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Swedish racism

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Internationally, Sweden has been branded a "post-racial utopia" (pp. 335) whereby the concept of race is an obsolete occurrence within Swedish society (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009). This can be explained by the appearance of a seemingly neutral historical background (Henderson, 2014) and the ideology of a "colour-blind society" (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009, pp. 335). However over the past thirty years, Sweden has transitioned into an increasingly multi-ethnic society (Bunar, 2007). Therefore, 'colour-blindness' is not the most effective way to tackle racial issues in a progressively more racially diverse society. This romanticised image of Sweden as a migrant's paradise has been challenged by recent critical migration research (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009). As a result, discrimination against migrants and persons of ethnic minority origin has been highlighted as a prevalent issue; inferring that racism is in fact not absent from Swedish society (Burns et al, 2007). Consequently, it is important to critically analyse the processes of racialisation in order to distinguish the facts and myths of racism in Sweden. The process of racialisation can be identified as a means of ascribing a racial identity to a group that a country aims to dominate (Winant & Omi, 1986). This paper intends to explore the rate of racist crime in Sweden as a means of assessing the extent to which migrants and ethnic minorities experience racial hatred and xenophobia. This will provide insight as to why immigrants and adoptees are discriminated against. It will then consider the increasing prevalence of right wing extremists, whom have placed greater pressure on migrants in recent years. It is important to explore this point in order to consider the way these parties have evolved since they reappeared in popularity. This is due to the way that many claim they no longer promote racist principles, however they still uphold anti-immigration and xenophobic beliefs. In order to assess their attitude, the paper will explore the lyrics in far-right music and investigate the intentions behind this form of expression. This paper will also identify the presence of scientific racism by examining the policies that once promoted eugenics and the sterilisation of ethnic minorities, all in the pursuit of a 'purer' nation. This will differentiate some of the misconceptions of the sterilisation law, and will highlight the hidden racial motives behind the country's attempt to prevent hereditary disease. Lastly, it will consider the ongoing struggle between the Sámi and the Swedes as a means of dictating the broader issue of racialisation in Sweden. The relationship between the two groups indicate that racism is very much alive in all corners of Swedish society. It also represents the changing attitudes towards the Sámi due to the evolution of their maltreatment, which has led to major implications regarding Sámi lifestyle and health.

Racism towards migrants and adoptees in Sweden dictates the issue of whether the Swedes are intolerant of other ethnic groups for their differing appearance, or if they associate their appearance with their culture. In 1993, 787 incidents were reported with circumstances that were considered to be racially motivated; some of which were connected to right wing extremism and anti-Semitism. Whilst 289 incidents excluded xenophobic, political and racist motives. Of the total racist crimes, 369 were directed against refugee hostels and representatives who tackled issues involving immigration (Bunar, 2007). This infers that the

