Melting Pot or Salad Bowl? An Overview of Mixed Families in Sweden

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Abstract: Due to globalization and international migration to and from Sweden, the option to choose a life partner who is of migrant background has been increasing in Sweden. Despite the growth of and greater ethnic and racial diversity in mixed marriages in Sweden, however, few researchers have studied such unions to any great extent. This article focuses on mixed marriages in which one person is of Swedish background and the other of a different ethnic or racial background. It questions whether Sweden is becoming what is metaphorically described as a melting pot or a salad bowl. The article, first, includes a meta-analysis of existing research on mixed marriage and families in Sweden. These studies present the actual numbers and patterns of mixed marriages and the socioeconomic status of mixed families as well as attitudes toward mixed marriage. The second part turns to analysis of 2014 register data, which shows how such factors as gender, country of origin, and immigrant generation affect the composition of mixed marriages and the socioeconomic status of mixed families.

Keywords: Mixed families, mixed marriages, Sweden, socioeconomic status

Introduction

With the exception of some minority groups, like the Sámi, Finns, or Roma, Sweden has traditionally been an ethnically and racially homogenous country. However, as a result of international migration—particularly of non-European migration flows starting in the 1980s—the racial and ethnic landscape of the country has changed significantly. In 2016, 18 percent of the ten million residents of Sweden were born abroad, and 5 percent of people born in Sweden had two foreign-born parents, while 7 percent of those also born in Sweden were the children of binational marriages, that is, children with one Swedish-born parent and one foreign-born parent.[1] Despite the rapid growth of the non-White, foreign-born population and the number of mixed couples, this topic is nevertheless underexplored in Sweden. Moreover, the field of critical mixed race studies, which "places mixed race at the critical center of focus," is almost nonexistent in Sweden.[2]

Mixed marriages are widely accepted to be an indicator of integration and assimilation, as marrying within or outside of your own race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and culture signifies embracing each other, independent of whether this leads to these differences becoming more salient or distinct. This is because marriage is one of the most personal and intimate social relationships that an individual can enter. It is also one of the few relationships in which individuals can choose who they want to be or not be with, in contrast to other types of relationships in society.[3] This article focuses on interracial and interethnic marriages and families where one of the partners has a Swedish background (two parents born in Sweden) and the other has a different ethnic or racial background (including those who are Swedish born). We use

the terms "mixed marriage," "mixed families," and "intermarriage" interchangeably in this article. Based on the meta-analysis of previous studies and our own register data analysis, we argue that the patterns of mixed marriage in Sweden show a tendency for European mainstreaming and what could be described metaphorically as a salad bowl; however, whether this mainstreaming will be observed for the non-European and non-White population of Sweden remains to be seen. We provide insights into how gender, immigrant generation, and country of origin affect the composition of mixed marriage and the socioeconomic status (SES) of mixed families in Sweden. We understand the occurrence of intermarriages and the SES of mixed families as crucial for understanding the situations of mixed children.

The purpose of this article is twofold: the first part briefly introduces the Swedish context and gives a systematic overview of existing research on mixed marriage and families in Sweden. Through this review of existing research, we identify the extent of intermarriage (how many intermarry), the background of intermarried persons (who marries whom), and any related social constraints (such as attitudes toward intermarriage). From this overview, we observe whether Sweden is heading toward becoming more of a melting pot or a salad bowl, to use metaphoric language. In the second part of the article, we analyze this observation through a statistical analysis of register data. We present the updated numbers of mixed marriages and the SES of mixed families as well as examine how such factors as gender, generation (first or second), and country of origin affect the incidence of mixed marriage in Sweden. This article contributes to the start of critical mixed race studies in Sweden by not only providing a systematic overview of previous studies in Sweden but also comparing these studies with the latest register data on mixed families.

Sweden: A Color-Blind Country with Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Today, 19 percent of approximately ten million residents in Sweden are first-generation immigrants born outside of Sweden and 9 percent are non-Swedish citizens.[4] Sweden's racial and ethnic composition has changed in a relatively short time as a result of immigration. Sweden was a country of emigration (people leaving Sweden) from the beginning of the 1800s up until World War I; within a period of one hundred years, a total of approximately 1.3 million Swedes—close to one-fourth of the total population—had emigrated from Sweden to America, Canada, South America, and Australia.[5] The year 1930 marks the first year Sweden recorded more people immigrating to than emigrating from Sweden, marking the country's shift to a place of immigration. By the end of World War II, Sweden began receiving a substantial number of immigrants. Until the 1980s, immigrants predominantly from within the Nordic countries and Europe came to Sweden to work. However, after 1980, most immigrants could be categorized as asylum seekers from outside Europe, particularly the Middle East, and their family members due to subsequent reunification. As the dominant category of immigration shifted from labor migration to asylum migration, the countries of origin shifted from within Europe to outside of Europe (with the exception of asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia).[6]

Sweden has continued to settle a steady number of immigrants over the past several decades. In 2015, as the whole of Europe experienced what is called "the European refugee crisis," Sweden recorded the highest number of asylum seekers. In 2016, around 70,000 persons received residency permits on the grounds of international protection. Another 80,000 received residency permits on the grounds of work,

family, EU/EEA (European Union/European Economic Area) rules, and study, resulting in a total of 150,000 persons receiving residency permits and settling in Sweden in 2016 alone.[7]

Swedish statistics are based on administrative data, which does not register race and ethnicity. Race and ethnicity are often inferred or assumed by scholars through data on citizenship or country of birth and parental country of birth. Moreover, Swedish statistics often divide the population into two dichotomized categories: persons of Swedish background (Swedish-born persons with one or two Swedish-born parents) and persons of foreign background (foreign-born persons or persons with two foreign-born parents). These color-blind statistics are problematic, especially for mixed persons, persons of third-generation migrant background, naturalized immigrants, or those who originate from racially and ethnically diverse countries. They all disappear from official statistic reports.

As no official categories of ethnic and racial groups exist in Sweden, there are no clear statistics on racial and ethnic groups and the mixed population. Race and ethnicity are defined in various ways in different disciplines and traditions. In this article, in line with the critical mixed race studies emphasis on the constructed nature of race, we understand "race" as a socially constructed category based on physical and visible differences and only assign racial categories as "procedural devices one uses to make an interpretation."[8] We also use "ethnicity" as a procedural device and category of analysis based on the assumption of cultural origin and heritage independent of whether or not the individuals engage in the cultural practices of that culture.[9] In line with other researchers, we infer race and ethnicity according to the country and region of origin pragmatically despite being aware of the problems that this entails. Even though assumptions of ethnicity and race through country of origin are problematic, this is one way to try to break down the fixed analytical dichotomies of "Swedish background" and "foreign background."

Table 1 Origin of the foreign-born population in Sweden, statistics as of December 31, 2017 (%)

Africa	2.2
Asia (including the Middle East)	7.3
EU28 (excluding Nordic countries)	3.6
Other Europe (excluding EU28 and Nordic countries)	2.6
Nordic countries (excluding Sweden)	2
North America/Oceania	0.5
Latin America	0.7
Total	19

Source: "Antal personer med utländsk eller svensk bakgrund (fin indelning) efter region, ålder och kön. År 2002–2018," SCB (Statistics Sweden), accessed October 12, 2021, http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START__BE__BE0101__BE0101Q/UtlSvBakgFin/.

