives from a, to some extent, objective perspective. Nonetheless, Haraway (1988) argues for a rational objectivity emanating from several points of view. Furthermore, this also aligns with Chang's emphasis on not forgetting the importance of analysis and interpretation instead of hyper-focus on narration (2008, pp. 54-59). Thus, have elements of both telling a story which arose connectedness and correlations between concepts and narrations. As academic work is shaped by both personal and intellectual understanding. Fataneh Farahani (2010) emphasises this as we cannot separate between the position of outsider and insider. She argues that researchers might approach the field with 'academic distance', yet it will be shaped by personal history (race, gender, class, experiences etc.) through the way the researcher views the material and what emerges from it (Farahani, 2010). Therefore, my position - and all researchers – is rather an entanglement of outsider and insider.

Through these considerations reflexivity became essential for this study. Being aware of my own and the participants' positionality in this space and time. The process became an exploration to "keep fieldwork dialogically alive [...] instead of speaking about them, one speaks to and with them" (Conquergood, 1985, p. 10). As the position of the narrator and listener could change, due to the methods used, the conversation become dialectically rich, as R. Delgado writes "through this process [that] we can overcome ethnocentrism and the unthinking conviction that our way of seeing the world is the only one" (R. Delgado, 1989, p. 2439). As a result, I attempted to decrease the asymmetry between researcher and researched (Davies, 2008), to avoid misrepresenting the group. Keeping the dialogue alive and being reflexive throughout the whole process has required time and labour.

4. The Ivory Tower as a space of investigation

This section is essential to understand the space that is being examined in this thesis, both as an individual body and as a space that is entangled in a globalised world. To further contextualise the experiences of Blackness and being Black in academia we will first need to

explore the Ivory Tower through its temporality and spatiality, meaning that academia will be composed via history and now, to investigate specific situations in time.

Therefore, I will delve further into aspects such as activism, Blackness and Whiteness, and the self-image of Lund University and Sweden. These aspects could give a wide understanding of the arena that the participants engage with in their everyday lives.

4.1 Decolonise the universities

Several researchers have pointed out how the construction of negative stereotypes of non-White people, particularly Black people, are based on historical understandings of these specific bodies dating back to the colonial era (Habel, 2013; Weisbord, 1972; Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021; Mångkulturellt Centrum, 2014; Hübinette et al., 2012). Where the "colonized" were racially depicted as less human than others, unintelligent and violent, this depiction was normalized and spread globally (Jämte et al., 2020, p. 375). Although it might differ how it is now, researchers argues that it still has justified the colonial order of racial power which have permeated social structures, and therefore partly inherited and lived in our society today (Alm et al., 2021, p. 2; Dijk, 2005, pp. 113-114; Jämte et al., 2020, p. 375).

Historically, and still, people have tried to shed light and fight this order within various arenas. For instance, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement spread like wildfire through social classes, discourses, and national borders in 2020, as a globalised outcry for acknowledgement and safe spaces, which had a great impact (see Jämte et al., 2020; Harmon et al., 2020). #BlackInTheIvory rides on the same wave as BLM, as a means to call out problems of systemic racism in the academy (Zook, 2021). However, that was not the first movement stirring up the academy. I will draw upon one of the latest globalised protests before the elevation of BLM. In 2015, the rise of *decolonise education* started in Cape Town, South Africa, which was first called Rhodes Must Fall. In the beginning the protest aimed to remove a statue that commemorated Cecil Rhodes (a scandalous symbol, as an avowed White supremacist and imperialist) (Bhambra et al., 2018). The statue was argued to be "the perfect embodiment of black alienation and disempowerment" (Chikane, 2018 as cited in Maylam, 2020, p. 1238) caused by the institutional culture. Furthermore, the statue indirectly acted as a symbol for reminding those who had been historically affected by the actions of people like Cecil Rhodes, that academia is not made for them (cf. Navarro et al., 2013). This reminder

might cause the feeling of an extra layer of pressure and discomfort in the academic space (Bhambra et al., 2018; Chantiluke et al., 2018).

The aim of the movement was to create awareness of problems sipping through academic institutions, for example racism, curriculums and raised tuition fees. According to Bhambra et al, the purpose was to challenge longstanding biases and exclusions that limit how certain bodies have access and others not, but also how we understand politics and society (2018). Through the movement of decolonise education some complexities are put at the forefront. Kehinde Andrews – specialising in Black studies – discusses the clash between resistance and expectations of gratefulness and silence at Oxford University, that was a result of the decolonise movement:

> In the heart of whiteness, students mobilised to reject not only their colonial schooling but the hidden curriculum embodied by the statue of racist Cecil Rhodes. We cannot underestimate the power of this movement happening in one of the most prestigious universities in the world. The backlash was swift and expected because the students had the temerity to challenge their own educational institution. Oxford's prestige is founded on its elite status, which is code word for its whiteness. By challenging the racial status quo the students were biting the hand that fed them by undermining a founding principle of Oxford's appeal. (Andrews, 2018a, p. ix)

Andrews emphasises the power it takes to challenge historical White institutions, like Oxford and Lund University. The consequences of challenging and the possibilities of people changing the perception of the protesters is palpable. Despite these high stakes, people continue to fight for their right to occupy space and make it a safe space for marginalized groups. Though there are similarities between Oxford and Lund University, being a prestigious and elite status institution (this view was mentioned by several participants), the same challenges against the institution have not appeared. According to Habel, this could be understood through Swedish exceptionalism. She argues that it has become a fundamental attitude in society, and consequently that has led to a structural denial of Sweden's colonial history as it does not correspond with the self-image (2012). Even though Sweden colonised Saint Barthelemy until 1878 and was one of the biggest iron exporters for the shackles used on slaves (McEachrane, 2016; Kelekay, 2020). The Swedish exceptionalism can therefore make it harder to recognise and speak about political struggles, hence movements like BLM and decolonise become arduous challenges.

4.2 Exceptionalism in academia

Through the thinking of Habel, Swedish exceptionalism seem to permeate the Swedish society. Therefore, it is vital to examine if and how this concept of exceptionalism could exist in the Swedish academy.

The Swedish doctorate in sociology Sarah Hamed (2020), conducts a project on the topic of racism in the Swedish healthcare system. She has developed the concept of Swedish exceptionalism to further understand the institutional position of healthcare. She uses the concept *health care exceptionalism* (vård-exceptionalism) to pinpoint how healthcare positions itself as different from other institutions. The reason is that the healthcare is assumed to be built around connotations such as solidarity and equality, where health care workers are rational and objective agents. Still, she argues, that there is a lack of acknowledgement about the health care's role of (re)producing racism. In the context of academia, Swedish universities are legally obliged to work with equality which have led to policies about equal terms to manage discrimination (SFS 2008:567; Lunds universitet, 2022). This signifies an official foundation of values at the universities, which have been worked on since the 1990's (SOU 2011:1). Thus, similar connotations as Hamed addressed could be related to the academy. Some researchers have argued that the academy is an institution that has not dealt with is racist history (see Ahmed, 2012; Bhambra et al., 2018). Historically, racist practices (e.g., segregation, colonialism, and discrimination) that have been carried out by politicians have also been legitimized by researchers (Dijk, 2005, pp. 113-118). As previously mentioned, researchers have been arguing that the academy is built upon meritocracy. Saxonberg and Sawyer (2006) address how meritocracy sometimes has been used strictly in cases where it could benefit Swedish researcher, however if it was not beneficial then meritocracy became elastic (cf. Osman, 2021, p. 72). The principle instead stretched to include the person they wanted (Saxonberg & Sawyer, 2006, pp. 456-458). Messner argues how people inhabiting "white guy habitus" are seen as the rightful objective researcher and women of colour become its counterpart. He means that White men are assumed to be in the classroom, and women of colour are not thus by being in the space they are also challenging the assumptions of who belongs in the classroom (2000). These arguments describe a foundation on colonial premises as a White, male status construct that has retained its truth-teller status and prestige while women, the working class and Blacks still fight for equality in the same space (see Ahmed, 2012; Andrews, 2018b; Skeggs, 1997). Therefore, through practices and privileges can these specific knowledge producers uphold its

position without coming across as (re)producers of racism, classism, and sexism. Developing the term *academic exceptionalism* then could be used to acknowledge these structures and practices that have long permeated the academy.

Following these arguments presented here, the two categories Whiteness and Blackness seem to be constructions that becomes of value. Collins argues that Black and White are "linked in [a] symbiotic relationship" (Collins, 2000, p. 90), therefore they will only acquire meaning in relation to one another. Nevertheless, as earlier mentioned, within these separate categories there are also myriad of differences and colour hierarchies (Collins, 2000; Kerr, 2005).

4.2.1 Conflicting encounters

In 2018, a report named "Anti-Black racism and anti-discrimination in the labour market" (my translation) was commissioned by Länsstyrelsen Stockholm. The conclusion of the report was that Black people had a more difficult experience in the labour market than other people in Sweden. More particularly, they had a harder time obtaining a job, advancing in their careers and appropriating a fair pay, still they might be as or more qualified for the position. Therefore, getting an academic diploma might not be as impactful for Black people in the labour market (Wolgast et al., 2018). Iao-Jörgensen and Borghei describe another issue within immigration law. Particularly the changes in the Alien Act, which has made it stricter and harder for non-EU/EEA students and researchers to stay (2021). These structures illustrate that access have become demanding for Black students, especially those from non-EU/EEA countries, and thereby worse representation in academia. Meantime, the migration office has made it less bureaucratic, by changing the period of residence permit for doctoral students from two to four years (Migrationsverket, 2022). The consequences of these obstacles may affect how students perceive belonging to the university and Sweden, as the regulations emphasises their "temporary visit".

Studentlund is a student body, (Academic Association, nations, and student unions), which is part of Lund University (Studentlund, n.d). In February 2022 a songbook got printed by the Malmö Nation which had a discriminatory song about people with Chinese descent, called "Pandemic song" (Lundagård, 2022). A few years earlier in 2011, another nation called Hallands had a student party with the theme Jungle. Three participants were in blackface with a rope around their necks and then a fourth participant was the one controlling the ropes, imagined as the slave trader. Later on, a fake slave auction took place where the slave trader,

in a tailcoat and top hat, tried to sell their slaves and multiple participants at the event started bidding on them (Haraldsson, 2011). These two acts have been viewed as discriminatory and racist, which have created a non-safe space for racialised people. In both instances the response from the nations have been that their actions were not to intentionally offend anyone or come from a racist viewpoint (Haraldsson, 2011; Lundagård, 2022).

Furthermore, what have been presented in this chapter is the encounter of conflicting and entangled experiences existing within the academy. This thesis will try to unbox these encounters through Black women's testimonies at Lund University – a myriad of orientations, emotions and lived experiences.

