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Introducing Mixed Race Sweden: A Study of the (Im)possibilities of Being a Mixed-Race Swede

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Abstract

Sweden is one of the most diverse countries as far as demographic makeup in the world; however, acceptance of multi-racial inhabitants is not on par with other diversified countries throughout the world. This article aims to understand the situation and position of mixed-race Swedes in contemporary Sweden, their experiences of racialization in different social spaces and how they acquire and develop a racial literacy. This study takes place in a country which is currently inherently super-diverse and rapidly developing into an even more multiracial nation but is also a highly racially segregated, and in which a color-blind racial grammar is the dominant discourse dividing the population between “immigrants” and “Swedes.”

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Introduction: Mixed Race Swedes in the New Multiracial Sweden

“Where are you from?” The constantly recurring question. As if I had been found in a basket in the water, even though I am living with my parents in a similar house on Ängsvägen as all the other children are living in... It is only because of my *un-Swedish* appearance as my origin always must be investigated and me having to explain myself. I am born in Sweden. But there seems to be no nationality, no name for those like me. (Tung Hermelin, 2012: 40)

The sparsely populated but geographically vast northern European, Nordic, and Scandinavian Kingdom of Sweden with a little bit over 10 million inhabitants has within barely a generation become one of the Western world’s most diverse countries in terms of its demographic makeup and not the least with regards to its racial diversity. Today, Sweden is well on par with the second most super-diverse Western nations after the USA such as Canada, Australia, the UK, the Netherlands, and France with one third of its population being either born abroad or born in Sweden with one or two foreign-born parents as of December 31, 2018 (Statistiska centralbyrån,

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2019). However, contrary to the other aforementioned countries, which are all former settler colonies or former colonial powers that have either been built on immigration *per se* or received immigrants for decades including substantial numbers of immigrants of color from their non-European overseas colonies and territories, Sweden became an immigrant country only after World War II and during the Cold War (Johansson Heinö, 2015, 87). In fact, Sweden was probably one of the whitest and most homogenous countries in the Western world well into the 1970s as its present multiracial super-diversity mainly derives from the 1980s and 1990s and onwards.

Various individual immigrants of color arrived in Sweden in the 1950s and 1960s; some of whom were African Americans, Latin Americans, North and Southern Africans, Turks, and South Eastern Europeans, while others were non-white children from Asia, Africa and Latin America who were adopted by white Swedes. By 1970 there were still fewer than 15,000 immigrants from non-European countries living in Sweden, representing a miniscule 0.15 percent of the total population. As late as 1980 the proportion had risen to only 1 percent of whom a majority were perhaps adoptees of color living with white Swedes (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2017). Today however, the recent immigration of non-Western refugees and immigrants which took off in earnest from the mid-1970s and continued in far greater numbers from the second half of the 1980s and after the end of the Cold War, has dramatically changed Sweden's demographic makeup. Currently, around 20 percent of the total Swedish population has an origin from the non-European world and from South Eastern Europe excluding North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, and the majority of them would not be able to pass as fully white in a contemporary Swedish setting.

Approximately one third of all children and youth have another language besides Swedish as their first language, around 40 percent of all children and youth have some kind of a foreign and minority background, and about 10 percent of the inhabitants of Sweden have a culturally Muslim background, whether they are practicing Muslims or not (Pew Research Center. 2017; Skolverket. 2018). Sweden has, in other words, become a super-diverse country in record time within a generation and both on a racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious level. Simultaneously, Sweden has also become one of the Western world's most racially segregated, stratified, and segmented societies espousing extreme inequalities between its white and non-white inhabitants and even in comparison to other European countries like Belgium, the Netherland, Switzerland, the UK, and Germany where substantial proportions of the immigrant and minority inhabitants are also strongly marginalized (Hübinette & Abdullahi. 2018).

Most of the earliest non-white immigrants who came to Sweden and stayed permanently within the country during the post-war period were young and unmarried men and many of them formed intimate relationships with white Swedish women. This meant that the first generation of mixed-race Swedes with African American, North African, West African, Southern African, Middle Eastern, South Asian, East Asian or Latin American immigrant fathers and white Swedish mothers were born already in the 1960s and 1970s even if the bigger and more sizeable cohorts of mixed-race Swedes have been born mainly from the end of the last century. These biracial Swedes who were born in the 1960s and 1970s were not the first mixed-race Swedes in Swedish history as Sweden had once had its own overseas colonies from the 1600s to the end of the 1800s

wherein interracial marriages had taken place and where mixed race people had existed (Fur, 2006). The practice of interracial marriage was principally from the 1980s and 1990s and even more so from the year of 2000 and onwards that today's mixed-race population of Sweden derives from. This means that while the mixed-race population in countries like France, the UK, and the Netherlands to a large extent has a non-white parent deriving in from a former French, British or Dutch colony, probably none of the mixed race Swedes have such a connection to a former overseas Swedish colony and they are instead mostly the results of the recent non-European immigration to Sweden.

Sweden is perhaps one of the Western countries with the highest proportion of intercultural, interreligious, and interracial families and intimate relationships as well as of multiracial children and mixed adults. There are, for example, proportionally more transnationally and transracially adopted people of color in Sweden than anywhere else in the world and there are more children born in Sweden with one foreign-born and one native-born parent than the total number of children born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2019). Today there are in total about 800,000 inhabitants who have been born in Sweden with one foreign-born and one native-born parent and around 200,000 of them would probably not be able to pass as being fully white in Sweden and since at least the 1990s it is more common that the father is white and the mother is of color instead of the opposite in the 1960s and 1970s. Most of today's mixed-race children have a mother from Southeast and Northeast Asia and a white father (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2019).

Sweden is currently one of the most multiracial and super-diverse Western countries and also harbors one of the biggest proportions of mixed-race people in the Western world; however, this is not reflected in Swedish research on ethnic relations, migration, and minorities as there are only a handful of existing studies that have given focus to mixed-race Swedes with the few Swedish researchers who have done that are themselves of mixed origin (Adeniji, 2014; Arbouz, 2017; Habel, 2009). Furthermore, it is hardly possible to find any specific studies on mixed-race Swedes using terms and concepts such as “mixed race” (in Swedish: *blandad* or *mixad*), “biracial” (in Swedish: *birasial*), and “multiracial” (in Swedish: *multirasial*) as search words in Swedish academic databases, including also Swedish euphemisms for mixed race Swedes such as “bicultural” (in Swedish: *bikulturell*) and “multiethnic” (in Swedish: *multietnisk*). Finally, studies that do make use of these latter concepts do not necessarily differentiate between minority Swedes with monoethnic backgrounds from those of mixed descent, and multi-ethnic as a concept most often denote a certain space or place that is dominated by immigrant inhabitants and it is not used as a concept denoting a specific identity formation.