Based on the country of origin of the individuals and the individuals' ancestry, in 2017, the largest ethnic minority in Sweden was Finns, as approximately 5 percent of the population have origins in Finland. Other major ethnic groups include persons from Syria, Iraq, and Iran, who comprise around 5 percent of the Swedish population today.[10] The table above shows the foreign-born population in Sweden according to their world region of origin, through which we can infer the racial composition of the country. Middle Eastern (incorporated within the category "Asian") is the largest racial minority in Sweden today, and

considering the number of newly arrived immigrants to Sweden every year, it is expected that the group will remain the largest racial minority in the coming years.

Previous studies, which identify African, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and South/East Asian as racial groups, highlight discrimination and racialization in contemporary Swedish society with findings that strongly connect Swedishness to Whiteness.[11] Researchers also found that persons of European (and non-Nordic) background can "pass" as Swedish, especially those who are native born. In the results of the attitudes survey, Europeans were not perceived as "different."[12]

In the population of those under eighteen in three major cities (Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö), the ethnic and racial diversity is obvious. As of December 31, 2017, the Swedish born with two Swedish-born parents (hereafter referred to as "ethnic" or "native" Swedes) comprised only 48 percent of the population. In Stockholm, Gothenburg, and Malmö, 53 percent, 47 percent, and 35 percent respectively were ethnic Swedes, while 29 percent, 36 percent, and 48 percent had foreign backgrounds (that is, either they or both of their parents were born abroad). Moreover, in the three cities, around 17 percent were born in Sweden with one parent born in Sweden and one parent born outside of Sweden (hereafter referred to as "mixed Swedes"), potentially representing a multiracial and multiethnic population.[13]

Research in Sweden shows that Whiteness and visible racial phenotype differences shape the definition of Swedishness and non-Swedishness.[14] This binary is established through whether or not one "looks Swedish." Researchers have shown how African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern identities develop through interaction and contact with the majority society through which persons who are in the non-majority become aware of phenotype differences, such as skin color or hair type.[15] Given that the official statistical classification does not recognize the mixed population and the perception of what it means to be "Swedish," multiracial and multiethnic individuals can fall between these dichotomized categories. Moreover, there is no established vocabulary in Sweden equivalent to "mixed," "multiracial," "haafu," or "Eurasian" (to name but a few terms) for mixed persons to express their mixed background, experiences, and identity.

Mainstreaming of Ethnic and Racial Minorities: Melting Pot or Salad Bowl?

The metaphor of the melting pot derives from the context of early White immigration in the United States. Based on the assimilation ideal, it symbolizes a fusion of different nationalities, cultures, and religions into one. The idea of assimilation in the melting pot metaphor has been challenged by proponents of multiculturalism, and thus, an alternative metaphor of a salad bowl and mosaic has emerged. Criticism of the assimilation ideal and acknowledgment of how difficult it is for racial minority immigrants to assimilate in the United States compared with earlier White immigrants have led scholars to argue that the process of integration is not as simple as the melting pot metaphor would suggest. In contrast, the salad bowl metaphor reflects a society where some cultures—understood as people from different ethnicities—and people from different cultures and backgrounds mix, while at the same time, some remain distinct and separate.[16] This can be understood in both a positive and negative light, as some of the distinctness and separation of the groups can be both voluntary and nonvoluntary through, for

example, racism and discrimination. In both models, the existence of mixed marriage is crucial and ultimately a way to determine assimilation and integration of racial and ethnic minorities.

Connected to the ideas of the melting pot and salad bowl is an understanding of "mainstreaming" toward the White majority culture and society. Focusing on mixed families, Richard Alba, Brenden Beck, and Duygu Basaran Sahin argue that mainstreaming is still the norm, except for those who have some Black ancestry, through showing that mixed families' socioeconomic and residential patterns are, on average, similar to those of White families and are higher than those of non-White families.[17] There are also studies revealing a flexibility in identifying as White among mixed persons.[18] The idea of mainstreaming does not automatically refer to the melting pot ideal and assimilation. Rather, mainstreaming is understood as reflecting social and cultural spaces where the dominant ethno-racial group is "at home," and thus, integration while still maintaining a distinct identity can occur.[19] A study also reveals that many families pursue the minority partner's culture for the benefit of their children.[20] This article explores the ideas of the melting pot and the salad bowl and their meaning in terms of mainstreaming in Sweden by looking at patterns of intermarriage from the 1970s until today and by analyzing the SES of mixed families.

Overview of Studies on Mixed Families in Sweden

The majority of studies on intermarriage in Sweden look at factors that affect the occurrence, patterns, and dissolution of intermarriage; societal attitudes toward intermarriage; and outcomes of intermarriage, such as its potential effects on the labor market. In addition, a number of descriptive articles and official reports map the intermarriage patterns of native Swedes with immigrants from different origins. Following a systematic overview and meta-analysis of studies on mixed families in Sweden, we demonstrate that these studies point to Sweden moving toward a European melting pot incorporating different White ethnic groups.

Patterns of Mixed Marriage in Sweden

In this section, we focus on some of the major published quantitative studies and reports that look at the patterns of mixed marriage in Sweden. The oldest Swedish study on mixed marriages that we know of is a statistical analysis of the number and national composition of marriages conducted by Gary A. Cretser. Basing his study on register data from 1971 to 1993 and defining intermarriage as marriage between a Swedish citizen and a non-Swedish citizen, Cretser observed a 50 percent increase in the number of intermarriages during the period—from 12.5 percent to 18.9 percent. Moreover, he shows that Swedish women were in mixed marriages more than Swedish men. Swedish-Finnish marriages were the most common mixed marriages for both men and women, followed by unions of Swedish citizens with citizens from other Nordic countries and European countries. In other words, mixed marriages with a person of non-European origin, which are more likely to involve an interracial couple, were not common. Among those of non-Nordic origin who often intermarried with Swedes during this period were Greeks, Iranians, Chileans, and Italians.[21]

A 2001 report by Statistics Sweden on "marriage migration" (that is, the number of people who immigrated to Sweden due to marriage) covers the same time period as Cretser's study. However, Cretser's study does not show where the marriages were established, while the report specifically looks at international marriages and the consequent migration. The report confirms the pattern of interethnic marriages even when the marriage was international. Swedish women tended to intermarry men from the former Yugoslavia, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Greece, while Swedish men tended to marry women from Finland, Poland, the Baltic countries, Thailand, and the Philippines.[22] Similarly, a 2015 Statistics Sweden report on migration and family formation looks at reasons for migration and shows that 22 percent of all foreign-born women and 19 percent of all foreign-born men who migrated to Sweden between 1998 and 2007 were in an established relationship with a Swedish-born person. The most common countries of origin for female migrants who were in a relationship with a Swedish-born person were Thailand, the Philippines, and Russia, while for men, they were Turkey and the United States.[23]

