Looking into the identity of Korean transnational adoptees in Sweden

– Pivoting on the correlation between microaggression and racialization experience in the daily life

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Not flesh of my flesh,
Nor bone of my bone,
But still miraculously my own.

Never forget for a single minute,
You did not grow under my heart,
But in it.

— Fleur Conkling Heyliger
Abstract

Diplomatic relations between Sweden and South Korea enabled international adoption. It progressed mostly between the 1960s and the 1980s. Concerning the aim for both countries, Sweden needed clear-cut and positive evidence to demonstrate the following social change: From race biology to multiculturalism. South Korea needed the foreign capital for national development. Adoptees were adopted without any appropriate support and deprivation of self-determination, and they had to situate the discrimination and identity problem in Swedish society because of the absence of whiteness. This study is not only unpacking problems of identity for Korean transnational adoptees in Sweden but also deducing meaningful outcomes by looking into their stories through an in-depth interview.
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Abbreviations

CRT: Critical Race Theory
ESWS: Eastern Social Welfare Society
GDP: Gross National Product
MCRC: National Centre for Children's Rights
NCRC: National Center for the Rights of the Child
POC: People of Color
KTA(s): Korean transnational adoptee
KWS: Korean Welfare Service
SD: Sweden Democrats (Sverigesdemokraterna, One of political parties in Sweden)
SIRB: Swedish State Institution for Race Biology
USD: US Dollar
I. Introduction

Research Problem

The background of international adoption in Sweden is needed prior to conducting an in-depth analysis of problems. Wyver (2021a: 86-92) points out the context of transnational adoption as an industry after the deal and fulfilling the fantasy of rich and educated white Swedes that they save children from Korea for several reasons. First, South Korea was the main supplier for Sweden during that period. Second, the Swedish government and the adoption agency since the 1970s were also actively mediated by the legislation of international adoption acts. In other words, Sweden does not necessarily need to adopt transnational children, but its adoption has progressed. The behavior of Swedish society was enough to be regarded as a proviso for creating a new national image and identity: Saving children from a deteriorated livelihood, and it was helpful to not only correspond with the declining trend of domestic adoption but also become a critical clue that Swedish society pursues following the social change: from the biologism (i.e., race biology) perspective to embrace multiculturalism. The background of international adoption was based on its association with the United States of America after the Korean War. However, the second wave (mainly to Nordic countries, including Sweden) of adoption was based on the national aim in both countries, and there was no direct connection between Sweden and South Korea except for aid during wartime, the establishment of agreements, and diplomatic relations.

Furthermore, clear evidence indicates that the Swedish migration policy after World War II was neither regarded as an important issue nor aimed at embracing diversity (Borevi, 2012; 2013). Because, the main reason for the change of migration policy was up to the labor migration inflow rather than accepting the diversified accept of refugees and asylum seekers – those who can recognized as the people is in humanitarian and urgent need. In addition, the pressure to reform the system was more important to settle societal change in Sweden than to consider diversity.

Sweden and South Korea have established diplomatic relations based on the circumstances of the assistance provided pursuant to United Nations Security Council Resolutions No. 83 and No. 84 as humanitarian and military aid for restoring peace on the Korean peninsula. Especially, Sweden was the sole country following the statement of United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 84 as follows: <Table 1> (United Nations Digital Library, N.D.) to dispatch the field hospital amid the war in Busan, the second biggest city in South Korea, in 1951. (Jiwook, 2010: 192-194).
The Korean War roughly destroyed all aspects of human life, including the numerous emergences of post-war issues. One of the post-war issues that urgently needed to be settled was that of mixed-blood children, those who were born to an American father and a Korean mother. Aram (2009: 32-35), one of the prominent scholars who analyze the social ecology and narratives associated with the United States in Korea around the 1950s, states how mixed-blood children became one of the important social issues after the war.

Above all, the presence of the United States of America in South Korea was the most important thing to maintain its sovereignty. Furthermore, during the progression of the war, numerous Korean men mobilized to go to war, and American soldiers in Korea became surrogates for the Korean men. Consequently, they became pseudo-surrogated figures of the Korean fathers, and mixed-blood children appeared. The mixed-blood children were not only the initial groups of international adoption in the contemporary sense in South Korea but were also regarded as others.

Because, Korean society wanted to maintain the homogeneity of its ethnic, social, and cultural identities. In other words, someone must have an attachment in a social and cultural sense to Korea and have biological ties with Koreans. Even though they have biological ties from their mother’s side, they have been regarded as others because their father was an American. The main reason for the legitimization of otherness towards them was the strong patriarchal custom in South Korea.

South Korea had clung to the patriarchal custom until comparatively recently, and the main point of Korean patriarchy was only acknowledged as the condition of family by the marriage between a Korean man and woman.

Hence, their presence must be concealed and treated disgracefully in Korea, and the Korean government also pursued abandoning themselves somewhere rather than embracing or furnishing countermeasures against the problem of mixed-blood children in Korea (Aram, 2009: 35). Korean patriarchal custom functioned not only as a deprivation of rights to foster the children by...
Korean biological mothers, because they were powerless and society did not treat them equally as Korean men but also as a justification to transfer the mixed-blood children to their father’s country. Unfortunately, the United States of America adhered to the unwelcoming manner of emigration from the Asian country. However, the Korean government wanted to handle this problem through negotiations with the United States of America because the United States of America was one of the countries that got a huge proportion of the Korean War. As a result of negotiations between these two countries, the American government instigated partial reform of the American Refugee Relief Act in 1953 after the ceasefire in Korea, and the mixed-blood Korean children were transferred to the United States of America as legally orphans. It was an exceptional action for the American government because the restriction on Asian emigration in the United States of America was abolished in 1965 by a reform of the American Immigration Act. The transfer of Korean mixed-blood children proceeded following Section 5(b) of the American Refugee Relief Act, as follows: <Table 2> (The United States of American Government, 1953).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sec. 5 (b) When used in this Act the term “eligible orphan” shall mean an alien child,</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>(1) who is an orphan because of the death or disappearance of both parents, or because of abandonment or desertion by, or separation or loss from, both parents, or who has only one parent due to the death or disappearance of, abandonment or desertion by, or separation or loss from the other parent and the remaining parent is incapable of providing care for such orphan and has in writing irrevocably released him for emigration and adoption;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) (a) who has been lawfully adopted abroad by a United States citizen and spouse, or (b) for whom assurances, satisfactory to the consular officer to whom a visa application on behalf of the orphan is made, have been given by a United States citizen and spouse that if the orphan is admitted into the United States, they will adopt him in the United States and will care for him properly, and;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) who is ineligible for admission into the United States solely because the non-preference portion of the quota to which he would otherwise be chargeable is oversubscribed by applicants registered on the consular waiting list at the time his visa application is made: Provided, That no natural parent of any eligible orphan who shall be admitted into the United States pursuant to this Act shall thereafter, by virtue of such parentage, be accorded any right, privilege, or status under the Immigration and Nationality Act.</td>
</tr>
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- 6 -
In total, one hundred twelve thousand seventeen Korean children were adopted into the United States of America following the act between 1959 and 2015 (National Center for the Rights of the Child, 2016). Especially, between 1959 and 1969, Six thousand two Korean children were adopted into the United States of America, a number estimated at least two kids per month for ten years. Therefore, the initial formation of international adoption from Korea arose from suspicion as an industry and the violation of human rights. South Korea was already seized by worldwide criticism about international adoption, such as the abduction of children, illegal intermediaries’ mediation of adoption, and so on (Dong A Ilbo, 1977; Rothschild, 1988).

Korean society swept away the shock of the case of a border broker who founded a paper company in Okinawa, Japan. The broker illegally adopted one hundred forty Korean children to American soldiers in Okinawa. Even the international embarrassment caused by the BBC report in April 1976 has not completely diminished, which makes this situation devastating to Korea. In April 1976, the BBC reported that the children abandoned in South Korea had been found safely in luxury apartments in Brussels or Boston for two months after their abduction. In addition, in European countries, Korean adopted children died in the process of falling from the second floor of the building when they were crying and were found in the waiting room of the mother of the children. The incident has provoked sympathy around the world. Even North Korea uses the case as an excuse for propaganda. (Dong A Ilbo, 1977)

The Korean government closely regulates adoption agencies. Indeed, they are quasi-governmental institutions. The government approves their budgets, scrutinizes each adoption application, sets informal quotas on the number of children to be adopted through each agency, and helps select the heads of the three largest agencies. Foreign adoptions serve many purposes for the government. First, they bring in needed hard currency—roughly fifteen to twenty million dollar a year. Second, they relieve the government of the costs of caring for the children, which could be a drain on the budget. Third, they help with population control, an obsession of the Korean government. And finally, they solve a difficult social problem: what to do with orphans and abandoned children? (Rothschild, 1988)

Nonetheless, international adoption to a third country from South Korea was not suspended or absent from consideration of improvement. Without the improvement of problems in South Korea, massive scales of adoption from South Korea to the Nordic countries progressed as a second wave of international adoption, and it mainly progressed between the late 1960s and the 1980s, and the motivation for international adoption in Nordic countries was not really different from the American adoption context.

Of course, the Korean government had already furnished the measures. President Jung-Hee Park implemented the Special Act for the Adoption of Orphans in 1961, and he revised the act in 1967 for
easier facilitation of international adoption. One of the Korean scholars, Sora (2016: 51-52) examined in detail by comparison the act of 1967 and the 2012 act concerning adoption. She pointed out that the act in 1967 functioned to activate adoption on an industry scale. Because, according to the Act of 1967, the Korean government mandated international organizations as proxies of the government, and the international organizations led international adoption without monitoring from the government and other organizations, there were fatal problems because of the absence of transparency and authority. From allusions to child abduction, inauthentic adoption papers, and many other problems associated with an individual adoption case.

A Korean journalist, Ki-Hye (2017), also revealed the uncomfortable truth of international adoption between the-1960s and the-1980s in Korea, and she also mentioned that the Korean government pursued international adoption to gain foreign capital to use for national economic development. The mean cost of international adoption was One hundred thirty USD, while the GDP of South Korea in 1965 was one hundred six USD. Additionally, some of the representative social welfare foundations in Korea actively led international adoption from Korea to other countries, such as KWS (since 1964), ESWS (since 1972), and so on.

There were numerous instances, such as allusions to abduction, and concerns over the authenticity of written documents were commonly raised. One of the representative newspapers in Korea, Dong A Ilbo (1975) pointed out the seriousness of problems.

Tak-un, a five-year-old boy, knew that he had been adopted to Sweden after eight months of being missing. He went along with his father to his father’s workplace, which is located in Sung-dang Dong, Seo-gu, Daegu Metropolitan City. He disappeared during the absence of his father because of his work. His parents visited all orphanages, local police offices, and every place in their town that he could go. In the meantime, his parents heard from their neighbor that they saw him in the Sung Dang-dong police office, and they visited the police office many times to ask to find him. But the local police office delayed the investigation into his disappearance by making an excuse. Finally, parents sent the petition to the provincial police office. The situation room accepted the information on his missing date that the local police protect a boy who wears a white shirt, blue rubber shoes, and a flat-top hairstyle. However, there was no further investigation into his missing case, and his parents filed the petition again with the local prosecutor's office. The prosecutor's office did a detailed investigation and informed his parents that he had been adopted to Sweden after eight months of being missing. According to the investigation, the Social Welfare Society intermediated the adoption, and information about his origin and his parents was written as ‘unknown’, even though his name was also written differently as "Jung Hoe, Baek”.

In this context, international adoption to Sweden had been actively progressing from Korea for a long time. Furthermore, there were clear limitations and problems in the Swedish context concerning the
adoption.

When international adoption was activated in Sweden, Swedish society was in the middle of social narrative changes, from racial biology to embracing multiculturalism. Therefore, Swedish society needed clear evidence that social change is positively progressing and promoting respect for diversity. International adoption was utilized for the national aim of Sweden for this reason, and it enabled the national image of Sweden. Yngvesson (2012: 332) states that the national image was effectively establishing the grounds for the acceptance of international adoption.