The first full-length monograph on mixed-race people in the Nordic region has recently seen its light – Tony Sandset's *Color that matters. A comparative approach to mixed race identity and Nordic exceptionalism* from 2018. Although not specifically focusing on mixed-race identity in Sweden as Sandset's study is set in Norway, Sandset provides an analysis of the ways how mixed identities in Scandinavia are formed along both cultural and embodied lines, arguing that while the official discourse in the region refers to a postracial or color-blind era, race still matters in the lives of people of mixed descent. The author also addresses the challenges and problems of doing mixed-race research in the Nordic region and he also provides an overview of

the status of the field and concludes that there are hardly any academic works that specifically and explicitly deals with the topic of mixed-race people in the Nordic countries.

Due to the absence of mixed-race studies in the Nordic region, including within Swedish academia, this article aims to address this gap and blind spot within the broader field of ethnic relations and migration studies in Sweden and contribute to the future formation of a specific field of Swedish critical mixed-race studies which is not yet existing.

This article consists of a study based on 18 interviews with mixed-race Swedes and on text extracts coming from novels and autobiographies written by mixed-race Swedish authors, which have been published from the 1990s and onwards and which belong to the category of non-white Swedish literature (Hübinette, 2019). This article aims to understand the situation and position of mixed-race Swedes in contemporary Sweden, their experiences of racialization in different social spaces and how they acquire and develop a racial literacy. This study takes place in a country which is currently inherently super-diverse and rapidly developing into an even more multiracial nation but is also a highly racially segregated, and in which a color-blind racial grammar is the dominant discourse dividing the population between “immigrants” and “Swedes” (in Swedish: *invandrare* and *svenskar*). This article tries to address the following research questions: Why is it so difficult to conduct research, talk about, and conceptualize mixed-race people in Sweden? How do mixed-race Swedes understand themselves in a country in which color-blindness is the norm and where the category designation of mixed-race is almost unimaginable? This article consists of an overview of Swedish race relations and Swedish color-blindness, and the experiences of mixed-race Swedes according to a selection of narratives and themes that are discernible in the interviews and in texts, and finally a discussion to sum up the findings of the article.

Swedish Race Relations and Swedish Color-Blindness

A few days later, he wrote in a debate article together with the singer and debater Michael Alonzo, who also has a Swedish-born mother and a foreign-born father, that none of them had concealed their mixed origin, but that it was the society that put together immigrants, mixed people and adopted people into the slush category “immigrants”... “As long as society chooses to treat us as and call us immigrants,” Dogge and Alonzo wrote, “we are and remain immigrants.” Oivvio Polite wrote in a closing text that it is dangerous to accept the statistical definition of what constitutes an immigrant. The goal should be, he wrote, to find “categories we fit into that do not mutilate us.” (Nordberg 2014: 120-121)

It is an irony that Sweden once was one of the world’s leading knowledge producing centers and research excellence nations for so-called race science as well as for so-called race hygiene policies and practices between around 1905-1968. Sweden would later become the first country in the world to abolish the word race itself in legal and official documents according to a unison parliament and government decision in the 2000s, and today only a few Swedish researchers operationalize the concept of race which has been mostly replaced by the term ethnicity (Hübinette and Lundström, 2014; Hübinette and Pripp, 2017). Furthermore, apart from the

abolishment of the concept of race, the only two main “ethnic” categories used in colloquial speech, in everyday life, within Swedish academia, and in the Swedish public discourse in general are “Swedes” and “immigrants” (Hübinette, 2017). This division is a racialized categorization as the designation “Swedes” not only includes white native-born Swedes who consist of about two thirds of the total population of the country, but also those inhabitants who can pass sufficiently as white whether they are born in Sweden, neighboring Nordic countries, some Western, Eastern and Southern European countries, North America, Australia, New Zealand, or South Africa. The other category designation “immigrants” consequently includes those who usually cannot pass fully as white including most mixed- race Swedes and according to perhaps the most exclusive, excluding, and arguably also most privileged version of whiteness in the world, namely Swedish whiteness which has traditionally always been considered to be the whitest of all “whitenesses” since the days of both Swedish and pan-Western so-called race science, when the idea of the white race itself was invented and formulated (Kjellman, 2013).

One way of understanding this particular way of how Swedish race relations and Swedish color-blindness function and how racial subjectivities including being a mixed-race Swede are (re)produced in a Swedish contemporary context is to put them within the framework of the notion of Nordic exceptionalism. The notion of Nordic exceptionalism sees the Nordic countries as being essentially antiracist or non-racist, equal, rational, and inherently good; with Sweden as the prime example of this ethos (Jansson, 2018; Loftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012). Sweden in particular has come to be considered the paradise for human rights and progressive politics worldwide and in which a certain kind of color-blind antiracism is the social norm as race and racial matters are seen as something belonging to the past in today’s Sweden. Race relations are associated with fringe and marginal white supremacist groups or as belonging to other Western countries, in particular to the US and the UK, which are two countries that are often considered to be either race obsessed or simply just inherently racist among Swedes.

Following the works of Anglo-American critical race and whiteness studies scholars such as David Theo Goldberg, Steve Garner, and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva who have analyzed Western societies as marked by an increasing color-blind ideology according to which issues of race are seen as something that are not that important anymore, color-blindness in its Swedish version can be said to have become the equivalent to a certain kind of progressive antiracism while in other Western countries color-blindness is more related to neoliberalism (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Garner, 2016; Goldberg, 2009). Swedish color-blindness can, in comparison to other Western countries’ color-blindness ideologies, also be considered a more extreme and version of Western color-blindness as the Swedish word race has become an uncanny word in itself in the Swedish language and among native Swedish speakers who would generally agree that issues of race either do not or should not exist or at least be of any significance in today’s Sweden (Hübinette, 2017).

Given that the dichotomizing, naturalized, and not the least grossly simplified division between “Swedes” and “immigrants” is practically the only “ethnic” categorization system that is socially acceptable and above all, culturally intelligible and readable, for most inhabitants of Sweden, one way of analyzing how mixed-race Swedes understand themselves is to make use of the concept of racial literacy which France Winddance Twine (2011) has developed in her book *A*

white side of black Britain and wherein she looks at how white mothers of mixed-race children in the UK are negotiating and dealing with their (white) racial positions and privileges. Racial literacy means how all people, regardless if they are white or not, understand, conceptualize, and articulate their awareness of race and racial processes in everyday life, and how they cope with and respond to racial hierarchies, racialized experiences and racialized practices. Individuals continuously (re)produce racialized meanings through a constant process of (re)negotiations, and as a concept racial literacy functions as a way to describe the ways people interpret racialized body signs, racialized aspects, and racialized meanings and their roles and places in society in oftentimes contradictory ways. The term racial literacy is in other words, a useful tool to be able to investigate how people acquire, uphold, and challenge a society's dominant racial discourses and ideologies. In the case of Swedish race relations, they are governed by the division between "Swedes" and "immigrants", by Nordic exceptionalism in its Swedish version, and by Swedish color-blind antiracism which taken together make it difficult to claim a space in-between or beyond these two categories or even to talk about being a mixed-race Swede.