5. Displacement of Black Bodies

Space figures as a significant category as it asserts certain attachments to objects and bodies (Ahmed, 2010). In this section, I discuss how the participants bodies are shaped through their lived experiences in the academic space. From these experiences the participants will share – their situated – knowledges of being Black at Lund University as well as affirm themselves as valid knowledge producers.

5.1 The burning spotlight

Amara, one of the participants, described her arrival into a room – where her body gets in the spotlight as soon as she enters and at the same time as it is erased.

> Everyone notices when you walk into a room. At the same time, you are invisible and not included in the knowledge production or perspective. Nothing is shown from your point of departure, no one takes your perspective seriously. You are being in a constant minority stress[8]. You are always a minority in class, the university, and the whole campus etc. (Amara)

In this example and in our conversation, Amara discussed the shifting position of her Black body through examples from when she has been put in the spotlight to being ignored. When I asked the question about how the participants felt about being Black and about Blackness in Sweden, I could feel, see, and hear how the Black women reacted to Black(ness), as something carrying an assemblage of lived experiences. These experiences became essential to explore as they could vary so extensively. Most of the participants started their responses with various sighs. "Ouf it is tough… It is not describable" was how Miranda first responded to the question. As she collected her thoughts, she touched upon several things about how to

depict it. She described her Blackness as an encounter between bodies: "there's always a question mark in terms of how people react to me, because Swedes are quite reserved. They keep to themselves and sometimes I will wonder, you know, is it just me or is it with everybody?" (Miranda). She felt that sometimes she got affected by how people perceived her. For Sade, on other hand, when I asked her, she also started with a sigh and then answered with "as you can see" as she presented her outfit, which was a top with an African flag and a colourful headband, to demonstrate her heritage and Blackness. Being Black in Sweden for her has even gotten more solidified "because actually coming here and being somehow like a minority has opened my eyes too" (Sade). Although she also described negative experiences, this had strengthened her connections to her heritage as well. Being proud of where she comes from.

Amara, Miranda, Hannah, Zola, Rebecka, and Sade all had experiences when they felt invisible and visible, which made them feel aware of their bodies in that particular space. This awareness was sometimes described as a result of an uncomfortable situation imposed on them. Rebecka felt that this sometimes ended up as her being viewed as the advocate of Black people.

> I stand out very much I would say. And in school I can very easily feel kind of, if the teacher is talking about racism or being Black, then one feels kind of observed. Because people know this kind of applies to you in a way. I think it's hard. I may not feel like saying anything in that situation. Then I kind of feel a pressure. I also feel that because I am the only Black girl in the class, that the duty of representing Black people falls on me. It is perhaps expected when we talk about racism, for example, that it falls on me to act as an advocate. (Rebecka)

Sade also pointed out how she felt that she was "always put on the spotlight" when discussion about issues in Africa started in academic settings. She described how she became an advocate for everyone in Africa, as people would start asking her specifically: "Like what do you think about your country in this regard? How is it in this aspect?" (Sade). This was something Sade did not like as she believed that the perspectives brought up were not nuanced nor did she like being placed as an advocate. This could be seen as a process of othering Black women. Ahmed argues that Black women become a tool for diversifying space and knowledge but under certain premises. She means that some bodies embody diversity (e.g., racialised bodies), and through having these bodies institutions can then re-imaging itself as being diverse (2012). Following Ahmed's arguments, what Sade describes could also connect to *tokenism*[9]. In this case, it could be that Black women become someone that is expected to speak for all Black people or filling up the quota of racialised bodies in a

space. Moreover, those who embody diversity are required to express happiness and gratitude for this image to work. Therefore, the diversity work could be seen as non-performative, as it does not bring effect to what it names (Ahmed, 2012). The participants described that they became a function in academia, a position that they have not chosen themselves but rather a conditioned position as strangers and others. The feeling the participants expressed could be further understood by exploring the space and how it interacts with other bodies.

5.2 Loneliness and representation

If the previous section indicated visibility, other participants described invisibility in academic spaces. This was reflected upon in discussions about Blackness and representation. In the conversations I had with the participants, they described how their position as Black women has resulted in an abundance of acts and reactions to their being and their position as a counterpart to the White inhabitant in academic space. In some ways they have seemingly become masters of orientation and negotiation to fulfil and resist certain conditions. At the same time, the participants most of the time feel that they are outnumbered and scattered in the space of Lund University, causing feelings of loneliness and sometimes a worn-down well-being.

Sade described one of her experiences which touched upon both loneliness and representation. In that situation she felt that her female Black body became erased partially due to lack of representation in the university. She was sitting in her office waiting for staff (not a faculty member) to come help her on an issue she reported.

> I gave them my room number and my name and everything. By the entrance we have our picture and the office is mostly glass windows also, so you have the room number, your picture, your name. This guy comes and I see him and I'm very busy working, so I did not really make eye contact or signal him to come in. He had this paper in his hands, I've met him before. He checked on the door against the paper that he had, and then he walked past. I decided not to pursue it and I just sat there, and he walked past the corridor and then he passed by my door and left. So, I was like, OK, maybe he's looking for somebody else. A few minutes later I received an email that I weren't there. "You don't seem to be in your office. We've come by and you're not there". And I'm like I am in my office. Yeah, nobody came to knock at my office to ask for me. […] Call it what you want, but. I think that was racist. So yeah, that was quite something I reflected on it quite a lot, but I did not let it bother me if anything I was very proud of myself, yeah? You know that he encountered somebody that he didn't think would be, you know. Qualifiable to sit in an office. I don't know what's so special about an African sitting in an office. (Sade)

Sade's experience describes a situation where she becomes invisible because someone else encountered a body he did not expect to be there, hence she gets treated as if she was not

there. If a Black woman is the counterpart to a person expected to work within Western academia (cf. Navarro et al., 2013) the expectation of the staff in Sade's Narrative aligns with such general expectations, as well as with the statistical occurrence of people with migrant backgrounds at Swedish universities (Universitetskanslersämbetet & Statistikmyndigheten, 2021; Universitetskanslersämbetet [UKÄ], 2021). Sade's response to this indicates that stamina is important to survive in academia as a Black woman, because she described how she does not let these situations affect her, instead she shifts it to become empowering instead. When Hannah responded to the question of Blackness and being Black, I could feel her frustration, and how her body clenched and her words trembling. She seemed battered.

> Oh god. Okay. [pause]. Maybe I could start with like right now. I feel it's hard and scary. I don't know, I feel like the older I get the more it becomes like oh my god it is such a struggle. It is getting so exhausting to be doing extra or try to be more. To just be on the same standard or seen as everyone else you know. That is annoying at times. (Hannah)

Hannah expresses that she has become exhausted because she feels that the work she does in academic spaces takes energy from her. Rebecca also highlights how being Black in academic spaces could be a lonely venture.

> Just that it is so white is a little strange feeling. To have this pressure of being a black woman here, it feels unfair. I'm here to study like everyone else and it's quite unjustifiable that I have to feel this. […] Your well-being becomes very much affected by what you feel in rooms like this. If you are not feeling good, then you may not be able to perform in the same way. It becomes pressure, you feel pressure and it causes stress. Hence you will not feel well. (Rebecca)

Rebecka outlines how she feels the conditions imposed on her are not only unfair, but it also affects people's well-being. Gilmore and Yeigh (2021) write how conditions have affected Black joy as Black people not only have to perform as everyone else, but they also must fight stigmatization and resistance in the academic space – thus affecting their well-being (see also Osman, 2021; McCoy, 2021). Zola described another perspective of being conditioned, although still expressed as a form of exhaustion. She felt that her experiences became clustered with everyone non-White, once again being othered. In her immediate answer to the question, she become hesitant as Blackness is not constructed in a vacuum:

> I don't know. I recently realised that Scandinavia is really scared to use the word Black and by not being able to use the word Black…you are kind of not accepting the experiences of Black people, and by putting all the POC's in one bubble also not accepting the fact that different POC's experience different problems. Like immigrants, second-generation all those things put together are different. I think it is just invisible maybe. (Zola)

In Zola's reflections she describes Blackness to be erased from the language use and that the multitude of experiences of BIPOC's in Sweden also gets ignored. Furthermore, this connects to colour-blindness and Swedish exceptionalism. Habel (2012) views the normative colour-blind as a discourse where stereotypes may be acknowledged as hurtful but refuses to historize and contextualise the meaning of those stereotypes (cf. Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017). Habel argues that this is because of the self-image of Swedish exceptionality, where the White comfort zone enables this situation instead silence and refusal arise (2012).

In my own experience, both in academia, outside of it and in dialogue with other participants in my previous project at the archive, I have noticed how Swedish White people prefer using the word ethnicity instead of race for instance. This relates to Habel's discussion on how "neutral" expressions of non-Whiteness, such as ethnicity, culture and multicultural are used to steer clear of other words like race (2012, pp. 101-102). She elaborates on, what Zola reflected upon, how hard it is to name and discuss Blackness in a normalized manner in Sweden because of these assumptions of a discourse based on politics of tolerance and neutrality (Habel, 2012). Hübinette et al. also describes a Swedish society which is not able to speak about racism.

> Racism, it is maintained, is something that belongs to history or does not exist in today's Sweden. The attitude reflects a normalized and institutionalized way in Sweden of turning a blind eye to both the privileges of whiteness and the discrimination to which non-white Swedes are exposed. (Hübinette et al., 2012, p. 42, *my translation*)

This correlates to Habel's (2012) previous discussion about how race is hard to talk about as it something assumed to be in the past. In Sweden, researchers argues that Whiteness become constructed through (re)producing practices and privileges but also through continuing othering non-White bodies (Hübinette et al., 2012; Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021). Habel further elaborates on what can happen when someone attempts to define themselves as Black, which could result in various outcomes (2012, pp. 102-103). She writes that one outcome is when a Black person becomes an "honorary White", through the response of "[b]ut you're not Black – you're brown/tanned! […]. I don't think of you as Black" (Habel, 2012, p. 102) as a supposed compliment. The response could be argued to show an essentialist understanding of race, where the category Black is viewed as bad. This understanding might be about categorization rather than colour, therefore a response like this can be based on a lack of knowledge about racism. Wolgast & Wolgast (2021, pp. 102-103) might argue that the response could be seen as a strategy to keep Whiteness and their privileges invisible by not

acknowledging people's experiences being Black. Amara also described how White people she met did not want to even touch the word Black, and instead reacted with "I am colour-blind […], I don't really see colour", which she felt as hurtful as it (in)directly ignores the experiences of Black people (cf. Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017). These responses made her feel that her experiences became unacknowledged and invisible.