Sweden’s significance in the field of international adoption is also related to its explicit commitment to adoption as a way of building a multicultural nation. The founders of international adoption in late-1960s Sweden argued that Sweden was “a well-prepared soil for the idea of intercountry to grow,” because of its egalitarian ethos, the absence of racism, the fact that Sweden has “no colonial history,” and the prevalence of an ideology that valued nurture over nature.

According to this statement, Swedish society was seemingly prepared the social welfare system and economic abundance to promote diversity in Sweden. However, the practical situation in Sweden was different. Wickström (2015: 57-58) mentions that the main reason for social change in Sweden was the inflow of immigrants rather than national preparation. After World War II, the emigration of many people from various countries became more frequent, and the demographic changes were the most significant factor in the social narrative changes in Sweden.

To sum up, Sweden actively encouraged international adoption as a means of aligning with its national identity establishment and contributing to social change. However, prevailing social cognition in terms of adoptees or adoption in Sweden did not embrace diversity and multiculturalism. Rather than that, international adoption was utilized for the national aim and as a concrete piece of evidence of the social transition in Sweden.

For this reason, KTA(s) have to confront various kinds of aggression and racist events in their daily lives, and these daily experiences made them question their identity and triggered the problem of identity. According to the National Center for the Rights of the Child (2016), at least ten thousand Korean children were adopted into Sweden. However, the research about their problem has not been addressed or activated as well, even though the transnational adoptees are attracting considerable interest due to their significance and scale in Swedish society. Thus, finding the problems and triggering the process of problems by looking into their story is important.

Research Aim and Questions

This study focused on exploring and explaining the relationship between racialization,
microaggression, and identity of KTA(s) by examining their daily experiences. KTA(s) identity shows stepwise changes throughout their lives. Initially, their identity was regarded as Swedish. They acculturated themselves by having learned about the Swedish system and culture, using their given Swedish name, but there was no connection with South Korea. However, during their upbringing, they had to confront aggression and racist remarks or events. Sorts to this experience have emerged continuously and repeatedly in their daily lives. It triggers the development of doubt or crisis regarding its identity. However, as Bourabain and Verhergue (2021: 221) refer to, aggression and racist remarks tend to be nuanced, indirect, and even passive. Therefore, it must be examined through the study, such as finding connections and implications. Additionally, including their Swedish adoptive families, they did not provide an appropriate explanation, taking into account the amount of time. This doubt can be raised as a question of their origin, and they want to know about it. One of the follow-up measures for them is asking about it to their adoptive parents, but they are mostly unable to give an answer for themselves. This is one of the biggest reasons why their identities are problematized.

Another reason for triggering doubt or crisis is the phenotypical image of Asians from Swedish society. The phenotypical image of Asians from Sweden has more brown or dark hair and eyes. This visible difference by phenotypical image rendered to regard Asians as others or one of the minorities in Swedish society rather than trying to understand their livelihood or context. This logic legitimizes the commit of aggression and racist remarks.

For these two reasons, they undermined their identities. Typically, it is changed from recognizing themselves as Swedish to non-Swedish or the presence of 'in the middle of somewhere' with voidness. To consider the context of adoptees’ livelihood, some questions are raised as follows, which will be answered throughout this study.

1. How do they identify themselves, between Swedish and Korean?
2. How are these experiences portrayed in daily life?
3. What kind of experience situates them to be doubted or under crisis?
4. How does aggression or racialization affect identity?
5. How do they recognize themselves after experiencing the experience?

Disposition of Thesis

This thesis is organized into nine sections. Section I (Introduction) provides a brief overview of the context of adoption as a research problem, research aim, and questions. Section II (Literature Review) presents how previous research dealt with the key points and framework of this study. There are three
subsections: understanding the context of adoption, whiteness, identity, and the knowledge gap. All detailed substances regarding the Methodology and Ethical issues are described in Section III (Methodology). The Fourth Section presents the theoretical framework of this study (IV: Theoretical Framework). The Next section (V: Analysis) begins by analyzing the findings of the seven interviews. The discussion points regarding this topic are provided in Section VI. The conclusion of this study is drawn in the seventh section (VII. Conclusion). The eighth section is the Appendix, in which the section describes the materials used for conducting in-depth interviews: a consent form, an information sheet, and an interview guide. Last section of this thesis is the list of references.
II. Literature Review

Understanding the context of adoption

There is a considerable amount of literature on the field of international adoption about Korean transnational adoptees, these have argued that the pull and push mechanism concerning adoption. One critical reason was the national interest when the adoption was progressing, and one another was the demographic context (Saunders, 2007; Selman, 2002). However, it is very little known about the adoptee’s identity and the most initial literatures only focused on one-side: such as focusing more either national interest or demographic context, even absent the one of aspects.

Swedish context was based on the intersection of national context and its interest. As aforementioned, Sweden was needed to change the social ecology because the massive inflow of emigration, and the social narrative of Sweden pursue to embrace multinationalism from the biologism perspective. Despite, there were no clear-cut evidence to demonstrate and the adoption was actively progressed for this reason. Yngvesson (2010: 55) argues that how Swedish society was not prepared well at that moment. Before and after the World War II, there were significant emigrations to Sweden including the Finnish, but Swedish society regarding as need to be acculturated Swedish value systems, and naming them as “Non-Nordic Children”. Kjellman (2014: 581-582) also pointed out how Racial biology standpoint gained the power and permeated to society. the strategy from SIRB was critical to prolonging this perspective, and it was mostly based on the utilization of photos and media resources. In particular, photograph carried out the role to categorize the groups of people through the lens of biological features (i.e., Race).

Although the Racial biology perspective became diluted and there were significant changes led by the scholars (Törngren, 2015: 130), still the biological features’ difference has been one of the constitutions to trigger the racism and other bunch of problems, because it has restructured as a social meaning. Of course, Swedish society has introduced the integration policy since 1975 to mitigate the problems in Sweden (Törngren, 2015: 127), but it was not appropriate to combat the problem for the transnational adoptees, because of the reconstruction of biological features in terms of social aspects in Sweden.

Concerning the reason of adoption from Sweden, most scholars pointing out for two reasons. On the one hand, it was based on the humanitarian action. Hübinette (2003: 254) illustrated that the humanitarian perspective was the one of the critical motivations. Hübinette (2019) unveils by the
further description, and points out that there were two main reasons: On the one hand, it was encouraged to mitigate the prevailing racial discrimination by accepting the diversity. On the other hand, Sweden was in need the provision of clear evidence to demonstrate following social change.


This statement was made by Margareta Blomquvist in 1969; she was one of the important persons in terms of international adoption in Sweden because she was the one of founders of Adoptions centrum. She referred term directly associate the specific race: Din lille svartig (Your little blacks) and Kinesen (The Chinese). These two words are typical racial discriminative terms, but she mentioned these two terms to argue her standpoint: Adoption can mitigate the prevailing racial discrimination in Sweden. However, this statement cannot be persuasive clues that the Swedish society was prepared to fully dealt with the concerning issues. One of the studies conducted by Bergquist et al. (2003: 49) indicates about the reason for adoption in practical sense, the main reason of adoption was up to relative fast process and curiosity about exoticness than embracing the children’s welfare.

In terms of Korean context, both national interest and social custom were triggered as pull factor for international adoption in Sweden. One of the prominent Korean scholars in migration studies field, In-Jin (2012: 415) argued that the prominent features of emigration flow between the late 1960s and the-1980s as for the export its citizens to promote the national development. Because, during this period, there are bunch of evidences of Korean citizens’ exportation in the world except international adoption. However, as Donghoon (2007: 27) states, Korean society has adhered to unclear or ambiguous perspectives towards the mixed-blooded people or other minorities that emerged in the sociohistorical context in South Korea. Despite the abolition of denial policies to grant ethnicity for themselves by the influence of globalization and democratization, still relevant Acts in Korea (especially, the Act on the Immigration and Legal Status of Overseas Koreans) prerequisites the condition of Overseas Koreans based on the blood ties with Korean.

Social custom that based on the strong patriarchy and developed racism throughout the modernization
in South Korea also triggered the adoption, because the various form of families and activated nationwide discussion about the criterion for fostering children and womanhood rendered noteworthy social changes, but the patriarchy custom was not accord with social changes in South Korea. In the case of Racism, Donghoon (2007: 22-26) pointed out the viewpoint towards the Western world since the enlightenment period in the East Asian region rendered the cult for the advanced society of Western countries, and trends of following the Western values dominated in Korea. As a resistance strategy in Korea from this perspective pursued the national solidarity based on ethnic purity by adhering the homogeneity and structured the hierarchal ethnicities towards others in South Korea. This social strategy is not only to be a strong basis for the legitimization of racism in Korea but also for the rejection of otherness strictly. Under this context, the emergence of mixed-blood children after the Korean War can be connected to the pursuit of the prototype of transnational adoption, and the pursuit of homogeneity strengthened as time went by for the national development, adoptees were abandoned for this reason. The adoption of Nordic countries including Sweden since the 1960s was developed as an industry scale by the institutionalization in Korean society rooted in the combination of both nationalism and the patriarchy system in South Korea (Jaemin, 2016: 292).

Won (2004) conducted the study about womanhood, and how the life of Yeogong (Factory girl in Korean) during the development period in South Korea became the root of numerous social problems. He (2004: 6-9) highlights the social viewpoints of womanhood and factory girls in Korea as “Precarious presence”, because they were migrated to urban area for not only maintaining their life but also their families’ lives, and mostly not fully educated than on average educational level in South Korea. Meanwhile, there were no supportive policies for them, and basic human rights were deprived because the political regime was military autocracy at that moment. Hence, as he additionally points out (2004: 10-11), They regarded as a presence for the exploitation to pursue the national development, have womanhood but needed to be regulated by their supervisor, norms in their workplace, or the Acts. Therefore, the various form of families; such as de facto marriage (actually married but not registered in the public service center) and single mothers emerged since the late 1960s.

Meanwhile, Korean society-initiated discussions over the wellbeing of children and the optimal conditions for the children care. Due to this rationale, the societal perception of factory workers who are also single mothers has traditionally not been seen as a suitable circumstance for nurturing their offspring. Korean feminist researchers, exemplified by Hee-Jung (2015: 85-87) and Seong-Yeong
This phrase refers to the prevailing societal expectation that a family should comprise a married heterosexual couple and their unmarried offspring. The significant prevalence of overseas adoption in Korean society can be attributed to the convergence of historical factors and social transformations. Single moms in South Korea are often compelled to make the difficult decision to place their children for international adoption in order to secure a better future for them. Unfortunately, these children face societal stigmatization inside Korean society, irrespective of their own agency and self-determination.

**Whiteness**

Whiteness⁵ (Noun): The fact or state of belonging to a population group that has light pigmentation of the skin; the fact or state of being white. (Marriam-Webster Dictionary (a), N. D.)

Whiteness is not only meaning that one of the skin colors, but also attributed to the criterion of scale for one’s sovereignty and human rights in society. Because, whiteness functions as one of the predominant norms (as unwritten rules or customs) and even sorts out who is the appropriate or not to enjoy the rights and so on.

To consider the influence of Whiteness for this study, it might be identified as a significant variable. Because, Swedish society has maintained the biological perspective (based on the whiteness) for a long time, and it has already reconstructed as a social factor to trigger the segregation and discrimination in contemporary sense (Törngren, 2019: 140), even though there is no more power of biologism perspective in Sweden. The whiteness is not only implying that the acculturation of Swedish value system but also to identify KTA(s) as different presences and never be a Swedish, even though they were already members of their Swedish adoptive families and rooted their life in Sweden.

Lind (2012: 91-93) argues that it is evident that Swedish adoptive families have a strong inclination towards assimilating their adoptive children into Swedish culture, encouraging them to acquire a Swedish identity similar to their own. The adoptive parents have predominantly shown a tendency to encourage their adoptees to speak in Swedish, urging them to identify themselves as Swedish without providing clear explanations or allowing sufficient time for comprehension.