The words "Swedish" and "ordinary people" can be used to include me in a national community or keep me stay outside of the same community, but they cannot put me at the place where it seems most reasonable to find me: On the border. There must be order. Surprisingly few people manage to not ask about my origin. "So you've grown up here." Before the most trivial conversation can begin, I have to be assigned a place. (Polite, 2007: 47)

The dichotomizing categorization of "Swedes" and "immigrants" corresponds to the spatial division between the so-called "suburbs" and the rest of the city, and in particular the historical inner cities in urban Sweden which are almost always massively white and usually socioeconomically affluent, while the "suburbs" are neighborhoods consisting of high rise buildings that were constructed between 1965-1975 as part of the Million Program project. In everyday speech, practically every Swedish inhabitant and Swedish speaker knows that a "suburb" is a Million Program neighborhood with high rise buildings, where most apartments are rental units, most inhabitants are "immigrants", and non-white inhabitants are also usually poor and marginalized or even very poor. As urban Sweden, and especially the three Swedish metropolitan regions of Greater Stockholm, Greater Gothenburg, and Greater Malmö, exhibit some of the most extreme segregation index levels along racial lines in the Western world, the sharp physical and mental segregation between "Swedes" and "immigrants" have resulted in certain neighborhoods becoming intimately associated with non-white bodies in the heavily racialized Swedish urban imaginary as several Swedish researchers have convincingly shown in their studies (Lilja, 2015; Lundström, 2010; Sernhede, Léon Rosales & Söderman, 2019; Socialstyrelsen, 2010).

Finally, Swedish society can also be described as being characterized by an ever increasing political polarization caused by the so-called "immigration issue" like practically all other European countries are today, and in the latest parliamentary election of September 2018 the far-right party the Sweden Democrats managed to get almost one fifth of all the votes. This record result for the party is a consequence of a general shift in the public discourse marked by stronger anti-immigration attitudes and which in turn has resulted in several serious violent deeds

and terrorist attacks targeting the country's non-white immigrants and minorities in recent years (Gardell, Lööv & Dahlberg Grundberg, 2017). The increasing political polarization and the continuous debate on immigration, which in a Swedish context almost solely means non-Western and in practice non-white immigration, is of course also present in the lives of mixed-race Swedes who at many times feel that they have to choose if they are "on the side of the immigrants" or "on the side of the Swedes":

Erik was Swedish, but also had another ethnic identity. In the same way as I had to, during his upbringing he was forced to choose. It was always either or, never both and. There was never anyone who said that we could be Swedes without leaving behind our deviant ethnic identities (Ismail and Magnusson, 2017: 63).

Mixed-Race Swedes Navigating Between "Immigrants" and "Swedes"

It has always been like this – "where are you from?" If you have then responded "Sweden" it has always been, "but where are you really from?" With adults, it has always been like this – "but where is your father from?" So you have always had to explain this, "yes well, Trinidad", and then further explain where this is, "well a country in the Caribbean", and then they have always responded, "oh how exciting!". And "have you ever been there?" And so on and so on, so it is, I guess, regarded as something very interesting. (interview with Eddie who has a Swedish mother and a Trinidadian father)

The above mentioned background contextualization of race in today's Sweden forms the backdrop to this study on how mixed race Swedes are managing, dealing with and also possibly challenging existing Swedish race relations and Swedish color-blindness and how they thereby develop their racial literacy in a contemporary Sweden that is spatially and mentally segregated along racial lines between so-called "Swedes" in the inner cities and "immigrants" in the suburbs. The study draws on 18 in-depth interviews with Swedish adults of mixed background that were conducted between 2014-2015 and focuses on how race shapes the interviewees' experiences of among others school years and working life and the background of the informants are accounted for in Table 1. The study is grounded in and informed by a critical race theoretical approach and employs a narrative based ethnography as a way of attempting to understand the ways how racial literacy is learnt and unlearned in today's Sweden throughout the life courses of the mixed-race interviewees.

The informants of the study self-selected themselves as they replied to a Call for informants which was posted by one of the authors and advertised at various cultural institutions, universities, and employment agencies describing possible interviewees as people with a Scandinavian-born parent and a parent with a non-European background. This also means that mixed-race and multi-racial Swedes having parents with minority backgrounds are absent from the study such as having a Chilean mother and a Moroccan father or a Korean mother and an Iranian father and so on. Some informants were also recruited using the snowball sampling method and the informants were all between 18 and 40 years old at the time of the undertaking of the interviews and they were all living, studying, and working somewhere in Sweden's three

larger metropolitan areas of Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö. The names of the respondents have been replaced and changed for reasons of confidentiality and the interview study has been ethically approved by the Ethical review board of Linköping University.

Table. 1. A presentation of the interviewees

Name	Age	Sex	Background		City
			Mother	Father	
Adam	25	Male	Swedish	Malaysian	Stockholm
Agnes	25	Female	Nigerian	Swedish	Gothenburg
Alexander	28	Male	Swedish	Chinese	Stockholm
Azra	30	Female	Finnish	Palestinian	Gothenburg
Camila	26	Female	Mozambican	Swedish	Stockholm
Daniel	20	Male	Swedish	Mexican	Gothenburg
David	34	Male	Swedish	Indian	Stockholm
Dunya	25	Female	Finnish	Palestinian	Stockholm
Eddie	26	Male	Swedish	Trinidadian	Stockholm
Emma	39	Female	Swedish	Argentinian	Stockholm
Jonathan	29	Male	Swedish	Nigerian	Stockholm
Maria	25	Female	Finnish	Chilean	Stockholm
Naomi	30	Female	Kenyan	Swedish	Stockholm
Nicole	23	Female	Philippine	Swedish	Stockholm
Paola	28	Female	Swedish	Chilean	Stockholm
Pauline	30	Female	Swedish	Philippine	Malmö
Rebecca	34	Female	Swedish	Palestinian	Malmö
Vanessa	28	Female	Swedish	Chilean	Gothenburg

Some but not all of the informants self-identified themselves as being “mixed” (in Swedish; *blandad*) while others used other self-descriptions such as calling themselves “half” (in Swedish: *halv*) and often half-something depending on the national origin of their non-white parent such as for example “half-Nigerian” and “half-Chinese” or describing themselves as being a “mixed child” (in Swedish: *blandbarn*). All of the interviewees had stories to tell about being treated differently because of their “atypical Swedish” appearance. Most interviewees also

described their childhood and upbringing as “Swedish dominated”, and meaning in practice white dominated, while only four of them had grown up in residential areas described as “mixed” or “immigrant dense” and which in practice means that they were not the only people of color in their closest vicinity where they grew up. Despite the burgeoning racial heterogeneity and the demographic super-diversity in today’s Sweden, Swedes of mixed descent still pre-dominantly seem to grow up in quite homogeneous and white neighborhoods and also still seem to attend rather homogeneous and white school settings. These white dominated spaces and contexts and the relative lack of interactions with other Swedes of color during childhood appear to play a substantial role in shaping the Swedish mixed race experience as will be evident in the following parts which are divided according to the different narrative themes that appeared in the interviews.