Furthermore, how the participants reflected upon being Black and Blackness in Sweden shows that this discussion is complex because in the absence of the social recognition of Whiteness, the Black body becomes othered, strange and deviant etc in the space. This further puts the participants in this study in a vulnerable position, especially, as Amara said, being the only one or one out of a few Black people in the room speaking about this. Therefore, both constructions, Whiteness and Blackness, need to be discussed to not (re)produce the system that preserves Whiteness as an invisible category and making Blackness the deviant (cf. Collins, 2000, p. 90). In a lecture about White privilege by Sima and Martin Wolgast, they discussed how issues about race should be a *shared burden*. They argued that it is not only about how coloured people feel and act but also how it is to be White – more particularly how White-privilege is acting as a buffer in the world (Fieldnotes, 19 April). Ahmed argues that comfort happens in an encounter with more than two bodies, in academia mostly White bodies feel comfort as they inhabit certain academic spaces (2006, pp. 133-134). Following this line, to acknowledge Black as a term of identification might make this comfortableness explicit. In a way forces White people to reflect upon their own position of privilege, which can be an uncomfortable endeavour (cf. Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021, pp. 102-103, 109). Consequently, being Black in a PWI might start a chain reaction of emotions and acts, for those in that space.

Blackness and being Black also reflected upon representation at the university, specifically regarding students, faculty members, and curriculum. One of the issues of representation according to Zola was that "amongst students we are all kind of scattered, although we study social sciences there isn't a place to meet, there is only like one Black person in every class". None of the participants said it was good representation but two said that some things were better in their department than others. Some participants described it as a constant feeling yet that does not mean that negative situations always happen. Miranda explained it rather as "being the only one or one of two all the time, everywhere, which in some cases doesn't create an issue but sometimes does make you feel a little bit like the outsider, I think"

(Miranda). This was further discussed by some as a form of loneliness, being the only one or one out of two Black people in most of the contexts in academic settings, which might impose emotional labour. As the participants described how not seeing themselves being represented amongst faculty members emphasised on this loneliness. Sade told me how during her masters in Lund there were a few Black and POC students but now when she is a doctorate, she has become the only one physically there. This resembles the story initiating this thesis, how the guest lecturer showed there became fewer and fewer Black people the further he advanced. When Zola was asked about representation she remembered in the beginning of her master, as she kind of laughed, she told me:

> In our introduction they said it was the most diverse year and I said diverse for Europe. I was so confused. I am the only Black girl in class and then there are two from China and the rest are from Europe. (Zola)

What Zola describes is a distinction between what diversity could be and for whom. This further implies that the faculty members, the academy, may not anticipate further diversity to happen either. It also raises a question about what counts as being diverse. Furthermore, both Ahmed (2012), Ohito and Brown (2021) have been arguing that diversity rhetoric's have been structured by logics of anti-Blackness or just being a façade. Ahmed argues that the diversity work sometimes is a non-performative act, where universities might just state that they are diverse in official documents but not necessarily do any performative acts of antiracism (2012). Ohito and Brown, on other hand, mean that PWI's are built on anti-Blackness, as Black history and knowledge are moved to the periphery or that Blackness becomes forced into a multicultural terrain which according to them is linked to White supremacy (2021, pp. 153-154). Following these arguments, Black students may not have the same possibilities of access to the academy. Therefore, a classroom with a majority of Western students and a mere few from other countries might then be accounted as diverse.

In dialogue with the participants, I could sense a form of frustration regarding the lack of representation in the curriculum and amongst faculty members. Sade describes her experiences in the faculty of medicine as something that lacked a fair representation.

> However, the downs have been that I sometimes felt that the curriculum hasn't really been developed to include the African perspective. So, we would always, for instance when we took health, we would always have talks about how it is in the western world and the comparison that was being made to the African setting. Sometimes I felt embarrassed. Yeah, I felt bad because they were always drawing on the bad examples from African countries, which I felt is not fair because of course we do have our challenges as countries do but there is always a good story that can be told from our African countries which I don't feel is reflected in the academic curriculum

> here, and especially considering that it is an international programme you would expect to find at least a fairer representation of cultures. (Sade)

What Sade demonstrates is a form of erasure of Black existence in the curriculum. She expresses her feelings of sometimes being misrepresented and other times not being included, all resulting in her feeling disappointed about the curriculum. Ohito and Brown argues that this kind of erasure could be seen as a refusal of knowledge, thus upholding a certain knowledge as the centre of production (2021). Both Rebecka and Zola, also noticed a lack of Black perspectives in the curricula. Rebecka said that it had only been mentioned regarding the concept of intersectionality and a text by Sara Ahmed, although quite vaguely. Following Habel (2012), the reason could be that people in Sweden are not comfortable discussing race, especially from a Swedish context. Zola described her curriculum as US- and Western-centric, which also neglects other perspectives not only the African canon. Haraway writes "[h]istory is a story Western culture buffs tell each other" (Haraway, 1988, p. 577), and within the "rarefied realm of epistemology, where traditionally what can count as knowledge is policed by philosophers codifying cognitive canon law" (Haraway, 1988, p. 575). Through such an approach, many types of knowledges are not recognized as knowledge. Hence, Haraway argues that the Western canon is a White construct, viewed as a creation of nature. Her analysis of Western knowledge as a closely monitored canon suggests that it is difficult for other perspectives within the academy to take place. That may be an explanation to why Rebecka and Zola describe their curriculums as Western-centric.

Miranda, who also teaches at her department, described how they had a process of trying to diversify the parameters so that they automatically reviewed the courses. This has led her to always investigate the curriculum, to expand and not just focus on literature from a Western canon. As I asked Amara if there were any representation in the curriculum she instantly replied "oh my god. No, no, no, no" (Amara). She had experiences of trying to change the curriculum like Miranda, but that had not been easy as she describes how she met resistance. For instance, she recalled a situation where she questioned the use of a book written by a colonizer who talked about freedom, and the professor responded that this is how it was talked about before. Amara expressed how she felt that they could have discussed this with a more critical perspective, and not reproduce colonial narratives. Consequently, as Rebecka said in our conversation "if you only read literature written by White people then that will be the only perspective you will get knowledge about" (Rebecka). Skeggs argues:

> [a] concept of the norm is produced which is read back onto those who do not have access to the forms of capital and knowledge of those designated as norm and are thus found wanting. The tacit and normalizing effect in knowledge operates by taking one group's experiences and assuming these to be paradigmatic of all. When only the middle class speak to the middle class the knowledge will be taken as legitimate and reproduced. It is when different audiences are introduced and respond that challenges over the legitimacy of knowledge are produced. Many theorists do not try to hear or see anything other than from where they are located. (Skeggs, 1997, p. 19).

Skeggs understanding of the normalizing process can also be translated from a class perspective to apply to race, or another power axis. In this case then, the normalizing process could imply to uphold the (White) Western perspective as the dominant and legitimate standpoint. By not having other perspectives as the central part of discussion, let alone mentioning them, there may be an eradication of potential counter-realities to the Western perspective (see R. Delgado, 1989; Amoah, 1997). In this case it keeps the participants, and othered bodies, as the strangers in the space of academia.

The lack of representation that has been discussed by the participants might affect who will apply to Lund University. Amara describes how she said to her sibling to try to study at Lund which the sibling responded with "no, why should I study at that white university?" (Amara), and Amara expressed that she understood that choice. At the end of the conversations, I asked the participants whether they would choose Lund University again now after they have experienced it. Sade responded with:

> I'm very ambitious and I want to aim high, and I want to set an example for other young African, women and other people of colour, that it is possible to aim higher. It is possible even when we are faced with all these challenges, we can still make a difference. […] and I want to use the challenge as a way to bring innovation so to speak. (Sade)

To follow-up that question I also asked if they would recommend Lund University for other Black people, and Sade continued on the path of change:

> I would because of this. Yeah, because if we don't have more people coming in then we will not be able to have a better representation. So even though we've been able to pinpoint some aspects which need improvements. We need more people to come in so that they will also strengthen the voice of advocacy here. And be able to bring the change that we want. And then I guess when we are more people, we will take up more space. (Sade)

Sade's reflection demonstrates how there may exist a certain academic fragility, by showing that through having more Black bodies (representation) the academic foundation can start to crumble a bit. If more people of colour occupy space, then it might be more difficult to ignore their existence. Zola's responded to this question that it would have

been crazy for Black people, coming from her Western country of origin, to choose Lund. She meant that as there are platforms and representation elsewhere, to be at Lund University which the participants have described as a burden on their bodies would not make sense. This was something some of the other participants also described, as the experience at Lund University had become a lonesome journey which had taken energy from them.

5.3 The ambiguity of (non)belonging

For some of the participants the experience of being a lone representative has led to a complicated approach to belonging. As they have felt a discrepancy between their own feeling of belonging and how others perceive them. This was sometimes described as a process of being othered, which has caused feelings of non-belonging. However, some participants view being accepted to the university as a form of belonging.

> […] I got in right. I am here, I am here for a reason. I applied and I got in. (Rebecka)

> I brought myself here, so I belong here. (Zola)

These two quotes from Rebecka and Zola, express how they see themselves to be an inhabitant of space (thus, belong) because they brought themselves to Lund University by applying, as everyone else, and got in. Even though this might be the case Hannah argues that being accepted is not necessarily about belonging but rather "the way it is".

> I am like the only Black present, so it has become more a way of life. I kind of always feel out of place anyway, so I never really feel that I do not belong, it is more the way it is. (Hannah)

Hannah accepted the way spaces treated her as a stranger in some ways, as she has not felt any difference in other similar spaces. Thus, perception could be understood as important here. During Amara's first weeks at Lund University, she was asked "Excuse me, how did you get in here?" (Amara) and she described how she was baffled by this because in Sweden you get accepted through your merits. She further experienced this as a racist act, where she became singled out because of her skin colour, as other students did not get this question. The voice of tone Amara described the person with implied a questioning of her being there, almost as it could not be true that a Black woman studies at Lund University. Moreover, the situation may point towards meritocracy being racialised and gendered (cf. Malone, 2012), where Amara is not assumed to have the merits to be studying at the university. She elaborated further on perception as she felt that the White spaces she had encountered

throughout her whole life involved situations where she had to deal with other people's perception of her, as this one. Sade had experienced a different life than Amara, where she had lived a life where she belonged to the majority. Therefore, when she came to Lund, she experienced a consciousness about her Blackness. She described how colleagues have made her uncomfortable by addressing her hair on a daily basis, and as a consequence Sade expressed that she "really felt [her] blackness" through these interactions.

