Creating an inclusionary classroom through alternative ways of knowing

- A Swedish Case Study

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“When we, as educators allow our pedagogy to be radically changed by our recognition of a multicultural world... we can teach in ways that transform consciousness, creating a climate of free expression that is the essence of a truly liberatory liberal arts education”

bell hooks
ABSTRACT

In recent years Sweden has witnessed an increasing number of newcomers into its schools from an array of sociocultural and ethnic backgrounds. Rather than see this as a ‘burden’, this case study looks at ways teachers can embrace diversity, build upon students' prior knowledge and experiences and challenge traditional notions of how knowledge is produced in the classroom. Drawing on multicultural and critical pedagogies, 11 class teachers across four subject disciplines and working at 2 different schools, in a provincial town in the south of Sweden, were asked about their pedagogical practices teaching in mainstream classrooms with students of different ethnic backgrounds.

The analysis focuses on whether the teachers are able to create spaces for inclusive learning. Findings suggest that while aspiring to a participatory model of teaching which welcomes students’ views and experiences newcomers are largely excluded from such practice further cementing their marginalised status. Furthermore, in navigating dominant discourse around race, ethnicity and cultural diversity teachers, for the most part, end up reproducing stereotypes or rely on common sense understandings of otherness which do not change the status quo. However, some of the teachers’ pedagogical practices demonstrate ways of moving beyond normative practice towards a more critical approach by providing students with alternative ways of knowing that aim to challenge stereotypes, avoid generalisations and disrupt the Western/Eurocentric ideal of the universality of truth.

Key words: newcomers; newly arrived students; Sweden; lower secondary school; multicultural education; critical pedagogy; culture; diversity; stereotypes; race; ethnicity; cultural racism; discourse; mainstream classroom
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would firstly like to thank Anna Bredström for your unwavering support throughout the supervision process. This work would not have been possible without your valuable guidance and expertise. Your faith and encouragement never faltered. I am eternally grateful.

I would also like to thank my study participants for giving their time to contribute to this research.

To the professors at REMESO and my fellow classmates I have learnt a great deal over the last two years and have been truly inspired. Thank you.

Also, to my wonderful friends and family, particularly Richard, Jack and Lily I am thankful for your unconditional support and patience throughout this journey. You have always believed in me and I could not have got through this without you.

And finally, to Beth. You would be immensely proud that I made it to the end. Thanks for holding my hand as always.
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1 INTRODUCTION

As a direct result of Globalisation more people are on the move than ever before. It has become an integral part of human life contradicting the *sedentary bias* that the human norm is to remain settled in one place. Populations are therefore becoming increasingly diverse forcing people to take notice of customs and values which may differ from the ‘norm’. Sweden is no exception having one of the highest proportions of foreign born in Europe today (Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2015). Being reflective of societal norms and values, schools have a vital role to play as attitudes towards migrants have important consequences for how educational policies are structured and implemented (Castles, 2009; Allemann-Ghionda, 2009).

Students arrive with an array of different resources coming from diverse backgrounds. Thus the need for a multicultural curriculum is evident. Yet the need goes beyond this. Even if those occupying the classroom pertain to the same ethnic background there is immense value in teaching from a multicultural perspective. It allows for a decentering of power structures and counteracting of societal norms which ‘exclude and discriminate against those who do not fit the image of the white, Western, heterosexual, middle-class male - socially, economically and culturally’ (Bromseth & Söreensdotter, 2013:27).

However multiculturalism as a concept is considered “dead” in the Global North having been seen as detrimental to the survival of ‘a national identity and security from migrants’ by both politicians and the media from the 1990s onwards (Castles, 2010:1571). Customs and values which differ from the norm are viewed as a failure to integrate particular in the current political climate of increased animosity towards the Other with the rise of the populist right in Europe and their anti-Muslim rhetoric (Abdou, 2017).