Swedes do not condone the behaviour of aiding migrants, therefore the hatred stems beyond the migrants themselves. Despite the low estimation of hate crimes compared to the population of almost 10 million (http://www.scb.se/, 2015), in 2013 there was a reported 5,508 hate crimes in Sweden. A hate crime can be defined by the victimisation of a person based on their ethnic background, race or nationality (https://www.bra.se/, 2013). This form of racial hostility can be described as abuse in the form of either societal aggression or derogatory and abusive language (Law, 2010). It has been identified that elderly migrants in Sweden are at high risk of experiencing social isolation and poor health. An ethnic-specific research project concluded that elderly Finn migrants are reported to have less social mobility and lower quality living standards than the Swedes, whilst many retired early due to disability and were dissatisfied with their jobs (Torres, 2007). According to Hübinette and Tigervall (2009), adoptees and migrants are most likely to end up in the lower strata of society compared to the Swedish majority population. It is hypothesised that the "routinized and systematic discrimination" (pp. 339) within everyday life based on having a non-white exterior has had a major negative impact on the lifestyles of adoptees and migrants alike (Akrami et al, 2000). For example according to a study, the most common form of discrimination is xenophobia which can be divided into categories of 'shops racism' and 'customs racism', whereby surveillance is heightened with the presence of a migrant. Xenophobia refers to a fear or hatred of foreigners (Institute of Race Relations, 2015). The heightened regulation of migrant behaviour in the public sphere infers that Swedish everyday life undergoes a constant process of racialisation (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009). More specifically, this form of racialisation derives from the act of ethnic exclusion and discrimination (Law, 2010), which is exercised by institutions who hold prejudices that may go unnoticed by the Swedish majority population. Meanwhile these prejudices are then recycled through the Criminal Justice System as minority ethnic groups are surveyed more carefully. According to a study, adoptees stated that they were allowed through customs after being stopped, once they demonstrated that they could speak Swedish (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009). This form of racism infers that individuals and institutions alike do not differentiate between those who have recently migrated, and those who have aged as migrants until contact has been made (Torres, 2007). According to Svanberg and Tydén (1994), migration policy and the 'immigrant debate' have played a key role in establishing the 'other' community. This is explained by the formation of the 'immigrant' as a category separate from 'Swedish'. These categories are thus defined as foreign, culturally different, and less modern (Svanberg & Tydén, 1994; Bredström, 2003). Therefore a negative stereotype has been culturally reproduced in Swedish society; reaffirming that migrants and adoptees are a separate entity to the Swedish ideal. The concepts of whiteness and 'Swedishness' are constantly being reproduced, therefore race and ethnicity are changeable and dependent on power relations, making race and ethnicity identities under a constant state of renewal. As a result, the processes of race and ethnicity contribute to the notion of racialisation in Sweden (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009). The negative experiences of migrants and adoptees in the public sphere reflect some of the extreme far-right attitudes of Swedish individuals. Therefore it is important to assess the functionality of extreme far-right groups and factors that help sustain these negative beliefs.

Right-wing extremism has become increasingly popular in Sweden since the revival of the "militant racist sub-culture" (Lööw, 1995, pp.119) during the 1980s. These groups are defined by their revolutionary and race oriented ideology, from which many have exerted organised racial violence against refugees and migrants within the Swedish community (Lööw, 1995). More specifically, The National (Reich) Front was the fastest growing race ideological group between 1992 and 1993, whom considered themselves a "militant liberation organisation for Sweden's survival" (Riksfronten, 2000, pp. 10). This description promotes the ideology that there is something external to Sweden which requires resistance; that of which being the migrants. An example of such resistance occurred on the 30th November 1993, where a conflict between young Swedish nationalists and immigrant teenagers led to a series of racially

