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### ABSTRACT

A global trend has shown an increase in intimate partnerships across nationality, race, ethnicity, and religion, and this is also the case in Sweden. As a result, the children of these unions (i.e. multiethnic and multiracial persons) are undeniably part of contemporary society. This study is one of the first studies in Sweden that solely focuses on the multiracial and multiethnic population. Based on 21 qualitative interviews, this article explores how mixed Swedes identify themselves and how they experience that they are identified by others using Brubaker's (2016) conceptualization. The analysis shows that, contrary to the flexibility in how mixed Swedes identify themselves, mixed Swedes experience that people in society categorize them in a fixed idea of 'either-or' – either Swedish or not Swedish. The idea of being Swedish is strongly connected to the idea of being white; therefore, many mixed Swedes with a non-white phenotype experience that their identification as Swedish is not validated. However, some interviewees reject the idea of Swedish as solely being 'white' and are actively redrawing what it means to be Swedish through emphasizing nationality and cultural belonging.

### KEYWORDS

mixed identity, Sweden, ethnic options

### BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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## Introduction

The increase in international mobility and globalization, which has enabled interactions between people of different origins, has brought about a significant increase in the number partnerships across borders such as country, race, ethnicity, and religion. As a result, the children of these unions (i.e. multiethnic and multiracial persons) are undeniably part of contemporary societies (e.g. Irastorza et al. 2016; Rodríguez-García 2015), and Sweden is not alone in this global trend (Author, forthcoming 2019).

The racial and ethnic composition of Sweden has changed dramatically in a relatively short period of time through immigration. The year 1930 marks when Sweden became a country of immigration, as it recorded more people immigrating to the country than emigrating. However, the change in the racial and ethnic landscape of the country is the most obvious after 1980, when the predominant category of immigration shifted from labour migration from the European and Nordic countries to asylum migration from outside of Europe. In 2018, 18 per cent of the 10 million residents of Sweden were born abroad, 5 per cent of people born in Sweden had two foreign-born parents, while 7 per cent of those also born in Sweden were the children of bi-national marriages, as in, having both a Swedish-born parent and a foreign-born parent. Regarding the population of those under 18 in three major cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö), the ethnic and racial diversity is clear. In these cities, native Swedish people with two Swedish-born parents are a numerical minority: More than 50 per cent have foreign backgrounds (that is, either themselves, one, or both of their parents were born abroad). Around 17 per cent of the population have one parent who was born in Sweden and one parent born outside Sweden in the three biggest cities, potentially representing a multiracial and multiethnic population (Statistics Sweden 2018).

The majority of studies on mixed-race identities are conducted in English-speaking countries, although there has been a significant increase in the amount of literature produced on mixedness outside of the English-speaking context (e.g. Chito-Childs 2018; Edwards et al. 2012; King-O’Riain 2014; Rocha 2017; Rocha et al. 2018). Despite the increasing attention on mixedness globally and the fact that mixed populations in the Nordic countries are increasing, the field has not taken off in the Nordic context (exceptions are the works Bang Appel and Singla 2016; Skadegård and Jensen 2018; Sandset 2018).

This is one of the first qualitative studies that focuses solely on multiracial and multiethnic Swedes. Based on 21 qualitative interviews with mixed Swedish young adults, this article explores how mixed Swedes identify themselves and how they experience that they are identified by others. The article examines whether mixed Swedes experience constraints in their ethnic options to claim that

they are Swedish and explores the reasons for the individuals' choice of self-identification. This article contributes to the growing field of mixed-race identities around the globe, particularly in the Nordic context, and to the understanding of the fluid and shifting nature of identity.

## Mixed identity

In exploring multiracial and multiethnic identities, it is crucial to understand that identity is not something static but rather a process that individuals go through. The process of identification is a two-way, dialectic process (Jenkins 2005:20). One may identify oneself through relational modes such as kinship or friendship, but another may also identify based on a categorical attribute such as race, ethnicity, language, nationality, or gender (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Identities can also emerge from experiences and be influenced by the attitudes of and pressures from others (Deaux 2018).

In the process of identification, the distinction needs to be made between self-identification (acquired identity) and identification by others (ascribed identity) (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Jenkins 2005). The knowledge of this dialectic of identification, that is, how 'self-image' meets 'public image' (Song and Aspinall 2012) among the mixed population is well advanced and explored. Previous studies show that there are different ways mixed people identify and redefine their identity (Aspinall and Song 2012; DaCosta 2007; Harris and Sim 2002; Rika and Hogan 2009). However, a mismatch in identification may occur, as one's self-identification is not always affirmed by others, and their ethnic options – their ability to choose their ethnic identity – can be constrained. Here, the conceptual difference between race and ethnicity becomes important: Racial appraisals are based on visible phenotype, whereas ethnicity is not always visible (Daynes and Lee, 2008; Song 2003). Mixed persons may experience a gap between their racial identity and 'reflected race' (Roth 2018; Morning 2017), that is, how a person believes others assume that person to be based on the phenotype (Waters 1990; Song 2003). When racial phenotypical difference is not visible, individuals may have the option to identify and present oneself as being of a different race (Goffman 1990). This practice of racial passing as majority or minority for multiracial and multiethnic individuals should be conceptualized as an ethnic option which one may or may not have control over (Brubaker 2016; Song 2003). The important question to ask is, what identity labels do people choose for themselves, and why might they make that choice (Deaux 2018)?