Five years prior to the 2015 report, Statistics Sweden published a report on mixed marriage that, for the first time, included not only the foreign-born but also the second generation by looking at parental country of birth in the analysis. According to this report, from 2004 to 2008, 9 percent of all established couples were ethnic Swedes with foreign-born spouses. Contrary to the earlier statistics that show that more women intermarry than men, the 2004–8 data shows that both men and women enter into a mixed marriage to a similar extent (6 percent and 5 percent, respectively). However, the inferred ethnic and racial composition of the couples reflects the same pattern: for Swedish women, men born in Great Britain or Finland were the most common mixed marriage partner, while for Swedish men, women born in Thailand or Finland were the most common partner. The report suggests the continued high proportion of interethnic marriages rather than interracial marriages. Moreover, the statistics indicate a mainstreaming of mixed Swedes to the ethnic Swedish population. A total of 78 percent of mixed Swedes with one Swedish-born parent and one foreign-born parent married Swedes. In this case, the applicable individuals were mainly mixed Swedes with origins in Nordic countries or other European countries. When it comes to second-generation Swedes with a foreign background, that is, those born in Sweden with two foreign-born parents, 55 percent of men and 60 percent of women started a family with persons of second-generation foreign background. Contrary to the high proportion of interethnic relationships within Nordic and European origins, the report shows that second-generation Syrian, Lebanese, and Turkish people were the least likely to establish a relationship with a native Swede.[24]

Thomas Niedomysl, John Östh, and Marrten van Ham take a slightly different approach to studying changes in the rates of marriage migration to Sweden between 1990 and 2004 by country of origin and gender. They identified married or cohabiting couples in which one person was a native Swede and the other was foreign-born, including the year of migration and marriage (or registry of cohabitation), and they concluded that female and male marriage migration increased by 28 percent and 44 percent respectively. Their study confirms that more females intermarry. Moreover, they conclude that the geography of marriage migration is highly gendered, with male migrants originating from Western Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East and with female migrants coming from Asia, eastern Europe, and Russia. While they report no large age difference between native Swedish women and their foreign partners, they highlight

striking age differences between native Swedish men and foreign partners: on average, they were 13 years younger in the case of Asian women, 11.2 in the case of eastern European women, and 9.5 in the case of Russian women than their male partners. While the educational level of couples in which the foreign-born partner came from a high-income country is quite similar, 40 percent of the immigrant partners from middle- or low-income countries had a higher education than the native partner.[25]

Factors behind Intermarriage in Sweden

Swedish scholars have pointed to an increasing occurrence of intermarriage within Europe. Three factors account for the occurrence of intermarriage: individual factors, such as education; structural factors, such as the availability of partners of the same origin; and factors related to value systems and norms, such as the existence of formal and informal sanctions. Alireza Bethoui's study, for example, estimates the probability of intermarriage by examining both married couples and those in cohabiting relationships who had children together in 2004. In line with the aforementioned intermarriage patterns, his analyses show that, even after controlling for educational level, having a job, place of residence, and age at migration, persons of immigrant background (which includes the second generation) from outside Northwestern Europe and North America (ONW countries) are less likely to have a native partner than those with backgrounds from Northwestern Europe and North America (NW countries) and persons with mixed ancestry. Based on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas about individuals with ONW immigrant backgrounds being stigmatized, Bethoui also analyzes whether these individuals are likely to compensate for this stigma with their younger age and educational superiority.[26] The results do point in this direction for both men and women: Bethoui concludes that, while intermarriage patterns of immigrants from NW countries might confirm traditional assimilation theories (referring to the melting pot), this is not as clear for those originating in ONW countries.[27]

The studies of Niedomsyl, Östh, and van Ham and Bethoui point to the age and educational exchange in intermarriage observed in other countries. Moreover, consistent with previous studies, for example, in the US, Aycan Çelikaksoy's studies show that there is also a general positive relationship between education and intermarriage in Sweden, for both native Swedes and those with an immigrant background.[28] However, based on the finding that highly educated people belonging to highly educated ethnic groups in Sweden are more likely to intramarry, she concludes that the relationship between education and intermarriage is not always clear.[29] Çelikaksoy also takes this one step further to look at the marriage patterns of mixed Swedes. Her work shows a positive association between parental intermarriage and that of their children for individuals born in Sweden.[30]

Studies on intermarriage in Sweden conducted by Martin Dribe and Christer Lundh attempt to explain the main factors behind the trend of more frequent marriages between native Swedes and persons of Western European background. Dribe and Lundh look at the effect of immigrants' cultural characteristics as measured by three sets of proxy indicators at the country level: the values, religion, and language of the partner. They found that, after controlling for individual characteristics and structural factors, immigrants from countries that were categorized as highly dissimilar to Sweden in regard to values, religion, or

language were less likely to marry native Swedes compared to immigrants from more culturally similar countries.[31]

Attitudes toward Mixed Marriage and Families

The aforementioned results inferred by the sets of proxy correspond to an earlier opinion survey conducted by Andres Lange and Charles Westin where attitudes toward people from a total of thirteen countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East were measured through a social distance scale.[32] Regarding people from Finland, the United Kingdom, Norway, and Germany, the closest relationship the respondents could imagine having with persons from these areas was having children with them, while for the other groups, the closest relationship they could imagine was that of a best friend, indicating that attitudes toward interethnic relationships are more negative toward interracial relationships.[33]

Society Opinion Media (SOM) and Integration Barometer (IB) surveys conducted over several years show that people are becoming increasingly more positive about mixed relationships. In two SOM surveys, 25 percent of the respondents in 1993 and 15 percent in 2004 agreed completely or largely with the statement, "I would not like having an immigrant from another part of the world married into my family."[34] In the IB survey, respondents were asked to respond to the statement, "People from different cultures and race should not create a family relationship and have children." The percentage of those who answered "totally agree" dropped from 4.8 percent in 2004 to 3.5 percent in 2005; however, this increased to 4.1 percent in 2007.[35] Corresponding to these attitude survey results, several ethnographic studies conducted in Sweden show that people who are involved in interracial or interethnic relationships meet resistance from their surroundings. Sven-Axel Månsson writes that negative attitudes toward mixed marriages exist in Sweden especially when the marriage involves individuals with "sharply deviating cultures and religions."[36]

It is difficult to conclude whether mating preferences of Swedish-born White people are mostly based on cultural proximity or skin color. However, Sayaka Osanami Törngren's study on attitudes toward interracial dating, marriage, and childbearing clearly illustrates that race and skin color matter in Sweden. A survey and interview study conducted among White Swedes demonstrates that adoptees from Latin America, East Asia, and Africa—who are racially non-White but culturally Swedish—were not as preferred as ethnic Swedes, Scandinavians, and other Europeans. Moreover, while the results of her survey showed that the majority of the respondents of White European background could imagine dating, marrying, and having children interracially, the hierarchical preference of a partner was obvious.[37] Scandinavian and West and South European were the most preferred, followed by central/east European and Latin American. South/East Asian, African, and Middle Eastern were the least preferred as a partner.

