'WE ARE THE OTHERS'
NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES WITHIN RACIALISED AND GENDERED DISCOURSES AMONG YOUNG WOMEN WITH LATIN AMERICAN BACKGROUND IN SWEDEN

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Introduction
This paper presents data from an ongoing study investigating the shaping of identities among Latin American girls and young women living in Sweden. The study describes interactions within racialised and sexualised discourses that structure negotiations and relations with other immigrants and between ‘immigrants’ and ‘Swedes’.

The immigrants/Swede dichotomy is a construction of binary categories, where ‘immigrants’ and ‘immigrants culture’ are seen to represent a patriarchal and traditional system in contrast to the modern, gender-equal Swedish system (see Brune 1993, 2000, Molina 1997, Reyes 1998, Reyes et al 2002, Löwander 1993). The discourse of immigrants is created around ideas of gendered oppression and virginity often represented by the Muslim woman (cf Butler 1999, Basit 1997). My interest was to explore how Latin American young women relate to the polarised discourses of gender and ethnicity and how they negotiate around the shifting contexts. As an immigrant group with a long history in Sweden and as described as coming from a culture similar to ‘ours’, how did they negotiate within the polarised discourses? At the beginning of the study I had thought of studying sexuality and sexual behaviour as a theme with young immigrant girls divided by their cultural heritage. My interest later focused on how Latin American girls and young women were sexualised and racialised as gendered ‘others’ (c.f. Gilman 1992) and the importance of ‘gendered othering’ in the interaction of young women

In trying to understand the processes of negotiating identity among Latin American girls and the way they structure their experiences and relations with other ethnic groups, I find three forms of discourses relevant. These include firstly, the discursive division between 'immigrants' and 'Swedes' around binaries such as traditional-modern and cultural-non-cultural, which are reflections of the self-image of total gender-equality in Sweden. The second is the notion of female sexuality as divided and represented as mutually exclusive categories where women are constructed as either ‘sexualised and non-reproductive' or 'asexualised and reproductive' (Svalastog 1998, Lundgren & Eldén 2001, Berg 1999, Jeffner 1997). The 'asexualised other' is represented by immigrant girls as victims of cultural...
systems that idealise virginity in women (cf Staunaes 2003), in contrast to the 'sexualised other' which represent immigrant girls referred to as kickers. The latter term is used to depict sexually active immigrant women, also expected to be violent. These are expressions of divided femininity and are both contrasted to the idea of the gender-equal Swedish woman. The third discourse is the sexualised (global) image of Latin American women, which might be represented by the Latin super star i.e Jennifer Lopes or in the image of women in carnivals.

I discuss in this paper the intersections between gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age, segregation and class and the way they affect girls in this study. Discursive as well as spatial exclusion are relevant in my study and in the lives of young Latin American women (cf Van Dijk 1993). The Swedish society is segregated both discursively and spatially into predominantly white areas and multi-ethnic areas, the two also reflecting high and low incomes respectively. Young women experience exclusion not only from the 'Swedish society' but also from good jobs., both as immigrants and as people living in 'immigrant suburbs' (Ristilammi 1998). Their lives as young women and their negotiation of identity are expressed within these social spaces. The fact that immigrant young women are negotiating within discourses of gender and ethnicity from different positions, and experience racism, stereotypes and oppressions in different ways is a central point in my study. This is a kind of 'gendered ethnicity' (cf Essed) as ethnicity is gendered and negotiated through gender inequalities and should be understood as ethnized within a process of exclusion ma(r)king of ‘the other’