Furthermore, in the case of the majority of Swedish adoptive families, the notion of treating all family
members equally, regardless of their skin color or other physical attributes, may be interpreted as a form of "colorblindness." However, this perspective does not necessarily entail acknowledging and understanding the inherent differences among family members, which can make it challenging to address additional issues stemming from racism and other experiences encountered during their upbringing. Hence, regardless of the extent to which colorblindness may effectively function as a mechanism for combating racism within Swedish society, it is imperative for adoptees to acknowledge their distinctiveness and recognize that they differ from their familial counterparts.

The significance of attending school, engaging in social interactions, and participating in socio-economic activities in Sweden is more apparent. It is imperative to acknowledge that individuals who possess visual differences are distinct from others, hence rendering them more prominently visible. Consequently, they become susceptible to racial hostility and racist incidents, as Gustaffsson aptly highlights (2021: 316).

Despite evident pressure and requests from their adopted family to assimilate, the individuals initially identified themselves as Swedish. Their achievements and sense of belonging were primarily linked to their association with Swedish society. Consequently, the individual's ethnic identity is classified as Swedish (white), whereas their racial identity is classified as Asian due to inherent biological distinctions.

Additionally, whiteness plays a significant role in the emergence of racialization and microaggression. Both things emerge by producing or reproducing the racial biases and prejudices in a specific group of people or individuals because the target of this phenomenon is generally not white, as the perpetuator is. It is performed repetitively and ordinarily in their daily lives, and the additional problems triggered by this phenomenon.

Lind (2011: 118) made reference to the Swedish societal system in terms of the adoptee’s problem. She claims that the first wave of adoption in Sweden was mainly adopted between the 1960s and the 1970s, and she paid attention to why the adoptees’ voices were raising. As the reason for this affair, she points out that it was based on a lack of support and efforts about their problems and the biologism. In other words, the social system and the Swedish adoption organizations were actively involved in their adoption case, but there was no relevant support for themselves during their upbringing. She additionally referred to the most powerful reason as the legislative structure in Sweden, because the legal code was based on an American perspective in terms of adoption, which was emphasized in favor of racial belonging. These trajectories in Sweden are one of the immutable but significant reasons why the racism problem in Sweden associated with the minorities’ identity still connects to the framework of biology and needs in-depth research or discussion about this topic.
Identity

The complex interplay between social narratives and the lived experiences of individuals in their everyday lives shaped the framework of identity. Lemart (2019) provided an account of the evolution of the identity framework within the field of social science. The author highlights that before the 17th century, the concept of identity mostly revolved around an individual's connection to a deity or their religious affiliation. However, over time, this framework has evolved to encompass a broader understanding of identity, which now includes factors such as gender, nationality, social class, and other forms of interaction.

Hence, in light of the current understanding of the framework of identity, one may pose the following inquiry: "To what extent do individuals within the knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs (KTA) paradigm identify themselves, and how is this identification shaped or influenced by their lived experiences and environmental context?"

Regarding the initial question, prior scholarly investigations have delineated two separate methodologies for comprehending the formation of identity: Mellanförskap, also known as "in-betweenness" in the Swedish context, and the acquisition of Swedish identity. One potential result of the absence of emotional connection and personal engagement in Korean society is the limited development of Korean identity. Moreover, the predominant share of their social and economic achievements was concentrated within Swedish society.

The exclusive chance to immediately obtain a Korean identity presents itself when individuals travel to Korea in search of their ancestral roots. The events encountered in Korea subsequently exerted a secondary influence on their sense of identity. However, this does not imply that they can possess a strong sense of Koreanness and Korean identity.

Prior to the use of the word "Mellanförskap," Tobias Hübnette developed a conceptual framework to describe the formation of one's identity within a third-place context. The author emphasizes the dearth of research on the issue of transnational adoptees within the field of diaspora and migration studies (2004: 16). Furthermore, the author acknowledges that the movement of transnational adoptees in Sweden and the Nordic countries has only recently come to light, but their presence and the related issues they face have not been adequately addressed or given sufficient attention. This is despite the fact that the adoption context is primarily characterized by a profound detachment from one's place of origin, often resulting from traumatic experiences such as abduction and forced separation, which are influenced by prevailing social norms in Korea (2004: 21-22).

In the subsequent year, the Swedish academic community introduced the term "mellanförskap" to describe the situation of transnational adoptees and individuals with similar backgrounds who are
living in Sweden. Arbouz (2012: 37) defines the term "mellanförskap".

År 2005 bildades i Sverige Mellanförskap, en politiskt och religiöst obunden förening med syfte att skapa debatt kring frågor som rör blandade identiteter och olika former av gränsöverskridande hos grupperna blandade, adopterade och andra generation i vilka alla har det gemensamt att de är födda alternativt uppvuxna i Sverige.

In relation to the second question, it has been noted that a predominant focus in transnational adoption cases in Sweden, specifically those involving children from South Korea, is placed on facilitating the assimilation process rather than ensuring sufficient avenues for understanding and reconciling the dual identities of being both Korean and Swedish. The normalization of whiteness within Swedish society serves to legitimize the existing framework, which is reinforced through processes of racialization and microaggressions.

The Swedish adoptive family and those considered their kin have significantly influenced and shaped their lives. The growing significance of this phenomenon raises questions about the construction and interpretation of KTA(s) identity. The process of racialization among adoptive families often involves an emphasis on Swedish cultural norms, including the use of the Swedish language and the adoption of Swedish names. This approach tends to discourage inquiries regarding the adoptee's origins or identity.

The development of individuals is facilitated through a systematic structure, which is further reinforced through exposure to similar experiences within educational institutions, interactions with peers, and engagement in public areas.

Tigervall and Hübinte (2010) conducted a study that investigated the influence of the social and cultural environment, as well as the effects of racialization, on individuals of Korean Transnational Adoptee (KTA) background residing in Sweden. Adoptees frequently experience instances of hostile remarks, such as microaggressions and other forms of aggression, as well as encounters with racism in various aspects of their everyday lives. These experiences significantly impact their perspective of themselves, as they are consistently made to feel different from others. The consequences of racialization and microaggression are evident in the perception of individuals as lacking legitimacy within Swedish society. These instances of microaggression contribute to the evaluation of people based on racial biases and stereotypes.

The prevalence of racist encounters in Sweden mostly arises from cultural elements impacted by the country's geographical environment, specifically the idea of Sweden as a nation designed for the Swedish populace. Pred (2000: 241-242) is a compelling illustration of how the process of
racialization has resulted in discriminatory practices against those who are not fully recognized as Swedish.

“Danne,” a young man who arrived Sweden as an adopted infant from Korea, is sitting at a Stockholm bar, drinking beer with two white Swedish friends. A man suddenly approaches and asks: “Where are you from?” Without hesitation he answers: “Sweden.” His interrogative stares at him with threatening eyes and then screams for all to hear: “Have you ever looked at yourself in the mirror?” Everybody within earshot breaks out laughing. Including his friends.

This statement highlights the significant impact of the racist experience on people who are perceived as members of minority or marginalized groups. A person of Caucasian descent approached him and acted aggressively, seemingly motivated by their perception of apparent differences. As stated in this assertion, he originated from Korea while self-identifying as Swedish. Despite exhibiting aggressive behavior, there was a lack of recognition of the racialization he underwent as a result of a racist encounter. This statement posited that the presumed criteria for being considered Swedish in Sweden are linked to attributes commonly associated with whiteness, such as possessing fair skin and blond hair.

Sweden demonstrates a degree of ambivalence in its approach to the concept of multiculturalism. Sweden portrays itself as a nation that prioritizes inclusivity and actively embraces diversity, as seen by its open and accommodating approach to integrating individuals from many origins. Its unequivocal affirmation of the importance of embracing diversity serves as an example of this. Contrarily, it is commonly thought that social emotion necessitates individuals to possess attributes linked to Swedishness, namely Swedish whiteness, which encompasses fluency in the Swedish language and an understanding of Swedish cultural standards.

Wyver (2020) conducted an investigation of the Swedish approach to diversity, with a specific emphasis on the frameworks of duplicated image and strategy employed by Sweden. The individual used an example of the phrase "IKEA" to illustrate a positive concept while using "SD" as an illustration of a negative concept. He referred to the term IKEA (2020: 903); the company is recognized for its attributes of simplicity, practicality, and universality. The concept revolves around the utilization of flat-packed furniture, enabling the provision of household furnishings irrespective of individuals' economic and social circumstances. The alignment of IKEA’s image with the values outlined by its Swedish founders throughout the development of international acceptance in the late 1960s is a significant factor.

Furthermore, the author highlights the case of SD (2020: 911) as a contrasting instance, as it aims to exercise authority over individuals from diverse ethnic origins and foster greater cohesion among
Swedes by exerting control over these individuals. In Sweden, social ecology frequently advocates for the assimilation of migrants and other individuals into Swedish cultural norms and values. Swedish society places significant emphasis on the promotion of Swedish integration, which revolves around cultivating a collective spirit and establishing a shared Swedish identity throughout the nation. Within this specific setting, individuals who have been adopted are also striving to recognize and cultivate their coping strategies. One potential method that individuals may utilize is the act of emulating whiteness in order to align themselves with the dominant cultural norms and practices. In their investigation, Wyver (2021b: 397-398) references Bhabha's conceptual framework of imitation to discuss the coping technique utilized by the individuals in question. These two components can be identified as the key determinants of this coping approach. On the one hand, the majority of individuals in the immediate vicinity of an individual KTA mainly exhibit traditional phenotypic characteristics associated with whiteness, including features such as blonde hair and blue eyes. Furthermore, the author investigates the usage of the Swedish language, the methods of sustenance within the social framework of Sweden, and the overt manifestations of Swedish racial identity. The importance of Swedish whiteness in maintaining Swedish society should not be underestimated.

In contrast, while considering the social narrative, it is important to acknowledge that KTA(s) exhibit discernible variations and may experience situations where their immediate surroundings unintentionally contribute to hostile aggression or racist incidents, irrespective of the underlying intentions behind such conduct. The activity is executed in a recurrent fashion and is commonly witnessed. Consequently, racial biases and preconceived notions not only establish the basis for perpetuating racism but also play a role in shaping an individual's sense of self. This issue presents significant challenges due to the various encounters individuals face in their everyday lives, which frequently involve inquiries about their identity or being subjected to harsh statements, behaviors, or instances of racism that serve to define them by others.

The daily life experiences of adoptees have prompted a desire to establish a sense of resemblance with others, leading them to engage in self-reflection over their racial identity. The individual poses introspective inquiries, such as "What is my personal identity?" and "Do I align myself with a white or Korean identity?" Throughout this process, individuals may opt to disassociate themselves from their Asian (or non-white) identity or attributes as a result of their limited acceptability within Swedish culture. Based on the contextual features, it may be deduced that the individual in question lacks Swedish whiteness and does not have immigrant status.

Nevertheless, even with the possibility of individuals forsaking their original or alternative identities that Swedish society may not readily embrace, they may still be classified as immigrants based on
their discernible characteristics.

**Knowledge gap**

Previous works has failed to address how identity and other factors; such as experience of daily lives and whiteness can be correlated each other and trigger the problems for KTA(s). Additionally, there are problem of representative because of the methodological issues of most studies. Of course, Previous works has effectively examined and addressed pertinent matters pertaining to individuals’ identities or other related subjects. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that there are distinct constraints concurrently. Firstly, it is important to note that there is a dearth of sufficient empirical evidence accessible to substantiate the assertions pertaining to the stated issues. The majority of previous studies have been completed comprehensively, employing qualitative techniques. Both qualitative and in-depth research methodologies possess the ability to capture significant implications and meanings, among other facets. However, it is crucial to recognize that a prevalent limitation in several research investigations is the employment of limited sample sizes, which might potentially hinder the applicability of the results despite their statistical significance. Further investigation should be conducted in relation to this subject, with the utilization of a variety of study approaches to augment the breadth of understanding and insight into the difficulties encountered by individuals who have been adopted.