Observing debates around transgender and transracial identities, Brubaker (2016) explores how gender and race as ways of social classifications have transformed. Brubaker concludes that racial identification faces more policing of the boundary than gender identification; therefore, one has less flexibility and

more constraints in ethnic and racial identifications compared to gender identification. Brubaker argues that this is because there are different conceptual and linguistic resources that are culturally available for thinking and talking about sex, gender, race, and ethnicity. Brubaker's notions of 'trans of between' and 'trans of beyond' explained by the logics of 'either-or', 'both-and', and 'neither-nor' are interesting conceptual approaches.

The either-or logic is based on the idea of singular identity (Lou and Lalonde 2015), in which individuals exclusively identify with one racial and ethnic category. The both-and logic utilizes what Brubaker calls 'recombinatory racial identifications', which may expressly preserve the parental categories (such as half Swedish) and rests on the idea that you belong to more than one classification simultaneously. This resonates with border identity, in which individuals understand themselves to be part of both races (e.g. Lou and Lolande 2015; Rockquemore and Brunsma 2002). The fractional logic of recombinatory identification becomes less socially meaningful as the generations of mixedness advances from the first generation multiracial specifically identifying as half something – with a strong cultural sense and often with transnational ties – to multigenerational mixed persons with a more symbolic association and further ties to culture and ethnicity. Brubaker argues that recombinatory identification then becomes selective, with one retaining some socially meaningful identifications but discarding others (see also Morning and Saperstein 2018). Being trans of between is going beyond both-and logic and is a mode of defining oneself with reference to the two established social categories without belonging entirely or unambiguously to either one and without moving definitely from one to the other. This identification still uses the ethnoracial classifications; however, it reflects a contextual and situational shift and fluidity of identity and identification, with multiple choices of self-identification depending on the context (e.g. Lou and Lalonde 2015; Harris and Sim 2002; Root 1996). When identifying with selected parental categories shifts to simply identifying as 'multiracial' or 'mixed' without a core identification with any particular ethnoracial categories, identification can be transformed to the state termed 'trans of beyond'. This is a transcendent identity (Lou and Lolande 2015) based on a neither-nor logic that locates mixed identities outside the prevailing idea of ancestry. The category of mixed is then not located between anything in particular, but rather it destabilizes the official practice of ethnoracial counting and categorizing (Brubaker 2016).

This article is not concerned with transgender issues. However, the relevant logics of either-or, both-and, and neither-nor will be applied when looking at ethnic and racial identification among mixed Swedes and the constraints they experience in their reflected identity.

## The Swedish context

Many countries gather information on individuals' race and ethnicity – whether it be self-reported or assigned – but this is not the case in Sweden. The Swedish statistical office (SCB) gathers administrative data which includes information such as the individual's country of origin as well as citizenship. Based on these colour-blind data, the population of Sweden is often divided in two categories in the official statistics and social analysis: those with a Swedish background and those with a foreign background, and those who are Swedish-born in contrast to foreign-born. A person of 'Swedish background' is defined as someone born in Sweden who has one or two parents born in Sweden, while a person of 'foreign background' is defined as someone born outside of Sweden or someone born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents (Statistics Sweden 2018). Based on the either-or logic, those who are born in Sweden and have one parent born in Sweden, who are potentially '2.5 generation' (Perlmann 2001; Ramakrishnan 2004) or 'first-generation multiracial' (Daniel, 2002), are incorporated into the category of Swedish background. Within academia, the ethnic and racial belonging of the individuals are inferred through information about country of birth and origin, and citizenship. This practice risks the essentialization and fixation of the culture, race, and ethnicity of the person to the country of origin (Jebari and Magnusson 2013). Recently, statistics have been made available that differentiate persons with one foreign-born parent and one Swedish-born parent from persons having two foreign-born parents of different countries of origin. Further distinctions based on geographical location can also be seen in the official reports. Nevertheless, identifying mixed individuals based on such statistics is still a challenge in Sweden.

Research in Sweden shows that whiteness and visible phenotypical differences shape the definition of Swedishness and non-Swedishness (e.g. Gokieli 2017; Hubinette and Lundström 2011; Lundström 2017; Mattsson 2005; Runfors 2016). The binary of 'Swedes' and 'immigrants' is established through whether you 'look Swedish'. Researchers illustrate how 'immigrant' identities in Sweden develop through interaction and contact with the majority society, through which they become aware of not being white (e.g. Kalonaityte et al. 2007; Khosravi 2006; Lundström 2007; 2017). As a result, in the public imaginary and daily conversation, the word 'Swedish' connotes whiteness and functions as a white racial category while 'immigrant background' connotes non-whiteness and becomes a category in which all non-white Swedes are lumped together. Moreover, the terms and awareness equivalent to 'multiracial', 'multiethnic', and 'mixed' do not exist in the Swedish society and the Swedish language, which may limit their possibilities to identify themselves in terms of neither-nor or both-and. (Arbouz 2012). Identifying as mixed does not necessarily

mean that one will be identified as such, and the claim to be mixed can be unvalidated (Lou and Lolande 2015).