Interestingly, the hierarchical preference of different groups as potential partners was motivated by the interviewees through the idea of social, religious, and cultural differences as well as liberal values, such as individual choice and gender equality. These ideas were the most evident when talking about gender differences in attitudes. Moreover, these social and cultural differences were only expressed toward someone of South/East Asian, African, and Middle Eastern background and not for the other groups. With these results, Osanami Törngren argues that race does matter in the Swedish marriage market.[38]

Few studies reflect actual voices of mixed families, including their experiences and the stereotypes they encounter regarding their marriage. Lena Gerholm's ethnographic studies show that persons in mixed marriages involving a different religion or skin color express that most existing problems are not related to the couple's relationship itself but rather their relations with the people around them. Gerholm discusses how the more the partner is perceived as "different," the more "mixed" the marriage is perceived to be. For example, she explains that a Swedish-Danish marriage is regarded as less mixed than a Swedish-Gambian marriage, and such couples do not receive the same treatment from their surroundings in the Swedish context. Gerholm also explains that a certain apprehension arises in marriages between Muslims and Western women due to the Orientalism and Islamophobia that underlie the stereotypes and negative conceptions of such marriages.[39]

Vedad Begovic also discusses the negative attitudes toward mixed marriages and examines how the willingness or unwillingness of those around them to accept the partner choice depends on which part of the world the person originates from. In cases where the men's roots are in a so-called Third World, or underdeveloped, country, the distrust of mixed marriage is greater and much more clearly expressed, according to Begovic.[40] Helena Hedman, Lennart Nygren, and Siv Fahlgren's study shows stereotypes of Thai-Swedish couples in Swedish daily newspapers. They note that, as White males, Swedish men are represented as having a superior position, while Thai women are portrayed as a feminine object and described as "both poor oriental object and active and aware agent making her own decision to swindle the rich man."[41]

Experiences of Intermarriage

Another area that is under-researched is the experience of dating and the marriage market among people of color. A 2007 report published by the Equality Ombudsman, which touches on Black youth and their dating patterns, reveals that the interviewed Black youths of African background have limited possibility of long-term and socially accepted relationships with people from other ethnic backgrounds.[42] Fanny Ambjörnsson, in her study on youth, more specifically, high school girls, has found that few girls expressed an attraction to non-White boys: the darker the boy is, the less interested the girls are. Ambjörnsson concludes that it is noticeable that the heteronormative relationship market was strictly stratified by skin color: a White Swedish-born boyfriend was ranked the highest, while a dark-skinned African refugee was ranked lowest in terms of attraction.[43] These findings are in line with statistics on intermarriage, which show a high rate of racial homogamy.

Attitudes toward mixed marriage, presented earlier, may affect not only the occurrence of intermarriage but also the stability of mixed unions once formed. There is a scarce but growing body of research that examines the likelihood of divorce in mixed marriages in Sweden. Based on register data covering the period between 1990 and 2005, Dribe and Lundh study the impact of intermarriage and cultural dissimilarity on separation risks of native Swedes and immigrants who moved to Sweden as adults. The construct of cultural dissimilarity is built on the same set of proxy variables as those employed in Dribe and Lundh's aforementioned study: values, language, and religion. They found that intermarried unions were up to 155 percent more likely to separate than endogamously partnered natives. Further, they also report that the more dissimilar

the country of origin of the foreign-born spouse, the higher the probability of separating. This finding is stronger for native women married to foreign-born men.[44] In line with their study, Statistics Sweden's 2015 report on migration and family formation shows that 23 percent of all female immigrants who were in an established relationship with a Swedish-born person and arrived in Sweden between 1998 and 2002 and 32 percent of the equivalent male immigrants had separated within ten years of immigrating.[45]

Intermarriage and Mainstreaming

Researchers on intermarriage and integration in Sweden address specific questions on how intermarriage is connected to economic integration. Dribe and Lundh's cross-sectional analysis using 2003 register data shows a strong association between intermarriage with natives and economic integration in terms of employment and income for men and women. However, they found no association between immigrants' income or chances of being employed and non-native exogamy.[46] As an extension of this study, Dribe and Paul Nystedt used longitudinal register data for the entire male immigrant population born between 1960 and 1974 who resided in Sweden between 1990 and 2009 to analyze the link between intermarriage and income.[47]

Their main findings point to different types of marriage premiums depending on the marriage itself, the age of migration, country of origin, and total years of marriage. Moreover, their results show that the earnings advantage for intermarried immigrants grows steadily from several years before marriage until more than five years after. They conclude that, although much of the intermarriage premium seems to be a result of selection effects, intermarriage could be an important vehicle for the economic mobility of the most marginalized immigrant groups. However, they also note that many couples in Sweden live together for a few years before they marry, and thus, their results may underestimate the true intermarriage premium.[48]

One of Dribe and Nystedt's conclusions is that the magnitude of the intermarriage premium is highly dependent on the country of origin: while immigrants with NW background earn no intermarriage premium either before or after marriage, immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa experience an intermarriage premium. Nahikari Irastorza and Pieter Bevelander extend these studies by looking at the economic integration of intermarried labor migrants, refugees, and family reunion migrants in Sweden. They also used register data from 1997 and 2007, their findings confirming the intermarriage premium hypothesis for family reunion migrants but only partially for refugees and labor migrants. Intermarried immigrants outperformed intramarried immigrants in terms of employment rate and salary before and after marriage, in 1997 and 2007 respectively, and the same holds true for each of the three subsamples they analyzed.

There is a statistically significant difference in income growth between intermarried and intramarried immigrants within that time period, but this difference is only significant for the subsample of family reunion migrants. Finally, the upward mobility in employment status between 1997 and 2007 was higher for intermarried immigrants than for intramarried ones, with this also being the case for each of the three groups of labor migrants, refugees, and family reunion migrants. Their findings provide evidence to support both the selection hypothesis and the intermarriage premium hypothesis for the whole group of

immigrants to Sweden. They also fully support the selection hypothesis for labor and family reunion migrants but only partially for refugees, whereas they fully confirm the intermarriage premium hypothesis for family reunion migrants but only partially for refugees and labor migrants.[49]

Lena Nekby used the same register data on the entire foreign-born population living in Sweden during any of the years between 1998 and 2005; however, her study presents different results compared to the studies by Dribe and Nystedt and Irastorza and Bevelander. Nekby defines intermarriage as a marriage between an immigrant and a native and includes two comparison groups: intramarriage between immigrants from the same country and unions between immigrants from different countries. She concludes that the marriage premium is similar or greater for immigrants intramarried to immigrants from the same country than for immigrants intermarried to natives.

To control for the effect of time-varying characteristics, such as host-language proficiency, she also takes into consideration the variation in the timing of marriage. She found significant increases in earnings prior to marriage for immigrants in all types of relationships in comparison to the increases of those within respective marriage types who were married for at least four years. She concludes that there is no causal impact of a change in civil status per se on immigrants' earnings nor a post-marriage effect on intermarried immigrants' earnings and that the intermarriage premium found in earlier studies is, in the Swedish context, largely due to unobserved selection.[50]

As seen above, the literature does not provide conclusive results as to whether intermarriage facilitates immigrants' integration, resulting in an increase in their opportunities in the local labor market (intermarriage premium hypothesis) or whether there is a reverse causality between intermarriage and labor-market outcomes—that is, the idea that immigrants who are more integrated and have better language skills and labor-market outcomes before marriage may be more likely to marry natives than their counterparts (selection hypothesis). Although the few scholars who have analyzed this topic agree that intermarried immigrants' employment rates and job incomes are higher than those of intramarried immigrants, there is no consensus on the causes of these differences. Despite the fact that these studies were conducted in the same country and are based on the same data, they present contradictory findings.