**Theoretical perspectives**

I have used the feminist theoretical perspective in dealing with questions of how relations of women and identities are constituted by ethnicity, race and sexuality. In attempting to make sense of the experiences of girls and young women with Latin American background, as well as the way they negotiate identities in shifting contexts. I am heavily influenced by the post colonial theory now articulated in many disciplinary sites including literature, cultural and feminist studies. Of particular relevance is the way the post colonial theory illuminates not only the material effects of the colonial encounter, but also its ideological basis, discourses and practices around ‘otherness’ (Said 2002, Mohanty 1996). More significantly, its constructivist approach illuminates the diversity of everyday and sometimes hidden responses and endeavours to reposition the dominant and the marginalised on the stage of a cultural discourse. This helps to challenge the representations of the colonised and colonising cultures as monolithic and having essential, unchanging features (Narayan 1997, 2000). It provides space for seeing how the daily practices of marginalised members disrupt the conceptions of the dominant culture allowing the voices from the margin to be heard, inside and outside of the dominant discourse. The ‘marginalised other’ can in such contexts represent the self differently and in way that destabilise what Bromley (2000) calls ‘the Eurocentric paradigms’, leading to better understanding of complex terrain in which the diasporic subjectivity negotiates the difference and the internal conflicts and tensions within the diasporic communities.
However, the construction of otherness may also mean that the other becomes subjected as other also for oneself (for discussion see Bhabha 1994, Spivak 1988, Fanon 1995, Minh-ha 1987, 1989, Said 2002). Othering is thus an ambivalent process and identity cannot be seen as having a fixed form but is constructed as a process in discursive practices and the meaning of language is important as we become realised that way (Pickering 2001).

Colonialism did not end with the official political colonialism. Rather, some suggests that culture has taken the place of biology (Sernhede 1999). It is in this context that the discourse of other cultures in contrast to 'swedishness' can be understood as part of the post colonial perspective and the multi-cultural Swedish society can be seen as both particularistic and universalistic (Bhabha 1994). The particularistic view of culture stresses that different cultures are separated from each other. The multicultural society is therefore made of distinct homogeneous cultures. In the universalistic discourse these cultures are related as ‘different’ from the dominant cultural centre.

Gender-construction too is as a continuous process where we ‘do’ gender in interaction with others making its meaning contextual and inter-subjective (cf Goffman 1972, 1974). But as West & Fenstermaker (1995) argue as we ‘do’ gender we also ‘do’ difference, which implies that gender intersects with ethnicity, sexuality, class and age and we cannot understand the one without seeing the other. Gender, ethnicity and class is ‘done’ mutually in specific contexts, which also creates the bases of our experiences. These ‘regimes of inequality’ (Acker 2000) constitutes multiple oppression that take shifting forms depending on how they interact in various contexts and in interaction with different groups which gives us diverse possibilities of identification (Ang-Lygate 1997, Hall and Du Guy 1996). The girls negotiate with these contrasts in relation to identification and in other experiences in everyday life (see Essed 1991). No gender can be non-racialised, ethnicized, aged or classed, which does not take away the difficulties to understand them. Sexualised discourses are made around ethnicity, where women are ethnicized, eroticized and gendered all at the same time (Mirza 1997). Ethnicity as created in social relations is not a primordial category but rather situational, as ethnic groups are shaped and re-shaped within social interaction (Mirza 1997, Anthias 1992, Hylland Eriksen, Sernhede 1999, Barot et al 1999, Fenton 1995). This means that I have a constructivist perspective on ethnicity that focuses on the meaning of ethnicity in social processes rather than merely as a cultural category. This gives a contextual understanding. In this context marginalisation, exclusion and ‘othering’ are important concepts. Ethnicity is formed by power structures where the global is reflected in the local and intersects with other social categories as gender, class and age. In this sense, culture can not be seen as static as it has "consequences for a discursive construction of 'immigrants' who are typically viewed as traditional and as belonging to cultures of lower standing" (Ålund 2002 s 8).
The Latin American Diaspora in Sweden

Life in the Diaspora entails a constant process where we may not ‘come from’ on place to another, but rather the changing processes where we might be situated differently – not only in relation to nation – and might give a feeling of being rootless as an outsider and also has social consequences. During the military regimes in the 1970s, many Latin-Americans went into exile and became symbols of the left radical political movement and activists (Lindqvist 1991, Lundberg 1987). In recent years, the reasons for migration has become more varied and the children of the Latin American population growing up in Sweden do not share the experiences of their parents as political refugees (cf Borgström 1996).

This also reflects developments in the Latin American countries as an example of the global developments where reasons for migration gives insights of how the Latin American group is perceived in Sweden. Earlier studies of Latin-American refugees in Sweden focused mainly on those living in exile for political reasons (Lundberg 1987, Lindqvist 1991). More recent literature (Borgström 1996, cf Lewin 1991, cf Frisell 1996) has focused on the(ir) children growing up in Sweden as second-generation immigrant, both as an outsider group in Sweden and as a group sharing cultural notions with Swedes for example in their view of sexuality (for international comparison see Bettie 2000).