Mixed populations are increasingly becoming visible in Swedish society without them being recognized as such. Exceptions are in found in the literary work of, for example, of Jason Timbuktu Diakit  (African American Swedish), Johannes Anyuru, (Ugandan Swedish) or Jonas Hassen Khemiri (Tunisian Swedish), whose backgrounds as multiracial persons are well known and who publicly engage about their personal experiences on racialization. They are also ascribed with immigrant male images by the public (Gokieli 2017). Recently, comedian David Batra (Indian Swedish) ventured into his Indian roots in the TV show ‘The World’s Worst Indian’ (V rldens s msta indier), with the tagline, “The comedian David Batra, despite his Indian roots, lives an extremely Swedish life [...] In the series The World’s Worst Indian, David travels to India [...] to try to find his roots and to understand the country better’ (Svt 2019).

Contrary to the rich literature in mixed race studies, research on mixed Swedes is almost non-existent in Sweden. Some quantitative studies indicate that persons of mixed origin may experience different kinds of discrimination and disadvantages in Sweden (see for example Behtoui 2006; Kalmjin 2015; Smith, Helgertz and Scott 2018). Romero’s personal account (in Hubinette et al. 2012) of her experience of being Pilipino-Swedish and Arbouz’s articles (2012; 2017) on mixed identity are the few that address the identification of mixed Swedes. While her analysis is based only on one Asian-Swedish interviewee, Arbouz nicely shows how he manoeuvres the white racial norm and experiences the conditions for being included in Swedishness.

## **Method and data**

My analysis will focus on 21 semi-structured interviews with mixed people (15 females and 6 males), which were conducted during the period of August 2018 to January 2019. The interviewees were recruited through social media and the university network on the basis of identifying with the description of having ‘one Swedish parent and one parent of a foreign background or is not a Swedish citizen’ and the place of upbringing being predominantly in Sweden. Five interviews were conducted in person, while the rest were conducted via Skype or Facetime with cameras on (except for one interview without the camera on, as per the interviewee’s personal request). All of the interviews were conducted in Swedish apart from one that was conducted in English, and each lasted approximately 30 minutes to an hour.

The mean age of the interviewees at the time of the interviews was 25 years. One interviewee spent some time in a third country growing up, two interviewees were born in the country of the non-Swedish parents’ origin and

moved to Sweden before toddler-age. All the interviewees grew up in Sweden, with most having lived in the three biggest cities in Sweden (N=17). The majority are first-generation mixed (with one foreign-born non-Swedish parent), while three interviewees are multigeneration mixed, having two parents of different origins who grew up in Sweden. Half of the interviewees visited the parent's home country regularly (N=11); however, none of the interviewees spent a significant portion of their upbringing in their non-Swedish parent's home country. A little less than half of the interviewees (N=9) grew up in a single parent household. Six interviewees were of Latin American-Swedish mix, eight were of Asian-Swedish mix, and four were of European-Swedish mix, which is a representation that falls in line with the statistics on intermarriage patterns (Osanami Törngren and Irastorza forthcoming 2019). The research attracted many interviewees of Japanese-Swedish origin, which may be a reflection of the author's own ethn racial background (see Appendix 1 for details).

The interviewees gave both oral and written consent to participate in the study. All the interviews were recorded with their consent, and the transcriptions were forwarded for them to review. In addition, the interview materials were treated anonymously and confidentially. The transcriptions were translated from Swedish to English, and the names that appear in this article are pseudonymous.

## Findings

When the interviewees were asked how they identify themselves, the majority identified with multiple terms. How they identify reflects the emergence of different ways of identifying in Sweden which includes hyphenated identification and specific terms such as 'half' (*halvis*), 'mixed' (*mixad/blandad*), or 'half and half' (*halv-halv*) as well as terms completely outside of the ethn racial connotations. This shows how these self-identification categories are constructed beyond the either-or logic that exists in Sweden, and moreover, it reflects an emerging exercise among mixed Swedes to self-identify in their own terms (Root 1996). Despite the diverse ways the interviewees try to identify themselves, most of them reported reflected identification as Swedish or non-Swedish and other specific words that imply non-whiteness.

**Table 1. Self and ascribed identification**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Self identification</b>	<b>Ascribed identification</b>
<b>Adam</b>	Jewish Latino	Swedish
<b>Agnes</b>	Swedish, half or mixed	Swedish
<b>Alicia</b>	Swedish	Swedish
<b>Claudia</b>	Swedish and Italian, half-half	Swedish
<b>David</b>	Swedish	Swedish
<b>Edvin</b>	Non-categorical term	Non-Swedish
<b>Elise</b>	Swedish, Swedish Ethiopian	Non-Swedish
<b>Eman</b>	Swedish and Moroccan	Arabic
<b>Eri</b>	Half Japanese and half Swedish	Non-Swedish, non-white
<b>Felicia</b>	Non-categorical term	Cuban
<b>Hugo</b>	Swedish	Swedish
<b>Ines</b>	Swedish-Argentinian	Swedish
<b>Jennifer</b>	Mixed, half Asian	Asian
<b>Lucia</b>	Swedish	Non-Swedish
<b>Mari</b>	Half Japanese	Asian, Japanese
<b>Maria</b>	Swedish and Roma	Non-Swedish
<b>Melinda</b>	Mixed	Swedish
<b>Mina</b>	Swedish, Japanese-Swedish	Non-white
<b>Nille</b>	Swedish	Swedish
<b>Sana</b>	Mixed	Asian, non-white
<b>Tova</b>	Swedish	Indian

I further explore how the interviewed mixed Swedes identify themselves and experience the constraints in their ethnic options as well as explain their choice of identification.