What Do All These Studies Show? Hypothesizing Forward

To summarize, previous studies on intermarriage in Sweden have shown the same pattern since the 1970s: assuming the country of origin and citizenship, there is a strong tendency for racial homogamy among native Swedes. Furthermore, there seems to be a preference among ethnic Swedes to marry foreign-born persons of NW rather than ONW background. There also is a clear gendered pattern of mixed marriage in which ethnic Swedish men tend to marry non-European women more frequently than native Swedish women. Moreover, a tendency toward a gap in age and socioeconomic background can be observed among couples formed by native Swedes and a foreign-born partner from outside Northwest Europe and North America. A meta-analysis of previous studies on intermarriage in Sweden presents how integration is not a simple process. The mixing of different nationalities, cultures, and religions is not simply a process of them melting together but rather is segmented. In the next section, we further argue and show that the patterns of mixed marriage in

Sweden point to European mainstreaming and not a melting pot, as the register data from 2014 still shows that the incorporation and mainstreaming of the non-White population of Sweden is yet to be observed.

Mixed Families 2014

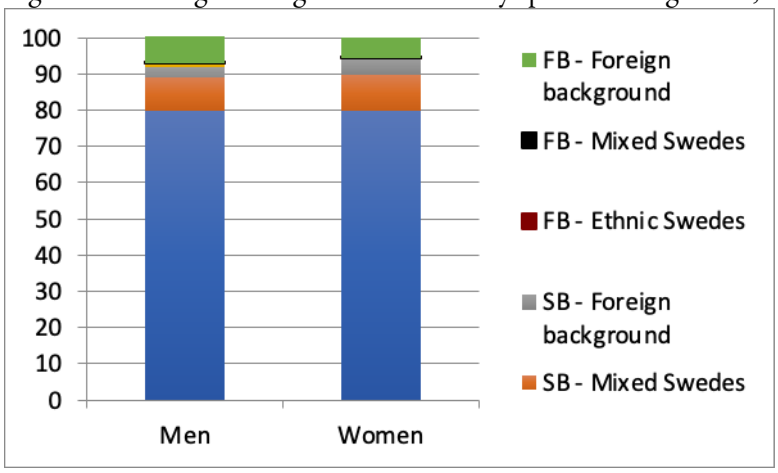
Previous studies have predominantly looked at mixed marriage as binational/international marriages and lack observations on the second-generation and mixed population, who can also be involved in interracial and interethnic relationships. Based on STATIV register data from 2014, we next present a series of figures and tables that show different intermarriage patterns, including marriages with second-generation immigrants and the mixed population, as well as the SES of mixed families.

STATIV is a longitudinal database for integration studies, which includes information on all individuals residing in Sweden. The database contains information on immigrants' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. Using this data, we determine whether the marriage patterns in 2014 confirm mainstreaming for Europeans versus non-Europeans. Although these data provide a snapshot of Sweden in 2014, trends have remained relatively stable and constant since then.

Who Intermarries Whom?

Our sample is composed of ethnic Swedes who in 2014 were registered in Sweden as a married or cohabiting couple, both of which we consider as marriage (n = 2,082,872).[51] About half of the samples are women and the mean age is between fifty-one and sixty-five, depending on union type. Previous studies identify a tendency for Swedish women to intermarry more frequently than men, and our analysis shows a more detailed gendered pattern of intermarriages. Interestingly, the intermarriage rate with foreign-born (FB) individuals is higher for men (8.1 percent) than for women (5.7 percent), whereas the opposite is the case for intermarriage with Swedish-born (SB) people with foreign background or second-generation immigrants (4.6 percent of female versus 2.7 percent of male ethnic Swedes are married to them).

Figure 1. Marriage among ethnic Swedes by spousal background, 2014 (%)

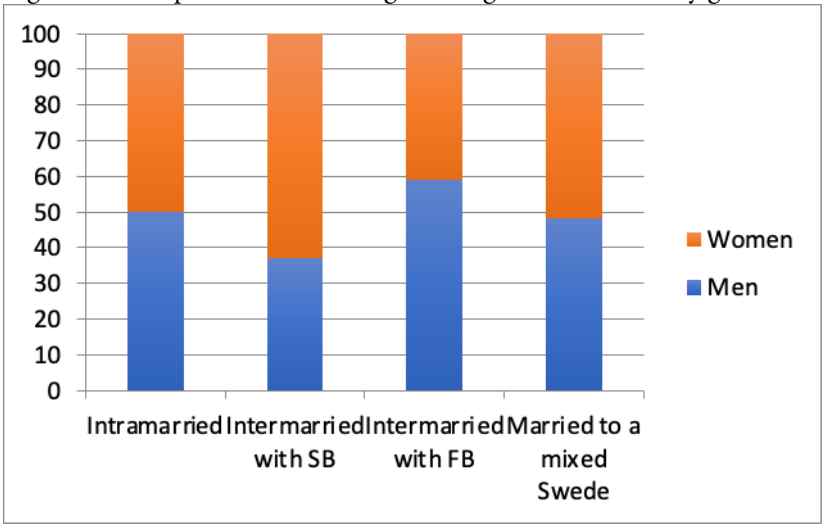


Source: Swedish register data (STATIV). Own adaptations.

Figure 1 illustrates more specific types of unions for male and female ethnic Swedes depending on the country of origin of the spouse and the parents of the spouse.[52] About 80 percent of men and women intramarry with ethnic Swedes, and between 9 percent and 10 percent marry Swedish-born mixed Swedes. As mentioned, more women than men marry someone from the second generation while more men than women marry foreign-born individuals. The proportion of ethnic Swedes marrying foreign-born ethnic Swedes or mixed Swedes is not significant, and therefore, they are excluded from further analyses. From here, our analysis focuses on marriages among ethnic Swedes with mixed Swedes, the foreign-born, and the second generation. We also include intramarried ethnic Swedes as a comparison group.

Figure 2 shows a clearer picture of the gender distribution within each composition of union: over 60 percent of ethnic Swedes who intermarry the second generation are women whereas almost 60 percent of ethnic Swedes who intermarry foreign-born are men. The proportion of men and women who intramarry or who marry mixed Swedes is highly similar.

Figure 2. Composition of marriage among ethnic Swedes by gender, 2014 (%)



Source: Swedish register data (STATIV). Own adaptations.

We next present a 2014 table representing the ten major countries of origin for foreign-born spouses and the birth countries of parents of second-generation spouses of ethnic Swedes. These countries cover between 30 percent and 55 percent of foreign-born and second-generation spouses and the remaining are classified as "Other." With a couple of exceptions, the top countries of origin of foreign-born spouses are the same for male and female ethnic Swedes. The largest group is composed of people born in Finland. This is not surprising considering that in 2014 Finns constituted the largest foreign-born ethnic minority group in Sweden. Other common countries for men and women are as follows: Norway, Poland, Germany, Denmark, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Chile. Male ethnic Swedes also marry people born in Thailand and China, whereas women choose spouses born in the former Yugoslavian countries and Iran. In the case of second-generation spouses, the top ten parental birth countries are identical for men and women, and with the exception of Turkey, Chile, and Russia, all the

countries are European. Between six and eight out of ten are also the same as the birth countries of foreign-born spouses.