Another limitation of the study on this topic is the requirement for a more precise articulation of the correlation between adoptees and other present-day migrants, including Syrian refugees, within the Swedish environment.
III. Methodology

Interview planning
In-depth interviews were adopted as the main method in this study to identify the identity problem of the KTA (s). The purpose of this study is to find the correlation between identity, racialization, and microaggression experiences by looking into their life stories and having interviews with adoptees. Because, the interviews enable to understand their problems and suggest discussion points to this topic. Not only natural progression of interview but also securing data for conducting analysis, questionnaire was needed.

However, there were several challenges in conducting the in-depth interviews. In the beginning, the substances of questions became the main challenge. Because, before as the researcher, my ethnic background is Korean and this background functioned as challenges to progress the interview of this study and it was based on Korean custom. The condition of being acknowledged as a citizen in Korean society presumes blood ties with attachment to Korean society. Thus, terms and detailed information for individual interviews had to be chosen cautiously.

Hence, the questionnaire’s substance decided as semi-structured and open-ended questions. The questions include shedding on the various aspects for their life. “The surrounding” was the core framework of the interview, but it narrowed down following the questions. such as; Swedish adoptive family, School and Friends, Social and Economic activities, Origin. Their Swedish adoptive family is the fundamental subject in terms of racialization and microaggression, and it has been viable and developed during their school period by encountering the racialized remarks and events. Social and economic activities included for the question, because of the investigation of validity regarding Colorblindness. Lastly, Origin is one of the problematic but the root of this problem. Because, implication and behavior towards the origin triggered the moral crisis and other problems that influences their identity.

Sampling and Gathering the Data
After the planning of the questionnaire and interview, contact with the organizations and networks was conducted as a way of sampling and gathering the data. There are many organizations involved in international adoption in both Sweden and South Korea. However, this study focused more on the identity problem for those who live in Sweden as transnational adoptees, so Swedish organizations are mostly in contact with the interviewees: SKANadoption, Adoptionscentrum, and the Naver cafe (Biggest online community between the Korean and Swedish in the Korean portal site). I posted a
brief explanation of this study (aim, procedure, etc.) to gather the interviewees for this study. All posts were only notified of basic information for this study, without any sensitive information, and requested indirect (one by one and via mail) communication to progress the interview. First, stratified sampling was used. The problems and stories of transnational adoptees were too broad, and most Swedish adoption cases were between the 1960s and the 1980s. Thus, age (the person who was born in Korea between the 1960s and the 1980s, and adopted Sweden when they were young) was selected as the main criterion. Only a few interviewees were gathered using this procedure. Therefore, the snowballing method was adopted to secure the number of interviewees. The snowballing method was requested by the interviewees, who gathered from the first step and requested to introduce other adoptees surrounding themselves. <Table 3> present the details of interviewees for this study, and totally seven interviews were settled.

<Table 3> Basic information of interviewees for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Adopted year in Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ulrika</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frederik</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Astrid</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophie</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helena</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview with Frederik was the exception, because the Korean government was not signed the Hague Convention before 2013 and the problem of international adoption in Korea was prevailed until the mid-2000s. To examine the change in Korean society according to chronological change, Interview with Frederik has a prominent value for this study.

**Interview Process**

After successfully recruiting an appropriate number of participants, the consent form and information sheet were distributed to individual interviewees to facilitate the interview process. These document contain comprehensive information on the study, serving the dual purpose of enhancing understanding and providing essential details. These were included as an appendix in the study documentation. All the documents were written with careful consideration of ethical concerns.
Each interview was conducted following the receipt of a consent form from the interviewees. Both
the interviewee and I expressed a desire to conduct the interview in a one-on-one format, but we
encountered a distinct constraint.
This was due to the disparity in the interviewees’ places of residence. Additionally, there is a distinct
separation and obstacles pertaining to the arrangement of time. Consequently, the majority of
interviews were conducted through online zoom meetings.
The interview guide was designed to facilitate a seamless interview process and elicit pertinent
findings for this study. The interview guide consisted primarily of questions pertaining to various
aspects. For instance, it includes inquiries about the participants' perceptions of their Swedish
adoptive parents, any noteworthy experiences or memories involving them, and similar questions
regarding their interactions with peers, engagement in social and economic activities, and experiences
in school.

Analytical Framework
This study employs thematic analysis as the main analytical framework, with Braun and Clarke
(2022) as the precursor. Their life story is varied, and it is not easily categorization and generalization
under a specific term. Therefore, thematic analysis has become the main framework for analysis.
<Figure 1> demonstrates how thematic analysis proceeds in a specific study.

<Figure 1> The procedure of thematic analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Familiarizing the dataset</th>
<th>Developing deep, intimate, and knowledgeable dataset (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 87)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coding the data</td>
<td>Involves reading each data item closely, and tagging all segment of the text (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initializing the theme</td>
<td>Captures the patterning of meaning across the dataset and capture a wide range of data that are united by (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 121)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engagement with (1) all the coded data extracts; (2) the entire dataset. The purpose is to review for the better engagement and secure the viability (Braun and Clarke, 2022: 144)

This study employs thematic analysis as the main analytical framework, with Braun and Clarke (2022) as the precursor. Their life stories vary, and it is not easy to categorize and generalize under a specific term. Therefore, thematic analysis has become the main framework for analysis. Figure 1 demonstrates how thematic analysis proceeds in a specific study.

The analysis of this study follows this framework by sorting out the stories and experiences based on the categories (adoptive family, School/Friends, Social and Economic activities, and origin). Subsequently, we explored experiences in each category related to racialization and microaggression. Therefore, the dataset was coded using two codes: racialization and microaggression. The categories included the datasets for each context. Therefore, each category became a subsection for each theme: “Existence of racism in the daily life,” “Validity of Colorblindness” and “Identity of KTA(s).” Because all of their experiences imply (1) there is racism towards them because of their difference, (2) colorblindness is not valid for this problem and needs to be critically understood; and (3) Identity is the conclusion for all problems. In fact, as aforementioned, their life stories are varied, not easy to generalize, and can be time-consuming. Because of this pitfall, there are many pitfalls in this method. However, this analytical framework is easy to comprehend in terms of the problem and its aspects.

**Ethical Issues**

The crucial ethical issues in this study pertain to the management and treatment of the data. As previously stated, a significant number of adoption cases involving South Korea and Sweden are characterized by notable challenges, such as the complete severance of ties with their country of origin and biological families. Hence, caution is vital when formulating specific inquiries for interviews. For instance, the utilization of specific terminology may result in an incongruous interpretation of the interview, wherein the inquiries pertain solely to experiences that align with predetermined categories while still permitting a certain degree of adaptability contingent on the interviewee’s circumstances. Ensuring anonymity and maintaining data confidentiality were also critical responsibilities,
necessitating the use of pseudonyms rather than real names and disclosing only limited information about individuals, such as their gender and the period of adoption in Sweden. Regarding the management of confidential data, I sought clarification on the storage methods employed, the purpose for which it was saved, and the length for which it was retained. The data were largely stored on my laptop without being directly shared with anyone. Additionally, the OneDrive account associated with Linköping University was utilized as a supplementary means to upload the data as a contingency. The specific details pertaining to this study can be found in the information sheet included in the appendix. The duration for which data are stored is indicated to have rapidly expired upon completion of the analytic process for this project.

In the consent form, a succinct and specific description was provided regarding the objective of the study, the anticipated time of the interview, the method of data recording, and the measures taken to ensure the protection of the participants’ data in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017: 41). All the interviews were conducted within the jurisdictions of Sweden and Europe.

Regarding data recording, it is important to note that information is typically saved in an aural format. Due to concerns regarding privacy infringement, many interviewees were reluctant to engage in conspicuous forms of documentation, such as video recordings.

The aforementioned information is presented in a comparable manner on the information sheet, albeit with a greater emphasis on providing detailed explanations. For the purpose of this study, it was essential to establish effective means of communication with interviewees.

The advancement of all documents and procedures was carried out in accordance with the Act pertaining to the Ethical Review of Research involving Human Participants (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017: 74).
IV. Theoretical Framework

Identity

Identity³: Sameness of essential or generic character in different instances (Merriam -Webster Dictionary (b), n.d.)

In terms of identity, it assumes sameness. Furthermore, ‘different instances’ include various variables in one’s life. For this reason, daily life experiences can be an important factor in the construction of identity. The characteristics of daily life experiences are as follows: (1) repetitive, (2) ordinariness, and (3) contributing to the formation of the basis of identity. All these factors can be established by the self-recognition, but humankind is an interactive presence and the given identity from one’s surrounding is also crucial as much as self-reflexivity identity. Burkitt (2011: 280) refers to how interaction from one’s significant presence, and renders its social role/persona. For KTA(s), their surroundings gave their identity as Swedish based on the influence of whiteness and in Swedish society with the full understanding of the norm of Swedish narratives. Despite their acculturation from the requested social role, they had to be situated the numerous confrontations, both microaggression and racialization in their daily life. Eventually, it settles as the main catalyst of identity questions, or any further relevant problems of themselves.

To consider the change in KTA(s) identity in Sweden, they have undergone stepwise changes during their lives. In the beginning, their identity was rendered Swedish because of immutable acculturation from their Swedish adoptive family members and significant others around their lives. However, during their growth, they had to encounter racist events or aggressive behaviors towards them. This discrepancy in opinions and the social atmosphere situates them to doubt their identity. They have been educated on the validity of colorblindness, but their daily experience resonates with doubts about value at the same time.

As previously stated, Swedish societal narratives were in the middle of the transition from racial biology and biologism to multiculturalism. Despites, Sweden still adhered to the standpoint of exclusiveness towards difference. For this reason, Swedish society has opted to establish the system as integration since 1975, but it was presuming the comprehension and learning of the Swedish value and cultural system that Swedish society wants. In other words, Swedish society facilitated made them to “as-if” Swedish citizen rather than having proper time and chance to understand about themselves. Bauman (2004: 20) argues that national identity is established and considers the important grounds for one’s identity embodiment.
The idea of “Identity” and a “National Identity” in particular, did not gestate and incubate in human experience “naturally”, did not emerge out of that experience as a self-evident “Fact of life”. That idea was forced into the Lebenswelt of the modern men and women – and arrived as a fiction.

Following the definition from the Merriam-Webster dictionary ((b), n. d.), Lebenswelt refers to the life world and the world of lived experience itself. The reason their identity was settled as Swedish in the beginning was the implication from both KTA(s) surroundings and the Swedish societal narrative.

During their growth, the implications of these factors triggered identity problems, and they have chosen their ways among: (1) mimicking or mocking their origin, (2) trying to be the same as others, and (3) remaining in-betweenness.

In accordance with the inflow of international adoption, Swedish society changed its strategy to sort and exclude others based on cultural and visible differences. The norm of Whiteness has become a core factor, and the cultural aspect of racism can be a dominant form of Swedish racism (Pred, 2000: 45).

In avowedly promoting integration rather than assimilation, in calling for a (vaguely formulated) “Multicultural society” based upon “cooperation and solidarity between the native Swedish majority and various ethnic minorities” in promising all the right to an ethnicity-based private communal sphere, in explicitly giving migrants “the opportunity to choose the extend to which they adopt a Swedish cultural heritage,” these enactments also stipulated the provision of some “mother-tongue” instruction for all migrant school children, the acquisition of foreign language literature by local public libraries, the broadcast of radio and television programs in minority languages, the broadcast of radio and television programs in minority languages, the publication of migrant-language newspapers and books, and the allocation of funding for the support of migrant-group association.

However, nationwide supplementation from the Swedish government does not mean respect for differences, including adoptees. Yngvesson (2010: 95-96) claims that the Swedish adoptive parent’s viewpoint alludes the identity problems, Swedish adoptive parents were not helpful to understand and mitigate the problems for their adopted children from Korea even though they did not behave intentionally caused discrimination or disadvantage.

Adoption center’s Margareta Blomqvist, who adopted two Ethiopian children in the 1970s, noted in the mid-1990s that
the situation of Ethiopian adoptees in Sweden has been complicated because they share their physical appearance and cultural background with immigrants from that nation, making it harder for them to be accepted as “not” immigrants but instead fully “Swedish” people.