Tensions exist between acknowledging differences and stereotypes of Otherness, whereby culture is seen as static and groups are viewed as homogenous (Mohanty, 1984). It is therefore imperative that diversity is addressed in pedagogical practices while at the same time avoiding cultural essentialism and dualistic representations. This may prove no easy feat when the prevailing discourse, embedded in educational institutions - as part of the ideological state apparatus (Althusser, 1971) - presents the notion of universality of knowledge based on Western/Eurocentric ideals, which we then interpellate as the norm. Yet in order to challenge traditional power structures which privilege some and marginalise

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1 The use of the word “dead” is in reference to a comment made by the former UK Prime Minister, David Cameron about multiculturalism (Castles, 2010:1571).
others ‘the right to be different with respect to the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one’s right to belong should be reconsidered’ (Rosaldo & Flores in Glick Schiller, 2005:54). The classroom therefore is a good place to start.

1.1 Research Motivation, Aims and Questions
The main motivation behind my chosen research study stems from the fact that I have witnessed first hand a shift in the demography of the Swedish classroom yet teaching methods and learning activities have rarely shifted with them. Those that tend to suffer the most have been the increasing number of students who are new to Sweden; having migrated for numerous reasons and circumstances. Often seen as a burden - an anomaly even - these students are invisible in the mainstream classroom and in many cases left to their own devices. As the onus is placed with the individual institution on how to implement the day to day running of a school, I have seen teachers struggle to find ways to provide meaningful tasks to engage the students and instead end up failing them in more ways than one.

As an important yet under-examined area of educational research in teaching newcomers in Sweden this study therefore aims to contribute to what is seen as ongoing work for change by examining how pedagogical practices within the mainstream setting can create inclusionary learning. Guiding the research are the following questions:

1. How do teachers, in their pedagogical practices, take into account the multilingual, multicultural makeup of the Swedish classroom today?
2. How do teachers address diversity while at the same time avoiding essentialism and dualistic representations?
3. What strategies do teachers use in order to move beyond stereotyping and marginalising the ‘Other’?

1.2 Structure of Thesis
The thesis is divided into six chapters. After my initial introduction, in this chapter, which also includes my research aims and questions, I set out to contextualise my research in Chapter Two, by firstly describing migration development in Sweden in recent decades to then providing an overview of the institutional educational context of my research. Finally, I

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2 In education the term *mainstream* classroom refers to the regular or general classroom. *Mainstreaming* refers to the process of immersing students with additional support needs into a class with those students who do not have such needs
present a brief overview of previous empirical research studies with a specific focus on teaching newcomers in Sweden. Chapter Three provides an overview of the theoretical framework and concepts guiding the study which is grounded in multicultural and critical pedagogy. Chapter Four details the methodological approach undertaken by describing the approaches to data collection and analysis as well as reflecting on ethical considerations. Chapter Five presents the research findings from my analysis of the qualitative data collected. Finally, Chapter Six reviews the findings and draws conclusions based on my initial research questions and theoretical framework. At the end a list of references is provided followed by appendices.
2 CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

This chapter will present a brief historical overview of the migratory patterns Sweden has witnessed since World War II as well as discuss the education context of the study which sets the background for the research. Finally, the chapter ends with an overview of previous research studies which focus on the education of newcomers in Swedish schools.

2.1 Migratory Patterns to Sweden - A brief overview

With a population of just over 10 million (SCB, 2021), Sweden has one of the highest proportions of foreign born in terms of its population, within Europe today (Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2017:250). Yet migration to Sweden is relatively new having historically been a major emigrant country. Following World War II Sweden began to witness the arrival of labour migrants which would go on to dominate migration trends in the country well into the 1970s, transforming Sweden from ‘a country of emigration to a country of immigration’ (Schierup, Hansen & Castles, 2006:199). However, following the economic crisis in the early 1970s Sweden saw a downturn in labour migration which was subsequently replaced by family reunification and refugees seeking asylum as the main reasons for migration (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2010; Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2017; Berglund, 2017).

Concerning labour migrants, Sweden did not have an official guest worker policy (Skodo, 2018:2), yet they began arriving in the 1950s due to the strong demand for workers in the declining agriculture and domestic sectors as well as in the industry and service sectors which were steadily expanding (Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2017:259). They mostly came from the ‘economic peripheries’ of southern and eastern Europe as well as Sweden’s neighbouring countries - most notably Finland - due to the formation of the Nordic region which allowed for free movement (Ibid.).