The other type of material that has been used for this study comes from a selection of books written by non-white and mixed-race authors although not all mixed-race Swedish authors have treated the topic of being of mixed race. Previously, non-white authors in general made little or no impact on Swedish literature and had a very small presence on the Swedish literary scene and book market but since the 1990s, and especially since the 2000s and onwards, a growing number of titles written originally in Swedish by non-white authors in the form of for example novels, autobiographies, poetry collections, theatre plays, short stories and essays has been published and some of the most acclaimed and well-known authors of color are also mixed race Swedes such as for example Aleksander Motturi, Johannes Anyuru, and Jonas Hassen Khemiri (Gokieli, 2017; Heith, 2014; Hübinette, 2019; Rantonen, 2013; Stenbeck, 2017).

Narratives of (Mis)recognition

To begin with, one of the most central narratives and themes in the interview material is related to the experience of having one’s Swedishness contested and sometimes also questioned by being variously included or excluded within the category of “Swedes”. This is strongly related to the informant’s (in)ability to be able to pass as a Swede and which often but not always means to be able to pass as a white Swede. Additionally, speaking fluent Swedish and bearing a Swedish sounding name also influence a mixed person’s (im)possibility to pass as a Swede or not. The process of passing, which is a concept from American English and which originally derives from the experiences of mixed African Americans, including more or less constant transgressions of racial boundaries are part of the everyday lives of the informants and they are governed by a logic which Sara Ahmed has described in the following way: “Passing involves the re-opening or re-staging of a fractured history of identifications that constitutes the limits to a given subjects’ mobility.” (Ahmed, 1999: 93).

This way of understanding the process of passing in relation to the mixed informants makes it possible to grasp and understand how ambivalent experiences of misrecognition shape the ways how the mixed race informants learn who they are such as when they are (mis)taken for being “immigrants.” We all become aware of racialized meanings depending on our experiences of being assigned to certain ethnic, national, and racial categories in relation to an imagined majority community and which for the mixed-race subjects in Sweden is about Swedishness.

Each and every informant was also able to recount various experiences of everyday racism caused by looking racially different from the white majority population of Sweden:

I get to hear very often, from my absolute best friend's boyfriend who voted for SD [the Sweden Democrats, the main far right party of Sweden], which to me is really hard, because I love her with all my heart. I do not really know what to do on that issue, but I have talked to her about it, and she says she tries to change him, she's working on it a lot, but it's very difficult, and I'm extremely grateful for that. She is expecting a baby now, and I do not want that child to grow up like that. I will probably be the godmother, and for me it's like my nephew, I feel a great responsibility. She explained that to him, and took me as an example, "but Agnes then, think about what you do?". And he was like: "but she's not like that, she doesn't count", and it is because I'm still counted as a Swede. I can carry myself in Swedish, or I mean white Swedish rooms simply because I speak the language fluently, grew up with Swedish culture, all this kind of stuff that gives me a higher status, or what to call it, so I definitely feel that my role as being mixed has been to not be like *them*, as I still get to be included. (interview with Agnes who has a Nigerian mother and a Swedish father)

Agnes is a 25-year-old woman living in a predominantly white area in Gothenburg, and she is currently enrolled in a teacher education program. For as long as she can remember her blackness has always been seen as a marker for not being considered "fully Swedish" although she is by her friends, as she says, "considered to be more Swedish than others". In her youth she was eager to fit in among her friends who were all white, and she even found herself drawn into the subculture of white supremacists, having been as she herself says "the funny Negro" among the subcultural members, and which was an epithet she used to describe herself all through her youth and up and until recently. To Agnes, being seen as Swedish and even "Swedish only" was very important for her during her childhood and teenage years and she often distanced herself from other non-white people and those whom she regarded as being "immigrants".

Today however, Agnes self-identifies as being mixed and also as being black and these are two self-identifications which she has gradually developed as part of having entered the higher education sector and when she started to read academic literature on social identities. Agnes' experience indicates that she has been designated the position of what can be described as an "honorary white" position among her white friends by often being seen as more Swedish than other white Swedes and especially more than the "immigrants" and to the extent that she was even once and for a while accepted as a Swede among Swedish Nazis.

The musician Ken Ring whose mother is from Kenya and whose father is a Swede instead started to identify with non-white children when he as a child and moved from a white dominated neighborhood to a non-white dominated Million Program suburb (Ring and Ekman, 2014). Although he recalls that he once wanted to be seen as Swedish and was also probably seen as such by his white friends just like Agnes was, after moving to the non-white suburb he instead started to identify with not being a Swede anymore as the suburb became a "free zone" for him and it might be said that he instead became something of an "honorary non-white":

I actually remember when I went down to the park for the first time. Everyone was an immigrant. They were not white like my previous friends, but they were Turks, Arabs, blacks, Gypsies and Chileans. The first day I was mostly hanging out with a Polish Gypsy, and I immediately got the feeling that this was a world I could identify with. I did not have to play Swedish, because everyone was different. If you are sitting with eight Swedes and being alone, it may seem like you just want to be one of them, but now we were from every possible place and it did not matter if you were Swedish or black. Everyone could be himself or herself, and that was okay. A free zone in a way. (Ring and Ekman, 2014: 28-29)

Another common denominator among many mixed-race Swedes, which can be found in both the interviews and the texts, is to have one's bonds with one's family members contested in various ways because of assumptions linked to one's appearance and racial attributes, and to having been "recognized" as anything but the origin that they actually have through their non-white parent:

People always believe I'm South American, so when I was younger I almost had that as an identity, and I wanted to go to South America as well to see how it was like to be in a world where people look like me, and how it might feel not to stand out. And now, the last time when I was in the Philippines, I forgot that I stuck out, and was so shocked when I realized that I really looked nothing like them. So this has been my life you know, Chileans have come up to me and addressed me in Spanish, while in Asia no one says hello to me, and so it has done something to my identity never to have been related to being Asian. (interview with Pauline who has a Swedish mother and a Philippine father)

I belong to a generation of mixed children growing up around the world and who seem to be able to be placed everywhere but not belonging anywhere. People usually think I'm from India, Spain or the Middle East. Once upon a time I was at a salsa party in Stockholm. A woman leaned forward towards me and asked in a coarse voice: "Hello, are you from Brazil?". I replied with the same voice: "No, I'm from Borås." After that I did not see her anymore. (Wong, 2004: 7)

Yet another misrecognition relates to interactions with immigrants and minority representatives who address and hail the mixed-race informants as one of them while mixed race Swedes like Eddie do not always recognize and identify with that connection. In the case of the mixed race photographer Alexander Mahmoud however, he tells about when he visits a place only frequented by Arabs and people from the Middle East and where he in the beginning feels recognized but soon he realizes that he is not really one of them as he for example cannot smoke the water pipe properly and his Iranian friend who is not mixed, and who is accompanying him, also tells him that he is Swedish even if, as Mahmoud says himself – "no one thinks so":