The identity problem was not only for Ethiopian adoptees, but also for Korean transnational adoptees for the same reason. On the one hand, they have visible differences (because of the possession of biological features of Asians). On the other hand, it has an attachment and achievement in Sweden rather than Korea. This duplicate situation caused them to confuse or situate the crisis regarding their identity. In this context, the norms of whiteness and cultural racism in Swedish aspects materialize the identity crisis. Lawler (2014: 64) also demonstrates the importance of kinship for adoptees by arguing that it has significant implications for them.

Despite their invented status, however, both ‘race’ and ‘nation’ are certainly real in their effects, and one way in which their ‘reality’ has been guaranteed is through the reference to kinship.

In conclusion, Korean transnational adoptees first settled their Swedish identity because of the implications of their surroundings. However, they had to confront aggression and racist events during their upbringing, and all surroundings around themselves were not helpful in understanding their problem or mitigating themselves based on the appropriate explanation for themselves. As Sassatelli (2019: 240) mentions, Swedish society needed evidence to demonstrate the positive social narrative change and their identity consumed to pursue the national aim rather than embrace multiculturalism.

Critical Race Theory
The Critical Race theory is a useful framework for examining this problem for the following reasons: (1) power is contingent on social structures, (2) counter storytelling, and (3) ordinariness. Delgado and Stefancic (2017: 8) refer to ordinariness as an important tenet of critical race theory, and their experience in triggering the problem of racism and identity also appears in daily life. Swedish government and society have professed the value of color blindness as a crucial factor for anti-discrimination, but the main reason for racism and aggression is based on visible differences, and their stories can counter storytelling against social norms. Hence, it is directly related to the standpoint of power. This is because Swedish society has maintained whiteness as its norm. Hence, Korean transnational adoptees cannot grant the equal rights and powers that Swedes can enjoy.
Bell (1992: 366) strengthened this logic by introducing the term “Racial realism,” which accurately explains the racial hierarchal order in Swedish society.

The realist also had a profound impact by demonstrating the circularity of defining rights as “objective,” which definition depended, in large part, on a distinction between formalistically bounded spheres between public and private.

Colorblindness has played a role in objectivity in Sweden. Törngren (2022: 52) pointed out the legal movement of Sweden in 2014 as evidence because the word of race is eradicated and substituted as racialization. The main aim of changing the term from the Swedish legal perspective was to proclaim that racism is no longer valid based on biological differences. However, discrimination does not disappear even after legal reformation.

Concerning the Swedish legal system, Lindgren (2021: 57-60) argues accurately how the Swedish legal system has critical problems and has not improved even though there are numerous problems because of it. Lindgren investigated Sweden’s Adoption Act between 1918 and 2018 and determined the problem of the Adoption Act in 1918. The Act in 1918 was aimed at saving children who cannot be supported by their parents, but the act stipulates that clear evidence had to be confirmed by the local or central prosecutor’s office in Sweden, and the initial evidence was biological similarity, which means Swedish society did not aim to secure the diversity of origin for adoptees. Biological heritance and similarity function more critically before the reformation of the Act in 1980. However, even after the reformation of the Act in 1980, except for the pursuit of children’s welfare and human rights, it was not meaningful to embrace the diversity and differences of adoptees. These two examples from the Swedish legal perspective show how whiteness have effectively functioned as a norm in Swedish society and has been utilized to sort and exclude others.

Solorzanó and Huber (2020: 33) introduced the approach based on CRT perspective in terms of racial problems.

1. CRT foregrounds race and racism and challenge separate discourses on race, gender, and class by demonstrating how racism intersects with these and other forms of subordination (e.g., sexism, classicism, eurocentrism, monolingualism, ableism, and heteropatriarchy), and how they impact people of color.

2. CRT challenges traditional research paradigm and theories, thereby exposing deficit notions about people and communities of color and educational practices that assume ‘neutrality’ and ‘objectivity’.

3. CRT focuses research and practice on experiences of people and communities of color and views these experiences as assets and sources of strength.
4. CRT offers a transformative response to racial, gender, class, and other forms of discrimination by linking theory with practice, scholarship with teaching, and the academy with communities of color.

5. CRT challenges ahistoricism, acontextualism, and arealism, expanding the boundary of the analysis of race and racism in education by using contextual, historical, and interdisciplinary perspective to inform praxis.

Among these tenets, the second and third tenets are emphasized more than the other tenets in this study. Finding out the counter storytelling and demonstrating the necessity to improvement (Delgado and Stefancic, 2017: 40) by looking into the daily experience of racialization and microaggression is main aim of this study.

**Everyday Racism**

Essed (1991: 3) coined the term “Everyday racism” and defined it as follows:

Everyday racism is racism, but not all racism is everyday racism. The concept of everyday racism counters the view, prevalent in particular in the Netherlands, that racism is an individual problem, a question of “to be racist or not to be racist”. The crucial criterion distinguishing racism for everyday racism is that the latter involves only systemic, recurrent, familiar practices. The fact that it concerns repetitive practices indicates that everyday racism consists of practices that can be generalized, it involves socialized attitudes and behavior. Finally, its systematic nature indicates that everyday racism includes cumulative instantiation. These arguments make clear that the notion of everyday racism is defined in terms of practice prevalent in a given system. Note that are not just “acts” but also include complex relations of acts and attributed attitudes.

In Swedish society, many individuals are questioned as racist or not racist, and most of them could answer the latter because of the implication of color blindness. However, as the previous sections demonstrate, the main reason for problems emerged in their daily lives with ordinariness, and it is not just once that it happened as an event. Repetition of remarks and events becomes the structure; it formulates remarks, aggression, and so on. Regardless of the effectiveness of colorblindness, whiteness in Swedish society has been influenced for a long time as one of the norms, so this complexity is attributed to two things: (1) complexity of racism and (2) hindrance to understanding the presence of racism and problems.

Of course, Swedish society has been efforted for a long time to settle racism. Hällgren (2005:320) points out that racism has been accepted as a social problem in Sweden over time. The inflow of emigration was welcoming in the beginning, but it was changed by the political context in Sweden (e.g., the emergence and gained power of far-right parties). Therefore, concerning racism in Sweden,
structural and macroscopic perspectives cannot be ignored, and it is also complicated because concerning debates and finding solutions is still progressive in Swedish society at the same time. To consider the context of KTA(s) in Sweden, can assess the problem of their identity reflecting this framework as follows <Figure 2> (Essed, 1991: 80-81).

<Figure 2> Evaluation of racism following everyday racism framework

1. Is it acceptable or not? Does this imply overt remarks or behaviors to discriminate?

2. Acceptable excuses for unacceptable behavior? Does it intend or not?
Is this based on a specific impression or experience?

3. It is because I am an Asian? Does it include sensitive or problematic information about Asians, because I am an Asian?

4. Is the specific event excusable? Does it target me?
Does it happen because of my identity?

5. Is the event socially significant? Does this consequently mean discrimination due to identity and generalizability to other people like me?

Nevertheless, Everyday Racism has clear limitations in explaining and investigating relevant problems. First, as Walton et al. (2013: 83-84), race-based jokes and remarks are not always perceived as racism, even though they have clearly negative implications. Second, individual contextual differences exist. For example, even though someone possesses Asian racial features, he or she would adapt himself/herself without a big problem, and someone does not seriously regard racism because of the implication of color blindness. Third, Bourabain and Verhaegue (2021: 229) refer to the difference between microaggression and the everyday racism framework. Everyday racism is more weighted to explain how aggression and racism provoke marginalization and problematize a group
of people or individuals. In comparison with the framework of microaggression, it focuses more on the psychological response, interpretation, and coping strategy. However, racism in Swedish society has structural implications and is not disavowable.

**Racialization and colorblindness**

Miles (1989: 76) defines the racialization as follows:

A dialectical process for which meaning is attributed to particular biological features of human beings, as a result of which individuals may be assigned to a general category of persons which reproduces itself biologically. (...) The process of racialization of human beings entails the racialization of the process in which they participate the structures and institutions that result.

As his definition demonstrates, racialization presumes based on the biological features of human beings. For this reason, KTA(s) can be one of the targets to be racialized, because they are basically possessing black (brown or darker) hair with brown or black eyes. Following this difference, they may not be recognized as non-Swedish, but this does not mean that they are recognized as Korean at the same time. On the one hand, they do not have any connection with Korean society, although they possess the biological features of Korean. On the other hand, they have most of their achievements and attachments in Sweden, but do not possess the biological features of Swedish. This ambiguity standpoint situates them as betweenness.

Regarding colorblindness, as Törngren et al. (2018: 5) point out, Swedish society sorted people based on cultural category rather than ethnic information or features between immigrants and people with a foreign background. However, this is not always in accord because of the various contexts. For instance, there are numerous Chinese migrants in Sweden, but they can never be generalized as Chinese migrants. Therefore, color blindness can be a challenge in comprehending ethnic and racial problems in society. Sasaki and Voraeur (2013: 247) support this standpoint by arguing that Colorblindness lies on head collision with multiculturalism, because multiculturalism presumes the prevalence of diversity and acknowledgement but colorblindness is not, and has to be ignored as an ideology rather than dealing with the relevant problems. Furthermore, there is a practical example of suspicion of colorblindness: the no-go zone. Gudmundsson (2014) reported about 55 No-go zones in Sweden, because of high possibility of crime, insecurity, and mindful manners to police. Representative regions in Sweden are Fittja, Alby (Stockholm), and Hageby (Norrköping), but the standard of the no-go zone always assumes a lower proportion of white residents and a high proportion of uneducated or unemployed immigrants.
Microaggression

Microaggression directly triggers identity problems. It harms the dignity and denial of treating someone equally. All these procedures concluded as perpetuation of exclusion or precarity for a targeted person or group, whether it was on purpose or not. Merriam-Webster ([c], n.d.) also referred the definition of Microaggression as “A comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority).”

Huber and Solorzanó (2015: 298) categorized the form of microaggression as: (1) verbal and non-verbal, (2) layered formation based on the race and other information of somebody (such as gender, class, ethnicity), and (3) cumulative. Generalized prejudice and racial remarks to KTA(s) and Asians are mostly about differences in shape, form of appearance, or skin color, and these prejudice-based microaggressions are recognized as different and doubtful. The context of doubt can be developed as an identity problem. Furthermore, this development inclined them to make a distance or select to depart from the majority. In conclusion, the whole procedure was concluded to reproduce prejudices and stereotypes towards specific groups of people or an individual, and it legitimizes the judgment of somebody based on incorrect information. Thus, microaggression leads to a vicious cycle. To consider the feature of microaggression, it is only valid upon the conflict composition between perpetuators and victims, and the degree of implication, shock, or damage can be differentiated because it sometimes targets a group of people or just an individual. No matter how a target was reached, it always included overt underestimation and discrimination.

Sue (2008:29) conducted a study concerning microaggression and explained each feature and implication in more detail. <Figure 3> shows how microaggression is composed and affected variously towards a target.

<Figure 3> Features and implications of Microaggression
**Racial Microaggressions**
Commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to people of color.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal Manifestations</th>
<th>Nonverbal Manifestation</th>
<th>Environmental Manifestation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Microinsult</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Often unconsciousness)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s racial heritage</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Microassault</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Often consciousness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explicit racial derogations characterized primarily by a violent verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant, or purposeful discriminatory actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Microinvalidation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Often unconsciousness)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality a person of color.</td>
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</table>

- Ascription of Intelligence
  Assigning a degree of intelligence to a person of color based on their race.

- Second-class Citizen
  Treated as a lesser person or group

- Pathologizing Cultural Values/Communication Styles
  Notion that the values and communication styles of people of color are abnormal.

- Assumption of Criminal Status
  Presumed to be a criminal, dangerous, or deviant based on race

- Aliens in Own Land
  Belief that visible racial/ethnic minority citizens are foreigners.

- Color-blindness
  Denial or pretense that a white person does not see color or race.

- Myth of Meritocracy
  Statements that assert that race plays a minor role in life success.