During and in the immediate aftermath of World War II Sweden also began receiving large numbers of refugees which would then extend to include those coming from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland following Soviet invasion (Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2017:259). From the late 1970s onwards following two decades of labour migration domination, the number of asylum seekers and resettled refugees began to increase again, reaching a climax in the mid-90s following the collapse of the Soviet Union and as a result of the Yugoslavian
wars (Schierup, Hansen & Castles, 2006:199). Sweden had thus become a major receiving country and ‘humanitarian haven’ for those displaced and fleeing persecution as a result of political upheaval and war across the Globe (Skodo, 2018:3) This coincided with a rise in the number of family members of earlier immigrants coming to Sweden and while the country saw a decline in arrivals during the latter part of the 1990s, numbers steadily increased again after the millennium.

A pivotal point then came in 2015, when Sweden along with Germany received the largest number of refugees seeking asylum within Europe (Berglund, 2017). Displaced, mostly as a result of ongoing civil war, the majority came from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan (Ibid.). In public discourse across Europe it became known as ‘the refugee crisis’ which saw Sweden, along with other EU member states, reintroduce border controls. This was the first of a number of dramatic moves made by the Swedish government which subsequently resulted in the temporary asylum and family reunification law being introduced in July 2016 (Skodo, 2018:1). The highly restrictive law set out to limit the social and economic rights of asylum seekers, including the rights to be granted permanent residence permits and reunification. However this shift toward more restrictive migration policy, from a country known for its fairly liberal stance, has a much longer trajectory and should therefore be seen in light of policy development stretching back to before the millennium, whereby ‘many current restrictive measures were either voiced, suggested or enacted’ during this time (Ibid, 6)⁴. Furthermore it is a trend which ‘reflects a deeper integration with EU policies on asylum in general, and with Sweden’s membership of the Schengen agreement [in 2001] in particular’ (Schierup, Hansen & Castles, 2006:199).

Having witnessed an increasingly anti-immigrant rhetoric in both public and political discourse largely based on Islamophobia and the rise of the far right, the growing sentiment in Sweden, in recent years, echoes that which has been prevalent across the EU with its calls for a ‘securitisation of migration’ (Bredström & Bolander, 2019: 81). Stretching back to the 1960s Sweden had ‘adopted a liberal policy of incorporation in which resident foreign citizens were given full rights to welfare and public services on a par with those enjoyed by native Swedes, and easy access to citizenship’ (Schierup, Hansen & Castles, 2006:196).

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³ In the 1970s Sweden notably took in refugees from Chile after the 1973 coup, along with Christian Assyrians from Turkey. Then, in the 1980s, Iranian asylum seekers began arriving following the Islamic revolution as did refugees from the Horn of Africa (Schierup, Hansen & Castles, 2006:199).

⁴ In his article Skodo (2018:6) points out that as the numbers of asylum seekers increased as a direct result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the 1980s and 1990s saw ‘a rise of restrictive laws, policies, anti-immigrant parties and xenophobia’ which marked the beginning of Sweden’s more restrictive stance on immigration, which then became even more visible after the millennium.
Embedded in a multicultural ideology which was firmly established in the early 1980s such policy embraced the growing ethnic and religious diversity of Swedish society, safeguarding culture and identity and ultimately respecting differences (Bredström & Bolander, 2019:81). However, the last two decades have seen ‘an erosion of the “Swedish exceptionalism” … as neoliberal policies and the commitment to managed migration [have caused] ethnic marginalisation’ (Schierup, Krifors & Slavnic, 2015:216). Migration has thus become seen as a “risk” to society and as such ‘integration policy has increasingly shifted towards an assimilatory discourse which portrays migrant cultures as a problem for society’ (Bredström & Bolander, 2019:81).

2.2 Swedish Educational Context

Regulated through the Education Act (2011) compulsory schooling in Sweden currently comprises of four stages4. Commencing in a preschool class (förskoleklass) from the Autumn semester of the year that the child turns six, it then moves to years 1-3 (lägstadiet), years 4-6 (mellanstadiet) and finally ends with years 7-9 (högstadiet)5. Students then have the option of going on to attend upper-secondary school (gymnasieskolan) for three years.