driven riots in Stockholm (Racist Sweden, 1992). This is a strong example of intercultural conflict, which involves the disputed control of territory (Law, 2010). In this case involving two groups of individuals who claim their rights to that area, exercised through violence and protest. This event dictates the issue of xenophobic beliefs being implemented against migrants, which demonstrates how racism is very much still alive in Sweden. Alongside this, it is important to explore a type of extremism which does not promote violence in its beliefs, but still holds strong anti-immigration values. This can be considered a new wave of far-right extremism; a type of movement that has evolved from the old days of violence with a far more subtle form of racism. A more recent example of right-wing extremism in Sweden is the Swedish Democratic Party, which maintains anti-immigration and nationalist values whilst stating that they are not racist. This was the most successful far right group prior to parliamentary election in 1991, and has doubled in votes every four years. This suggests that xenophobia and anti-immigration values are determining the way in which people vote (http://www.theguardian.com/, 2014; Lööw, 1995). This can be explained by a range of negative opinions towards migrants, mostly involving the belief that the country has a problem with immigration (http://www.theguardian.com/, 2014). According to Law (2010), the dissemination of racist ideology demonstrates strong international links between extreme right groups and web-based news groups, portraying attitudes that there are too many asylum seekers. The far-right movement has also been able to disseminate such anti-immigration beliefs through the arts, such as music. According to Futrell et al (2006), White Power music is utilized as a tool in "vitalizing and sustaining member commitments to movement ideals" (pp. 275). This can be explained by the range of emotions that music has the power to evoke; some of which being a sense of kinship, pride, and fellowship. Therefore it is evident why the far-right movement uses music, as it helps to avoid stagnation and upholds its members through unity. An example of such a musician is 'Saga', who rose to fame in the neo-Nazi scene creating Swedish pop-music with an extreme patriotic twist (Shekhovtsov, 2012). Lyrical analysis presents an insight into the recruitment and sustainment of activists (Futrell et al, 2006), therefore it is necessary to delve into the wording of far-right music. Saga's (2010) lyrics state, "rise the god of Thunder, unleash the hurricane, emancipate our racial souls, let loose the hate and pain". The god of Thunder symbolises Thor; a popular Nordic symbol among far-right groups, representing the 'old religion' (Davis, 2013). Moreover, this conveys a strong sense of patriotism and old values, connected to Swedish social life before Christianity came into being. From a far-right perspective, the racial soul represents the "mystical racial psyche" (Robert & Doerr, pp. 327) that is greater than any other, this phrase can be drawn from the lexicon of the Third Reich. Meanwhile those of other ethnic backgrounds were perceived to be deficient of this quality (Robert & Doerr, 2002). With these concepts in mind, Saga (2010) is openly expressing her issues concerning race with the use of violent imagery and dark heroism. The music signifies the extremists turning to the old gods to save them from the arrival of migrants. Overall, the far-right ideology presented in music lyrics demonstrates an act of ritualization (Durkheim, 1915), which is demonstrated by the dramatic events expressed in Saga's (2010) song. These rituals are translated into occasions based around far-right music, as a means of gathering activists together (Futrell et al, 2006). The imagery created by the metaphors in these lyrics draw upon a deeper understanding of racist ideology in Sweden. According to Shekhovtsov (2012), White Power music promotes the demonization of 'other' communities and the 'system'. The system refers to the political sphere and the general functioning of society, whilst the other communities are connected to those who differ from the white Swedish category. As a result, far-right groups can utilise music as an instrument of diffusing xenophobic and racist values, whereby those who wish to listen are able to indoctrinate themselves or others. Therefore music can be manipulated to fulfil a certain far-right objective; "to preserve, actualise or revive an ethnically or culturally homogenous society" (Shekhovtsov, 2012, pp. 278). This statement epitomises the core value of the far-right movement, which involves the exclusion of other races with or without violence through the dissemination of racist ideology. In its functionality, music enables activists to mobilise their protests and "create group solidarity" (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998, pp. 45). According to Bjorgo (1998), Sweden is described as one of the world's main producers and consumers of racist

far-right music. In 1999, the music label Swedish Nordland Records doubled to 80,000 CDs (ADL, 2000). This demonstrates the acute growth in popularity of far-right extremism in Sweden since the 1980s, and the extent to which music has played a role in promoting far-right beliefs. Saga's music expresses particularly xenophobic values which resemble racist Swedish policies that have been exercised in the past. For example, Sweden's participation in ethnic cleansing through the method of legal sterilisation meant that some of these far-right values were being somewhat fulfilled. Therefore the lyrics in these far-right songs are not too detached from the reality of racist Swedish legislation in the past.