### *Identifying with one category*

David (American-French-Swedish) identifies himself as Swedish and experiences his identification as validated. When he was young, he lived in France but never in America where he occasionally visited his family. However, there was no strong American or French influence in his upbringing except for the language. This is reflected in his comment that “it never comes up in a conversation that he is different’, and he claims that he feels at home in Sweden and passes as Swedish, French, and American everywhere he goes. His identification with his mixed background is symbolic (Gans 1979) and not specifically based on practising the cultural heritage. His way of identifying infers a similar process to white Americans’ ethnic options of being able to choose white ethnicity. It reflects the flexibility of ethnic identification based on the cultural origin and heritage independent of whether the individuals engage in the cultural practices of that culture (Cantel 2005; Waters 1990). In Alicia’s upbringing (Hungarian-German-Swedish), the Hungarian language and culture were also not strongly present. The German influence was more present, as she had direct contact and interactions with her relatives in Germany, including her grandmother. She identifies herself as “Swedish rather than not Swedish, but less Swedish than a 100% Swede’. She says she feels “a little bit Hungarian’ and expresses her wish to learn more about her Hungarian heritage. Both David and Alicia identify themselves as Swedish; however, this does not mean that they dissociate or distance themselves from their mixed background and parental origin. They exercise their choice to identify as Swedish, and the choice is validated because they can pass, which reflects Swedish as a white racial category.

Nille (Japanese-Swedish) said that he always says that he is Swedish. He rarely experiences that he is asked questions like “But where are you really from?’ and therefore, believes that he can pass as Swedish. Nille was the only interviewee of non-white mix background who experienced that his claim to be Swedish was validated, while others experienced constraints on their claim of being Swedish. Elise, for example, says she is Swedish but adds “racially and biologically 50-50: Swedish and Ethiopian’. She explains to me that her physical appearance contradicts with her cultural and ethnic background, which makes her claim to be Swedish questioned. Elise says that it is sometimes strange to say that she is Swedish, and when I ask her why she answers: Because despite everything, it feels like it is not possible [to be accepted as Swedish]. I know that if I say so, they [people] will say against me [that I am not]. [...] At the same time, if I can't say that, what else am I?

She later adds, “It is quite confusing because it is such a contradiction that one sees oneself in one way, and then it is pointed out that you are not. So it gets a little bit, it gets strange to handle’. Her words reflect the gap between her

identification and how her identity is scrutinized and policed because of her phenotype (Brubaker 2016). Her feeling of misrecognition resonates with previous studies (e.g. Aspinall and Song 2014; Osanami Törngren 2018).

Like Elise, Tova also shares the same experience of being policed with the boundary of 'Swedish', although she is resolute in her claim to identify as Swedish. When asked how she identifies herself in ethnic and racial terms, she answers, Swedish. Yes. I feel that it's quite easy to say so; meanwhile, it is hard to have to defend it so often'. Her reflection around her identification as Swedish is interesting considering that her father is an adoptee from Finland and her mother is an adoptee from India: In other words, she is multiracial and was raised by two monocultural parents. She says she has always been seen as Indian because of her physical appearance.

Swedish is my native language. I have not been able to speak any other languages. I was born here. None of my parents speak any other languages other than Swedish, although none of them were born in Sweden. There are different definitions on the basis [of what it means to be Swedish]. Some think that one must be born in Sweden, some think that your parents must be born in Sweden, some think that one must be able to speak the language, or some say that it is just to have a passport. I feel that I can check off the majority [of these things], but not all. Some think that you have to look Swedish, which I may not, but I think I look Swedish in my definition of Swedish.

Tova's words indicate how identifying as Swedish can embrace different racial and ethnic categories instead of understanding Swedish as a white racial category. She actively uses the term Swedish as a national identification rather than simply as a white racial category, and in doing so, redefines the meaning of the category of Swedish.

Hugo (Chilean-Spanish-Swedish), who experiences that he can pass as Swedish, says 'I am mostly Swedish'. When he was younger, he identified more with his Chilean and Spanish mix; however, as he grew older, he started to identify himself more as Swedish. This also came with the fact that he realized that he was increasingly ascribed with a foreigner identity and also saw how people dichotomized themselves:

I became too annoyed and angry when people said that I was not Swedish – that it was partly this thing that, of course, I am Swedish. I was born and raised in Sweden. But also because we see the opposite as well. [One can] meet people who had lived in Sweden their entire lives and still have nothing good to say about Sweden and criticize and say negative things and say we are not Swedish and this and that.

Like Tova, Hugo's words also reflect the idea that the identification as Swedish should embrace different backgrounds. Lucia, Hugo's sister, also clearly articulates this identification as Swedish. Contrary to Hugo, she experiences that she cannot pass as Swedish and constantly has her claim questioned when people

insist ‘But where are you *really* from?’ She identifies herself as someone ‘*from* Sweden’ and reasons around the idea of national belonging which goes beyond the either-or logic.