With regard to compulsory schooling, children can choose to either attend a municipal school or a privately owned school, known as an independent school or “free school”. As a result of a law reform in the 1990s, which brought about ‘neo-liberal shifts in school regimes’ (Mulinari & Neergaard, 2010:139), a large number of such schools now exist in Sweden. Yet there has been much critique of the ever expanding independent school. Firstly, they are often viewed as profit seeking enterprises ‘paid for by a publicly financed student price tag’ (Ibid, 140). Secondly, it has been argued that they increase polarisation and ethnic segregation (Ibid.). Mulinari & Neergaard (2010: 141) point out that individual choice has ‘severely affected unprivileged groups’, arguing that it is ‘mostly children from privileged Swedish backgrounds [who] leave the public schools for the “free schools” and privileged parents use this freedom of choice to move away from schools with high concentrations of children with migrant backgrounds’.

Like municipal schools, teaching at independent schools must also follow the national curriculum and syllabi, which sets out the subjects to be taught and how they should be

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4 School Law (Skollag 2010:800), https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/dokument/svensk-forfattningssamling/skollag-2010800_sfs-2010-800
5 Sami school (sameskolor) for the children of indigenous Sami people also exists as part of compulsory education in Sweden.
distributed over the year groups (Skolverket, 2021). In addition, each subject discipline has its own course syllabus which describes the course content, the aims and purpose of the teaching as well as highlights the knowledge the students are given the opportunity to develop within the specific subject area. Grades are given at the end of every term, beginning in year 6 to the end of year 9 when compulsory schooling ends and final grades are set. The overarching principle is that ‘education should be democratic with respect for human rights and democracy as a foundation’ (Skolverket, 2020b).

2.2.1 Newly Arrived Students

All children who are living in Sweden are entitled, under Swedish law, to attend school. This not only refers to those registered in accordance with the Population Registration Act, but also those residing who have not registered and have migrated for any reason (Skolverket, 2020c). Therefore, the right to education in Sweden also includes those with temporary resident permits, asylum seekers, so-called undocumented children as well as children of labour migrants (Ibid.). For asylum-seeking children and young adults the school law states that they should be admitted to school as soon as possible and within one month of their “arrival” to Sweden. However, aside from these children, the law does not stipulate any specific provision on how soon schools need to receive other students who have recently arrived in Sweden (Ibid.).

“Newly arrived” (nyanlända) is a term which has come to be used in educational discourse and, after amendments to the Swedish Education Act in 2016, is one which defines those students who lived abroad and now reside in Sweden and who started their education after the start of the Autumn school term in the year that they turn seven or later. Furthermore, their status as newly arrived is limited to the first four years in a Swedish school; after that they are no longer deemed as such. The law also states that mandatory mapping of previous knowledge, experiences and interests needs to be carried out with students new to Sweden and that access to any preparatory class should be limited to two years and that the student should have contact with the mainstream class (Svensson, 2019:3, Skolverket, 2020b).

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7 Compulsory schooling in Sweden requires educators to follow a specific curriculum referred to as LGR11 which is outlined by the National Agency for Education (Skolverket) here: https://www.skolverket.se/download/18.31c292d516c7445866a218f/1576654682907/pdf3984.pdf

8 It is worth noting that the right to education is limited for students who are categorised as asylum seekers or undocumented whereby the law states that they have the right to an education up to and including upper secondary school if that education begins before they have reached 18 years of age (Skolverket, 2020c).

Nilsson & Bunar (2016) distinguish these newly arrived students as four subgroups. The first group consists of undocumented minors, who prior to July 2013 ‘had no legal right to attend school’ in Sweden (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016:403). Unaccompanied minors seeking asylum make up the second group, with the third made up of children granted refugee status and are either waiting for asylum in Sweden or who have arrived through family unification. Finally, the fourth group includes children of migrant workers from both within and outside of the EU. A group, which has, according to Nilsson & Bunar, been largely ‘invisible in the reception system’ and subsequently of little academic interest (Ibid, 404).