- Denial of Individual Racism
  Denial of personal racism or one’s role in its perpetuation.
Most of the microaggression towards KTA(s) in Sweden shows a mixed form between microinsult and microinvalidation. Both are mostly unintentional, which is the reason why aggressions cannot be easily recognized as discrimination or triggering problems. Value of colorblindness strongly affects Swedish society, but the discrimination is based on the difference; thus, Colorblindness and Denial of individual racism, both of which are remarkable features of microaggression. In addition, KTA(s) do not possess whiteness (not as their ethnic identity), and it is also enabled to aliens in their own land of microinvalidation, and pathologizing cultural values and communication styles of microinsult. These types of aggression can deepen the identity problem for KTA(s), one of the expected consequences of which can be psychological. Spanierman et al. (2010: 1047-1050) refer to the anxiety, getting stress, depression. In addition, after the impact of microaggression, victims can find coping strategies that can appear as resistance to Eurocentric or white norms. In conclusion, victims of microaggression need sufficient attention and care, but the society and majority mostly recognize the victims as hypersensitive persons or groups to conscious not a big problem rather than pointing out the hidden meaning or implications of the microaggression (Spanierman et al., 2021: 1046).
V. Analysis

The presence of racism in their daily life
Essed (1991: 47-48) refers to the characteristics of everyday racism as: (1) heterogeneous and (2) a distinction between cognitive and behavioral discrimination. These events occur in various situations, such as public transportation, grocery stores, schools, and workplaces. The perpetrator is characterized by a varied context, which is also related to the context of experiences. Thus, in their daily lives, racism clearly pertains, but it is not easily captured because of Swedish social narratives, such as color blindness. The value of colorblindness functions as ground to legitimize the argument: “There is no racism, or things to provoke the racism is no more important.”

Swedish adoptive family
Swedish adoptive family has a significant implication for adoptees concerning identity. Because, they are not only their foundation of kinship, and their outlook is rooted in the influence from their adoptive family. Hence, appropriately coping when the problems occur or their response by providing sufficient information can have a huge impact on Korean transnational adoptees. On the one hand, among the family members, there was consensus; for example, we are the same, even though we look similar to each other. Nevertheless, it was not meaningful to discuss how the adoption of affairs is easily accepted for them.

Ulrika: I was brought up by two parents and two siblings. In other words, we have three siblings, including me. One of my older sisters (four years older than me) was a biological child. We have not been able to discuss adoption within our family.

Sophie: I think they are good parents. I think the Swedish adoptive parents who adopted their children from another country between the 70s and 80s, understanding the child’s need, welfare, and how to deal with their problems was quite limited for both of them. In addition, most Swedish adoptive parents are pretending to give a Swedish name and regard their adopted children as Swedish, with no discussion about adoption. In this sense, certain problems are unavoidable. I did not want to hurt my parents’ feelings, and it was not easy to talk, even if I wanted to. This is because they do not know how to precisely deal with the problem.

On the other hand, Their Swedish adoptive family provided proper information, but sometimes it was
too fast to understand as one of the children, and their background knowledge of their adoptive children was sometimes inappropriate. Hence, the problem of family communication levels can be the root of the identity problem.

Astrid: I have always been open to referring to my roots. I have adopted this paper for my case. However, this does not imply that I can be fully understood. They did not hide it from me, but I am too young to understand. My parents were born in the 1940s, and they have only limited or little knowledge about adoption, although they were trying to explain the adoption to me.

Fortunately, as time goes by, the response is improved to consider the children’s context, and it clearly appeared in an adoption case after the mid-1980s and later.

Hanna: I think I have a normal childhood and upbringing that we have loved each other. We always spoke about adoption naturally, and it was a kind of birth story. They always spoke positively about adoption.

Nevertheless, regardless of their adoptive family’s positive explanation and responses about their origin and about themselves, the emergence of identity problems or questions is immutable. There are clear triggers from other subjects in their surroundings that arise from self-awareness by a chance or event in their life.

Frederik: My parents have said different things. They told me about something before they adopted it. They said that there were many examples in which the adoptive family did not speak about or explain to their adopted children about adoption. However, they told me about the procedure for adoption and other things to refer to their adoptive children. (...) I remember some periods, maybe around ten to twelve years. It may even have been some years later. I had a hard time in my early teenagers. For example, when I looked at myself in the mirror, it was difficult to accept that I was different. As a young person, everybody (or someone) wants to confirm that they are a part of everybody and look the same.

Another significant characteristic of Swedish adoptive families between the 1970s and the 1980s is that they adopted more children before and after the adoption of Korean transnational adoptees, and their origin/background is that most countries can be regarded as underdeveloped or deteriorated situations for children, as one of the studies has clarified. The pattern of adoption in Sweden can be a clear piece of evidence that adoption was utilized to manifest and show how Swedish social narratives have positively changed as they wanted.
Hanna: I went with my parents to get my little brother at six years old. He was adopted from Vietnam.
Helena: I have a sister in Sweden, she was six years older than me. She was adopted from Indonesia.

**Exotifying Presence**

One of the major problems with their identity is the exotification of their presence in daily life. In the beginning, the value of colorblindness becoming the consensus implies that they are the same, but the consensus made it hard to put on the table of adoption affairs for discussion and understanding about themselves. It develops in other aspects and is also connected to the value of color blindness. As mentioned above, the value of colorblindness presumes that color is not a significant factor in discriminating or emerging experiences of racism because it is no longer important. Their experience, however, led them to present themselves as an 'exotified presence', and they felt admired by white Swedish families. Many Swedish (White) adoptive families do not respond well to racism events or aggression because they wish to believe that color blindness is effective and that they are able to cope with problems. Due to this context, aggressive remarks and racist events are racializing them as 'others,’ and the question of their existence is becoming more serious, resulting in a variety of negative effects.

Sophie: My mother was proud of me because I am Korean. She always thought, “She is pretty, lovely, and has black hair,” But I would not say I liked it, because one of my biggest dreams was to be look like my friends. I wanted to have blonde and blue eyes. I have a strange memory in a grocery store. A stranger (Swedish) came to us, and she said: “Oh, you are so pretty!” and asked me, ‘Where are you from?’ In this situation, I must be happy to say that I have a great Swedish mother. My mother said, “Yes, you know, she is so happy.” To be honest, I understood this event in two ways: On the one hand, there was one side that I did not want to remind: “I am different.” On the other hand, I understood myself as coming from a different place, not from Sweden.

Ulrika: Well, I understood that I had another background, and I remember when I was at Suyongjang (swimming pool in Korean) with my mother. I was around five or six years old at that time, and a woman came to me and said, “Where she is coming from?” to my mother. My mother got frustrated and answered that “You can ask her,” Of course, she speaks Swedish’. I was quite embarrassed and thought “Yes, I am from Korea,” and that situation was awkward for me. I think she was annoyed, and my interpretation of that experience was that my adoptive mother did not want to treat me differently.

Occasionally, it is quite violently expressed about differences, and even in such a situation, the
environment they surround themselves is not helpful for them, and they are not easily helped by institutions or other means due to their differences. There is no doubt that they are becoming hyper visible; however, their problem cannot be easily solved as far as their visibility is concerned.

Astrid: When I was young, many older adults were around me always wanted to have my (dark-colored) hair, and even wanted to touch on me. I did not know how to respond and I could never avoid it. I was frozen when I faced with this type of experience. I remembered many similar experiences during my life in Sweden, which made me chaotic. Concerning this problem, my Swedish adoptive family wanted to me to be a Swedish person, and behave like them rather than helping me.

School and Friends
Concerning the school and their friends, they mostly feel more comfortable and confident than their adoptive family has been doing. However, at the same time, schools and their friends are also significant subjects for aggression and racist events in their lives. The features of the school and their friends are quite different those from of other subjects because their aggression and racist remarks are more overt and strong, but mostly unintentional, and there is a possibility of improvement by the provision of education in terms of race and other relevant things.

Helena: I have many friends. They never cared differently for me. I had no problems with my surroundings, and I could say that my adoptive mother was genuine to me. However, people who did not know me asked me questions after hearing my name. For instance, “You are Chinese,” and I said, “No.” or other negative remarks are as follows. When I was young, many people did not know about South Korea. Hence, they asked to me, “So, are you coming from South Korea or North Korea?”. I had to say, ‘South Korea.’ whenever I asked this question. Swedish society has adopted many people from various backgrounds. However, they regard themselves more between as “White” and “Non-white (Multicultural).”

Another context is directly being the target of aggression, and racist remarks because of differences, and they not only recognize themselves as different but also consider the reason for discrimination or aggression because they are Asian.

Astrid: I remembered that it was my preschool, so I was around six or seven years old. I felt locked out and thought I was ugly. Because I look different, and other girls, except me, have blonde hair. I remembered one of the boys asked me, “Why your face looks like?” He added the remark, “Why is your face flat?” It was quite aggressive for me even though he did not intend to harm me. I have similar examples. One of my classmates in the same class asked me, ‘Why are your eyes so small?’ I have no answer to his question, and this hurts me. This was aggressive for me.
Similar to other factors, the problem is lessened by education and the improvement of public opinion. However, the problem still pertains to and is reproduced by an incorrect standpoint from their teacher and other people, and it is based on the norm of whiteness in Swedish society.

Felicia: I grew up with my best friends and had no big problems concerning discrimination during my school period, because I was adopted from South Korea. However, I remember one case, and it was Lucia’s vote when I was in elementary school. The teacher said, ’Raise your hand if you want to be a Lucia,’ and there were four candidates, including me. I won the vote because I received the most votes. However, the teacher became upset when I became Lucia. She cannot accept that the dark-haired or black-eyed person can be Lucia. She said, “Okay, then let’s have another vote,” instead of apologizing for her remarks or considering the alternatives.

To sum up, the biological difference and absence or inappropriate explanation of their background renders the ground for aggression and racist experience, although it was mostly not intended to harm themselves. The generalized form of aggression is based on micro-invalidation, including colorblindness, such as discrimination, which is up to individual problems rather than social narratives, such as the norm of whiteness in Swedish society.

**Validity of Colorblindness**

As a follow-up to the first chapter, the question can be asked, "Does colorblindness exist in Sweden?" It would then be said that the answer to this question is Yes, but there are various forms of discrimination. It is generally agreed that the value of colorblindness is a consensus within intimate spaces, such as the home and among friends, even though it is ineffective. Considering social and economic activities, color blindness appears to be of significant value.

This is because, regardless of their name, background, and other information, it is not significant to trigger aggression or racist events. However, the validation of color blindness does not imply that there is no racism. For instance, political and social discourse in Swedish society has more significant implications than the value of colorblindness, and the passive form of aggression (denial, showing doubtful reactions to someone) still pertains. One of the interviewees, Ulrika, presented how political ecological changes in Sweden aggravated the problem of identity and its recognition of non-Swedes or minorities in Swedish society.

Ulrika: One significant change has been the upsurge of conservative, populistic, and far-right political movements since
the 1990s. For me, it was scary. There are some typical features, such as skinheads in the city and changing manners in society. For example, some people in my school did not approve of me as a dignified person.

Additionally, political discourse is more powerful in recognizing themselves as others, rather than the effectiveness of colorblindness, because political discourse from far-right parties, represented as SD, implies the xenophobic normativity of white as the manner. Therefore, various racial minorities in Swedish society thought about themselves as different and never the same as the Swedish people. In other words, color blindness is not helpful in understanding the identity problem of minorities in Sweden, including Korean transnational adoptees.

Ulrika: To mention me, my husband, and my children, we are somewhere in between. We did not have immigrant family members. However, when we settled in Swedish society, we regarded immigrant families as well. Hence, concerning how to raise children, we are fully aware of racism and discrimination and never like a popular person because of their origin. We can then talk about all relevant things with our children. I think this is how immigrant families interact with their children, and it is becoming the basis for forming their identities.

Passive aggression or behavior can appear as another example of a head collision against colorblindness, mostly regarding someone as having an invalid existence in Swedish society based on their color and racial characteristics.