> I was quite overwhelmed by the attention I was receiving from my hair to my dressing. I was honestly shocked. […] Of course, if you gotten a nice hairstyle, your friends would say "oh that is nice" but the kind of attention I'm referring to here is completely different. That made me feel uncomfortable. It made me feel insecure. What is it about my hair like you must come out and speak about it? So, it was like almost every day in the personnel room. I am, you know, African hair is very flexible so you can make so many different hairstyles. So apparently this is not something that is of common knowledge, and I don't blame them, but every day that I came with a new hairstyle. Oh, you have new hair? What is it? What did you do to it? How long does it take to fix it like endless questions. Can I touch it, can I feel it? I was always overwhelmed. (Sade)

Sade depicts a situation where she feels overwhelmed by the attention. She describes how she does not mind if this would have happened once or twice, but these constant questions made her uncomfortable. She is being put in the spotlight even though she just wants to be treated as everyone else. This relates to what been brought up in the overview, where Ahmed argued that women of colour – more particularly her body, not her – become an object of display for others to assessed (2012). In a way this process is minimizing women of colours work as it focus on her body instead. Moreover, following Ahmed (2006) arguments about lines, Sade's change of hair and her being in the staff room might deviate from the lines in that space. She points out that her hair's flexibility is not of common knowledge, thus her proximity to most of the other bodies become disruptive, and therefore these interactions may occur. Sade started to change her habits because of these interactions:

> And the thing that is even worse, is that I started avoiding the staff room during lunch hour altogether up to now, it has affected me up to now for all the four years I've been doing my PhD, I won't take lunch during the same time as everybody. […] I just want to be seen as a normal person. A normal person you don't have to give that kind of attention that makes me feel like I've been put on the spotlight, you know? (Sade)

Sade describes how she changed her time of having her lunch to avoid these interactions, constructing a clear strategy for her well-being through avoiding situations where she felt that people were infringing on her personal space. Consequently, these interactions also formed the rest of her lived experiences at Lund University, showing how some interactions could have a long-term impact on body orientations in this space. Ahmed (2006) argues that

orientations of bodies are affected by how the space is available for us, a body that feels comfortable in a space would also extend itself. Because the body is in line with the orientations of the space. In this case, Sade feels uncomfortable as the proximity to other bodies in the space creates a distance. As a strategy she chooses not to occupy certain spaces; thus, the orientation of her body is limited because the normative body has already extended in the space and therefore decides its orientation.

This could further be understood as the making of the stranger as "becoming noticeable, of not passing through or passing by, of being stopped or being held up" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 3). Ahmed argues here that the experiences of the stranger could make us understand how some bodies feel a space is inhabitable and how spaces can be extensions of bodies. Furthermore, how the body of the stranger is distanced from the body that are the extensions of the space (see Ahmed, 2006). Therefore, habits are about what bodies do and *can* do in a space (Ahmed, 2011). Sade's Blackness, and the non-existence of mutual experiences as Black, make her feel noticeable. Although Zola and Rebecka describe themselves as belonging, the participants still experienced encounters where they felt their bodies became the construct of the boundaries within a space, through their proximity to Whiteness (Kerr, 2005). Following Ahmed (2000) and Collins (2000, pp. 69-70), the participants could therefore be positioned as the stranger in the margin, and through that positionality also clarify the space's boundaries. Miranda felt that she sometimes belonged and not belonged. In her department she felt that she belonged and one of the reasons was that it is international, mostly represented the students and doctoral students. This made it a space that also was catered for her, as she also is international. Nevertheless, she thought it was difficult to know whether she belonged or not as well, as she sometimes felt that afterwards. Other times she experienced more the feeling of the situation being odd. She describes one of these situations when she was in a faculty meeting where most were White, of a certain age and speaking Swedish and then it was just her and another person perceived as non-Western there. She elaborated further "you cannot always say that you belong wherever you are, even if I feel that way […] that feeling could get disrupted" (Miranda), instead become odd as this situation did for her. Ahmed has also portrayed a similar situation:

> When I walk into university meetings, this is just what I encounter. Sometimes I get used to it. At one conference we organized, four Black feminists arrived. They all happened to walk into the room at the same time. Yes, we do notice such arrivals. The fact that we notice them tells us more about what is already in place than about ''who'' arrives. (Ahmed, 2012, p. 35)

She exemplifies here how Black women become noticeable because of what the space already inhabits. More particularly, in both examples Black women are argued to be noticeable based on their bodies distance to what have already been inhabited in that space which have been viewed as Whiteness. Researchers have been arguing how Whiteness has become institutionalized through accumulated practices in a space (see Ahmed, 2012; Hübinette, et al., 2012; Collins, 2000). Therefore, Whiteness have been viewed to not become noticeable, but the arrival of the Black body does because of the proximity of other bodies, and through this history of arrival Whiteness may eventually become unnoticeable for those who inhabit Whiteness or those who have gotten so used to seeing these bodies in this space (Ahmed, 2012, p. 35, 2006). This could be the reason why Miranda feels like she does in the meeting. Hannah and Rebecka expressed this similar experience of feeling odd (non-belonging) and belonging when they were at student nations. As earlier mentioned, the student nations (which are part of the university) become these social spaces where people could engage with other students at the university. But as the slave auction (Haraldsson, 2011) also showed, the space might entail difficulties for non-White bodies. Hannah's experience of it was that she felt that even though she had access to these spaces she did not feel that she belonged.

> In the nations there's no representation either. Like if I am there, I am the only Black person there. I did volunteer a few times anyways. At a certain point, like of course I want to include myself in things, but after a certain point it is like why? What's the point? (Hannah)

Hannah describes how she tried to get involved in this space but got drained by mostly being the only Black person in that space. She experienced how she got ignored, for instance at an event one person joined the conversation she and others were part of, and he talked with everyone except her. In a way she became someone being in the shadows as a body in the margins. Although, as a stranger in the margin she could also re-appear at any moment because the stranger could be anyone who returns from the margin (Ahmed, 2012). Rebecka, on the other hand, said that she continued to be involved in social student life. She described encounters with people who seemed to have stereotypical understandings of Black people, where they would sometimes change their behaviours. For example, people would use slang or words used within Black/African American Vernacular English, such as "yas queen" or "slay"[10] (i.e., used as a response to appreciate what someone is doing, how they look, or what they say) around or to her. Although, she had difficulties taking this seriously, she noted that this just happened to her as a Black woman, her non-Black friends had never experienced this

change of behaviour towards them. Her experience further relates to the feeling of belonging

and at the same time becoming othered (not belonging).

Zola tried to further understand her position at the university, and it became complicated as

she felt that racial issues in Sweden was not acknowledged:

> It is baffling to me that it is not even acknowledged but I think maybe because it is a given. You
> should be grateful that you are here or that you should be grateful this is a welfare state. (Zola)

This view aligns what Habel have been arguing, that the self-image of Swedish

exceptionalism position Sweden on moral high ground – thus the perception is that Sweden a

great to be at (2012). There might be another aspect of this which Andrews (2018a) argued to

be an expectation of gratefulness and silence from those who attend prestigious universities

hence to call out racial issues you may bite the hand that feeds you (see chapter 4). By

assuming the role as compliant, you might feel that you are a guest at the university. That

feeling of being a guest was something Amara have felt she been frequently reminded of. She

described that feeling being in the air most of the time, as a sort of disruption of her own

feeling of belonging in the space. One of these situations Amara noted were:

> People started talking English with me. Like excuse me? […] But also, it was not so weird
> because some people had never seen a Black person in their entire life. For example, one person
> that was from Skåne told me that he never had seen someone who is Black in person. Then I
> thought like, maybe it is not that weird that people start speaking in English with me. (Amara)

According to de los Reyes there seem to be a public discourse which assume that non-White

bodies automatically have Swedish language deficiencies (2007, p. 20). This assumption

might be what Amara experienced. Sade instead described a situation where language

became another issue. In her second half of her PhD, she was supposed to have a half-time

review which did not go as she anticipated:

> It was important for me that I can fully understand what they're saying, so I would like this to be
> done in English. And she was like, well, you can't force them to speak English, because English
> is not their first language. And I was like, yeah, but I can't be forced to speak Swedish either,
> because Swedish is not my first language and she was like OK, then you will speak English. They
> will ask their questions in Swedish so we will have both languages and so that is what happened.
> So, I really felt that my rights to be able to use a language that I feel comfortable with was being
> taken away from me. In the end it may not be a huge implication on the institution, but to me as
> a person it's having a big impact on me. (Sade)

Sade was accepted as an English-speaking doctoral student with the awareness of her not

being a Swedish-speaker and her dissertation is written in English, yet she was expected to

have her review in Swedish. This situation added to her experience of discrimination. Moreover, when Sade described this experience, I asked if it was possible to record the review, but she was told she was not allowed. This situation could be seen as an academia practice maintaining normative lines in the space, and as Sade said this might not be an implication for the institution but for her it was strongly felt. Furthermore, this aligns what previously has been mentioned, that academia is built from a certain perspective – more particularly from the perspective of academic exceptionalism (see Navarro et al., 2013; Ahmed, 2012). Amara talked about feeling like a guest and losing the position of belonging. Sade, on the other hand, is put in a position where she lost the rights she thought she had as a doctoral student.

6. On-going strategies and labour

In this part of the analysis, I want to focus on the different strategies and labour that occur in relation to space and bodies.

6.1 Web of histories: relations and intimacies

In my conversations with the participants, they described an academic space which made them sometimes feel uncomfortable, noticeable, and lonely. Ahmed argues that bodies either follow or depart from the lines in a space (2006). To examine how the participants oriented in the space was therefore essential to understand their situatedness. However, according to Zola, history is an inherent part of the university, thus affect how their bodies orients.

> The history of, like the university being an old and prestigious university, has an effect on how it is today, really. I think the university is more obsessed with their own image than it is about its student's well-being. Definitely. (Zola)

Zola's reflection was based on conflicting experiences. Her feelings correlate what Andrews addressed earlier about Oxford University, that institutions as such need to uphold their image to maintain their appeal regardless of other people's well-being (2018a). In her time at the university, she had met various people who said that Lund University was an "academic paradise" and highly ranked, and this was one reason why they had chosen the university. Then the actual experience being at the university has been completely different for her. Although – as she described – it might be good on paper, but her experiences have illustrated an academic space that neglects the existence of non-White perspectives. In her case, that sometimes inflicted feelings of being lonely as there are barely any representation nor

platforms for coloured students. Zola also touched upon what Skeggs argued, that historically the universities have neglected the voices of the working-class, women, and Blacks, which she has argued to still be a problem – thus having an effect today (Skeggs, 1997, 2004). This could further be understood through what Ahmed calls the *web of past intimacies*. Ahmed argues that institutions are constructed through relationships, intimacies, and connections between bodies. These intimacies affect how people act as it orients us to what we know and what has been institutionalized in the space. She claims that the web of past intimacies is ingrained in the structure of academia. Meaning for instance that intimacies between bodies can form allyships which function to protect some and not some others, or some from others. The web of past intimacies could therefore be mobilized to protect the whole institution from negative claims by protecting one specific person (Ahmed, 2021a, pp. 421-431, 2021b). For Amara being in this space of web of past intimacies, she did not feel that she changed but rather that she felt confident in her position.