Methodology, method and selection

As this is a work-in-progress I want to say something about the research process so far. My interest with Latin-American women goes back to my undergraduate studies in which I have focused mainly on women in Latin America. As I began to study the Latin-American group in Sweden, my interest then was caught by the phenomenon of migration and identity. The idea of breaking from the familiar perhaps in the middle of the teenage years, move to another country or be born in Sweden as a ‘second-generation immigrant’ raised my curiosity to investigate what impact this has on young women’s lives and to the analytical construction of gender and ethnicity.

The study is based on focus group discussions (FGDs) (see Bloor 2001, Wibeck 2000, Kreuger 1998, Morgan 1998a/b) and individual interviews with Latin American women living in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood. From this data I will discuss different possibilities of identifications and how gender and (hetero)sexualisation becomes important in this process. A focus group is a group where interaction is part of the analysis. This method has been a good method for my study in various ways. First, it is appropriate when the question is little explored. Second, being a dynamic method it indicates where there are different opinions and meanings about a subject and where negotiations are taking place. Third, when group norms or group processes are studied, FGDs may be the most relevant method.

I found focus groups suitable for empowering the group members in relation to me as a Swedish researcher (Madriz 2000, cf Wilkinson 1999, Chiu, Knight 1999, Farquhar (with Das) 1999, Kitzinger
1995). During the sessions, I noticed that the girls became more critical in their analysis of exclusion and parts of Swedish cultural behaviour. For my project, focus groups were a way to explore a field that is relatively unknown. It also gave me a dynamic material that reflected various opinions. However, it does not reveal individual stories in the same way as one-to-one interviews do.

The girls participating in the study were recruited through schools in the multi-ethnic suburbs. I sent a letter to the heads of eleven schools introducing my study and myself. All the school heads were positive about the study although they also added that they did not have many students with Latin American background in their schools. Many teachers told me they had “no register or registration of students by ethnic background "and might especially be difficult to find girls with Latin American background"iv. I visited two different schools and I got in contact with one teacher and one student contact person who had Latin American background themselves. These two helped me to come in contact with the girls. Most of the (Swedish) teachers met were keen to present for me 'good' and 'ambitious' girls. It appeared as if they wanted me to see 'good examples' of Latin American girls. I interpreted this as a way to give good examples of ‘immigrants’ to contrast with the medial stereotyped image, but it also reflects the ideas that teachers might have of Latin American girls. One teacher gave me the phone number of a student, whom she said was excellent in school. This girl participated in an individual interview.

All the girls contacted were willing to participate in the FGDs. I explained about my research and booked a time for the interviews. The reason for this arrangement was to give the girls time to make their decision whether to participate in the study or not. There was no refusal. The first FGD was conducted mainly in Swedish. The second was mainly in Spanish, due to the short period of time the girls had been in Sweden. Afterwards, the girls told me how relieved they felt talking about these issues. These were things they could not share with their families.

**The empirical data**

In this section, I present a number of themes to illuminate how the girls and young women with Latin American background describe their situation as well as how they experience and negotiate within the discourses of ‘othering’. The girls in the study were between 16 and 19 an were in high school. This means that ethnicity and relations between different ethnic groups is part of their everyday lives in school. Majority of the students in the schools I visited had a foreign background.

This differences within the Latin Americans in the diaspora were reflected in the groups. In the first group, the participants where mainly Chilean young women and some having been were born in Sweden. In this group, the young women were negotiating their identity in terms of ‘Swedish’ or ‘immigrant’, being ‘half’ or ‘whole’ Chilean, Swede, Peruvian or Mexican. It was clear that the political history was an important part in the shaping of identity. “It’s the same reasons why we are all here” as one Chilean/Mexican girl said. The most important political event reflected in the groups was
the Chilean dictator Pinochet, but other conflicts like the earlier ones between Chile, Bolivia and Peru were present in their interaction (cf Gómez 199).