Astrid: As an adult, I think many people assume that I am not Swedish. When someone tries to speak about me, then they do not directly mention me, but assume me as I cannot speak Swedish. I sometimes think in the same way. I am an Asian woman. There are many Asian women in Swedish society; for example, from the Philippines and Thailand. Additionally, Swedish shares some typical racial stereotypes with Asians, and this is becoming a problem. I remember an experience in one day: I was on the bus, and there was an old (Swedish) man. He sat in a seat on my side. I noticed him and he started at me. I was looking back and he did not try to hide. I feel scared. After that, he touched my phone and took several photos of me. I was scared and I did not know how to react.

Felicia: When it comes to saying about racial situation, it has not been during schooltime or work. It has been when I am on the street, in a store, and meet someone who does not know me. In general, they said “Oh, where are you coming from?” and I would say, “I am coming from Stockholm,” then they asked again to me, “Where are you really coming from?”. Some people assume that I do not look like Swedish; then, what does Swedish people look like?

However, as previously stated, colorblindness strongly maintains and supports the anti-racist perspective in Swedish society. Additionally, the application of color blindness can differ according to
racial identity. In other words, colorblindness shows a layered formation in the Swedish society.

Frederik: In most my social settings, I do not receive as much racism as compared to other people. For example, I am my African sister. Additionally, concerning social and economic activities, I do not encounter or feel that sort of thing. I can only say an example. My first work was seasonal work with a connection from the Church. This is because my social network was based on the Church. I moved out and started working in healthcare and elderly care occupations. It was around 2015, seemingly recent for me. Most elders in Sweden already know that there are many different people in Sweden, and there were no specific problems because I could speak Swedish without the problem of communicating with them.

**Identity of KTA(s)**

To summarize the whole context, there are typically three ways to embody the identity of Korean transnational adopters in Sweden: Swedish identity, Korean identity, and positions as Mellanförskap. On the other hand, if there is a Korean identity, it is mainly caused by visits to Korea rather than Sweden to find its origins and experiences in Korea. On the other hand, in-betweenness is embodied by the impact of its contextual situation, such as lack of explanation, aggression, racist experience, and self-awareness of the experience that made them in-betweenness of their identity.

**Swedish Identity**

The first way to acquire identity is to have Swedish identity. This is because they have grown up in Swedish society by interacting with the environment and understanding the value of the Swedish system. Most Swedish-identity adoptees admit that their parents in Sweden and South Korea have a fixed choice for adoption, which is an unchangeable choice.

Felicia: They are my family and the most important people in the world, except my husband and children. However, they struggled with me. I was an angry young teenager. I think they have struggled with me, but they have done their best. I love my family and parents. They are not the people I need, but what they can do. I have two parents and I know about society, and many people have asked me many questions. For example, "Who is your true father, or who is your true mother?" Then I said, "I have two real mothers and two real fathers."

Another example is a well-informed explanation of the adoption case and the meaning itself from their Swedish adoptive family. In other words, her cases show that the accurate explanation and support provided enough time to understand the context is not only important to understand themselves, but also to prevent the crisis of identity problems.
Hanna: I think I got mostly informative answers when I asked about things. They always said, ‘This is what I will know about your (me for herself) adoption history,’ and they explained it. This paper is what we have always been, and you can look at it anytime you want. In other words, they always kept an open mindset about it. I also felt that they were not ashamed of talking about it. I can ask them anything when I want, and they always respond promptly to my question. This made me very confident about adoption.

Korean Identity

In the case of possessing a Korean identity, it is weaker than Swedish identity and has no strong reasons. Since most of their bonds and connections are in Swedish society, they have the opportunity to recognize and own their Korean identity on the basis of their visits to South Korea and their experiences of travel to South Korea. In addition, it is based on their similarity to racial characteristics rather than other factors. Because they cannot speak Korean except for basic phrases, Korea and Korean society cannot be recognized as Korean because of the difficulties in communication and the lack of memory (adherence) in Korean society.

Ulrika: When I look at the elderly in Korea and Sweden, I identify with Korea rather than with Sweden.

Mellanförskap (In-betweenness)

Another way of identifying is to be located as in-betweenness (Mellanförskap in Swedish). On the one hand, as mentioned above, it is based on aggressive statements and racist experiences in their lives. However, visits to Korea to find their origins and processes in the two countries made them within the context of intermingling. In general, in the first case, they became self-aware and expressed themselves through their experiences. Surprisingly, adoptive parents do not seek help from their adoptive parents because they feel that their adoptive parents have "done as much as they can" and tend to internalize racialization of themselves instead of seeking help themselves for the reasons mentioned above.

First, they saw social stories and behavioral patterns in their environment, and demanded that they become Swedes instead of accepting differences in what they have. Second, Swedish adoptive parents have done the same throughout their lifetime. Therefore, they did not want to cause problems with adoptive parents, even though they had their own crisis, and this moral crisis led to inner conflicts in their identities. For example, they realize that their contexts and lives are different, and finally recognize that they no longer have the same environment. Ultimately, they find their own way to progress in the process. For example, only people can understand social contact but do not ask about their identity problems. One another important perspective and crucial impact in terms of in-
betweenness can emerge during the process of figuring out about their origin through their life changes; e.g., pregnancy, and social changes in their life. It provokes the desire to visit their motherland but their problem is still left as a problem because of the difficulty of process and disaccord between their expectation and the reality that they have to encounter throughout the procedure of finding and comprehending their origin. All these procedures bear not only the realistic pessimism or neutralism towards adoption but also the in-betweenness from the self-recognition by this mechanism (Jeong-Jun, 2017: 115-117).

Ulrika: When I was about fifteen or sixteen years old, I understood that I had been adopted, which made me feel like I was being brainwashed. I did not tell my parents about it. When I first understood myself, I realized that we were different, that we had another background, that we looked different, and that my appearance was not as popular as the blonde hair. Over the past few decades, many immigrants have arrived in Sweden. I prefer to be with Asian people. This was a big step for me, and I felt more involved in the development of a new relationship. I am increasingly isolated, and I am unable to share the same path.

Astrid: My adoptive parents hoped that although they did not push me, I would look like Swedish. I had to learn Swedish value systems, languages, and customs in order to be Swedish. However, I never felt connected to these things, and I did not belong to them. This was a kind of emotional pain for me. If I have my daughter, I can say that I have a blood tie with her. In my education, I have experienced a long-standing feeling of being different. However, I have not told my parents about this. I did not know how to deal with the problems, and they are stored in my mind. I will never be open up to them.

In the latter case, being in the middle before and after the process of finding their origins and visiting Korea caused the additional problem that they did not belong to Sweden or Korea. Most Korean transnational adoptive people in Sweden are eager to find biological families. However, it is difficult to identify cultural and social contextual differences, as well as other obstacles.

Felicia: Differences between Korean and Swedish system is can be a challenge to find the origin, and it gives frustration to adoptees when they want to find. First, public information in Sweden can access the public level, whereas it is private and confidential and difficult to access in Korea. Korean society requires adoptees to provide precise information, but they are limited and sometimes inauthentic. This is why it is difficult to identify a biological family outside Sweden. KWS has tried to find and provide an alternative solution for this problem, such as providing DNA tests to find the biological families and updating the special database on the website to contact them. However, there are clear limitations owing to the lack of information and other reasons.

Even if someone has authentic information about their biological family, the next challenge is the
adoption of paper. Most Korean transnational adoption cases have forged adoption documents or do not contain appropriate information about themselves.

Sophie: I tried to find my biological family in Korea, but could not find them. This is because the information on mine adoption paper did not contain any information. Therefore, I went to the Swedish Adoption Agency. I thought they knew about me, but they did not tell me, and it was hard for me to know. Then, I should look for police records and other documents I have to find.

Another example is the fact that some adoptees have a specific context. For instance, their parents were married, but they did not register their marriage (i.e., staying a de facto marriage), so adoptees have no means to figure out their biological families in Korea. This is no matter how strongly they have a Swedish identity.

Frederik: I have a weak and limited connection with my biological family and South Korea. My mother (biological) had already died, and my father (biological) had not married him. They split up after marriage and I was born. My father did not know I was born. Consequently, I did not have any evidence or documents to find him. It would be difficult to prove that he was my biological father.

After all the challenges of finding their biological families were overcome, the differences in culture and language and their differences from expectations frustrated them and placed them in between. For example, differences in expectations can cause psychological problems, such as depression. Eng (2003: 28-29) mentions how the reunion experience of the transnational adoptees’ family in their motherland (in this study, it is South Korea) and even the procedure of finding themselves negatively and enormously affect their mental health condition. Blaming their biological mother because of the absence of care can also trigger negative change, it is typical but has significant impacts on them as much as depression. A thing needs to be clarified; The reasons why adoptees’ mental issues have been addressed are (1) pointing out that this issue should be actively addressed in the future’s research, and (2) raising the awareness of their problems rather than deal with them deeply.

Felicia: At the age of 18, I began to seek a biological family, but I was not emotionally ready until 21 years old. Everything has turned out, and my birth family welcomes me with open arms. I have two brothers and sisters, one of whom speak English fluently. This was very rare at that time. We have been in contact since 2005, but I did not prepare for an emotional journey when I discovered them. It concerns responsibility, emotions, and answers. I was angry at the time and could not take into account their answers. For five years, I stopped answering their emails and texts because I thought I could not afford them. Meanwhile, I finally knew that I was going to be Imo (Aunt in Korean), and my sister was expecting a mother in 2012. I started travelling in 2005, but gave up on depression in 2007 and knew I was going
to become Imo in 2012, and I was slowly talking to them again since 2014. Their relationship with them began to rebuild. However, I was unable to search for or contact them. First, there is no support for me, and second, it places me in a state of guilt.

Hanna: I have been searching and doing a search for a biological family in Korea. First, the information on the adoption paper is incorrect. I always thought that I had a biological brother, but it was wrong, and that it was a sister. When I visited Korea, I was proud of my cultural heritage, but I identified myself as Swedish. My body language and cultural standards are based in Sweden. There is a clear gap between my Korean family and that of me. A critical reminder came when I visited South Korea. My biological sister was three years older than me and was twenty-five when we met. She has two children, and I am single. They looked at me and said, "Okay, what's wrong with you?" and asked me,’ Why are you single, even though you are already twenty-five? Have you had a boyfriend or plan to marry?
VI. Discussion

Resilience

Although the identity problem was expected to emerge from many factors in Sweden, this does not mean that there is no resilience or alternatives for them. In fact, adoptees have found their resilience or coping strategies though their surroundings and the social narrative itself are hostile or exclude them. As Wyver's research has demonstrated previously, the imitation of whiteness or acceptance of whiteness value is one form of resilience. As one of the adoptees’ resilience factors, they built a network based on religious institutions. One of the interviewees, Frederik, stated that his family was based on the church and that the value of Christianity contributed to a larger extent in resolving his identity without problems.

Frederik: My family is a Christian. We not only pray to my current family, but also to my biological parents. In other words, I had two parents and two contacts with South Korea and Sweden.

As mentioned above, his network is also based on religion and his occupation is determined by social capital. He also stated that he faced challenges, such as the difficulty of recognizing his differences and the fact that some people committed aggressive behavior on the assumption that he was not a white Swedish.

Another resilience is to send them to a Korean school in Stockholm. Seonwha (2019:40-41) presents the history and role of the Korean School in Stockholm. Stockholm's Korean schools have an important meaning for them because they have been established not only by adoptive parents of transnational Korean adoptive children in Sweden since 1986, after the Swedish Government ceased to support them, but also have the role of creating a framework for understanding and exchanging Korean cultural heritage, language, etc. Korean transnational adopters have a positive impression of and an impact on themselves.

Hanna: I attended Korean schools in Stockholm for three to four years from the eighth grade. On Saturdays, I went to Korean schools, and I was very proud to be of Korean origin.