I had a math teacher, it must have been in the seventh or eighth grade, it was a lesson, and so my math teacher said to me quietly, "we immigrants have to stick together," and I didn't even understand what she said, I didn't connect... I was shocked! First of all, I'm Swedish, and even though I'm not a white Swede, I feel I do not belong to the vulnerable

group, because I have not felt... uh... what should I say... discriminated against, so when people have said “*blackie*” or things like that, then I have just thought that this is what I am, and they haven’t treated me wrongly because I’m black, I have not made any connections to having been exposed to racism. (interview with Eddie who has a Swedish mother and a Trinidadian father)

We drink strong tea, play backgammon. I ask for a new taste of the water pipe and order in baklava. I’m sitting there and I’m feeling very pleasant. There is no white person in the room at all. I’m happy, but after a while jealousy takes over. I have no origin. I got nothing. (Mahmoud, 2015: 127)

Narratives of Cultural Differences

Rebecca, a 34-year old woman working and living in Malmö, describes her life course as someone growing up in Sweden having a mixed background in the following way when asked about what she believes has affected her the most during her life course as being a mixed race person:

This culture clash-thing, it’s been commonplace to me, like a constant collision, and if I hadn’t had it all around me all the time, maybe it hadn’t been so evident, but both my sister and me have had it... I know that I very early on tried to explain to my surrounding what it was like to grow up with two parents who have such different perceptions of the world, different priorities, and different ways of speaking. I understand them both while they do not always understand each other [laughs], it’s like being in a constant clash and why I then chose the picture of a clash, is because it is a moment, but I’m simultaneously always in that moment. (interview with Rebecca who has a Swedish mother and a Palestinian father)

Rebecca’s story is not an unusual narrative even if the discourse surrounding “culture clashes” might sound a bit old-fashioned in relation to the situation in other Western countries. While mixed-race people are nowadays officially recognized in both the US, the UK, and in many other countries by the state and the government such as a category in the censuses, in Sweden the terms “bicultural” or sometimes also “multicultural” are still words being used to describe people of mixed descent and which result in a heavy focus on cultural differences and of course also on “culture clashes”. Rebecca is probably both talking about cultural and racial differences at the same time, but she lacks a language to be able to articulate the racial aspects of her experience as being of mixed race and therefore “culture talk” takes over.

I love languages, cultures and so on. You could call me, *multicultural*, I speak almost every language, I know the basis of the Kurdish language for example, so now, I’m the interpreter at work, yes translator and interpreter, I translate for those who are *fully Swedish*, to caretakers who are Kurds you know, and sometimes I think when I go out from there, where do I come from really, you know? (interview with Vanessa who has a Swedish mother and a Chilean father)

Highly present throughout the interview material is also how multiculturalism as a concept has become a part of the interviewees' own self-identifications and social dispositions. To be multicultural (or not) has in other words come to reflect the different subject positions taken up by the respondents. Multiculturalism becomes a way of not only attaching a value to oneself and one's mixed heritage but also a way to describe the racialized world that they are living in and are embedded in, that is as a mixed-race person navigating between those who are considered to be *fully Swedish* and those who are not seen as being fully Swedish or not Swedish at all including those who are deemed to be completely outside of Swedishness – that is the “immigrants”. The discourse on multiculturalism and its associated meanings of being both diverse and tolerant thus has become an organizing trope that enables the respondents to talk about their lives without talking about race and thus without breaking the norm of Swedish color-blindness. In this way multiculturalism works as a sticky term, to refer to Sara Ahmed (2014), in the sense that it appeals to the interviewees' self-understandings of their experiences of being mixed.

In a country obsessed by drawing a sharp line between “Swedes” and “immigrants”, at the core of the informants' experiences is the feeling of inhabiting the world and encountering everyday social interactions at the very intersection of these presumably stable categories. Being multicultural thus becomes synonymous with being *half* or part-Swedish and a way of talking about themselves and their connections to the outside world using a color-blind antiracist language. To position oneself as multicultural hence becomes a socially accepted way to talk about this racialized reality, highlighting not only the sharp polarization and division between those who counts as a real Swede and those who are not seen as real Swedes, but also their own experiences as falling in-between the categories of “Swedes” and “immigrants”.

Narratives of Being a Multicultural Mediator and a Symbol for Diversity

My mother and teachers always used to say “you should be happy about being half because you can take the positive aspects of the Swedish culture and the positive aspects from the Chilean one and mix it all up, and it is not everyone who can do that.” And when I think about it, its damn true! (interview with Vanessa who has a Swedish mother and a Chilean father).

Many of the informants also told that people around them also talked about them in a celebratory way in relation to their mixedness and they were almost seen as someone having a natural ability to blend in, and travel between both or even all worlds, and to “have the best of two worlds” inside them as well as being able to adapt to new and different cultures more easily than all others who are not mixed. Vanessa and several other respondents also told about being designated the role of a mediator between the white Swedish majority population and the ethnic, religious, and racial minorities of Sweden and some of them also felt that these expectations were also coming from their own family members or from the society as a whole.

The praising of the mixed-race informants as being “multicultural mediators” was sometimes commented on by the interviewees with ambivalent feelings and in an ironizing way

and which signals how this positioning was expressed both as something that the interviewees identified with as well as distanced themselves from simultaneously. The experience of being designated an in-between position between the “Swedes” and the “immigrants” and of being conceived of as a person characterized by both espousing Swedishness and Otherness at the very same time also resulted in some of the informants being designated mediating roles also in practice:

Right now, she [Vanessa’s mother] wants me to apply for the police academy and usually says things like, “when I see police officers out on the streets I tend to think of you, and what a good cop you would be, fair and all that”, and that I have, you know, both the Swedish and foreign thing, and that I could be a great role model for young people because of that. (interview with Vanessa who has a Swedish mother and a Chilean father).

Vanessa is, according to the opinion of her white Swedish mother, seen as if she inhabits a unique position in today’s racially segregated Swedish society as she as a mixed person almost embody the perfect role model in and poster figure for the new super-diverse and multiracial Sweden. Interestingly enough and perhaps symptomatically, some of the interviewees also witnessed about their active engagement in antiracist practices in their youth and of practicing “diversity work” later in life as professionals either at their workplaces or during their formative years. Some of the informants also told that they were often the only non-white person in a predominantly white setting and that they were assigned a position as symbols of diversity:

I’ve worked pretty much with diversity stuff in my job, at least in the past, when I could run projects myself. I’ve pulled together stuff, projects, and lectures for the workplace and so on, I have pretty much become the person who knows about these issues, and I’m interested, because I want to be, or because it has become that way, or maybe both, but I’ve also noticed it has backfired. People turn to me whenever, and often ask things like: “Do you know of someone with the right background for this or that? Who can come and give a lecture?”. Even such things like how to pronounce a name, things like that, and I’m like: “I don’t speak Farsi”. (interview with David who has a Swedish mother and an Indian father)