Scientific racism is defined by "notions of hierarchy and oppression" (pp. 1479) based on variances in external features which has thus constructed systematic differences between the ideological Swede and 'other' communities (Dikötter, 2008). Subsequently, the biological differences between groups of people in Sweden have dictated racist Swedish policy and legislation. For example, until 1975, Sweden was the first country in the world to introduce a research centre for racial biology (Beckman, 1959). Racial biology refers to the concern with eugenics that aim to 'improve' the Swedish population by removing 'unsuitable' persons of other ethnic origins from the possibility of reproducing. As a result, the government passed a sterilisation law which involved the legal sterilisation of people of ethnic minority origin. However, it has been concluded that the alleged law of forced sterilisation being proliferated through articles in Dagens Nyheter was in fact a myth (Tännsjö, 1998). Sweden's policy of compulsory sterilisation required individuals to give their written consent before undergoing the procedure. Between 1935 and 1975, 63,000 persons were sterilised within the boundaries of the sterilisation law for the purpose of race enhancement. However, in many cases individuals may have been informally coerced into giving their consent (Lynoe, 2007; Tännsjö, 1998). Therefore, whilst the Swedish government required persons who did not conform to the desired category to be sterilised, it was still very much influenced by physical qualities such as ethnicity. This can be likened to a soft form of genocide, which refers to a crime under the law involving bodily or mental harm through the forcible sterilisation of a large portion of individuals (Dikötter, 2008). This leads on to the importance of assessing ways in which these sterilisations were decided upon. Some doctors and social workers accused people of living like 'vagrants', and those who shared this lifestyle were labelled a 'tattare'. A tattare is a group of people who are not defined by their race, but by their way of life. However many promoting the sterilisation law who held prejudices against the tattare, held the belief that they were a race. As a result, some of the sterilisation verdicts may have been dictated by racist beliefs (Tännsjö, 1998). Despite this, DNA studies have proven there is no variation between different races in modern humans (Law, 2010). As a result, Swedish eugenics served for the purpose of eradicating external racial variations. According to a study, adoptees simply considered ethnicity an attribute to their physical appearance. Therefore the hypothesis that ethnic minority individuals were a different identity to the Swedish is problematic (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009). Whilst these individuals may have differing external characteristics, many of the adoptees still hold the Swedish culture due to their exposure to the country over a period of time. Therefore it is evident that racism in Sweden overshadows those of different coloured skin alongside those of different cultural backgrounds. This intolerance demonstrates a major issue regarding the existence of a multi-ethnic society, as appearance plays a major role in xenophobic beliefs. The sterilisation policy was used as an instrument by those in positions of power who held social prejudices (Tännsjö, 1998). Therefore this law dictates the broader issue that goes beyond the prevention of hereditary diseases; it in fact also held a hidden prejudice against those who did not conform to the "white Swedish majority population" (Hübinette & Tigervall, 2009, pp. 336). Subsequently, those in positions of power were granted the permission to legally diminish the capacity for a multi-ethnic society during the years of sterilisation. Moreover, these inequalities and disparities in health observed by such doctors have become intertwined with populations defined by their said racial background (Carter, 2007). As a result, there is a deep connection between the sterilisation law and ethnic

cleansing. Doctors viewed the tattare as second class to Swedish citizens based on their lifestyle. Due to the health inequalities caused by their living standards, it was seen as necessary to remove them from the gene pool to prevent them from producing another line of this type of individual. However, this racist belief was based on myth and the sterilisation of these individuals had no scientific basis concerning hereditary disease, but was more concerned with racial hygiene. The sterilisation law is symbolic of the Swedish social thought at the time, with the growing concern with racial hygiene and an idealised view of the desirable Swede. Racism in this context can be understood as an organised ideological phenomenon "to demean oppress or exterminate the other" (pp.1480). Moreover, this sterilisation law mirrors the toxic relationship between racism and science in Swedish history (Dikötter, 2008). This relationship is only strengthened by the false perception that genealogy has a greater epistemological footing than it actually has (Carter, 2007). Consequently, Swedish individuals were able to base their racist beliefs on scientific hypotheses, which were in fact untrue. The Swedish concern to standardise its population reflects some of the racist ideology that has affected many minority groups within Swedish society. For example, the Sámi have been greatly impacted by racist Swedish law, which has historically forced them to question their own cultural identity.