The direct effect of attending Korean schools is not only to experience Korean culture, food, and language, but also to understand the origins of people and to be proud to understand the origins of people.
Inadequacy of the policy

Another point of discussion is the inadequacy of the policy and the need for both countries to reform as quickly as possible. In Korea, individual information processing remains confidential for internal purposes. Consequently, the Swedish system does not provide individual information management systems. The Korean Government can then establish a special committee for international adoption. Most adoptions between the 1970s and the 1980s were exacerbated by allegations of kidnapping, false documents, or human rights violations. They have no self-determination and are forced to adopt without explanation.

Of course, the Korean Government has already prepared the reform of the Special Adoption Act, and the special adoption law reform was adopted by the Korean Parliament on June 30, 2023. According to an official statement published by the National Centre for Child Rights (2023), the Act will be a complete revision of the Special Adoption Act. The reformed version of the law must give priority to the welfare of the child and to the consideration of adoption to prevent abuse. This includes the issue of certificates and the continuation of cooperation between organizations and governments in accordance with the Hague Convention. Furthermore, the Korean law system on adoption is considered to have been united as a single law to deal with the lack of reforms after the 1950s war and social changes, and the Korean law on adoption should be separated from internal and international adoption laws according to context and situation.

However, both announcements are neither useful nor valid for those who have already adopted them for a long time. As a result, policies involving post-adoption services must aim to take appropriate care of their cases. For example, establishing links to various topics (e.g., psychotherapists) should consider the entire post-adoption service procedure with transparent storage of their information. Therefore, as a suggestion for both organizations and governments, they must know the truth and resilience to understand their moral crisis and other adoption problems, rather than responding in business or indifferently to the adoption case. In addition, for the Korean government, patrilineal customs and stigmatization of single mothers have made it possible to abandon and adopt children in Korea. According to a report (Jinsong, 2023), since 2009, Baby Boxes have been installed in many cities and places in Korea as a mitigation measure. The purpose of introducing the baby box was to enable people not to raise their children due to inevitable circumstances. The problem of single mothers is still one of South Korea's biggest social problems, but it is considered to be abandoned children, and because they were born from their biological mothers, the problem is stigmatized. Since 2009, Two thousand and seventy-six children have been left in the baby box. Not only is the child of a single mother, but the child of an illegal immigrant is also left. However, Do-Gyun (2023) pointed
out that most children left in the baby box do not have birth records. In addition, Korean authorities have started to consider their baby to have left without a specific reason as a child's abandonment. Therefore, the Korean authorities announced that they would conduct further investigations. South Korea still has the shameful nickname “Children's Exporting Country.” The Hague Convention and Baby Box have apparently improved compared to the past, but have not changed significantly over the past few decades.

Consequently, Korean policy must comply with international standards and be amended to effectively facilitate adoption issues. Furthermore, Sweden needs to set up a permanent statistics database on international adoption and provide a special committee to identify problems that have occurred in the past. Attention should be paid to Swedish society at all levels, including research on the subject, to mitigate this problem.

**Lack of Research**

The last point of discussion is the lack of relevant research. Sweden is one of the main destinations of international adoption. However, there are no appropriate statistical data, despite the fact that the Adoptions Centrum (2018) and SCB (2018) have also been published. The important fact is, there are no statistical data showing how many people were actually adopted from South Korea to Sweden. Data storage is one of the most important factors of each policy, but Sweden does not have unified statistical data on adoption. In other words, although adoption is carried out under the pretext of children’s welfare, the Swedish Government and authorities are not very interested in adoption. International adoption is a declining global trend. However, the management and facilitation of previous adoptive cases are also important, and the lack of data is in clear contrast to the evidence displayed by the Swedish Government.

Furthermore, the commonality of racism against minorities in Sweden and characteristics of racism against minorities in Sweden need to be more actively researched. It aims not only to understand the discrimination problems of Korean transnational adoptive people but also to understand other minority groups in Sweden. This study demonstrates how racism and micro-aggression manifest and how they affect their identity and life through many daily experiences. Relevant research based on racial theories and other factors should be conducted at Swedish universities. Through the study of minorities' discrimination problems, Swedish society and academia should reconsider the concept of integration and the value of color blindness.
VII. Conclusion

Embodiment of Identity

The KTA(s) identity embodies stepwise formation, and it can change in accordance with a specific moment. Their identity was Swedish in the beginning, and the reason was based on the adoption and influence from their surroundings, including Swedish adoptive families. However, as they grew up, microaggression and racialization events occurred, provoking racialization. The main point of racialization situates them to be doubted about their identity and the emerging crisis. It is no matter how Swedish adoptive parents support them, because the norm of whiteness legitimizes sorting them as “others”, and the value of colorblindness hinders the understanding of the presence of discrimination.

Most aggressions are demonstrated as microinvalidation (typically colorblindness, denial of racism, and aliens on own land) or microinsults (typically pathologizing for cultural values and communication styles). These types of aggression are caused to recognize them as neither Korean nor Swedish. Therefore, microaggression and racialization can significantly affect identity problems in KTA(s) through observation. As one of the evidences, Interviewees (KTAs) were expressed that they were struggled to be same like others; having blonde hair and blue eyes, but they finally reckoned that it is impossible to change, and triggering to be recognized themselves as in the middle.

As a result, there are three dominant types of identity settled: Possession between Korean and Swedish identity and Mellanförskap (in-betweenness).

In the case of possession of Swedish identity, resilience (such as religious value) and supportive manners from the surroundings are clearly helpful to establish. Nevertheless, the Swedish adoptive family played a critical role in the embodiment of their identity in the initial form of international adoption to Sweden and the absence of supplement for them. Korean identity possession is relatively weak and rare because of the absence of attachment, but has similarities in appearance and biological features.

One significant finding about identity is that visiting Korea to find their origin and encountering themselves is not always concluded positively, or even made worse. Because Korea and Sweden have totally different language and cultural factors, the long-time disconnection between them is also aggravated to natural communication and understanding of each other rather than resolving the problems that they have ardently wanted.
Implication of Colorblindness

Colorblindness can be a negative factor in identifying the identity problem, but it is also useful at the same time. Most of the context of the livelihood of KTA(s) appeared to be colorblind; it functions positively concerning economic and social activities in Sweden, such as entering the labor market in Sweden. Most interviewees answered that Asian identity was not significantly related to getting a job or provoking discrimination. Most aggression and events that triggered the crises for themselves were committed by strangers and occasionally in their daily lives. Therefore, colorblindness is still valid and applicable in a practical sense in Swedish society, but this research shows that colorblindness is layered or differently applied according to the context.

Limitations

However, there are clear limitations to this study. Inevitably, there were some discrepancies owing to the preliminary information. Most research and published data by the media focused on the negative perspective of their identity, but there was a considerable positive case of adoption for the adoptees, and most adoptees have their own psychological and other strategies against the problems. Another limitation is that it cannot easily capture the identity problem, which remains serious or problematic. Certainly, the first generation of adoption (between the 1960s and the 1980s) strained many issues (e.g., inauthentic adoption paper, violation of human rights, etc.); they already have their own family and children, and the identity of their children would not be in the same context as their parents. Despite these limitations, as previously stated, there was a clear lack of research and discussion related to the framework of identity and daily experiences. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted based on a more significant number of samples (interviewees), and longitudinal studies on this topic are needed. Correctly understanding the difference between the first and second generations of Korean transnational adoptees is as important as distinguishing accurately between other groups of minorities and themselves in Swedish society.
VIII. Appendix

Consent form

I, ___________________________ consent to participate in the interview for the Master’s thesis of BUMJIN LEE in Ethnic and Migration Studies at Linköping University.

1. I have been informed clearly about this research project orally in advance, and I understand that the interview data will remain confidential with anonymization following the General Data Protection Regulation.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the research at any time, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.

3. I consent to the interview being audio-recorded for conducting the analysis of research project.

4. I confirm that I have read and understand the information above.

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Taking Part in an interview for the study: Looking into the identity of Korean transnational adoptees in Sweden – pivoting on the correlation between Microaggression and Racialization experiences in their life

Hello, my name is BUMJIN LEE, I am a student in Ethnic and Migration Studies at Linköping University. I am asking you to take part in my research by taking part in an interview for my Master’s thesis. Before you decide, if you want to take part or not, I want to claim you why research is being done, and what you can expect if you do take part. Please read what I have to say carefully. Ask me if you want have any questions.

[What is the aim of this research?]
The research is based on hypothesis. I hypothesize that there are many factors to trigger the identity problems of Korean transnational adoptees in Sweden. Amongst them, I thought that the experience of racialization and microaggression have been critically influencing the identity crisis and problem. Thus, I want to clarify how the experience of racialization and microaggression to Korean transnational adoptees in Sweden influenced the identity formation through the research. For example, does it have been one of the important factors in their identity changes throughout their life? The reason why I have chosen two factor is, it is valid in both Korean and Swedish society, and embodied through the daily experiences with critical influence. Throughout the whole process, I aim at setting forth the discussion point about this problem not only to raise awareness but also for further research about the topic.

[Why I have been asked to take part?]
You have been contacted because I want to interview the people who have grown up as Korean transnational adoptees in Sweden, and I want to include the voice of adoptees for this study.

[Do I have to take part?]
No. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part. If you decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be requested to sign a consent form. If you decided to take part, you are still free to stop at any time without giving a reason.

[What will happen if I take part?]
If you decided to take part, I will contact you individually via e-mail or other means, and arrange an interview. The interview will take 1.5 to 2 hours, and the time takes for an interview varies, depending on how much you are going to say. The interview is going to be mainly online; via Zoom, or other platforms.

[What would the interview be like?]
I will ask you about your experience of racialization and micro-aggression in your daily life in Sweden, and I will also ask about relevant episodes and your life stories during the interview. Furthermore, I will ask additionally what happened to you, what was your feelings, and thoughts have been at different stages, or how you have got support or information, et cetera.

[What would happen after the interview?]
I will store it as an audible form in my private OneDrive account, and it is going to be shared with my supervisor, Anna Bredström; who can deal with the overall tasks of my thesis work for preventing miscellaneous problems. All the data is going to be protected following the Act concerning the Ethical Review of Research involving Humans, and the audio-recorded data is going to be destroyed after the whole process of thesis work.

[Contact for further information]
I hope that this information sheet has told you what you need to know before deciding whether or not to take part. If you have any questions, then please contact me or my supervising professor as after mentioned.

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Interview Guide

Thanks for participating the interview, and I am going to ask some questions about your livelihood, surroundings, and episodes in your life. Furthermore, I also ask how did you feel, respond, and recognize yourself through a specific episode or in your livelihood.

First, let me know who you are briefly.

Then (Second), How was your surroundings to you? For example, your (Swedish) adoptive families?
- Did you get appropriate support as the child care from your adoptive parents during your childhood?
- Could you tell some memories or episodes about it?
- Were there any problems with your adoptive family?
- When the problems happened, did your adoptive family members supported you with the relevant explanation?

Let’s talk about your School and Friend. Could you tell me more?
- Have you felt any feelings?
  (Additional question: Why did you feel? Were there any episodes?)
- Were there any problems with your school or classmates?
  (Additional question: What was the problem? and how did you afford it?)
  (Additional question 2: How did you feel? Were there any changes by that?)

I want to know about your social, and economical activities in Sweden.
- Did you encounter any problems or challenges of your social and economic activities?
  (Additional question 1: What was the problem or challenges?)
  (Additional question 2: How did you feel, and afford it?)
- Did you encounter any problem or challenges when you enter the Swedish labor market?

This is the last question. Let me know about the experiences, and challenges regarding to your origin, your thoughts and stories.
- How did you recognize yourself between Swedish and Korean?
(Additional question: If there any reason, can you tell me more about it?)
- How did you feel about your origin in your life? Have you felt any struggle to know/find your origin?
(Additional question 1: How was the process, and were there any obstacles?)
(Additional question 2: When you met your biological family, how did you feel about them?)
(Additional question 3: Were they explained to you about the context of adoption?)
- What was your surroundings’ response when you attempted to find your origin? Did they support you?
(Additional question 1: How about organization and government in each country?)
- During your journey in Korea, have you encountered any aggression or racism event?
- Does the episodes, events, or journey in Korea triggered any changes to you?
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