With the aforementioned exceptions, the population in the top source countries for foreign-born spouses in Sweden is predominately European and, therefore, most likely racially White. Even though some mixing with people from other races and ethnicities occurs, the current picture of mixed marriage in Sweden continues to be more illustrative of the salad bowl metaphor rather than that of the melting pot. This is not surprising, considering that the major non-Swedish countries of origins in 2014 were European. As the composition of the population with foreign background increases in Sweden, it remains to be seen if the intermarriage patterns of ethnic Swedes evolve accordingly.

Figure 3. Ten major countries of origin for foreign-born and parental origin of second-generation spouses of ethnic Swedes, 2014

Foreign-born spouse		Second-generation spouse	
Female	Male	Female	Male
Finland (20%)	Finland (16%)	Finland (33%)	Finland (16%)
Thailand (9%)	Denmark (7%)	Germany (5%)	Germany (3%)
Norway (6%)	Germany (7%)	Denmark (5%)	Denmark (3%)
Poland (5%)	UK (6%)	Norway (3%)	Norway (2%)
Germany (4%)	Norway (6%)	Former Yugoslavia (3%)	Former Yugoslavia (2%)
Denmark (4%)	USA (4%)	Poland (2%)	Poland (1%)
USA (2%)	Ex-Yugoslavia (3%)	Hungary (2%)	Hungary (1%)
China (2%)	Iran (2%)	Former Soviet Union (1%)	Former Soviet Union (1%)
UK (2%)	Poland (2%)	Turkey (1%)	Turkey (1%)
Chile (2%)	Chile (2%)	Chile (1%)	Chile (0.3%)
Other (44%)	Other (45%)	Other (44%)	Other (70%)

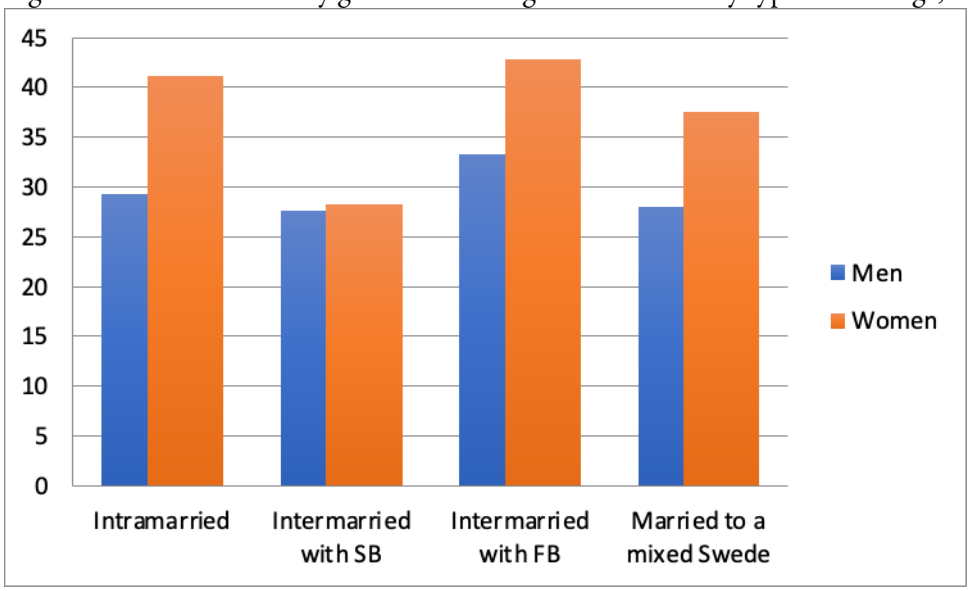
Source: Swedish register data (STATIV). Own adaptations.

Socioeconomic Status of Mixed Families

SES is commonly understood as the social standing or class of an individual or a group. In line with previous studies, we measured SES by the educational level, employment status, and job income of individuals. In the following, we present three figures illustrating these variables for ethnic Swedes by marriage composition and gender.

Figure 4 shows the share of university graduates among ethnic Swedes by marriage composition and gender. What we noticed at first was that the number of university graduates is higher among women than among men. The difference is clear for all types of unions apart from ethnic Swedes intermarried to the second generation, of which the numbers are similar between men and women. This is also the group with the lowest number of university graduates (about 28 percent for men and women), and the educational gap between this and other groups is greater for women. Ethnic Swedes with foreign-born spouses have the highest share of university graduates (43 percent and 33 percent for women and men, respectively), followed by intramarried ethnic Swedes and those married to mixed Swedes.

Figure 4. Share of university graduates among ethnic Swedes by type of marriage, 2014 (%)



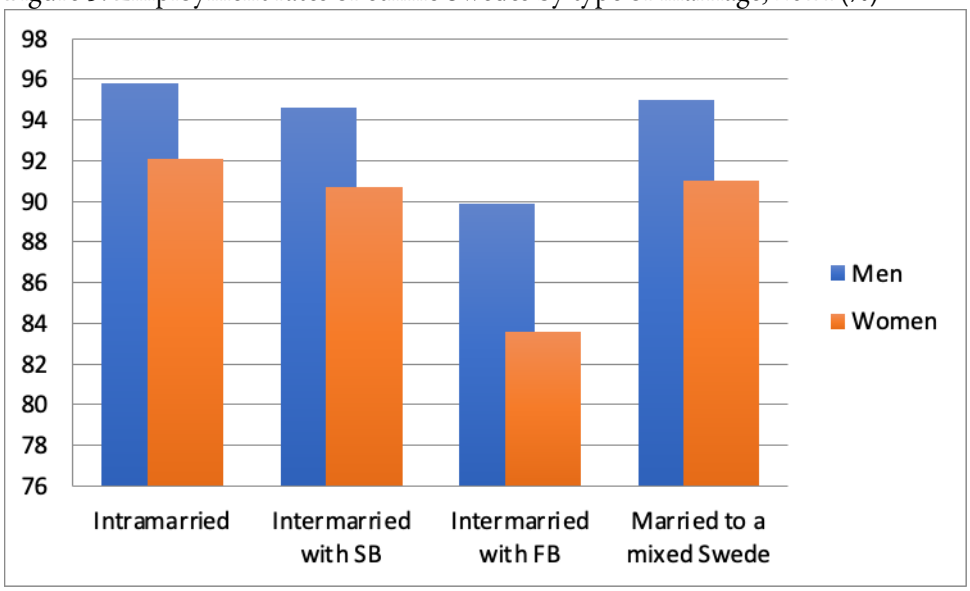
Source: Swedish register data (STATIV). Own adaptations.

Next, we present employment rates for ethnic Swedes between the ages of twenty-five and sixty by type of marriage and gender.[53] As expected, for ethnic Swedes, employment rates are high for men and women in all four groups (84 percent to 92 percent among women and 90 percent to 96 percent among men). Ethnic Swedes who intramarry have the highest employment rates, followed by those married to mixed Swedes and to the second generation.