I want people to see me as a person who has a mixture of different things and likes having different interests and not really box me in and [categorize me] – ‘You are foreigner’ or ‘You are typically Swedish’.

Contrary to the majority of the interviewees who are first generation multiracial and multi-ethnic, Tova, Hugo, and Lucia are a multigeneration mix. It is clear that their identification as Swedish outweighs any identification based on parental country of origin. In the minds of others, their mixed backgrounds are fixed with the parental origin, despite that today the social meaning of parental origin is diminishing and ethnicity is becoming more symbolic (Brubaker 2016; Gans 1979; Waters 1990). Embracing their mixed heritage, many with mixed backgrounds identify themselves as Swedish, not as an either-or identification located in the either-or logic of Swedish as white and thus redefining what it means to be Swedish through national belonging. This identification of Swedish as a race-neutral term, independent of whether the interviewees can pass as Swedes or not, resonates with previous research showing how mixed persons identify through national belonging (Song and Aspinall 2012).

Mina (Japanese-Swedish) says that she does not feel comfortable saying that she is Japanese in front of a white Swedish person, and almost always say that she is ‘Swedish’. In situations where people have a diverse background and not just ‘Swedish and white’ but are ‘non-white’, she identifies herself as Japanese or Japanese-Swedish. She explains that ‘it feels more legitimate to make a claim.’ When I ask her why she does not feel comfortable identifying herself as Japanese in front of white Swedes, she explains that it’s because of the ‘imagination about Japan’ and the expectations that are connected to Japan and being Japanese which are enforced on her against her will.

There is something about Japan. I experience that many Swedes have very concrete pictures of what they think Japan is. Do you get it? They have some kind of imagination, lots of ideas and preconceptions. Some kind of fantasy. Like the other day, [someone said], ‘You are someone sort of Asian’, and I said I was Japanese. Right then, they feel that I can talk about these things. I can talk to you about sushi. I can talk to you about anime and manga and this thing that is happening in Japan.

Later she says, ‘If I then say at the same time that I am *half* Japanese, then it is all of a sudden “Oh, okay, you are not a real Japanese – a *full* Japanese”.’ She experiences that her authenticity as Japanese and her knowledge about Japan gets questioned and overruled in the majority white Swedish context and by Swedes who want to maintain a certain picture of Japan. Her experience depicts how different identification choices invoke different associations and expectations,

which leads to consequences for one's actions and associations with others (Deux 2018). Mina also says that she is questioned regularly: 'are you more Japanese or more Swedish?' It is clear that she experiences the policing of the boundary, the ascribed identity based on either-or logic, that you are more of/less of one and thus you cannot be both-and (Brubaker 2016).

It is so tense. In Sweden, it is so clear that I am Japanese because I do not fit in and because I am not white. But then, personally and absolutely I myself think I am more Swedish than Japanese.

Her words clearly reflect the existing idea of Swedish as a white racial category based on the either-or logic. She is confined in this either-or logic despite that she is flexible with her identification. She shifts between identifying herself as Swedish in a Swedish context and Swedish-Japanese or even simply as Japanese in situations where there are other persons of mixed background or racial and ethnic minority background. She clearly experiences a gap between self-identification and how people identify her.

Interestingly, several interviewees expressed that 'being Swedish is boring' and identified themselves as something else than Swedish. This idea of being Swedish as boring can be interpreted as a contestation of the either-or fixed idea of being Swedish or not. For example, David (Argentinian-Swedish) strongly identifies himself as Sephardi, Jewish, and Latino, and says, 'I do not identify with the Swedish identity even though it is quite obvious.' He normally passes as a Swede, and people are surprised to find out that he is of a mixed background. He shares his experience of being excluded from the category 'Latino' and feeling strange about it. When I asked him how he wants to be seen by others, he articulates very clearly:

I want, firstly, to be seen as Sephardi and partly Latino. They are the two identities that exist simultaneously. [...] Swedish has been something that – I have never fought to be seen as Swedish, but I have always struggled not to be seen as Swedish.

Adam aspires to not be seen as Swedish, and identifies with his father's origin, which can be interpreted as a contestation to the existing idea of being Swedish. His words depict his self-identification as both-and and beyond either-or because he experiences that he is confined in the logic of either-or being categorized and passing as 'Swedish'. Agnes' experience (Honduran-Swedish) is very similar to Adam's; however, Agnes feels that she does not have the claim to say that she is Latin American. Agnes can pass as Swedish, and this makes her identification complicated. She explains, 'Appearance-wise, I'm very white passing, and that is exactly what has led to me having a complex feeling.' She visits Honduras frequently and is fluent in Spanish. Moreover, her name indicates a Latin American background. Despite the language skills and transnational ties, she feels that her Latin American identity is not validated by others, given that she can

pass as white and Swedish and is often situated in a predominantly white middle-class environment. She claims that when she was in a mixed setting at a university, she felt that it was easier to assert her Latino identity. She feels confined in the either-or logic and cannot locate herself in between. She explains to me the racialized geography of Stockholm – to come from ‘the hood’ (*orten*) – and how that may affect the way she acts and identifies herself as Latino. She connects her middle-class status as a reflection of Swedishness which partly invalidates her Latino identity. Adam and Agnes both feel that their ethnic identity is not validated always because they can pass as Swedes despite their upbringing being strongly connected to Latin American culture. Their experiences are examples of how ascribed identities are based on the either-or dichotomized categorization of being ‘Swedish’ or of ‘an immigrant background’. Their experiences of passing and being appraised as Swedish reflect the idea of Swedish as a white racial category. Passing as a majority often entails privilege; however, their experience shows how passing can also involve feelings of misrecognition and dilemmas (e.g. Aspinall and Song 2014; Gaither 2015; Osanami Törngren 2018). Adam and Agnes respond differently to the constraints of feeling that there is no in between or an option to be both-and or neither-nor.