In a group comprising of girls recently arrived, where the main reason for immigration was the relation between their mother and a Swedish man, the underlying themes in the discussion was their being ‘here’ and ‘there’. One of the girls mother was working as a home helper in a Swedish family and the girl had to work herself as a cleaner after school and Saturday’s to supplement of the house rent. From the discussions it seems that the women who come to Sweden with a man might be a particularly vulnerable group of immigrants.

In this section, I present how the young women identify themselves in relation to the categories of immigrants and Swedes, how they feel positioned as immigrants, how they shift into different identities and the forms of interactions and discourses among immigrants themselves and in particular the rumour system.

‘We are the Others’

It became obvious that Latin American young women were opposed construction of both the states of being immigrant as well as of Swedish. Living in the multiethnic areas, these young Latin American women are constantly negotiating identities in relation to the discourses and constructions of immigrants and women as ‘others’. They talk of themselves as Chilean in Sweden and as Swedish in Chile. My question to them was whether they think about where they were born or their background:

/…/
G1: I do that.
R: Mm.
G1: Because I am friends with two Swedish girls. One is not really a Swede in the real sense but all the same feels so. They are Swedes and I am an immigrant or ‘half’ Swede. So I feel more like an immigrant and one thinks a great deal about this.
R: Mm.
G1: I do that all the same.
G2: I feel that I am a Swede. I mean, I feel Swedish.
G1: Well yes, I also feel I am Swedish.
G2: But when for example I am with my Swedish friends, then I feel I am half Sweedish, but not when I am abroad, then I feel, yes I am from Sweden and I am Swedish.
G3: One is wholly immigrant. When I travel to Chile, Swedish. When I am here Chilean. One is immigrant whenever one moves.
(All laugh)
G1: Everywhere. Wherever we move. There should be a country for us.
G2: we who feel...
(All laugh)
G1: A country that… (laugh) We are like Romanies. Aren’t we? Like gypsies. The thing is, one, they come from Finland, but Finland doesn’t accept them, they come here to Sweden, yes, they are gypsies. But it is Finn/gyp/, what is it called, gypsies from Finland. So it is like this, they do not have a country either…
/…/
It seems that identity is created by the exclusion of what one is not at the particular place and with particular groups, for example, in the presence of a Swede, she cannot claim to be Swedish. It is obvious that identity is shaped and negotiated as a matter of inter-subjectivity and of different contexts.

G1: Well, I feel like a Swede. But I cannot say to my friends who are Swedish “I am a Swede”. That would not be possible at all although one feels like a Swede, even so that won’t be.

This is the kind of discussions that show contradictions in the discussion. I here give an example on how a negotiation spontaneously took place in a FGD around identifying as 'immigrant' or 'Swede':

G1: […] No, but sometimes it is like this that one can hear a lot of crap because of immigrants; “I don’t like that school because of the immigrants, because of immigrants” and all that and then you get, then you take it personally although you know you shouldn’t, because you know it has nothing to do with you because I am Swedish but still, one takes it personally.
G2: But you can’t say that either.
G1: What?
G2: Well, if they say that that school, [their school name] for example, yes those immigrants, then you cannot say “I don’t take it personally”.
G1: No but, I do take it personally, but of course I should take it personally…well that is not possible to explain.

Being Othered within racialized structures

In the group with newly arrived Latin American girls the discussion was mostly around the difficulties related to being immigrant and feelings of exclusion. They never named themselves 'Swedes'. They were talking about how they were positioned as immigrants and perceived in Sweden as social welfare abusers and as robbers and as unable to find employment for themselves and for immigrants in general. Quite early in the discussion they took up the question of racism. They said that they experienced Sweden as “a bit racist”.

G6: No, it is racism in the sense like, they say that we don’t behave, that the majority say that we are like this bad.
R: The/
G6: In the sense of robbing, painting on the walls, we/
R: Who are 'we'?
G7: The Swedes? It is like they think that we are all bad.
R: But when you say 'we'.
G7: The Latin people.
G6: No, not only the Latin people, it is all the immigrants.
G8: Because the Swedes think you know that those come here to our land.
G6: To rob, to rob.
G8: Not really rob but with negative impact on ambience, I don’t know… there are many who say that the immigrants who come here don’t do anything except living on social welfare […] I think the majority come here because they want to work, there are many who do not have the possibility to work because they don’t… they don’t… have, they don’t have, they don’t find work or because the eh… language I don’t know.