To be Chilean feels like something positive... mostly the language, to be able to write in three languages and to have gone to school in Chile. I spent half my 9th grade in secondary school and after finishing upper-secondary I went there to study Spanish for six months. And it feels like a thing that there’s a great need of and that it is perceived as something very positive when working with diversity and equality work. So it’s a bit nice to feel that you are in the right industry in terms of getting a position in diversity and equality work. (interview with Paola who has a Swedish mother and a Chilean father)

At the same time, despite being designated or taking on the in-between role as a mediator and as a bridge thus symbolically helping Sweden in a new nation-building process marked by super-diversity by bring together the “Swedes” and the “immigrants”, the informants were also often invisible by having their mixed background downplayed as something unimportant in everyday social life. This paradox of on the one hand valuing their

“multiculturalism” and “diversity” but on the other hand at the same time downplaying the recognition of difference as something important can perhaps be analyzed as an outcome of the fact that color-blindness must still be adhered to despite the celebration of diversity and the praise for multicultural subjects like mixed Swedes:

The only time I emphasize it, and when my background is seen as a positive thing, is probably in my job applications. I have found a workplace where having another background is seen as a good thing, so I slipped that in, in a neat way, it was a deliberate move, and it was obviously a winning concept! However, we use badges with the different country flag on, symbolizing the different languages we speak. Someone has a Spanish flag... and most have the English flag, but also other... And it's seen as something really positive, if you can speak several languages you get several flags, and the woman who hired me also asked if I knew another language, and then, unfortunately, I just had to say no, and that I only speak English, and I had more than anything else really wanted to have another language, really, it's a sensitive thing really, lacking it it's like I turn into this too Swedish person, or not Swedish but you know, it's a pity I don't have more of it in me. (interview with Alexander who has a Swedish mother and a Chinese father)

In other words, diversity politics do something as diversity becomes stuck to certain bodies to speak with Ahmed again, that are seen as having a value on the market and at workplaces in need of diversity. In several of the interviewees' stories, there was besides the expectation of having a certain linguistic and (multi)cultural capital, also a story about problems with the diversity skills that they were expected to fulfil at the workplace as in the case of Alexander who lacked the skills to live up to the expectations that were put on him. Informants like Alexander, who cannot speak Cantonese like his father, were at the same time seen as being more or less inherently multicultural in spite of not always being able to perform the diversity that was expected from him.

Just as social exclusion can be an impediment for one's wellbeing as in the case of all too many marginalized people of color in today's Sweden are experiencing, so can also certain forms of inclusion. Inclusion can in other words also be “murderous” in the words of Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco and in this regard to be included within a Swedishness that is intimately linked to one's perceived whiteness (Haritaworn et al., 2013). The idea that not just exclusion but even inclusion can have a price also shifts the focus away from the view on inclusion as being something merely promising and progressive thereby obscuring the violence that can be at work for included minority subjects such as in a country like Sweden wherein ideals like assimilation, sameness and homogenization have for a long time been valorized by the white Swedish majority society.

Narratives of Being a Tolerant and Cosmopolitan Subject

It was fantastic. There were so many people of different nationalities, and no one cared that much about my appearance. When I said that I came from Sweden they just said:

“Oh, Sweden, that’s far from here!”. No one reacted to the fact that I was both dark and Swedish. (Jacobsson and Bruchfeld, 1999: 43)

When I’m in France, people always address me in French, but in Sweden, it happens at least once every other month that someone approaches me in English. It becomes so apparent that I’m not something that belongs to the cityscape. (interview with Rebecca, who has a Swedish mother and a Palestinian father)

I have more advantages than many others. When I was abroad, in Italy for example, and met Arabs, Bolivians, talked a bit of Tigrinya there, ehm... You can immerse yourself in the context so damn easily, it’s easy to understand, Ramadan for example, you understand, you’re more international, it’s easier for you than for others who find it difficult to understand cultures, there are so many who thinks that culture can be a strange thing, but I feel I have more tolerance and more understanding than most people have. Sweden has a good reputation, good people... I could work with supplements, double pay, and a bunch of other stuff, I worked in the media and with commercials and hung around with Scandinavian film-makers, anything was possible, and then I came back to live here [to Sweden], and then it was like, you got the finger directly. (interview with Jonathan who has a Swedish mother and a Nigerian father)

Jonathan, who is 29 years old and has a Swedish mother and a Nigerian father, told in the interview about his entrance to the job market and his wish to boost his career through a temporary move to Italy and Spain. Jonathan currently works within the sales market sector and he is aspiring to become a manager in the future. Despite his successful career he told about experiences of discrimination on an almost daily basis within Swedish working life. When asked what he recognized is needed as a skill and as a competence to enter the job market and succeed within his sector he answered: “To be white... if I had been white, I would have done even better.” However, while living abroad, he felt that he was suddenly seen as creative and competent in comparison with his job experiences in Sweden where his “non-Swedish appearance” marks him as less educated, and as someone coming from a non-academic background given that immigrants of color and not the least sub-Saharan Africans are heavily stigmatized and usually seen as being more or less uneducated.

Jonathan told that in Italy and Spain his Swedishness was seen as an asset and which he also made use of to his advantage. To feel more welcomed in other countries and even at home abroad and to be seen as a non-Swede in Sweden but as a Swede abroad is something that was a relatively common theme in the interviews and which again indicates how hierarchies of belonging in the Swedish context are constructed against the background of the “immigrant” as the ever present symbol and figuration for Otherness and for the opposite to Swedishness. In the case of Jonathan, it is quite evident that in Sweden he is being subjected to racial stereotypes concerning black men while abroad he can occupy a cosmopolitan and tolerant subject position by appealing to his Swedishness and in that way he gains a higher social status compared to when he is in Sweden.

In her study on white Swedish migrants abroad, Catrin Lundström (2014) argues that the migrant in our contemporary age of international migration is a figure who is mainly linked to

non-white bodies while whites are considered comfortably mobile as professionals, as tourists or as so-called expats and which in practice mostly mean white educated Westerners. Connected to this image is also the idea that non-white migrants are fixed, essentialist and monocultural while the tolerant and the cosmopolitan subject is a white person. Finally, Jonathan's story also shows that whiteness, and in his case Swedish whiteness, is not necessarily tied to white bodies but also to how certain nations, and in this case Sweden, is positioned in the global hierarchy of countries:

I feel more at home in these kind of areas [a suburban Million Program area in Gothenburg, where the majority of the residents are non-white] where a lot happens, where there is chaos, both good and bad, and I mean, people are afraid of coming here and they are like: "Do you really live there?". And I'm like: "Stop with these damn prejudices!" (interview with Vanessa who has a Swedish mother and a Chilean father)

Sometimes he doesn't like taking us to different places, like to a coffee shop for example, up North [Norrland, which is the Northern part of Sweden] you know. Especially if there are only white people inside whom he reads like, hmm... how should I say this, like "shabby construction worker dudes", then he doesn't want to bring us there and I don't think he understands why or the reason behind it, but I mean I do of course, and maybe even my mum, I think, or I don't know, we usually don't talk about these things, for many different reasons. It's not that I think she wouldn't want to open up about these things, but maybe she doesn't recognize it in the same way. (interview with Nicole who has a Philippine mother and a Swedish father)

Vanessa was born and raised in a white middle-class residential area but as an adult Vanessa has chosen to move to a non-white Million Program neighborhood. She obviously enjoys the mood of the people there who are hanging out on the streets, talking a bit loud and sometimes playing music from their windows. When Vanessa was younger, she made friends in that area because she did not feel that she connected fully to the place where her family lived, which was a white dominated area. Vanessa is at the same time constructing the non-white residents of the Million Program suburbs as having a more authentic relationship to life than the white Swedes whom she was exposed to during her upbringing. People's spatial practices and how they relate to a certain place is also a race making practice as Claire Alexander and Caroline Knowles (2005) argue and this is evident in the above mentioned citations, which must be related to the extreme racial segregation pattern of urban Sweden, including Nicole's story about how her white Swedish father is aware that certain white dominated places are perhaps not safe for Nicole and her Philippine mother.