> No, I just feel that I have been strengthened in my own blackness, but I have also strengthened as a person. Who I am has become more, I have blossomed I think. What could be better than being yourself? It's 100%. Then everyone does not appreciate it. I heard through people that some did not like me, but surprise surprise most were white men, but yeah I'm a threat to them so that is not so weird. (Amara)

Amara describes that being in this academic space have made her even truer to herself, however she noticed that this made White men dislike her. Her reflections about her position and how her being affects others in the space points to an awareness of her arrival and a web of past intimacies. Amara believes that Black people in the space does not only make Whiteness acknowledged, but she also describes that she feels how her presence as a Black woman is threatening to White men (cf. Collins, 2000, p. 70). As discussed previously, the participants' Blackness seem to create involuntary boundaries in the space. In dialogue with the participants, their Narratives have illustrated how they have felt like outsiders, threats, odd, and being perceived as less etc. This opened up for discussions about painting a picture of whom Lund University would be personified as. Amara replies first with "oh" and a sigh, then she takes a pause and answers partially with a metaphor – "an old rich white man with a safety vest on being inside of his castle" (Amara). I asked her what she meant by that, and she says "well because he is scared. He is scared of new things, quite simply. He thinks it will kill him." (Amara). The university is therefore perceived by Amara as an old, rich, White man. Once again, Amara describes different threats for the White male status. Where he, as she elaborates, becomes safe through isolation in what could be viewed as the Ivory Tower.

Moreover, the focus on the person being insular was also discussed by Rebecka. When she thought of an academic from Lund University she saw a White man with a suit, polished, narrow-minded, and loud. He was someone that took a lot of space and may not give space for others. To theorize this embodiment of Lund University, I will think through Ahmed's argument – "[…] when I am saying that 'white men' is an institution I am referring not only to what has already been instituted or built but the *mechanisms* that ensure the persistence of that structure." (Ahmed, 2014). What she argues is that "White men" are already assembled in academic space, he is someone that is expected to be there and therefore rarely questioned. In Ahmed's terms "White men", as an institution, become an object full of attachments (Ahmed, 2010, 2014) – for instance Rebecka and Amara attribute Lund University as someone White, male, polished and insular. Through this theorization the embodiment of Lund University become more tangible.

Zola's first impression of Lund related to the description of "White men". Coming to Lund was not as she expected as she explains that she was not prepared for "how white and blonde the city was" (Zola). She continued with "now I am okay with not having so many black friends because it is not a reflection on me but on Lund" (Zola). Zola meant that the university is not accessible for Black people because it mostly ignores Black existence and therefore it is not weird that she does not have so many coloured friends there. The image of Lund University, both visually and the feeling of it, have been portrayed by the participants as a predominantly White academic space. Where the othered bodies in the space have not been really considered.

Ahmed (2021, p. 421) also mean that web of past intimacies can become a tool in recruitment, where people might be hired because they are connected in some ways (friends, friends of friends etc) or that the person is similar to oneself in certain matters (cf. Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021). Wolgast and Wolgast writes that people tend to recruit homogeneously, (un)consciously, to avoid disparities as it is the most comfortable (2021, p. 46-51, 103-104). We might extrapolate from this and say that institutions like Lund University seem to be shaped by regulative norms of the "White men" and therefore also reproducing non-Whiteness as strangers. Aforesaid Whiteness is continuously produced through historical intimacies, closeness to Whiteness and White bodies in the present, thus there is a persistence to maintain academic institutions as "White and male". Nevertheless, Ahmed suggests that it is difficult to diversify or call out systemic racism in academia due to structures such as web

of past intimacies. To defend allegations of racism in academia can therefore rattle these allies and may recognize the position of White privilege (Ahmed, 2021a, 2006). A privilege that Saxonberg and Sawyer have described is borne out of the assumptions of inhabitant White bodies in academic spaces. More particularly, a privilege that may positively affect their progression in academia (2006, pp. 431-433). Therefore, to examine the function of the web of past intimacies is essential to understand the choice of whom to support more than other bodies, or some bodies against others. It is through history and practice we know who will be supported and who will not be supported (Ahmed, 2021b).

6.1.1 Web of intimacies

The previous section illustrated an entanglement of intimacies and histories which have been described to affect the participants' experiences in academic space. In the conversations I had with the participants, I felt less lonely at the university. We acknowledged each other, laughed but also carried the experiences together – feeling tired, sad, happy, and pained. Then in the end, I was feeling empowered and strengthened. This became a sort of volatile and short-lived moment of Black joy for me, where I felt a sense of belonging and safety in an otherwise White space (see Ohito & Brown, 2021, p. 138). In these conversations we were let to speak freely around Blackness and Black joy (Ohito & Brown, 2021, pp. 138-139).

The participants expressed that they did not find many spaces where they felt that they are being acknowledged and validated. For example, they had not seen any events for BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour) students or faculty members during their studies. Zola said that it should be the university's responsibility to facilitate safe spaces for international students as the university accept so many. In a sense she felt that her experiences at the university mirrored that thought of if she had grown up in Sweden, she would never have chosen Lund to study at. She thought that the university lacked safe spaces and representation. In this conversation, Zola mentioned that she attended a student union meeting where a discussion started about the university's diversity officer being a White man – someone she felt would not fully understand the experiences of marginalised groups. She described that it was so typical, and at the same time if someone of colour would have gotten the position it could be a token position (see footnote 9) but at least it would be someone who know and feels the experience of marginalisation. In this moment I felt that Zola just wanted

to be heard, to not need to explain her experiences to others but have someone in that position that understands and affirms her.

Rebecka as well was longing for that shared common bond (West, 2019, p. 546), so when she moved from another Swedish city to Lund, she wanted to experience something else than White spaces.

> I had an idea coming here, when I grew up, I have always been in a white class, a White school and grew up in a district that is very White. So, I thought, I was kind of hoping to meet a little more, or what should one say, meet a little more Black people when I moved down. That has not been the case. (Rebecka)

Rebecka expresses a saddening realisation coming to the university, as it mirrored her previous experiences. Hannah also reflected upon her previous experiences, more particularly on community.

> When I am back home in [African country] or with my Black friends in Canada, then again when I talk to them, they have a community. I remember talking to one of them and saying like "you kind of live in a bubble" which isn't the world. Once you step out of that bubble you are like the world sucks. It's perfectly fine while being in that bubble but unfortunately the world isn't like that, for instance in my field that I am in I won't be in that environment where I am amongst other Black scientists. So I don't have a bubble here to hide in, so it's different. […] Just having one other person that understands your experiences, you would have had more of a support system in that environment, and I think that would go a long way. (Hannah)

What Hannah and Rebecka define is that going outside a community or being without a support system could come with some hard realisations. At the same time, as Hannah meant it could also shield you from certain challenges as it creates a space to breathe. For Sade, who has mostly belonged to the majority in her life, also felt that she missed a community at the university. She explains that the experiences she has described might not have happened if she had been in spaces which were more diverse.

> I think it's just these examples that I've given you made me really feel like I'm an outsider. These examples of me not having the rights to use the language I wanted or having somebody clearly see me in my office and then ignore me. You know these are a few things that I can point out and also just being a minority and not having so many students that are affiliated to Lund University who are either African or people of colour. (Sade)

Sade feels that she has become an outsider because of the lack of other BIPOC-students. Zola thought the reason for this might be that "in Sweden and Denmark, if you tweet about someone being racist against you no one would care but in these other countries [e.g., UK, US] it would lead to uproars because the platform is more connected" (Zola). The

participants urged for support or a platform of more Black people and people of colour as it might strengthen marginalised groups at Lund University, instead of being scattered as Zola mentioned earlier. Zola sees this potential space as a community where people can acknowledge and validate each other: "I also went through this, or I also felt that. And yes, that person was rude" (Zola).

The participants have described various situations where they did not feel acknowledged in academic spaces, however occasionally in some of the participants recounted interactions with similar feelings like the one I described earlier. Both Amara and Rebecka expressed that they rarely see someone else Black in the space but if they do their immediate response would be "Oh how fun". Zola describes that she had met a few during her time at the university and her strategy were more interactive:

> If I see like a Black woman, I'll go like Oh my God hi. But elsewhere I would probably say nothing because they are everywhere. So, you're not freaking out because representation is there. Yeah, but in Lund it's just crazy if you see another black woman. (Zola)

Further into the conversation Zola and I started discussing more in-depth about these short interactions of (non)verbal dialogue between Black women. Although Zola misses the representation in the street, she remembers a certain aspect at Campus. She had noted that every time she saw a Black woman on campus, they were very smiley towards her and said hi – an encounter she loved. When this would happen, her friends would ask her if she knew the woman, and as soon as Zola said this both of us started laughing. Like we both already knew the answer, even so through the laughs she clarified the answer – that she usually does not know them. In dialogue we reflected on these encounters as something different from other European places we have lived in. Zola pinpoint that these interactions here is just a smile, nod, hi, or how are you and then you might not never see that person again. She describes another encounter she had where she bumped into a Somali woman who was working in the canteen. They ended up having a long conversation together, which she thought was nice. Zola expressed that these interactions reminded her that she is acknowledged, and that she would always have someone there and Black people do exist at campus.

6.1.2 Future intimacies

The (non)verbal dialogue that occurs between Black women on campus that Zola describes, seems to do something to our minds and bodies. She feels acknowledged in that short

moment with another stranger in the space, through a hi, smile, or conversation. Therefore, based on the participants and my own reflections, I want to move beyond the conditions made by the web of past intimacies, thus propose a focus shift to a *web of future intimacies*. This thesis, as previously mentioned, has the ambition to move the experiences of Black women from the margins to the centre of knowledge production (as agents of past, present and future) hence amplifying these voices inside and outside of academia. Sade earlier described that she had the ambition to go through higher education and encourage other Black people to do so. This puts an emphasis on what I would argue to be a form of future intimacies. Through representations more of these mentioned interactions might occur or someone might not be the only Black person in their faculty. Additionally, organisations may not be able to just do non-performative diversity work (see Ahmed, 2012). As a result, having the possibility of a platform or network could enhance the feeling of belonging, which Zola mention was missing here. Osman who has written about his doctoral and post-doctoral journey in Swedish academia, argues for the importance for non-White students to create networks to overcome barriers in the academy (2021, p. 72). Therefore, such platform, as web of future intimacies, may have multiple purposes.