These girls felt they were viewed as thieves, wallpainters and stereotyped as young criminals. They told stories of how they felt being indirectly accused of shoplifting or being seen as lazy, abusers of the welfare system etc. I was curious to find out whether they talked about themselves as Latin girls or as immigrants. One of the girls said that the Latin people were considered to be loud. This they said was something misunderstood by the Swedes as they thought it was an expression of aggressiveness, but the other group talked of all immigrants groups as having similar experiences of discrimination. For them, Swedes and immigrants were deeply segregated in a way they almost described as a 'state of war' between them:

That most of the girls felt more secure in immigrant suburbs than the Swedish dominated areas is interesting. The connection between being othered through a racist practices were less explicit in the first group. The theme of racism was not so easily recognised in the group of girls with mixed Swedish-Latin American background. They had difficulties to put names on their experiences of racism.

R: This which we were talking about. We talked about nazists and so. Do you have any experiences of being oppressed in ways that you can relate to the feeling of being.. immigrants or something else..
G2: No.
(Everybody say no)
Quiet..
R: So this thing with drawing swastika and so on that’s things one has to accept?
G2: Yes, well I feel like that. Or no. Well I let them know, but I couldn’t do anything about it, I felt then as I was the only one who let them know. The teachers seemed to take it…
G1: …with a grain of salt.
G2: Yes exactly, they didn’t react, but it is not that bad. So..
All quiet.
Here, I am provoking the girls using an earlier story of racist practices they had talked about. When they spoke of racism they only referred to racism in obvious forms like pure Nazism. I interpret this as Swedish racism is hidden behind ideas of tolerance and multiculturalism and these ideas might also be internalised in their view of racism.

To be an immigrant, Latin American, Swedish, Chilean, young woman

A great part of the interviews were focused on when the girls assumed what identity. Were they talking about immigrants, Swedes, Latin Americans, Chilean, girls or boys, and in relation to whom, where and when? It was clear that these categories of identification were shifting in different times, spaces and in relation to different people. Sometimes they were immigrant in opposition to Swedes, Latin American in opposition to immigrants and Swedes, Chilean in opposition to Peruvians etc, girl in opposition to boys, and to other girls.

In an interview with a young woman who was half Finnish and half Latin American she said she felt mostly Finnish and not Latin American at all, as she was not 'the kind of Latin American girl'. What is that kind of girl, I asked? She answered: It is a girl who "does what she wants".

The identification was also constructed in relation to me. When I first met the girls in school cafeteria I told them that I doing research on Latin American girls. One of the girls said ‘okay but hey, we are no whores you know’. This was an example of how ethnicity is gendered and constructed along sexuality for young women and how they are constantly dealing with it. Later, in the interview I asked her to elaborate on this again.

G2: Laugh… I was only joking.
R. But I do find it interesting that you said so...
G2: What? But you see most of the people or what I have heard or I hear from many people, a Chilean or Latin American, yes those… putas… I don’t want to say it in Swedish, it sounds like maldito…son unas putas, they are easy-going, many believe that, they have the image of… when they hear someone is like that dark-skinned, or like that, they think, no but it’s true, you hear it from the guys and so on, that’s a Latin girl over there she is really easy-going for sure, and that is/
G1: It’s the same you see, we are class/ you see we are classified together with the Swedish girls, it’s all the immigrant boys, or I should judge everyone alike but they think that all Swedish girls are easy-going.
G2: Yes.
G1: Just because they have a more, they have another view of sex because they come from another culture where, yes, sex you have when you are married, but we don’t live like that, or we Swedes, and now I say we as Swedes, because I feel Swedish.