While the overall framework regarding basic provisions and legal regulations is decided at national level, the daily activities of any one school is the responsibility of the school’s principal (Skolverket, 2020a). This has subsequently led to an array of different implementation strategies across the country and within municipalities as the organisation of the teaching of newcomers is left to individual schools (Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013, Avery, 2016, Obondo, 2018). As such the teaching of newly arrived tends to be organised in one of two ways; either through direct placement into mainstream classrooms or through a preparatory class (förberedelseklass), also often referred to as an introductory, transitional or international class.

According to Nilsson & Bunar (2016), being taught in a preparatory class often means that students are ‘physically segregated from the rest of the school facilities’ (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016:405) therefore limiting the opportunity for newly arrived students to socially interact with the other students at the school, sustaining an “us” versus “them” culture. At the same time, while the main reason given for a swift transfer to the mainstream classroom is notably so that the students can integrate, they often find themselves ‘physically and emotionally isolated often sitting at the margins of the classrooms where their presence is often not acknowledged’ (Obondo, 2018:121); what Tajic & Bunar (2020:4) term as ‘exclusion through inclusion’.

Advocates of having a preparatory class see it as enabling students to receive an introduction to Swedish culture and to gain a basic understanding of the language and familiarise themselves with the new school system, while direct immersion to the mainstream classroom could, some argue, be detrimental to the quality of education they receive (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016:406). Then there are those who advocate that direct placement into the mainstream classroom allows students to immerse into the Swedish language right from the beginning (Obondo et al, 2016:179). A catch-22 situation is thus clearly evident.
2.3 Previous Research

2.3.1 Empirical Case Studies: Sweden

Previous research on multicultural education in Sweden has mainly focused on issues at structural and organisational levels rather than on pedagogical practices or curriculum content (Obondo et al, 2016). Yet a small, but increasing number of studies have emphasized the growing need to examine teachers’ experiences by developing classroom based research within the context of multicultural schools in Sweden (Ibid,192); an area which they argue is underrepresented in the educational field (Obondo, 2018; Svensson, 2019; Högberg et al, 2020). That said most studies, which centre around the teaching of newcomers at the lower secondary school level, have predominantly focused on the experiences and pedagogical practices of teachers who meet these students in preparatory classes and less on the experiences and pedagogical practices of those teaching the newly arrived students in the mainstream classroom (e.g. Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Obondo et al, 2016; Obondo, 2018; Svensson, 2019; Tajic & Bunar).

Much of the research points to the challenges teachers face in working with newly arrived students (e.g. Obondo et al, 2016; Obondo, 2018; Svensson, 2019; Högberg et al, 2020). Högberg et al (2020:2) point out that the students often arrive with highly diverse educational backgrounds, with some close to illiterate having previously never attended school. Teachers therefore struggle to meet the needs of what is seen as a growing culturally and linguistically heterogeneous group of students, particularly when faced with ‘powerful ideologies of cultural and linguistic homogenisation’ (Obondo, 2018:111). In addition, Svensson’s study (2019:1) shows how ‘institutional factors, lack of training and insufficient support’ can constrain the teachers’ ability to provide equal education for asylum seeking students. With no control over asylum decisions and left to their own devices to take care of the needs of these students, Svensson points out that ‘conflicting goals of education and immigration policy conditioned their work and risked undermining the compensatory pedagogical task’ (Ibid.).

Due to the often ‘forced and abrupt’ nature of their departure from their homeland, the newly arrived students can encounter difficulties in adjusting to school in Sweden which, according to Obondo et al (2016), is partly due to possible interruptions in their education as

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10 The previous research I discuss is a sample of empirical case studies written in English. It must therefore be noted that a number of other studies exist in Swedish which I do not refer to here.

11 Such studies examine the experiences of teachers from both preparatory and mainstream classes although much focus still tends to be on the former more so than the latter. None focus exclusively on teaching in the mainstream classroom unlike this research study.
well as experiences of ‘post-traumatic stress and depression’ (Ibid, 177). Yet Nilsson & Bunar (2016:400) argue that ‘a disproportionate focus has been given to these difficulties, resulting in a system that misses positive opportunities to build on newly arrived students’ pre-existing capacities’. It is therefore becoming increasingly important as Obondo (2018:121) highlights for teachers to disrupt the status quo and provide students with alternative spaces of learning where teachers build on students’ cultural knowledge and create possibilities for culturally responsive teaching amid testing regimes.

