"Det bästa för mitt barn"

Nyblivna mödrar i den delade staden

av

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Abstract


In Sweden, research on residential segregation has often focused on neighbourhoods comprising people with foreign backgrounds, implying that segregation is an “immigrant problem”. It has been argued, however, that people with Swedish backgrounds are influenced by but also contribute to the residential segregation in Swedish cities. This study explores how mothers, mostly with Swedish backgrounds, construct ethnicity and “race” in their neighbourhoods and in relation to bringing up their children. Theoretically, the study uses perspectives from Critical Whiteness Studies, theories regarding place and identity and theories of motherhood. The study is based on qualitative interviews with 19 mothers, a majority of whom lived in two different neighbourhoods in a middle-sized Swedish city. The analysis of the interviews is based on discourse analysis and more specifically discourse psychology.

The study observes that the women’s lives were influenced by the polarisation in the city in a number of different manners. For example, the women constructed who they were or wanted to be by describing their own neighbourhood and its place in the segregated city. Another finding was that the polarisation of the city became important when the women discussed which neighbourhood they wanted their children to grow up in. Although the women emphasised that they wanted their children to grow up in a culturally and socially diverse neighbourhood, when the mothers disclosed concrete decisions regarding the upbringing of their children, they instead said that they avoided such neighbourhoods. The contradictory discourses that the women used when discussing the upbringing of their children, was legitimised in different manners. For instance it was legitimised by arguing that they, as mothers, must do “the best” for their child. This argument could be understood as building on both modern and historic constructions of motherhood.

Keywords: whiteness, Swedishness, Critical Whiteness Studies, residential segregation, motherhood, school segregation, place identity, national identity.

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