It is interesting that those who have the highest share of university graduates (that is, ethnic Swedes married to someone foreign-born) show the lowest employment rates (90 percent and 84 percent for men and women, respectively). It is possible that unemployed people in this group come from families with very high SES. In any case, the employment gap between these groups and the group of intramarried Swedes is only 6 and 8 percentage points for men and women, respectively. The difference between male and female employment for ethnic Swedes with foreign-born spouses is also greater than for other groups. The six major source countries for the foreign-born spouses of female ethnic Swedes are high income countries, namely, Finland, Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom, Norway, and the United States. While this is not the norm in

Sweden, perhaps these are women who stop working after they have children and live on their husband's income.

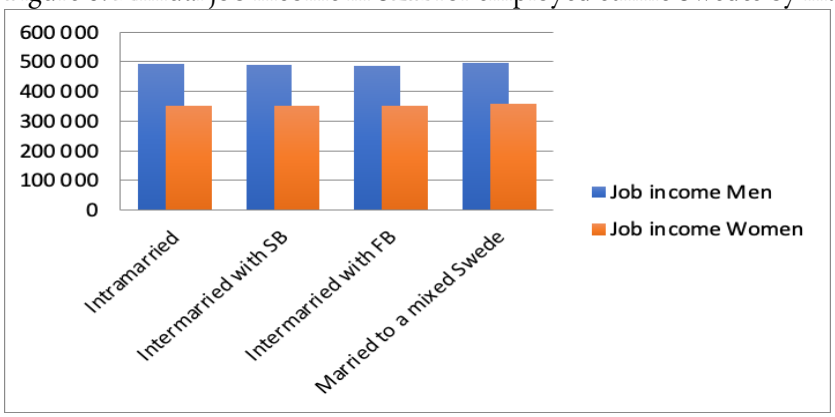
Figure 5. Employment rates of ethnic Swedes by type of marriage, 2014 (%)



Source: Swedish register data (STATIV). Own adaptations.

Figure 6 shows the average job income in Swedish krona (SEK) for ethnic Swedes who were employed in 2014 and whose yearly income before taxes was equal to or higher than the *prisbasbelopp*, or price basic amount (see endnote 53 for further explanation).[54] The most noticeable gap as illustrated by this figure is the income difference between men and women for all groups. This gap is almost identical for all the groups, and there are no other significant differences among them: on average, women earn between 350,000 and 360,000 SEK, while men's annual salaries vary between 486,000 and 497,000 SEK.

Figure 6. Annual job income in SEK for employed ethnic Swedes by marriage composition, 2014



Source: Swedish register data (STATIV). Own adaptations.

To summarize, ethnic Swedes who intermarry someone foreign-born and those who intramarry have the highest share of university graduates, while ethnic Swedes who intermarry someone from the second generation have the lowest share. Employment rates are high for everyone but slightly lower for the latter group. We considered the possibility that some people in this group may come from families with a very high SES. Finally, we found no significant differences in the annual income of male and female ethnic Swedes by marriage composition.

Melting Pot or Salad Bowl?

Where does Sweden stand today in relation to the idea of a melting pot or a salad bowl? Previous studies clearly show that Sweden is heading toward a European melting pot and mainstreaming, which is consistent with our analysis of 2014 register data. Our analysis illustrates that it is more common for ethnic Swedes to intermarry a foreign-born person than someone of the second generation. This finding is rather surprising considering that studies from the United States show that, even though patterns of intermarriage may be different among different groups, intermarriage increases with every generation.[55] We also found that the population in the top source countries for foreign-born spouses and the parental birth countries of second-generation spouses in Sweden are predominately European, and therefore, whether persons of non-European background will be mainstreamed as persons of European background or will remain as separate as the ingredients in a salad bowl is yet to be observed. However, the low intermarriage rates of ethnic Swedes with the second generation, especially those from a non-European background, do call into question the process of integration and the melting pot.

An analysis of the intermarriage premium and the socioeconomic background of mixed families points to a need for further analysis of the idea of intermarriage with the White majority as an indicator of integration for second-generation immigrants and further generations of people with a foreign background in Sweden. While the SES of ethnic Swedes who marry foreign-born as measured by university education is higher compared with those who intramarry, differences in employment rates and job income among the different groups are minor. We explained this by the high employment rates of ethnic Swedes in general and the relatively higher income equality in Sweden. While these results suggest mixed families' mainstreaming toward the majority population, they also highlight the need for further longitudinal analyses in the future to understand what mainstreaming means in the Swedish context where income equality is quite high.

Critical mixed race studies is not yet an established field in Sweden, and this article suggests several important research fields that need to be further explored. Firstly, research is needed to understand the patterns of mixed marriage and the SES of mixed families. For example, a follow-up study is needed that would explain the preferences for a European marriage partner (whether it is someone foreign-born or second generation), more specifically, whether partner choice is a voluntary process or a nonvoluntary process deriving from discrimination and racism.[56] Although mixed marriage is widely accepted to be an indicator of integration and assimilation, it may not necessarily lead to the embracing of different races, ethnicities, religions, nationalities, and cultures in the wider society or lead to integration and assimilation outside of the family sphere.

Secondly, future research is called for in terms of intermarriage and different outcomes of economic integration that compare different racial and ethnic groups to understand the pattern of intermarriage and

economic integration in the Swedish context. Research on the sociodemographic and SES of both spouses among intermarried couples is needed to test the main theories of intermarriage—assortative matching and exchange theory. Moreover, these analyses should be conducted separately for couples involving foreign-born and second-generation Swedish-born persons, as our exploratory analysis shows that the characteristics of ethnic Swedes entering each type of union are different. Another factor to consider when looking at the different characteristics of foreign-born spouses is whether the union was formed in Sweden or abroad. Among second-generation Swedish-born persons, the data on the residential area will reflect the pool of potential spouses from the majority, the minority, or within the ethnic groups.

Finally, but most important, scholars should direct more focus on the mixed population in Sweden. As intermarriage in Sweden has steadily increased since the 1970s, first-generation mixed persons are reaching adulthood and becoming increasingly more visible in society. Mixed population may be lumped together, if not ignored, in the dichotomized categories "persons of Swedish background" and "Swedes with foreign background" when exploring experiences of racialization. Their identity formation and experiences, which may or may not differ from second-generation Swedes of foreign background, are under-researched. The marriage patterns of multiethnic and multiracial individuals in Sweden are also overlooked by current research; however, these patterns are crucial in understanding the process of assimilation, mainstreaming, and integration in Sweden.

Notes

[1] "Antal personer med utländsk eller svensk bakgrund (fin indelning) efter region, ålder och kön. År 2002–2018," SCB (Statistics Sweden), accessed October 12, 2021, http://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/sv/ssd/START__BE__BE0101__BE0101Q/UtlSvBakgFin/.