Culturally responsive teaching centres on ‘the importance of teachers learning and understanding the background and lived experiences of their students’ (Obondo, 2018:112)\(^\text{12}\) However, the research also highlights the dilemma teachers face in trying to avoid cultural essentialism while simultaneously recognising and then subsequently working with the students' culture as a resource for learning (Obondo et al, 2016:190). What is highlighted is that while some of the pedagogical approaches demonstrate attempts at building on the students cultural and linguistic experiences, many more present ‘a dualistic representation of Sweden vs the children’s home countries or cultures [whereby] the teachers tend to consider the children’s experience and cultural backgrounds existing in complete contrast to Swedish culture’ (Ibid, 191). Obondo calls for further research to address this, thus inspiring this study in that regard.

With much pedagogical practice geared towards standardised testing, which is increasingly seen as the benchmark for success (Obondo et al, 2016), much of the research highlights how language acquisition has been a dominant feature of school debates as it is seen as a key factor in hindering academic achievement. Yet such a ‘one-sided focus on what students lack, that is, a knowledge of Swedish’ (Nilsson & Bunar, 2016:410), fails to take into account the newly arrived students previous knowledge in other subjects and the benefits of utilising the students’ mother tongue within the school setting (Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Avery, 2016; Obondo et al, 2016; Straszer, Rosén & Wedin, 2020). In addition, with such a pivotal focus on supporting the students in learning Swedish, Nilsson & Bunar (2016:410) argue that ‘there is a danger that the needs for other types of support are confused with, or reduced to language difficulties, leaving newly arrived students deprived of the school’s regular support structures’.

Researchers (Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Svensson, 2017; Straszer, Rosén & Wedin, 2020) recognise the benefits of bilingual scaffolding and yet it is a

\(^{12}\) In 2009 Ladson-Billings developed the concept as culturally relevant pedagogy, which was then later termed ‘culturally responsive teaching’ by Gay in 2010 (Obondo, 2017:112).
resource few take advantage of outside of the preparatory classroom despite there being a greater need for it in the mainstream setting (Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016) and something which can be achieved through better use of mother tongue tuition.\(^\text{13}\)

Avery (2016:404) points out that mother tongue tuition is a collaborative support measure between a class teacher and a mother tongue tutor, who ‘contributes with knowledge of the student’s mother tongue and familiarity with the region where the mother tongue is spoken’, while the former has the responsibility for deciding upon the subject content (Ibid.)\(^\text{14}\). Yet, while recognising the necessity for such cooperation, this is limited in practice (Avery, 2016; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Obondo et al, 2016) and as Nilsson & Bunar (2016:409) state ‘suffers from a lack of organisational priority, isolation from mainstream tuition, difficulties in finding qualified teachers and scepticism from parents’. Tajic & Bunar (2020:10) note similar cooperation lacking between Swedish second language teachers and other subject teachers (Tajic & Bunar, 2020:10), while Nilsson & Axelsson (2013:160) point out that ‘the lack of structures for pedagogical and social provision in the mainstream system risks leaving the students to their own devices and creates leeway for a deficit-paradigm that places the responsibility and blame on the individual for not succeeding in school’.

To conclude, while recognising that language is an important determinant to student success, it is not something which is explored at great length in the limited space of this research study (see 5.1). Instead, focus is largely given to other areas within pedagogy which contribute to inclusionary learning, yet are often overshadowed by the prevailing discussions on language proficiency. With this in mind, I now turn to the theoretical perspectives guiding my research.

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\(^\text{13}\) Straszer, Rosén & Wedin (2020) refer more specifically to the idea of translanguaging, which can be described as a model of teaching which makes ‘parallel use of both languages for different activities’ (Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013:150).