### *Being both-and*

Claudia identifies herself as ‘Swedish and Italian’ and feels that she can pass as Swedish and Italian in both countries. Similarly, Melinda (Kosovo Albanian-Swedish) and Ines (Argentinian-Swedish) also pass as Swedish yet identify themselves as mixed. Despite the fact that they identify as mixed, they all experience that they are ascribed with a Swedish identity based on the either-or logic and Swedish as a white racial category. Both Melinda and Ines have been told, ‘I didn’t know that you are not Swedish’. Ines clearly articulated that she has a ‘mixed identity’ (*blandad*), and she identifies herself as Swedish-Argentinian and ‘both Swedish and Argentinian’. She passes as Swedish phenotypically, but the difference for Ines compared to Claudia and Melinda is that Ines’ name is an indication that she is ‘not Swedish’.

I have a Swedish first name, and then I have a double last name – an Argentinian and a Swedish surname. And it is really about drawing a boundary directly when I meet people in context where my name is directly [visible] as soon as I introduce myself. I am very quickly reminded of my background and my parentage and where I come from, why my name is my name, and I get a lot of comments about it. Then there are many who get confused and say, ‘Oh when I saw you I thought you were Swedish’.

At another point, she said that as soon as people notice that her name is not Swedish, they do not accept her as being ‘completely Swedish’ anymore despite

that she can pass as Swedish phenotypically: '[My name] comes up directly, and then I am not given a chance to say how people should treat me before they realize that I have Latin American ancestry.' This is another clear example of the either-or dichotomy and the policing of Swedish identity.

Eman (Moroccan-Swedish) says that his identity is based on his personality and behavior but also clearly identifies himself based on the parental origins having 'Swedish mother and Moroccan father'. He says that he cannot pass as Swedish and he is ascribed as an 'Arab'. His words clearly reflect yet again how society defines people in the either-or logic based on the idea of Swedish as a white racial category, and this inhibits him from being able to locate himself in between as he wishes.

I think it is others who help me, other people and not me, who help me to clarify, other people who emphasize the national identity more than I do myself. That is why I think of my national identity because it is obvious that this is what people think of.

Jennifer (Chinese Malay-Swedish Finn) has been repeatedly asked, 'Where are you from?' and she says that people see her more as 'Asian' than mixed. Despite that she is ascribed with the either-or category, her words reflect the flexibility of her identity:

I usually describe myself as mixed in some way. I can sometimes say 'half Asian', but then there will be a long explanation. I'm half Asian, my dad comes from there, my mother comes from there, and I was born in Sweden. I know that when I was younger, it was very important that I was born in Sweden. It was my identity. I have always felt that I am Swedish to a larger extent. Although I don't look Swedish and maybe not everyone has seen me as Swedish, but I myself have felt very Swedish.

Similar to the interviewees introduced earlier (such as Lucia), Jennifer understands the category of Swedish as a national identity rather than as a white racial category. Moreover, similar to multigenerational mixed interviewees, the social meaning of parental origin does not outweigh the meaning of her being mixed and Swedish (Brubaker 2016).

Eri explains that the easiest way to identify herself is 'half Japanese and half Swedish'; however, that she goes beyond the both-and logic does not definitely position or incline herself to either side of the parental origin.

I want to be seen as both Swedish and Japanese. But I would surely be more upset if someone denied my Swedishness. Because I am more Swedish than what I am Japanese, and I was born and raised in Sweden.

She also said (as Adam mentioned earlier) that she thinks being Swedish is boring, which can be understood as a contestation of the either-or appraisal of being Swedish or not. She says that she belongs to the group 'non-white' because she had an upbringing where she was told and reminded all the time that she is not

‘white’. In the following quotation, she contests the idea of Swedish as white. Her sister, Sana, also recognizes the fixed idea of Swedish as white and says that ‘it gets much more complicated for me when I say that I am Swedish. Then I have to have a much longer conversation about it’. She describes herself as ‘mixed’ and sometimes ‘Japanese-Swedish.’ Like Eri, Sana also says that her cultural identity – which she specifies as language, values, and other cultural grounds – is Swedish and nothing else. At the same time, she says she cannot deny the influence from her father who was strongly attached to Japan despite that they were not close after her parents separated. She reasons how she navigates the traditional social categories that exist in Sweden:

I'm not an immigrant. I'm not [transnationally] adopted either. There were such clear identity categories that I did not belong to. What am I then? I am perhaps some kind of a white person because I still have the attributes. I have the culture.