The Sámi are an indigenous group of Finno-Ugric descent living in certain parts of Sweden. This minority group has experienced a history of discrimination since the 16th century, caused by ulterior and nationalistic explanations (Henderson, 2014). More specifically, these motives are directed towards the standardisation of Swedish society within the educational, religious and cultural spheres. Throughout history the Sámi have been forced to remain loyal to their culture at the expense of themselves, or to lose their cultural identity in order to live above poverty. This dictates the issue of citizenship in Sweden, and the ongoing struggle for Sámi citizenship rights; to which they have been denied full access to (Henderson, 2014). For example from a cultural perspective, the Sámi have undergone the process of standardisation, beginning within the education system. All Sámi pupils are taught in their native tongue (Henderson, 2014), preventing the children from fully integrating into Swedish society whilst they conform to their own culture. As a result, the Sámi are obligated to either remain within the boundaries of the policies that aim to segregate them, or to abandon their traditional way of life. Throughout Swedish history, Sámi students have been denied equal rights to education. During the 17th century they were considered second class citizens, therefore they were required to attend school at an earlier age as a means of educating them up to standard. This is an example of forced education and institutionalised racism, by which the young Sámi population is segregated from other Swedish schools (Henderson, 2014). A study showed that 31% of the Sámi respondents had over 14 years of education compared to 21% of the Swedes that responded (Omma et al, 2013). This demonstrates the inequality within the educational sphere. According to Kvist (1992), it is compulsory for Sámi pupils to be educated by missionaries. This is with the intention of indoctrinating the pupils with Christianity, in order to infiltrate the religion into the Sámi community. It is evident that the native Sámi religion is disapproved of by the Swedish government and seen as something to abolish. This is a form of integration through which policies assume ethnic minorities are culturally different, and therefore must endure acculturation (Law, 2010). Acculturation refers to the blending of a dominant culture into another, thus making them dissimilar. Consequently, it has created an extremely negative impact on the mental wellbeing of the Sámi community; conveying the extent to which they have been intervened with. According to a study, suicidal expressions and ideations were reported at 30-50% amongst the Sámi, and appeared to be higher than that of the Swedes. Meanwhile Sámi reindeer herders experienced a 3, 5-fold greater odds of suicidal plans. This occurrence can be explained by the bad treatment of the Sámi based on their culture and ethnicity (Omma et al, 2013), to which the reindeer herders stand at the front line of such a cultural attack. In order to maintain their cultural identity the Sámi are encouraged to live their traditional lifestyle of reindeer herding, despite the developing

presence of colonial expansionism and nationalism. This plays a key role in marginalising and promoting the unequal treatment of the Sámi (Kvist, 1994). More specifically, the Swedish government promoted Social Darwinism through new racist policies, vastly impacting Swedish social thought and beliefs (Lundmark, 2005). Social Darwinism refers to the ideology that those who are best suited within a particular society shall flourish, whilst others will fall by the wayside (Dictionary of Unfamiliar Words by Diagram Group, 2008). An example of this ideology points towards the Reindeer Pasture Act, which was passed as a means of segregating the Sámi from their Swedish counterparts. This law entitled a person to be a Sámi as long as their parents were of Sámi descent, and whilst reindeer herding was a primary source of income (Henderson, 2014). This indicates the importance of the reindeer herder's role, through which the Sámi identity is forced to wholly rely upon. This circles back to the issue of depression within the Sámi community. The rate of mental illness and suicide attempts within this indigenous group highlights the issue of Sweden's attempts to legitimise and standardise Sámi culture. Consequently, the concept of suicide can be described as a cry for help or an act of pain in response to the situation that has disabled them (Williams & Pollock, 2001). Suicidal feelings and thoughts particularly amongst the reindeer herders can be linked to the overriding existential complex in their desire to preserve the Sámi language and culture, through which the Swedes have attempted to assimilate over the years (Henderson, 2014). Assimilation is defined by the process of homogenizing the Sámi culture to resemble that of the Swede's. Therefore the role of the Sámi reindeer herder is no longer simply an act of survival, but now a fundamental act of protecting the cultural identity of the Sámi family. Hence the reindeer herder can be compared to that of a guardian of tradition, through which they must act by the racist policies in order to fulfil their role as a Sámi. The cost of such an act prevents them from successfully establishing themselves within the economy, causing the Sámi population to diminish (Henderson, 2014) and placing the upmost pressure on Sámi reindeer herders. Meanwhile the very meaning of being a Sámi has been artificially transformed through the continuous necessity to uphold and reaffirm their identity to the rest of the population; be it a damaging by-product of racism. Moreover, Williams and Mohammed (2009) infer that racial discrimination was consistently connected to a range of negative health measures. Those who experienced racial marginalisation were more prone to feelings of unsettlement and worry (Omma et al, 2012). A survey confirmed that 269 of 516 Sámi respondents reported experiencing maltreatment due to their ethnicity (Omma et al, 2013). The high rate of negative emotions experienced by the Sámi connect back to the harsh circumstances and greater existential demands expected of them. For example, reindeer herding places great pressure on the Sámi due to the persistent conflicts over land, resulting in a gradual loss of herding regions (Omma et al, 2013). As a result, the Sámi have suffered a historical loss of land which has impacted their mental health and general state of happiness (Whitbeck et al, 2009). More specifically, the Swedish King offered to relocate the Sámi land in exchange for enticing rewards such as exemption from taxes for fifteen years and immunity from military services. It is important to note that the Sámi were required to pay higher taxes than the Swedes in the first place, highlighting the Swedish agenda to accomplish their imperial conquests (Henderson, 2014) through equalising benefits, those of which should have been equal to begin with. This example highlights the inescapable residential segregation of the Sámi, for they must pay a price for whichever option they pick because of their culture. More specifically, this is a form of bio-colonialism which is defined by the exploitation of land, biological resources and human beings by the dominant state (Law, 2010). According to Banton (1993), ethnicity is used as a strong motivation to compete for resources and conflict over land, suggesting that there is a strong sense of racial hierarchy in Sweden. These aspects of racialisation highlight the pressing issue of racism in Sweden currently; the historical segregation of the Sámi has led to the normalisation of such an occurrence. Meanwhile, the symptoms of low mood are only exacerbated by the low economic standards and harsh conditions linked to reindeer herding (Hjelmeland, 2011). The policies that have placed the Sámi in this predicament portrays the Swedish ideology that Sámi culture is an impediment to social development (Luundmark, 2002). Instead there should be a requirement to introduce a culturally adapted health system that can treat the needs of the Sámi in the