After approximately a month after my first conversation with Zola, she contacted me to tell me a new association was about to start. A Black and African association focusing on seminars, social events, and discussions etc, to acknowledge the Black existence at the university. In a way, to create a form of homeplace (hooks, 2015a) where people could breathe. A space for Black students especially, but also where everyone else could join as well. This was the re-birth of the previous *Black and African Student Association* that existed a decade ago, which stopped existing when the president left the university. The association can maybe become that space the participants urged for, to find a network/platform where Black students could meet and support each other, in what Zola viewed as a scattered campus. Thus, an opportunity to create a web of future intimacies.

6.2 Strategies for survival: subvert or adapt?

Ahmed writes that "[w]hen we talk about a 'sea of whiteness' or 'white space', we talk about the repetition of the passing by of some bodies and not others." (Ahmed, 2012, p. 42). Meaning that Black bodies in White institutions becomes noticeable and White bodies does not. She argues further that such spaces push for non-White bodies to construct strategies to

survive (Ahmed, 2012, pp. 39-43, 162). Osman describes that there are two choices for him as a Black person to survive in academia – either adapt or resist (2021, pp. 69, 78-83). However, for the participants being in this environment as a constant stranger, entangled in a web of past intimacies, they have illustrated a more assorted strategy with both adaptive and subversive elements. More specifically, their bodies are in a constant dialogue with the space, as they orient, perceive, subvert and adapt.

Some of the participants have illustrated how they adapted by being smiley towards White people (Hannah) or avoided the staffroom not to feel uncomfortable (Sade). Rebecka described that she used her style to adapt in the space:

> For example, before I go to school, I think a lot about what I look like. I like to express myself a lot with my style, but I feel that I cannot do it in the same way here. Because it can be perceived as unprofessional. As I said, Lund personified is a well-dressed white man. So, through my looks I try to change so I can feel some community. (Rebecka)

How Rebecka relates to clothes and professionalism, follow Wolgast and Wolgast idea that stereotypes about style could indicate people's class and competence (2021, p. 35). In this case, she might radiate a certain class and competence when she is well-dressed, but also move away from the stereotypes she described earlier of being less smart. However, opposite to Rebecka, both Sade and Zola used their clothing instead to subvert rather than to adapt.

> But I will never conform by wearing black clothes because all I have is colourful clothes. So, I will not be Swedish that way. (Zola)

> I've deliberately decided to use bright colours at work, especially during winter because I want them to see that you don't have to be in the dark just because it's winter. You don't have to put on a gloomy face just because it's winter. You can still be happy, bubbly, and colourful. (Sade)

The reason for Rebecka's different approach could be that she is brought up in Sweden and goes to a Swedish class, thus might feel more urged, comfortable and familiar with following the lines in the space (see Ahmed, 2006). At the same time, Zola expresses that it is difficult to know whether you conform or not "as you don't realise you are conforming until after".

Both Rebecka and Amara had grown up in White environments in Sweden, and their experiences were described by them as something they did not pay much attention to because they were used to it. Although, Amara also expressed that she felt like she does not know how it is to not have this feeling either, because the feeling has existed since she was little. Sade, on the other hand, who had a different background did not want these challenges to

determine her happiness. Her way to deal with the conditions imposed on her body was related to her response to the negative attitudes towards her, and that response would determine how she coped with it.

> Will I allow that to make me bitter or allow that to actually put me in a place where I say, OK, this has happened, but I'm going to advocate for myself, I'm going to use this opportunity to make me a better person or to make that ignorant person more knowledgeable. […] I probably wouldn't have been like this if I didn't come here because then I'm in my country, I'll be among a majority, and I don't have to face racism. But coming here has just unearthed a certain trait in me that I never knew I had. I'm bold and I know that I might be a foreigner in your country, but I equally have rights. So as long as I'm abiding by the rules then this right applies to me. And I should be able to demand it, so to speak. So, this boldness, I think has risen within me because I've been exposed to the best and the worst of both cultures and I'm just trying to find where do I belong and how can I survive this. (Sade)

Sade describes how her position from being majority to become a minority have made her bolder. Her strategy is to advocate for herself, she is proud of herself occupying space and she make others more knowledgeable. In both cases she becomes bolder. Amara also propose this boldness, where she does not let others affect her opportunities in the academy. At the same time, she had noted that boldness has led to White men starting to dislike her as she called out problematic structures. Consequently, Amara has built a myriad of strategies to be true to herself and uphold a certain state of well-being. Osman writes that he believes that resisting will only make it worse but through adapting he may have access to certain opportunities. Meanwhile, that might entail that you need to be complicit about your subordination to pass in the space (2021, pp. 69, 78-83). According to Ahmed (2012) and Osman (2021) there does not seem to be much room for reproducing a position of Blackness which is not linked to Whiteness (cf. Collins, 2000, p. 90). Instead, academia may entail a few fugitive moments where the participants can feel their whole being as Black women. Amara describes her reflection on our conversation and being in the academy:

> I am not like this. I am not like I am towards you right now, like humorous and all that. That part does not White people get access to unless they are very close to me. Instead, this strict Amara that critically asks questions, straight to the point, no smiling or so because I protect myself. Then I am not like this open with every Black and POC I meet. This is how I am, so it is also a shame that I have to walk around with this mask. (Amara)

In our conversation, I perceived Amara in this moment as tired and sad. It felt like she could not fully be herself because that would make it even more draining. This relates to Osman, where he argues that being Black in White spaces sometimes forces you to be complicit of your subordination to survive (2021, p. 83). Amara ended that conversation saying, "it is very

sad because sometimes I think that I could have been a comedian", as soon as she said those last words, she and I, started to laugh for a moment together, steering away from that tense and sad realisation of having the feeling that she must save herself from others. I related to the feeling Amara described in our conversation. Usually when I enter a new academic space which is predominately White I do so with caution, and I adapt to present myself quite formally just to not let other's negative assumptions of Black people get solidify (see Osman, 2021). Sometimes it feels like you are carrying the weight of an entire diaspora, which connects to Rebecca and Sade's previous description of being advocates. Nevertheless, to have this moment together with Amara creates a space to breathe and laugh, and not to feel exhausted and anxious (cf. Ahmed, 2021a, pp. 40-42). In a way we were forming our own web of histories, or as hooks (2015a) would argue – a sort of homeplace.

6.3 The labour of Black women

Being in these predominantly White academic spaces has led Hannah to strategically act in a certain way to avoid creating a situation of tension:

> When I go into the space, I am going to make them [White people] feel safe and I am friendly and stuff. I am always the first one to approach first and so. So, it just has become a part of me, I do turn to a bit overly smiley and cheery which I am not. I go into that mode, so yeah I do kind of switch on a bit. (Hannah)

She views this mode, even though she sees it as something automatically happening, as "exhausting, like you can't be you. So, you have to switch on to try being accepted or make them feel - oh she's not like that or I don't know what they think." (Hannah). This shows the extent of how laborious it is to deal with these small everyday issues, both consciously and/or unconsciously. Amara also describes this position of constantly having to deal with her positioning.

> I do not know, I just think it's made me have a guard up a little more. So, it would have been great if I did not have to have this in the back of my mind all the time. But now I might be exposed to racism or whatever. So yeah, it would have been very nice. To avoid having it, but at the same time so [pause]. I do not know how it feels not to have it like this either. (Amara)

Amara has previously specified that her strategies have been to have a close circle of friends and being true to herself but here she addresses another strategy: having a guard up. I asked Amara how it made her feel having these strategies to cope and feel comfortable in the space of academia. Her response seemed to come with exhaustion and a bit of sadness because she felt that this was not her choice but rather something that have been imposed on her through

minority stress (see footnote 8). Furthermore, these situations mentioned by Hannah and Amara puts them in a position of labour. Hannah portrays her labour as not equal, as she "feel like people don't learn how to approach or like to include us [Black people], maybe it's just in my head but then I know it is not" (Hannah). Amara and Hannah's experiences portrays an on-going deliberation of practices causing labour, which they feel is partly bound by their Blackness. According to Wolgast and Wolgast, White people are not taught into talking about their Whiteness and the privileges that may entail (2021, pp. 102-103, 109). Arguably the symbiotic relationship of Whiteness and Blackness (Collins, 2000) seem to therefore mostly encompass a burden for Black people.

Amara, and the other participants, have earlier described how they have become strangers in the academic space, and therefore also the involuntarily boundary-maker. These experiences have been expressed by the participants to overburden them with emotional (normative structures imposed on them), mental (practices to present themselves in a certain way), and physical (bodily tiredness) labour. These forms of labour could be seen as gatekeeping Black joy (Gilmore & Yeigh, 2021, pp. 1-6; Ohito & Brown, 2021) and transgression (hooks, 1994). Meaning that in educational settings researchers have argued that there are structures that prevent joy and transgression for Black people, through for instance resistance, "colour-blind", defensiveness, and unacknowledgment from non-Black people and institutionalized structures (see Gilmore & Yeigh, 2021; Habel, 2012). So instead, the academic space can become soul withering rather than being a space of opportunity to learn, explore and empower (see hooks, 1994; Gilmore & Yeigh, 2021; Ohito & Brown, 2021). The participants portrayed how the academy sometimes is wearing the Black body down, slowly by structures and interactions bound to past, present and future. More particularly, the academic spatiality and temporality, including the bodies within, is engaging with the Black body. When Rebecka and I talked about how it is to be a Black woman at the university, she moved her hands to her shoulders to express how it is like a weight on her shoulders being in this space which she meant differed from her non-Black classmates.

> I really feel that I have to accomplish in a different way. Kind of like there's an expectation that I'll do badly. It's probably that I automatically feel dumb when I'm in a place like this, Lund University, where it's like the majority of white people. I feel like I have to show that I really can, perform as well. (Rebecka)

This exaggerated need to accomplish, perform well, and achieve are laboursome ventures for the participants. Being the stranger has meant more than being forced into the margins.