When asked about her future plans, however, Vanessa connects a successful future to a place that is not a Million Program area and which in many ways confirms how many mixed-race Swedes look upon themselves as being more cosmopolitan and tolerant than others when it comes to encountering and associating with different cultures and with immigrants and minorities but at the same time they know that their future is dependent on their Swedishness. Vanessa does not want her children to grow up in the area where she lives now because, as she said, it could threaten her children's safety and which is more or less exactly how so-called tolerant and antiracist minded white Swedish mothers talk about their

children when asked why they do not move to more racially mixed and less homogenous areas in Maja Lilja's (2015) study on white motherhood and the racially segregated Swedish city.

Narratives on Discovering a Multiracial History

During my first years in school, everyone knew that if you wanted to make me really upset, they should call me "the Chinese". I was mad, furiously really, and started to beat and kick, and when I look back now, with a little more adult eyes, I realize that it was a damn touchy subject, for it had to do with an unresolved something that existed within me. (interview with Alexander who has a Swedish mother and a Chinese father)

Alexander, who has a white Swedish mother and a Chinese father, told in the interview with him that he never felt that he belonged anywhere. He also told that he had had a "strong Swedish" upbringing but he always felt an inner state of psychic fragmentation, constantly carrying a feeling that "there is something in him beyond who he is" according to his own words. Alexander defined himself as being both Swedish and Asian at the same time; not entirely Swedish and not completely non-Swedish." Alexander's sense of fragmentation and alienation was according to him related to his "Asian share", as he put it. He "looked Swedish" to his immediate surrounding and he did not speak Cantonese like his father does so Alexander is, according to himself, being "denied" his Asian identity. As a matter of fact, Alexander is more often perceived as being white than being Asian by many people and his experience of being Asian becomes apparent only when he is together with his Chinese father as "one can obviously see that he is Asian:"

In England, there is a Chinatown. Even in Malaysia, one has a Chinatown. It is a street market where people can buy their damn good Ray Bans, Lacoste shirts, and Nike copies. I can actually feel that I am at home there. When I was in London, in Chinatown, I could feel at home, not at home directly, but it felt like belonging... more like a deeper connection. Even though, in fact, the department store Gekå [a Swedish discount store] is more of my home, I don't know, but Chinatown has a greater resonance inside me, as a whole. (interview with Alexander who has a Swedish mother and a Chinese father)

In other words, because of Alexander's perceived white body, his Asian counterpart seems to disappear, which is something that he resists. Alexander himself is as an adult seldom subjected to everyday racism but he is well aware of painful and humiliating experiences of a discriminatory character which are directed against his Asian father. Alexander told that he knows that his father is carrying a load of repressed "rage within himself because he is not fully accepted in this society":

There is a biography of Bruce Lee where he is at a movie with his wife and watching a movie making fun of Asians. An actor has two lumps of sugar under the lip, which is a very stereotypical image of an Asian or a Chinese person. Everyone in the auditorium laughs out loud except for him. It felt I could resonate very much to that... bah... this is wrong, this is also my identity... All these caricatures of and jokes about Asians, this is

something still going on in this country. Making fun of Asians is quite common and allowed. I would stand against that because they are also my people. And as time goes by, the lesser I feel Swedish. (interview with Alexander who has a Swedish mother and a Chinese father)

Stereotypical images and representations of Asians, in particular of Asian men, is a common feature in today's Sweden in the form of for example images, ads, performances, and film characters and this is something which Alexander is well aware of and also strongly dislikes. For Alexander, the massive presence of stereotypes of Asians in contemporary Swedish culture means that he has developed a new consciousness concerning the situation of Asians in Sweden and including his own father. Alexander's various phases of identity building can be summarized as follows: as a child he did not want to be related to Chinese people and to Asia at all and he became angry if someone reminded him that he has a Chinese origin, and later on he started to see himself as being "half-Swedish", then as being "half-Asian" and today he even calls himself "Eurasian." While visiting his Chinese family in Malaysia a few years ago Alexander's previous worldview changed dramatically:

When I heard, for the first time, the term Eurasian, that was suddenly something I could identify with, it just had a very significant resonance to me. This is a concept I really love to use to describe myself as. But it didn't work out that way so easily because the term was not common in Swedish language. So, I started using it little by little. I think people in Malaysia told me about it, "you are Eurasian", they said to me. (interview with Alexander who has a Swedish mother and a Chinese father)

In many parts of Asia, and especially in the former European colonies, the term Eurasian has been around for a long time designating mixed-race Asians but in Sweden being mixed-race is not even recognized in Swedish language and even less so being Eurasian. Despite the practical problems to claim a Eurasian identity in a Swedish setting, Alexander has chosen to go against the Swedish discourse by claiming a belongingness to a category that is also highly racialized. Alexander's adoption of this new identification can be interpreted as both a rejection of Swedish antiracist color-blindness and of the Swedish division between "Swedes" and "immigrants." Alexander's example can therefore be analyzed as the development of a different racial literacy breaking down the otherwise rigid dichotomy between "Swedes" and "immigrants" as Alexander's white passing body should not identify with a racial category like Eurasian. Alexander's experience of living with what may perhaps be called an inclusive exclusion also shows how bodies cannot be understood as simply a given and objective material reality but as something which are also linguistically and discursively mediated.

Discussion: Mixed Race Swedes Challenging Swedish Color-Blindness

Harlem makes me feel as white as a lecture hall at Lund University made me feel black. But in the gap between the races, between the colors, between the narratives, I have built my home. In the in-betweenness [in Swedish: *mellanförskapet*]. (Diakité, 2016: 211)

I have always felt very skeptical about black and white divisions, simplifications like Swedes/immigrants and the suburbs/the inner city. The aim of my writing is to write me away from such dichotomies. I do not belong to any collective or have a single base, I am not included in a common strength. (Khemiri, 2008: 258-259)

Never enough Swedish, never enough Chinese, never enough hetero, never enough homo; Always between, always half-something, bi so and bi so, little of each, mixed. It's in the interstices where I live, it's in-between where I become. It's in the in-betweenness where I'm free, here I'm allowed to realize that my heart is sitting in the middle of my body, that I'm my own person - no longer a chameleon, just my own animal. *Mellano* [a neologism based on the neologism *mellanförskapet* which can be roughly translated as the in-betweenness in English] is my new middle name. (Tibblin Chen, 2012: 160)

This study is situated within the Anglophone field of critical mixed-race studies which still does not exist as a field in Sweden and has accounted for a selected number of narratives and themes on being of mixed race in contemporary Sweden that are discernible in the examined material. The extracts coming from the interviews with mixed race Swedes and the citations taken from the texts written by mixed-race Swedes together show that the white Swedish majority society has to a large extent failed to adjust itself to the new super-diverse Sweden and to construct a new Swedishness wherein also all those inhabitants who cannot fully pass as white are included as being “fully Swedes”.