Sana explains how her middle-class identity has become important because she looked different from other ‘Swedes’. For her, emphasizing her class was a way of belonging to the idea of Swedishness. This is an interesting contrast with Agnes’ experience (introduced earlier), who felt that her middle-class status was a hinder for her to claim her Latino background.

Mari (Japanese-Swedish) identifies herself as ‘half-Japanese’. She explains that it has always been important for her to point out that she has a Japanese parentage, but her identification as half-Japanese also comes from her experiences of constantly being referred to as ‘that Japanese girl’. She expresses her wish to be able to be neither-nor. She expresses her wish not to be categorized as one and be trans of beyond: ‘Being tied to just one thing – it is a suppression which I may not be really happy about. [...] I want to be me. I do not want to be tied to any single category.’ Like Mina (introduced earlier), Mari also faces expectations and stereotypes around the idea of being Japanese and says ‘You just want to be [yourself]. Can’t you just get away from what people identify you as?’. Mari describes this as a feeling of ‘alienation’, which is a clear example of misrecognition which resonates with studies on mixed identity in a different contexts (see for example Osanami Törngren 2018; Song and Aspinall 2012; Aspinall and Song 2013)

Maria (Polish-Swedish-Roma) identifies as being Swedish and Roma. Maria has two Roma parents who originate from two different nation-states. She clearly says that she has never ‘felt Polish’ even though she has transnational ties, speaks the Polish Romani language and knows the culture. She states, ‘My home country is Sweden. I am Swedish’ and for her, being Swedish is tied to where she feels home. She explains the feeling of coming home when she goes on a flight and lands in Sweden. She experiences that people wants to categorize her according to the either-or logic – Swedish or Roma – and responds,

If I want to call myself Swedish, I will call myself Swedish. If I want to call myself a Roma, I'll call myself Roma. Accept it. If I want to say both, one should not question one identity and not the other.

This is a clear articulation of flexibility of identity being trans of between (Brubaker 2016), and an articulation of her right to identify herself as she chooses (Root 1996), where she can shift between being Swedish, Roma, and both without inclining to one. Her claim of being Swedish is based not on racial identification as white but rather a national identification – a feeling that other interviewees share. However, again, Swedish as a white racial category puts constraints on her claim to be Swedish and Roma.

Many interviewees identified themselves as mixed in different ways; however, it is clear that their mixed identity is not validated in Swedish society (Lou and Lalonde 2015). Although they view themselves as beyond either-or and both-and, others may not accept the mixed status as a meaningful category (Rockquemore and Arend 2002). Depending on the phenotype and name, they are placed in a category of being 'Swedish' or of 'an immigrant background'. It is also clear that they all identify themselves as Swedish through the national belonging.

### *Being transcendent*

Edvin (French-Korean adoptee Swedish) and Felicia (Cuban-Finnish) were the two interviewees who identified themselves completely outside of ethnoracial terms. They both experience that they cannot pass as Swedish, and their distancing themselves from ethnoracial identification comes from the constant reminder of their background by others. When I asked how he identifies himself, Edvin explains that he avoids any national, ethnic, and racial reference by saying that he is from Gothenburg. He understands the category 'Swedish' as being equal to being white and questions what Swedish actually means.

So just this thing, Swedish. I have understood [it] through people's way of talking to me. [...] But just because they say 'Swedish', that I am not Swedish, I have never seen myself as Swedish. In other contexts, when I have become closer to these people, then they say, 'I see you as Swedish'. And it's like that, see me [as Swedish], what?

Felicia identifies herself as 'global' and explained to me that she acted according to the stereotypes and what is expected of her as 'Cuban' when she was younger to make it 'easier for everybody'. Until today, she says she was never treated as Swedish wherever she went but rather as Cuban or someone who is 'brown'. She tells me her experiences of how people ascribe her with a non-Swedish identity, which shows yet again the constraints based on the idea of Swedish as a white racial category. She explains, 'Sure, you can put me in a box, but you will never

understand who I am’.

It was all the time, ‘Where are you from?’ Then I started with a new strategy, and I say ‘Finland’. ‘Okay’, they say, but they can't digest it. There must be something more. Cuba! It's a relief. Yes, there! Of course! Okay, I understand [why people see it that way], but I see myself as part of the world, and I am myself. I am [me]. You do not need to put me into boxes.

Edvin’s and Felicia’s experiences reflect how the Swedish society and people around them cannot think outside of the either-or and the boundary of Swedishness as fixed and policed with the rigid whiteness. As a strategy, both Edvin and Felicia identify themselves completely outside of the prevailing idea of ancestry and outside of any particular ethnoracial categories as they try to achieve a neither-nor identification. Their identification resonates with studies which shows superordinate identity as ‘human’ or a ‘world citizen’ (Amiot and de la Sablonniere, 2010) and thus challenging the validity of race itself (Shih et al. 2007).

## Discussion

The article examines multiracial and multiethnic Swedish young adults’ identification and response to their reflected identity and gives their reasoning for the choice of self-identification. Most of the multiracial interviewees experience a gap in their identifications. As previous studies indicate, multiracial individuals respond to these gaps differently (e.g. Song and Aspinall 2012; Osanami Törngren 2018).