Rebecka said that she needed to be accomplished in different ways than others. For Hannah this meant that she introduced herself in a specific way:

> For me, whenever I enter a new space, I always have to introduce myself in terms of other things I have accomplished. Because otherwise they will think she doesn't have anything to offer. Like other people just have to tell their names and I need to tell them *my whole resume* to feel like I am being good enough to be accepted here. (Hannah, my emphasise)

Hannah's feeling of always having to prove herself relates to how many other Black scholars have been discussing their position in the academy (see Ahmed, 2012, 2021a; McCoy, 2021). For example, Osman writes:

> Thus, with time, it became clear to me that my role in the white world was then, and still is, to show the white world that the only difference between us is the black materiality of my body and nothing else. (Osman, 2021, p. 76)

He sees himself having his guard up all the time, like Amara described, and tries to be 'impeccable' as a teacher, colleague, and researcher so White people cannot confirm their stigma (Osman, 2021). This further relates to Rebecka's mixed feelings regarding her position. She knew that her classmates did not care at all that she was Black, but she could still feel something chafing in this space:

> I can still feel almost a stereotype or an expectation that it will not go so well for me. I sometimes feel a little stupid. Almost a bit automatic. I would feel that from both teachers and classmates. I think, or I do not know if they are being mean intentionally or mean something bad. But it feels. I do notice this. (Rebecka)

This feeling Rebecka talks about made her feel aware of other people's reactions to her, and consequently she describes an urge to combat these negative stereotypes against her. The academy in general may evoke the feeling of not being good enough, as researchers/students have to achieve and handle critique that can give voice to internal self-doubt (see Breier et al., 2019; Davies, 2008; Gilmore & Yeigh, 2021; Kristoffersson, 2021, pp. 40-41). Meanwhile, the participants in this thesis also described another layer of race-related and non-belonging feelings in the academy. In a sense this layer gets added onto these general emotions that this space may evoke. Hannah's approach to oppose these stereotypes was to present her whole resume. One of the problems that Hannah thinks is the reason for this is that she is the only Black person in her class. She said she had noticed how the Swedish people in her class are more inclined to hear out from the other international students (non-Black), and she feels that:

> I have to show off like "No I am smart" because they might feel like, to me, that they feel like that everyone from Africa is dumb or everyone who's Black isn't smart. Sometimes I be like "here we go again", like it's me but I have also learnt from experience that unless I show that I know or that I am smart too they would completely ignore my existence. (Hannah)

Hannah expresses that there are certain stereotypes that forces her to present herself in a certain way in order to be acknowledged in the academic space. According to her, this behaviour had even become something she was used to. She described her behaviour as something she just does, "it is not as a braggy thing, it is more integrated in the conversation." (Hannah). In both Hannah's and Rebecka's examples they portrayed how they have been conditioned by perceived stereotypes of being less smart, which have led them to working harder to overcome those stereotypes – with the purpose to be viewed equally and to be acknowledged. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian writer, argues that the problem with stereotypes is that they are incomplete, as one repeated story easily become the only story (Adichie, 2009; see also Skeggs, 1997). The stereotyping of Black women has been an on-going issue for a long time (see Collins, 2000; Wilder, 2015), where she is stereotyped as for instance an angry and "dumb stranger (Collins, 2000, p. 70; Navarro et al., 2013). According to the research, presented here, on stereotypes of Black women, there seems to be an expectation of Black women to not be as articulated and knowledgeable. The participants describe such stereotyping as a reason to work harder, this have also been argued by researchers (McCoy, 2021; Ahmed, 2012).

One reason for this could be understood through the concept of meritocracy and academic exceptionalism. Merits in academia become the validator of the acceptance of your existence in the space (Saxonberg & Sawyer, 2006), therefore Hannah may feel that she is acknowledged when she presents her whole resume. Black women who are not assumed to occupy space in the academy may need to justify their presence, as they oppose the image of academic exceptionalism (cf. Messner, 2000; Navarro et al., 2013, p. 454). Therefore, Black women in academia might experience an extra requirement to be accepted (Messner, 2000, p. 460). Sade describes this extra requirement as something inextricably linked with blackness: "I've always had to push myself more. And it's like, *by virtue of you being black,* you have to work like 10 times extra to show that you can equally do this." (Sade, *my emphasis*). Amara felt that even though she had worked harder to be viewed as equal it had not been enough, at last she decided to kind of hand off the baton over to some of her White friends.

> They helped me and so, but then I gave up and so I said, you can take that fight because there are studies that show that White people listen better to the other White people. So, take that fight if you would like. I'll just do this, take my degree and get out of here quickly and smoothly. (Amara)

Therefore, what the participants have described takes a toll on them and sometimes they need support in this laboursome space. The experiences show that to survive could then be to fight, avoid, or adapt, nevertheless all have been argued to entail labour in various ways.

6.3.1 The extra labour in the labour market

The participants have described that the labour imposed on them as Black women are forcing them to be acutely aware of their position and leads to a constant dialogue about how they are perceived and how they should present themselves in order to be taken into consideration. The participants' experiences illustrate an extra layer of pressure in the academy which urges them to show their skills and resumés to contradict the prejudice against them so they can be taken as someone who belongs at the university. In a way they unconsciously/consciously orient to fit in a White academic context, however some participants are also doing the opposite – orients towards other racialized bodies. This has been described through being bold, not adapting too much, acknowledging Black existence (bodies, scholars etc.), and occupying space.

The participants experiences depicted a labour market that acted in a similar way as the academy have been presented here. This made some participants prepare themselves for the coming steps after graduation. Hannah, as she soon was done with her masters, reflected on her position as being Black and how she felt that the labour market became a difficult terrain to navigate in.

> They will first look at the Swedes and then us. But then I am like well at least you guys [some of her friends] are from Europe, and you basically are like them [Swedes] to me. They don't understand that I got a worse position, I have to be exceptional to get the same recognition you know. (Hannah)

This experience Hannah's speak about is not isolated. According to Wolgast and Wolgast (2021), many Black people in Sweden experiencing having to go through processes of constantly being excluded from the labour market (see also Wolgast et al., 2018). Hannah said that she had already started looking for jobs, which her classmates had not, as she knew from previous experiences that she will have a harder time finding a job. Although, she saw that her academic degree from Lund University would put her in a better position,

she felt that it might not be enough. The global credit of the university was something that Sade also emphasised as being important of her choice of education. Which she thought came with an added value when applying for jobs, as people will know about it. However, as mentioned earlier, getting a degree might not help as much as needed for Black people (Wolgast et al., 2018). The report Wolgast et al focus on Afroswedes but then there are many Black students who are not Afro-Swedish and for them other issues may arise.

For instance, Sade noticed how even though there have been a few Black students at Lund University, the opportunities to stay after graduating and pursue a better life in terms of academia and outside is quite minimal. This has also been argued by the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise (Svenskt Näringsliv), where they have noted that many master students and doctoral students leave Sweden because of issues with residence permits, lack of connections and opportunities in the labour market (Svenskt Näringsliv, 2021, pp. 7-12).

This further implies that moving from the status of student or doctoral student to the labour market comes with some difficulties. Although Lund University could come with an added value when applying for jobs, it was also mentioned as being something negative. More particularly, the expectation of who is a graduate from Lund University. Miranda pinpoints a few situations, in relation to her research, where she has come into an office or interview (outside of Sweden), and she could instantly see how the person looked at her disappointed.

> [I have] expressed how it can be a bit tiring when you come into an office, and somebody looks disappointed, and you have to kind of work twice as hard to make them talk to you. It can be tiring. At the same time, I have no choice in this sense, and it's always been so. (Miranda)

She identifies this disappointment as having to do with not corresponding with the idea of a person from Lund University. Miranda stated how it urged her to adapt, to try to gain their trust again and show that she is worthy of being talked to. Her experiences illustrate a perpetual position that have placed the participants in way that they do not seem to have the ability to avoid. She elaborates further that this positioning might not just be attributed to her colour identity, but also being a woman and looking young to some people. This also makes it difficult to know how people would perceive and behave towards her as it can vary. Nevertheless, Miranda describes how she always become positioned in the space anyways, both negatively and positively. This positioning however in academia and the labour market could be argued to come with strategies and labour for Black women.

6.4 A Sea of Whiteness

During my conversation with Amara something particularly stuck with me, it was not only because she spoke warmly about the encounter but that it encapsulated an array of emotions regarding Black experience at the university.

> I remember one time; I think it was an exchange student from Nigeria. Me and him saw each other from far far away, and we just walked up to each other and hugged. Then we went our separate directions again. (Amara)

This experience emphasises on the importance of representation and the feeling of being seen. In that moment none of them were lonely even though they still moved through "a sea of whiteness" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 35). Throughout this thesis the participants' experiences have in a way been visualized through the thinking of a sea of Whiteness as they orient themselves at Lund University. A sea of Whiteness let us speak about noticeable and unnoticeable bodies. The participants have discussed how their bodies have been negotiated in the space – oriented towards or away, visible or invisible, subverting or adapting. Resulting in what they felt as labour in academia but also how being a lone representative emphasised this experience. What the participants have described could be further understood through the concept of *slow violence*. Ohito and Brown argues that it is a form of anti-Black violence which acts in the way of an accumulated process of absence and/or erasure of Black thought, practice, and bodies (2021). Following this theoretical line, the participants' experiences of lacking representation in class, campus, and curricula could be argued to be a form of slow violence. As previously mentioned, the "white guy-habitus" premiers certain bodies and several researchers have argued that an institutionalized Whiteness uphold that structure (cf. Ahmed, 2006, 2012, 2021; Osman, 2021; Hübinette et al., 2012). As a result, noted by Ohito and Brown, it has led to less Black people being in academic space (2018). Unfortunately, this has been portrayed and felt by the participants as well, and my own feeling that I had in the classroom 3 years ago, - that "the higher you are, the less diverse it gets" (Zola).

Additionally, Black people who keep being in this space might not get their experiences acknowledged. The institutionalisation of Whiteness could then lead to a normalization and therefore making it harder to recognize these structures. Following the line of slow violence, which is a violence that often manifests gradually as erasure and absence, and because of its "delayed destruction" it might not be perceived as violence (Ohito & Brown, 2021, pp. 139-140). In some of the participants' experiences this was described through representation, as

the lack of it pushed them to behave in certain ways. Hannah and Rebecka dealt with this through adapting, becoming more smiley to not create tension or dressing "professionally" to follow the line of that "White, male, academic". Amara and Sade instead became bolder than before, trying to not let outer impacts affect them which sometimes led to them avoiding certain situations. Either way, the Black women in this thesis were struggling in their orientations in the White Sea as they try to occupy space. The participants have described how they are longing for more representation to maybe walk into "a sea of brownness" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 36). Meanwhile there is a discourse about the dangers of the assumption of "body count" being something transformative. Ahmed writes that she is aware of the risks but still believes that "body count" could be effective. She argues that a woman of colour walking into a sea of brownness might let her become conscious of her previous inhabitance and efforts in predominantly White academic spaces (Ahmed, 2012, p. 36). Right now, however, the participants might encounter a mere pond of brownness for a split second as they see a few Black bodies at campus. Like Amara's experience in the beginning, nevertheless the interaction seems to do something with the participants. Being in situations that entails more Black people, e.g. body count, might energize the participants enough to keep staying in predominately White academic spaces – despite that slow violence operates to delay that feeling of a sea of brownness.