Further, the division between “Swedes” and “immigrants” forces the informants of this study into a position where many of them seem to self-identify as being “multicultural,” “tolerant,” and “cosmopolitan” in spite of how shallow that might be and as something of a mediator and a bridge between “Swedes” and “immigrants.” This binary categorization also exposes the norms that shape the narratives of the mixed race Swedes according to which the Swedish white majority population is perceived as neutral and the non-white minorities as deviant and subjected to becoming both tolerated by and integrated among the white Swedes and at many times also assimilated. Studying mixed-race people as a social category can in other words help us to gain knowledge about how various differentiations in everyday life and in a certain society and culture reproduce normative and hegemonic ideas of race, whiteness, and belongingness.

The politics of belonging are in other words highly present in the lives of mixed race Swedes according to both the interviews and texts, and which for Nira Yuval-Davis (2011) means how the dialectics of inclusion and exclusion are dependent on everything from formal citizenship and statistical categorization to immigration status, mobility capital, and the emotional aspects of citizenship and belonging. The mixed-race Swedes are almost always born in Sweden, they almost always have Swedish citizenship, and they are nowadays all counted as having a “Swedish background” according to official statistics and most of them come from a more privileged background than most non-Western immigrants do but at the same time and evidently people do not always feel that they are “fully Swedish”.

The interviewees do, to some extent, also challenge the division between “Swedes” and “immigrants” as they do not always obey the racial scripts and norms of Swedish color-blindness

although they perhaps most often adhere to and reproduce them, by explicitly naming the exclusionary social and racial practices which they are encountering and have to cope with. Even if most respondents did not explicitly talk about themselves as being of mixed-race but rather as being “mixed” and as being “half-half” due to the color-blind norm that prevails in Sweden and which most of them probably do not question, some such as Agnes and Alexander have also developed a language as being black and as being Eurasian and thereby a new racial literacy going against the dominant white racial frame of Sweden to speak with Joe Feagin (2010).

As critical mixed-race studies scholars in countries like the US, the UK, and Germany have convincingly shown, the experiences of those having a mixed background and of those inhabiting a racially ambiguous body are illustrative examples of how fluid and arbitrary all racialized categories actually are and not just those that mixed race people are subjected to (Ali, 2003; Haritaworn, 2012; Ifekwunigwe, 1999). Just like mixed subjects in other Western countries, mixed-race Swedes also occupy an ambivalent position as sometimes and probably mostly belonging to the white majority population and as sometimes and probably mostly unwillingly belonging to the non-white minority population due to various racialized processes of misrecognition or because of their own self-identifications.

Contrary to the situation of mixed race Americans or mixed Brits who are nowadays recognized as statistical and social categories, the Swedish case is different in the sense that the hegemonic Swedish antiracist color-blindness makes it almost impossible verbalize issues of race and it is also worth noting that since 2003 those who have one foreign-born parent and one native-born parent are counted and categorized as having a “Swedish background” in Swedish official statistics which divide all inhabitants of Sweden between those having a “Swedish background” and those having a “foreign background,” and which at least on a symbolic level indicates that the mixed race Swedes are since then considered to be fully integrated into the Swedish majority population.

The mixed-race Swedes can also be compared to those minority subjects that Patricia Hill Collins (1986) have called “outsiders within” who are inhabiting a space where they can gain knowledge about those who are in power without having access themselves to the very same power such as domestic workers of color in white middle- and upper-class homes. The feeling of being in-between or outside the categories of “Swedes” and “immigrants” and of exhibiting physical and racial markers that are not perceived to belong to neither those who can pass as white nor to those who cannot pass white is arguably highly present in many of the interviews and texts examined in this study.

Finally, it has to be said that the mixed-race Swedish experience is by no means a homogeneous experience. The dynamics of being positioned by family and friends as Swedish and sometimes by others and strangers as non-Swedish is also influenced by both gender, sexual orientation, class, age, place, and by the racial category of the mixed subject’s non-white parent even if many of the informants also witnessed that the outside world often has problems to categorize them such as in the case of Pauline and in the citation by Ola Wong. The example of Jonathan also indicates how perhaps especially mixed black men are seen as not being educated and competent while Vanessa’s case shows how places like the non-white and minority

dominated Million Program areas are saturated with discourses of both class and race.

The interview extracts and the text citations that are presented in this study further show that the informants were mostly quite aware of how various racialization processes place them in different positions and link them to different categories, and meaning that they had acquired a certain level of racial literacy grounded in their everyday experiences. In other words, even in color-blind Sweden, race operates as a reference point for the informants even if the language of culture, cultural differences, and “culture clashes” were often used instead of talking explicitly about race. Although color-blindness still seems to be the dominant way of conceptualizing and relating to race in Sweden and even if being non-white and Swedish at the same time is still an unstable position, it might also be argued that the Swedish mixed-race experience as it has been accounted for in this study also signals a new racial awareness and consciousness among younger Swedes of color who recently have initiated provocative discussions on race and Swedishness and who have started to formulate a new and more inclusive and hybrid Swedishness for the future wherein they are also potentially included.

Mixed-race Swedes have symptomatically been especially active in this new and recent development such as for example in the form of the association *Mellanförskapet* (in English: The In-Betweenness), which is a neologism signifying something in-between or beyond, and of platforms, networks and groups like *Interfem*, *Rummet* (in English: The Room), TRYCK, Black Coffee, *Makthavarna* (in English: Those in Power), *Svart kvinna* (in English: Black woman) and so on, and which in some cases mainly have existed on the internet and in social media and which all have contained mixed-race founders or activists. This relatively new presence in Sweden of non-white activists, voices, and perspectives in the Swedish public sphere including mixed-race Swedes has finally started to challenge Swedish color-blindness and to highlight the both material and psychological costs of the *tabooisation* on race which also has functioned to silence any serious political discussions on racial segregation, racial stratification, and racial discrimination in Sweden in spite of its supposedly antiracist intentions. These new non-white Swedish actors, voices, and groups, which have been inspired by the American people of color movement that developed in the post-civil rights era of the 1980s and 1990s, are in other words at the moment of writing both criticizing and challenging Swedish color-blindness and the Swedish division between “Swedes” and “immigrants”, and they are perhaps even changing what Swedishness itself stands for.

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