Through Brubaker’s conceptualization of the identification process (2016), the analysis shows how mixed Swedes self-identify less according to the either-or logic and more towards neither-nor identification by choosing terms such as ‘mixed’ and using hyphenated terms. Contrary to the fact that the majority of the interviewees self-identify as Swedish or mixed, they experience that others place them in the traditional dichotomy of Swedish or a person of immigrant background, which falls in line with either-or logic. Similar to the black–white US context (Brubaker 2016; Morning 2017), the interview results clearly show that although they claim their identities are outside of the traditional ethnoracial categorization, other people’s appraisals remain fixed with the either-or logic based on whiteness. Moreover, their mixed identities are unvalidated (Lou and Lalonde 2015; Rockquemore and Arend 2002).

Therefore, the majority of the mixed Swedes who were interviewed expressed the gap between the self and the ascribed identification. Responses to the gap and the reasoning around their identity varies, as suggested in previous studies conducted in different contexts (e.g. Song and Aspinall 2012; Osanami

Törngren 2018). As Roth (2018). If classification norms remain relatively fixed, the disparity will increase between self-identification and how one is seen by others. This calls for an attention in observing how flexibility in identification may or may not lead to the redrawing of traditional boundaries.

In addition, it shows that some interviewees identify themselves as Swedish in terms of nationality and cultural belonging in Sweden as in the British context (Song and Aspinall 2012). Claiming to be Swedish does not necessarily cater to the dichotomized either-or logic based on whiteness but can be an active attempt to redefine the boundary of what it means to be Swedish, thus rejecting the idea of Swedish as a white racial category. Self-identifying as Swedish in national terms was not validated in cases where the interviewees cannot phenotypically pass as Swedish, which confirms previous studies that show how whiteness defines who can and cannot be called Swedish (e.g. Lundström 2017; Gokieli 2017; Runfors 2016). Interviewees experience the policing of Swedish identity through the scrutinization of their non-Swedish sounding names or the question, 'Where are you from?' based on their phenotype.

The interviewees' experiences also suggest that the choice to identify as Swedish or mixed is not a fixed and objective state of identity but rather highly fluid (Brubaker 2016; Jenkins 2005). This indicates how mixed Swedes' identifications are beyond the traditional either-or thinking based on the prevailing idea of ancestry and whiteness. The choices invoke different associations and expectations that are associated with the identification, which may have consequences for one's actions and associations with others (Deux 2018). Therefore, some mixed Swedes identify differently depending on the context and time.

The findings of this study also suggest the need to further address the meaning of whiteness, race, and the racialization process in Sweden. It is clear that although Sweden as a whole maintains a colour-blind approach, interviewees freely used different terms that refer to their skin colour, phenotype, and racial belonging. Currently, there is a polarized discussion around collecting data on race and ethnicity in Sweden (Osanami Törngren 2018). However, there is no evidence which suggests that not collecting data reduces racism, discrimination, or the belief in racial essentialism, nor asking to self-report your ethnicity and race are experienced as sensitive (Simon 2008; 2017; Öhberg and Medeiros 2017). One can argue that the growing mixed population in Sweden need to be recognized. Mixed persons are unique by challenging traditional understandings of racial dichotomies and thus providing valuable insights into the process of racial appraisals and identification in Sweden.

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## Appendix 1. List of interviewees

NAME	AGE	FATHER	MOTHE R	OCCUPATI ON	PARENTS' DIVORCE	PLACE OF UPBRINGING	HOME VISITS
Adam	27	Argentinian	Swedish	Working	Yes	Stockholm	Few times
Agnes	22	Honduran	Swedish	Student	No	Stockholm	Regular visits
Alicia	21	Hungarian	German- Swedish	Student	No	Other	Few times
Claudia	23	Italian	Swedish	Student	No	Malmö	Regular visits
David	20	French- Swedish	American	Working	No	Malmö	Regular visits
Edvin	31	French	Korean adoptee	Working	Yes	Gothenburg	No visit
Elise	24	Swedish	Tanzania	Student	Yes	Other	Sporadi c
Eman	26	Morocco	Swedish	Working, studying	Yes	Stockholm	Regular visits
Eri	31	Japanese	Swedish	Working	Yes	Gothenburg	Few times
Felicia	25	Cuban	Finnish	Working	Yes	Stockholm, Malmö	Regular visits
Hugo	21	Spanish- Swedish	Chile	Working	No	Malmö	Regular visits
Ines	28	Argentinian	Swedish	Student	No	Stockholm	Few times
Jennifer	33	Chinese- Malay	Swedish- Finn	Student	No	Malmö	Regular visits
Lucia	19	Spanish- Swedish	Chile	Student	No	Malmö	Regular visits
Mari	26	Japanese	Swedish	Student	No	Gothenburg	Regular visits
Maria	21	Roma-Polish	Roma- Swedish	Student	No	Malmö	Regular visits
Melinda	22	Kosovo Alban	Swedish	Sick leave	Yes	Other	No visit
Mina	23	Swedish	Japanese	Student	No	Stockholm	Regular visits
Nille	27	Japanese	Swedish	Working	Yes	Other	Sporadi c
Sana	33	Japanese	Swedish	Working	Yes	Gothenburg	Few times
Tova	26	Finish adoptee	Indian adoptee	Student	No	Stockholm	Few times