\(^\text{14}\) The National School Agency points out that those students with a different mother tongue than Swedish may be entitled to receive instruction and guidance in their mother tongue or strongest academic language if it is deemed necessary (Skolverket, 2020b).
3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The theoretical framework and concepts guiding my research has its grounding in literature on multicultural education and critical pedagogy. The chapter begins with an overview of multicultural education from its conception to its critique. From there the focus of the chapter centres around critical pedagogy, which sets out to question and challenge systems of power and domination. It begins with Paulo Freire and his foundational work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) before moving to an intersectional approach to pedagogy in which bell hooks led the way by recognising the interplay between gender and other sociocultural categories of difference within the arena of teaching and learning. The chapter concludes with a discussion around Kevin Kumashiro’s work on anti-oppressive education. Influenced by queer theory and building on intersectional feminist pedagogy, Kumashiro takes a post-structuralist view on power, whereby oppression is defined as operating in relation to discourse and inequality is created when one discourse is privileged over another.

3.1 Multicultural Education: A Brief Overview

Beginning with the emergence of ethnic revival movements in the 1960s and 70s, on the back of the Civil Rights Movement in the US, Banks (2009) traces four decades of multicultural education. Prior to this assimilationist ideology dominated policy in the West with the main perception being that diverse groups should relinquish their own languages and culture to allow society to ‘flourish’ and for them to become ‘effective citizens of their nation states’ (Banks, 2009:11). As Banks points out, however, such assimilationist and liberal ideology had ‘serious limitations’ (Ibid, 12). He states that while it may have been viewed as something of a success for white ethnic groups it failed non-white ethnic groups who faced discrimination and racism from being ‘structurally excluded’ (Ibid.). Thus multicultural education emerged as a response to the shortcomings of such forms of schooling (Castles, 2009:59).

Banks (2009:14) states that the concept of multicultural education began with a focus on minority groups according to race, ethnicity and language and has since expanded to include issues related to gender and what he refers to as ‘exceptionality’. Castles (2009), with his focus on international migration and the impact this has had on education in receiving OECD countries, further emphasises that ‘by combining the principles of recognition of cultural difference and working for equality, [multicultural education] takes account of differing group backgrounds and seeks to develop the full potential of all students’ (Ibid, 59).
Yet it too has not been without criticism and Banks (2009:13) points out that early responses to multicultural education saw it as something ‘hastily conceptualised and implemented’ with the primary goal of quelling any discontent from ethnic groups. In its infancy structural changes were limited to ethnic units of work being slotted into the curriculum and the celebration of holidays over the course of the year or language and bilingual programmes taught by native speakers (Ibid). However as the academic gap remained there was a realisation that significant changes were needed at a structural level. Multicultural education subsequently widened in scope to include ‘all the major variables in the school, such as teacher attitudes and expectations, testing and assessment, the language and dialects sanctioned by schools, and school norms and values’ (Ibid, 14).

In the 1970s and 80s anti-racist educators argued that multicultural education had failed to adequately address the institutional structures which continued to oppress minority groups (Banks, 2009:14; Castles, 2009:59). According to them, it assumed that the problems migrant children faced were more to do with ‘cultural dissonance’ than an education system which was racist (Castles, 2009:59). While Banks (2009) points out that little distinction is made between multicultural education and antiracist education today - with many antiracist concepts having since been incorporated into multicultural discourse - he also states that it still remains a concept which is contested in terms of its limitations (Ibid, 14). For Castles (2009) multicultural education faces serious practicalities. While addressing that cultural differences need to be recognised within the learning space, Castles fears that too much time spent on this ‘risks producing graduates with lower levels of work-related cultural capabilities and skills’ as it would result in less time being spent on what he refers to as core subjects in this regard (Castles, 2009:59).

However, with travel and communication becoming more readily accessible, Castles points out that people increasingly see themselves as a part of ‘transnational communities’ and as such maintain ties across borders. He therefore emphasises that ‘education needs to respond with new ways of conceptualising citizenship and belonging’ (Ibid.). Furthermore, in light of the ‘new political economy’ many families are left in a precarious and irregular situation without legal residency rights (Ibid.). Schools, Castles argues, must therefore seek ways to offer equal opportunities to those children caught up in this. Yet, despite such dilemmas Castles maintains that multicultural education in comparison to assimilationist approaches is the way forward for migrant children.
Banks (2009:15) describes multicultural education as having five dimensions\textsuperscript{15} and while each is distinct from the other, in practice they become interconnected. He highlights that multicultural teaching is not only about ‘infusing ethnic content into the school curriculum’, but also involves restructuring school knowledge (Ibid, 16). This he points out requires both teachers and students to change how they conceptualise and interact with knowledge in order to assist students in becoming ‘knowledge producers not merely the consumers of knowledge produced by others’ (Ibid.) Something which is also inherent to the perspectives of critical pedagogy (see 3.2).