[2] Daniel et al., "Emerging Paradigms," 8. Research on multiracial and multiethnic identity is almost nonexistent in Sweden as well. Madelein Romero reflects on her experience of being a mixed person of Philipino and White Swedish background in two recent publications on mixed identity, the only studies that address the identification process of mixed persons in Sweden. See Hübinette et al., *Om ras och vithet*, 34–47; Arbouz, "Multirasial Identitet," 201–14. Few studies in Sweden highlight that persons of mixed origin may experience discrimination in Sweden, and these studies are based on the statistical analysis of register datasets. Some studies include mixed individuals as part of their studies but do not conduct a systematic analysis on mixed experiences. See Behtoui, "Unequal Opportunities," 1–60; Lundström, *Svenska Latinas*; Kalonaityte, Kwesa, and Tedros, *Att färgas av Sverige*.

[3] Gordon, "Assimilation in America," 24–44; Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life*, 276.

[4] "Antal personer med utländsk eller svensk bakgrund."

[5] Swedish Migration Agency, "Historik," accessed October 12, 2021, https://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Migration-till-Sverige/Historik.html.

[6] Swedish Migration Agency, "Statistik," accessed October 12, 2021, https://www.migrationsverket.se/Om-Migrationsverket/Statistik.html.

[7] Ibid.

[8] D'Andrade, "Cognitive Anthropology," 58. On the constructed nature of race, see Daniel et al., "Emerging Paradigms," 6–65. On race as a socially constructed category, see Daynes and Lee, *Desire for Race*.

[9] Cantle, *Community Cohesion*; Gans, "Symbolic Ethnicity," 1–20.

[10] Numbers include persons born in the country and born in Sweden with one or two parents born in the country.

[11] On identification as racial groups, see, for example, Kalonaityte, Kwesa, and Tedros, *Att färgas av Sverige*; Khosravi, "Manlighet i exil," 77–104; Lundström, *Svenska Latinas*; Signell, "Unga adopterade." On discrimination and racialization, see Mattsson, "Diskrimineringens," 139–57.

[12] See, for example, Lange and Westin, *Den mångtydiga toleransen*, 151; Osanami Törngren, "Love Ain't Got No Color?"; Lundström, "White Side of Migration," 79–87.
[13] "Antal personer med utländsk eller svensk bakgrund."
[14] Hübinette and Lundström, "Sweden after the Recent Election," 42–52; Mattsson, "Klonad Skönhet," 191–202; Runfors, "What an Ethnic Lens Can Conceal," 1846–63; Runfors, "Fängslande frihet," 105–44.
[15] Kalonaityte, Kwesa, and Tedros, *Att färgas av Sverige*; Lundström, *Svenska latinas*.
[16] See, for example, Peach, "Mosaic versus the Melting Pot," 3–27; Palmer, "Mosaic versus Melting Pot?," 488–528; Gleason, "Melting Pot," 20–46.
[17] Alba, Beck, and Sahin, "U.S. Mainstream Expands," 99–117.
[18] Lee and Bean, "Reinventing the Color Line," 561–86; Qian, "Options," 746–66.
[19] Alba and Duyvendak, "What about the Mainstream?," 105–24; Lichter and Qian, "Boundary Blurring?," 81–94; Vasquez-Tokos, *Marriage Vows*.
[20] Le Gall and Meintel, "Cultural and Identity Transmission," 112–28.
[21] Cretser, "Cross-National Marriage," 363–80.
[22] Stenflo, "Kärlek över gränserna," 12–13.
[23] Statistics Sweden, *Kärlek över gränserna*, 18–25.
[24] Statistics Sweden, *Födda i Sverige*, 89–93.
[25] Niedomysl, Östh, and van Ham, "Globalization of Marriage Fields," 1130–34.
[26] Bourdieu, "Pierre Bourdieu on Marriage Strategies," 549–58.
[27] Behtoui, "Marriage Pattern," 415–35.
[28] For studies in the US, see Furtado, "Human Capital," 82–93; Chiswick and Houseworth, "Ethnic Intermarriage," 149–80.
[29] Çelikaksoy, "Parental Background," 351–62; Çelikaksoy, "Household Formation Behavior," 547–67.
[30] Çelikaksoy, "Intergenerational Transmission," 101; Çelikaksoy, "Parental Background," 351–62.
[31] Dribe and Lundh, "Intermarriage and Immigrant Integration," 329–54; Dribe and Lundh, "Cultural Dissimilarity," 297–324.
[32] Social distance is measured by such statements as: having children with, being in an intimate relationship with, being a best friend, being a neighbor, living in the same residential area, or not living in the same residential area.
[33] Lange and Westin, *Den mångtydiga toleransen*, 151.
[34] Demker, "Både tolerans och kritik," 236. All translations by authors.
[35] Integrationsverket, *Integrationsbarometer 2007*, 37; Integrationsverket, *Integrationsbarometer 2005*, 235.
[36] Månsson, *Cultural Conflict*, 246.
[37] Respondents were defined of White European background if they reported that both parents originated from Sweden; that they had an origin in Scandinavia, southern Europe, western Europe, including North America; or that they had a mixture of the previously named origins. Respondents who reported to be adopted were excluded.
[38] Osanami Törngren, "Love Ain't Got No Color?," 316.
[39] Gerholm, "Stereotyper och upplevelser," 97–108; Gerholm, "Äktenskap över gränser," 5–9.
[40] Begovic, "Skönheten och invandraren," 10–13.
[41] Hedman, Nygren, and Fahlgren, "Thai-Swedish Couples," 44.
[42] Kalonaityte, Kwesa, and Tedros, *Att färgas av Sverige*.
[43] Ambjörnsson, *I en klass för sig*.
[44] Dribe and Lundh, "Intermarriage, Value Context and Union Dissolution," 139–58.
[45] Statistics Sweden, *Kärlek över gränserna*, 12–13.
[46] Dribe and Lundh, "Intermarriages and Immigrant Integration," 329–54. Moreover, as their data did not allow them to check for the self-selection hypothesis and the endogeneity of intermarriage, they were unable to establish any causal relationship between intermarriage and economic integration.

[47] They established two types of union: endogamous (both parties born in the same country) and exogamous (an immigrant and a native Swede). Exogamous marriages between two immigrants of different origin are not considered in the analysis. Basing their study on a distributed fixed-effects model, they followed individuals for several years before and during their marriage to capture the possible effects of intermarriage on individual income development.
[48] Dribe and Nystedt, "Intermarriage Premium," 3–35.
[49] Irastorza and Bevelander, "Economic Integration."
[50] Nekby, *Inter- and Intra-Marriage*.
[51] Note that cohabiting relationships are only registered as such in Sweden if they have children.
[52] In the absence of self-reported data on race and ethnicity, we use these variables as a proxy for ethnicity.
[53] To exclude individuals who did not have steady employment, we only selected those whose yearly income before taxes was equal to or higher than the so-called *prisbasbelopp* (price base amount), which in 2014 was set at 44,400 SEK (Swedish krona).
[54] Also note that our data does not contain information on the number of hours worked. Therefore, part-time jobs—more common among women with children—are also included in this figure.
[55] Qian and Lichter, "Measuring Marital Assimilation," 289–312; Osanami Törngren, Irastorza, and Rodríguez-García, "Understanding Multiethnic and Multiracial Experiences," 763–81.
[56] As far as we know, Osanami Törngren's "Love Ain't Got No Color" is the only study that systematically looks at attitudes toward interracial marriages in Sweden.

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