As Latin Americans or Chileans they feel they are seen as easy-going-girls. And in this question of sexuality they talk of themselves as Swedes. They are unlike other immigrant groups when it comes to sexuality but the ideas of themselves as sexualised is related to their ethnic background and makes them appear culturally as 'Swedish girls'. In relation to ‘other cultures’ not similar to 'Swedish
culture', they are seen to belong to the 'Swedish culture'. Here, the construction of immigrant culture, as expected to be asexualised immigrant woman from Middle East, does not fit Latin American girls. Instead they feel Swedish. But in relation to ethnicity they were as pointed out earlier not Swedish. The girls use the discursive division between immigrant girls from ‘a different culture’ opposed to the notion of 'Swedish culture'. In this dichotomy, they don’t feel as ‘immigrants’ in terms of culture and not as Swedish in terms of ethnicity. The fact that young women are dealing with sexualised notions of themselves might be analysed as an expression of 'divided femininity', a cultural notion of a female dichotomy of ‘the virgin’ and ‘the whore’ in which the virgin is the reproductive asexual woman in contrast to the sexual non-reproductive woman. The feeling of stereotyping of Latin American women was shared with the more recently arrived group.

/…/
G7: […] we were many groups, we were going home everybody, but we were in [name of place] I think and we sat as a group where everybody was Latin American I think and I see a place where there are some Swedish youth and on the other… they were other groups. We stood there, we laughed but I see that those young people are laughing because we are having fun, like that, look at them. Someone asked me where are you from and I said Nicaragua, like Spanish and they said aha, Spanish like that, Spanish, they think we are, I think that many people think that just because we are Spanish we are, well I don’t want to say the word… whores… [laugh] they believe that because we are open and laughing and we are warm and so on, but that is wrong, and that irritates me when they think like that just because you are Spanish, you dance, you have fun, you show who you are… why should they say so?
R: Who are 'they' in this case... you feel?
G7: Well… Syrians and them.
G8: Everybody who is not Latin Americans..
R: they think that the Latins are...
G8: The women [laugh]
G7: Has it happen to you?
G6: No it never happened to me.
G7: You know you go to parties and they think that we are like this crazy [loca] and/
R: Are there, are there women who think like that or is it...is it them who think like that?
G7: It’s them. Both girls and boys, but maybe it is so because in town there are many Spanish girls who do well, bad things and make you, just because one person do something bad everyone is judged alike…
/…/

After this discussion the girls tried to understand why they felt being seen like easy-going girls and it was clear that they did not describe their cultural heritage as different from the other immigrant girls.. One girl (G6) felt a lot of freedom in Sweden and claimed that they had this ‘culture’ of virginity in Peru and she said that others know that Latin Americans cannot run around with boys as it is important to be a virgin before marriage in this culture. On the other hand she claimed that nobody cared about this culture but was breaking the rules constantly. This was the main reason to ideas of Latin Americans as being easy-goings they said.
Rumours among girls and boys

Although all the girls have friends from different ethnic groups and backgrounds as young women they dealt with sexualized and racialised discourses in their everyday life. 'Gendered othering' do influence their interaction and relation to other young women. One expression of this is the type of rumours spread at school.

R: But what are they about?
All (screaming): Who you have slept with, what you wear, who you are going out with, maybe she doesn’t change underwear, she doesn’t use deodorant, she doesn’t shave her armpits, she doesn’t wash.

Rumours were also spread among girls. Both girls and boys are expected to take part in the gender construction as norms of gender are internalised. In this control, girls ethnicity becomes a ma(r)ker of (a)sexuality which is controlled and expressed also among girls.

G1: Yes, well it is people I have come across and talked to and they have had an attitude towards me and you see I don’t like that. It’s the same with the girls, you see they look askance at you just because you/
G2: are there
G1: … exist. One can pass by and they look askance at you and you haven’t done anything.
R: Is it older girls or?
G1. Well I don’t know.
G2: It doesn’t matter you see. And do you know, this is also true, that when you are from Chile, you see especially Chile, it’s true, then you are stamped, look at her, yes Chilean.
G1: Is it true?
G2: It’s true.
G3: Yes it’s true.
G1: At this school?
G2: Yes but you know these dark-skinned girls.
G1: The Afro-gang.
G2: Yes exactly, some are like dead good, but others are looking questioning, yes she is Latin American and they think ho’ at once.