mental health sector (Omma et al, 2013). Meanwhile there must be more legislation to protect the Sámi as a culture, to allow them to progress, and to cure the illness of depression that has been caused by such racism.

To conclude, although Sweden may not be the first country one may think of concerning racism, it certainly has a history of racism that must be explored. Racism towards migrants and adoptees conveys the line between the intolerance of another culture and simply of an individual's different appearance. The hate crimes and heightened surveillance concerning migrants and adoptees infer that the Swedes do not differentiate between recent migrants and those who have aged as migrants. As a result, migrants who identify themselves as Swedes are also discriminated against. This draws upon other racial issues in Sweden regarding the ways in which these individuals are negatively impacted by racism and how these beliefs are being reproduced. The growth of far-right extremism in Sweden points towards a set of issues which contribute to the process of racialisation. For example, music is utilized as a tool to disseminate racist ideology (Eyerman & Jamison, 1998), which enables the activists to celebrate during music events. Music crystallises and compartmentalises racist far-right values amongst its activists, demonstrating its power to sustain inter-cultural conflict. The sterilisation law represents a strong connection between racism and science (Dikötter, 2008) in Swedish society; doctors intertwined negative racial stereotypes with health disparities (Carter, 2007), and used such prejudices to dictate the types of individuals to be sterilised (Tännsjö, 1998). As a result, mass genocide was committed against people of ethnic minority origin due to their lack of 'ideal' Swedish characteristics. Sweden's attitude towards the Sámi dictates the broader issue of race, their maltreatment creates a deeper understanding of Swedish racist values that are still present within the country. Drawing upon sociological theory of racism, the relationship between the Sámi and the Swedes demonstrates a strong racial hierarchy within the system. The process of acculturation suggests that Sweden as a country has a historical timeline of negative attitudes towards 'other' communities. More specifically, bio-colonialism is still fundamental aspect of Swedish society; whilst the Sámi continue to live unequally. Alongside this, while depression within the Sámi community remains a by-product of racism, there will still be concerns about racial inequality. From the past up to now, Sweden has always been a fairly strong racial state. However this country is unique in the sense that universally, it has not been perceived as a very racist country. As a result, much of the racism that occurs does not get widely acknowledged. Therefore it is important to recognise that no country is able to exclude itself from the issue of racism, as racism will not be resolved while it goes ignored. It is important to acknowledge that racism is present in all corners of the world; racism is pre-modern. It relates to many aspects of society be it in politics, religion, and the arts. Consequentially, it remains to be a contemporary issue that affects all modern societies, thus by understanding the process of racialization one may be able to consider what must be involved for de-racialization (Law, 2010).

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