The participants perceived position of being visible and invisible at the same time illustrates a form of ambiguity. They are being part of Lund University but simultaneously they do not perceive to be taken seriously. This ambiguous position could further be understood through liminality. Academia becomes this space partially separated from the rest of the world, as it is inaccessible for many people. Breier et al. rather move away from the traditional concept of liminality, which is usually a temporary and transient space, instead focus on *permanent liminality*. This is characterized by a perpetual in-betweenness and loneliness, which is further described through experiences of people who attained academic positions, without a PhD, in the field of education. It was mentioned that it was more common for marginalised people to be academics without a PhD (2019). According to the participants' Narratives they seem to be somewhat stuck in a similar permanent liminality. They have described a multitude of experiences that have forced them to work harder to become acknowledged, otherwise they feel that they might be perceived as undeserving or be objected to stereotyping about Black people. However, the participants still feel that their presence become noticeable as strangers in the academic space, which may be upheld by structures such as permanent

liminality and slow violence. The academic space may continuously gatekeep Black existences to withhold institutional norms, more particularly academic exceptionalism (see Ahmed, 2021a, pp. 519-523; Ohito & Brown, 2021; Kamali, 2005, pp. 35-36).

Zola reflected upon on the position of White bodies and how she believed that they might have an easier time to be acknowledged and advance at the university:

> I think so, yeah, definitely. Just because they know the system more and they have those support systems which Sweden is always about. Like having networks, yeah, and in order to have those networks. You have to be within a privileged position. (Zola)

This privileged position that Zola brings up, have been described by her and the participants in various ways, like web of past intimacies. More particularly, how they have felt excluded from that position. Osman (2021) also noted how important networks become, and especially for someone marginalised, to better their chances of advancement in academia. Zola's argument encapsulates what has been argued by both Ahmed (2012) and Collins (2000), that Black women become inhabitants of this space of permanent liminality. Where Black women meet challenges and become worn down and gate kept to not advance or stay too long instead be forced to the margins. However, through the testimonies of these six women we have been shown strategies to overcome these forces and maybe that will be one step closer to a university catering for the many instead.

7. Conclusions

In this chapter I will present conclusions from the study, as well as give suggestions on a few aspects that deserve further investigation. The aim of the study was to examine the bodily and emotional experiences of Black women at Lund University, thus exploring the movement of female Black bodies. I attempted to contribute and widen the research field of critical race studies of Lund University and Swedish academy. Furthermore, this study has illustrated several aspects of Black women's lived experiences at Lund University, which have demonstrated structural and social issues that suggest a need for continued work.

7.1 Concluding remarks

Based on the empirical material it appears that the academic rooms at Lund University are oriented towards accumulated lines of Whiteness and maleness. Thus, the main insights have been drawn upon the participant's positioning which have been attributed to be a place outside the academy – more particularly as a stranger in the margins. As Black women, the

participants "naturally" deviate from the academic lines as their proximity to the White male bodies are distanced. Although the Black woman has been positioned as the stranger, she has also been viewed as a threat because of her mere existence subvert from the assumed academic, and this subversiveness could dismantle the Ivory Tower and make the institutionalized Whiteness in the space explicit.

In the academy there are spatiotemporal structures at play that affect Black women that occupy space, for example slow violence that reinforces the annihilation of Black existence in academia (practices, bodies, and thought). Therefore, upholding the image of Lund University as the participants described, White and male (cf. white guy-habitus). This further put emphases on; to talk about Blackness could be argued to talk about Whiteness, and vice versa – as these construction's meanings rely one another. This signifies that this endeavour, transgressing the lines in academia, is a 'shared burden'. Nevertheless, the participants have experienced that this is not the case. Instead, they have created their own strategies to survive in academia, to overcome the structures imposed on their bodies. This has urged them to negotiate constantly, how to adapt, subvert, present themselves and/or change in order to follow the lines in the academic space or rather the contrary as some of the participants did, orient along racialised lines. By being bold and trying to resist the structures that might affect their opportunities in the academic space. This has led to emotional, mental, and physical labour for the participants as their bodies cannot be unnoticeable.

This thesis has explored Black women's geographies through lived experiences of boldness, subversiveness, loneliness, frustration, exhaustion, and Black joy. To move the participants experiences from the margins to the centre of knowledge production and letting their stories be told by them and for them. But also, for others to create a collective awareness of how one space involves an entanglement of contradicting experiences and knowledges, as our bodies orient us differently.

Black women's experiences are not a collective way of experiencing but it entails some levels of the same problematic structures being imposed on their bodies. Previous research has shown that this is not an isolated story at Lund University, rather a social system default which results in Black people being viewed as strangers and threats to the hegemony of that space and temporality. Narratives as a method have let the participants' experiences create a counter-reality of knowledge and challenge the institutionalized understandings. This has

visualized a form of academic fragility that prevails underneath this thick foundation of meritocracy, Swedish exceptionalism, and academic exceptionalism. Concepts that have been argued to maintain the position of the Ivory Tower but also continue to not acknowledge Black experiences and history – as a means to withhold its status of truth-teller (see Andrews, 2018b; Skeggs, 1997; Ahmed, 2012). Therefore, this thesis works to acknowledge these structures lurking in the Swedish academy, to confront the past in the present to hopefully construct another future where academia is not catering for a merely few. As I previously suggested there might be an opportunity to create a *web of future intimacies* to gather scattered Black bodies at the university to easier combat the lack of representation and the slow violence imposed on their bodies. With a web of future intimacies Black existence could get acknowledged, and through pressure making slow violence and Whiteness explicit to further create a more accessible space.

In conclusion, this thesis has tackled a stereotyping single story (see Adichie, 2009) of Black women in academia which has flattened their experiences in this space. From the perspective of applied cultural analysis I have been able to qualitatively show the complexities of Black women's experiences and their shared common bonds, and through that widen the boundaries of academic space.

7.2 Applicability

In Sweden, the subject of Black women's experiences in academia nor critical race studies have barely been given the time, priority, and space to be explored (see Behtoui, 2018; Lövkrona, 2016). Consequently, the research field is limited, and previous research has shown that talking about critical race studies may meet resistance and silence. This illustrates that not only is there a lack of research about this issue in Sweden, but there is also a lack of language to speak about these structures. Focusing on applicability, one purpose of this study was to continue expanding the research and knowledge about Black women's lived experiences. Therefore, this thesis could be seen as a potential springboard and a starting point of how it could be done and what need to be further examined and explored.

Moreover, I would call on further research with several different points of departure, as this thesis has shown that there are multiple ways of engaging with lived experiences. To do this I want to echo the importance of Narratives once again, as it made its own space of theorized

existence for Black women in academia – a counter-reality at Lund University. This approach, especially hearing not only listening (Delgado et al., 2012), is useful to bring forth experiences of marginalised groups. To deeper understand how issues like meritocracy and Swedish exceptionalism are affecting real people's movements in the space. For example, how can we understand the recruitment process through orientation, which bodies do we orient towards, and which do we not, and how does that affect the candidate who gets hired (cf. Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021). Nevertheless, as this thesis has shown, body count is not all but institutions may need to start think *why* we are not appealing to for instance Black women and *how* have spatial and temporal structures impacted that. Body count might be the first step in the right direction and the second must be to facilitate safe spaces for them, in order to enforce academia to be 'paradise'.

I have previously argued that this is not an isolated story for Lund University, institutions which have these similar practices of academic exceptionalism deeply ingrained in the space and bodies need to look inwards. I do think universities in general need to systematically become aware and be critical of how people are being oriented and conditioned in academic space. To not continue (re)producing structures that prevent people from having access, feeling safe and comfortable and thus upholds the absence of non-White bodies.

One crucial applicability of this thesis is that it has tried to create a clearer language to talk about Whiteness and Blackness. To talk about one is to talk about both, as they are symbiotically constructed in our society. If we avoid the discussions or refuse the existence of them, we are only hurting or being ignorant. They have been described as two entities that orient us differently. It is not about dividing but rather to make our position even more explicit. To do so we can more easily understand why we act as we do. This will probably be uncomfortable (see Wolgast & Wolgast, 2021, pp. 102-103) but it is needed for change. Spaces like external relations could use this study to understand how some internationals might feel when they start studying or working at Lund University, and hopefully further understand what they will need to feel safe and acknowledged in Swedish academia.

Conclusively, this thesis tries to acknowledge and amplify Black voices in academia, being vocal about the systemic racism that exist in Swedish academia and therefore shed light on the importance of being represented, being recognized and be freed from the conditions imposed on us.

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8.1 Empirical material

Field notes (19 April). Lecture by Sima & Martin Wolgast at Malmö City Library.

Amara (2022-02-27). Interviewer Elsa Mertala.

Hannah (2022-02-23). Interviewer Elsa Mertala.

Miranda (2022-03-29). Interviewer Elsa Mertala.

Rebecka (2022-02-24). Interviewer Elsa Mertala.

Sade (2022-02-25). Interviewer Elsa Mertala.

Zola (2022-02-23, 2022-05-05). Interviewer Elsa Mertala.

8.2 Notes

[1] In this thesis I have capitalized the word Black to emphasise its cultural and political connotations.

[2] BLM started in 2013 by three Black female organisers as a political movement in response to the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. In 2020 it became a worldwide movement, beyond its initial area, as a collective outcry of injustice and an urge of combating systemic racism in other spaces (Zook, 2021; Harmon et al., 2020)

[3] Blackface is an act of a malicious portrayal of a Black person. The stereotype was introduced in the US after the ending of slavery, as part of minstrel shows were White people painted themselves Black with the purpose of ridicule Black people, consolidate White supremacy and Black inferiority (Sabuni, 2011).

[4] Colour-blindness, in this case, is understood through the colour-blind ideology. The idea of ending discrimination is by treating people as equal as possible without regards to race or culture. The main problem of this ideology is that it ignores the lived experiences of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), which includes issues of racial disparities, violence and trauma (historically and current) and inequities permeated within a society (Jayakumar & Adamian, 2017, pp. 914-919)

[5] Following Amoah's (1997, p. 84) reasoning of capitalizing "Narrative", I too argue for the importance of the word as it become something part of everyday life and communication.

[6] Poverty porn (e.g., development, famine, and stereotype) is the act of exploiting the "poor's" condition to increase support (cf. Adichie, 2009).

[7] The Ivory Tower could be as hooks (1994) states, a creative space of knowledge production, but it could also be seen as an isolated, debilitating, and exclusive space, especially for those "who not only buck the status quo but whose very bodies stand in opposition to the conventional wisdom regarding academia." (White, 2008, pp. 21-22).

[8] That is high levels of stress experienced by stigmatized minority groups as they encounter prejudice and discrimination repeatedly.

[9] Tokenism is a concept which describe a symbolic effort to do a particular thing, for instance by recruiting a few people from underrepresented groups, to give the appearance of an equal organization instead of, for example, working with the organization's culture and structure. (Kanter, 1977).

[10] Both Yas queen and slay are used as a response to appreciate what someone is doing, how they look, or what they say.