Two of the girls have experiences of ‘being looked at’. But they are interpreting it differently. One of the girls is experiencing that Chileans or Latin Americans are seen as ‘whores’. These girls experience that ‘other’ groups are sexualising them from their ethnic background also among the girls. The Finnish-Latin American girl had some kind of middle position where she could take a position as Finnish in relation to her Syrian friend and ask her about how they perceived Latin Americans. Still, she did not feel indifferent to the classification and it seems that it is both part of her notion of Latin Americans and of her identification with ‘them’.
G10: (simultaneously) yes but, Latin American, they are, you see the girls are like that, yes they take what they want for real and I know that Syrians have prejudices about Latin Americans, like they are whores and so on, and I don’t think so myself, but, well now I’m lost.

R: Is that what Syrians say to you?

G10: Yes I asked a friend what do you think of Latin Americans, or what do Syrians or Arabs in general think and she said, they are whores, or they, I don’t know why, but I guess it is because of Jennifer Lopes, you know her style and so on, but I think it is good that one takes what one wants as a girl, wherever you come from. Like that.

R: How do you mean when you say ‘take what you want’.

G10: Well I mean, Jennifer Lopes, okay she is good-looking and so on but she shows what she got, she takes what she wants, I don’t know, I guess Syrians do too but I don’t know. But it is like this with Latin American girls they are like.. I don’t know.. maybe I have thought about it because I am one myself.. or one..yes but everyone I have seen… [...] these girls were always like that tough.. maybe I have thought of it because I had.. I mean..

R: Latin Am/or? Yourself?

G10: Yes because I am a Latin American myself… mm.

This girl is talking about Latin Americans as ‘they’ when she talks about the stereotyped Latin American woman, but she is obliged to relate to these notions as she is Latin American herself. She also raises the global representation of Latin American women in the image of Jennifer Lopes.

G10: […] well when others think of Latin Americans they think of these oily guys and girls who are like this with oil all over, I don’t know, like Jennifer Lopes, yes those, but I know that, I think that, I have thought about this and really I think that Latin Americans become Latin Americans when they come outside of Latin America/

R: Mm.

G10: Or, you see, like Muslim women who start wearing a veil when they come to Sweden, so do Latin Americans when they.. for example the men, or old men, well old men, who are 40 or 50 years old, they have long hair, cowboy boots and so on and you know, they are really, you can see that they are Latin Americans, they hold on, they scream Chile and that is peoples’ idea of Latin Americans but… my cuisins and everyone in my family they are not, they have become Swedish, yes, and when I was in Chile I was completely or I thought that people would be more like … people think they are.. but they were just ordinary people, [laugh] if you see what I mean.

This girl is negotiating with her own relation of being half Latin American and the people she knows and her family and the representation of the Latin American stereotype which she is confronted with from 'elsewhere'.

Discussion

In this paper I have tried to focus on the different forms of identity-shaping-processes and contexts among Latin American girls take. The focus is the consequences of being an immigrant, a Latin
American, a Swede, a young woman, living in the diaspora in a multi-ethnic suburb and how these interact and gets meaning in relations to others. I also try to see the heterogeneity within the group. My data suggest that identification is a constant process created within these complexities. Identity is not a stable ground. Rather there are shifting possibilities for identification (Minh-ha 1987, 1989). These possibilities are though restricted. Othering is experienced from ones position within racialized structures. All the girls had to negotiate identities in relation to the discourses of immigrant and Swedes.

Latin American young women are constructed as in-between the main gendered discursive categories of Swedes and immigrants. When it comes to sexuality they are seen as being like Swedes by other immigrant groups but ethnically they are identified as immigrants. Within processes of 'gendered othering' young women are dealing with the cultural notions of divided femininity and risk of rumours in relation to this. Latin American girls seem to experience rumours just because they are Latin American. As one girl suggests; the stereotype of Latin American woman is created 'outside of Latin America' and what has become connected with the sign of Latin American women is thus of othering processes.

**Litteratur**


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For a discussion on culture and feminism see Narayan 1997.

In a Swedish advertising campaign for 'hot' and 'exotic' Latin weeks on Viking Line, a woman’s behind was showed.

There are criticism towards the (re)presentation of people as marginalised for (re)producing the idea of the centre. Spivak (1995) suggests that marginalised groups are 'silenced centers'.

An interpretation of the non-consciousness about Latin American presence might be a result of constructing the category of immigrants around notions of ‘other cultures’ where Latin Americans do not fit in.

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