Banks proceeds to detail a number of different response paradigms\textsuperscript{16} which he states have generally emerged at different phases of ethnic revitalisation movements (Banks, 2009:18)\textsuperscript{17}. In doing so, he draws the conclusion that while multicultural education is full of ‘single-factor paradigms’ that offer explanations to why minority students and those from low-income households have low attainment levels, a multi-factor paradigm is called for instead which recognises that all the major variables of a school are interconnected (Ibid, 26). Viewed as a ‘holistic paradigm’, Banks believes this would allow schools to devise strategies which would lead to the successful implementation of multicultural education (Ibid, 27).

Banks concludes by highlighting that ‘school should be a cultural environment where acculturation takes place’ (Ibid.) A place where different views and perspectives are incorporated as teachers and students interact, which he points out ‘will help educators to create a school culture that validates and legitimises the cultures of their students as well as enriches their personal lives’ (Ibid.). Irrespective of whether the students are of ‘majority, minority or migrant origin’ it should be an education for all and no matter their legal status (Castles, 2009:60). Only then, Castles states, can multicultural education achieve its objectives. Looking at it from a more critical perspective he adds that multicultural education ‘can assist in overcoming histories of colonialism, racism, and xenophobia, and is therefore a vital instrument for change’ (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{15} The five dimensions Banks (2009) describes are: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy and an empowering school culture and social structure.

\textsuperscript{16} He discusses the following multicultural education response paradigms - ethnic additive, self concept development, cultural deprivation, cultural difference, language, cultural ecology, protective disidentification, structural and finally antiracist. (Banks, 2009:18).

\textsuperscript{17} Though Banks also acknowledges that they ‘do not necessarily occur in a linear or set order in any particular nation’ (Banks, 2009:18).
3.1.1 Challenging the Multicultural Paradigm

Of the response paradigms Banks (2009) discusses, those theorists he locates within the Structural Paradigm have responded more critically to the more traditional multicultural approach to education, highlighting its limitations in eliminating racism and discrimination (Ibid, 25). For such theorists, school plays a major role in the continued marginalisation of ethnic groups. They therefore argue that attention needs to shift to focus more specifically on societal structures and institutions in which inequality and racism are embedded rather than focusing on minority students and cultural differences (Ibid.).

In particular, critical race theorists, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995/2006), highlight the limits to what they term as the multicultural paradigm. While the concept is intended to bring about change in order for marginalised students to experience ‘educational equality’, Ladson-Billings & Tate point out that in practice it is often reduced to nothing more than ‘trivial examples and artifacts of cultures’ (2006:24). Furthermore, while ‘multiculturalism came to be viewed as a political philosophy of many cultures existing in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance’, discussions which focus on tensions between and within different cultural groups are often lacking (Ibid, 25). Instead there is an assumption of ‘unity’ in that differences are both ‘analogous and equivalent’ (Ibid.) .

Critical race theory, with its roots in legal studies in the United States, entered the field of educational research in the 90s. In their pioneering article Towards a Critical Race Theory of Education, Ladson-Billings & Tate looked to critical race theory for new perspectives in addressing the vast inequalities in schooling experiences. Undertheorised at the time, Ladson-Billings and Tate sought to examine the centrality of race and racism in producing such educational inequity on the basis of three propositions. Firstly, that ‘race continues to be a significant factor in determining inequity in the U.S.’ Secondly, that ‘U.S. society is based on property rights’ and thirdly, that ‘the intersection of race and property creates an analytic tool through which we can understand social (and, consequently, school) inequity’ (Ibid, 12).

In introducing their first proposition Ladson-Billings & Tate point out that one only needs to turn to statistical and demographic data to highlight the significance of race in determining inequity (Ibid.). At the same time they recognise that the concept of race is problematic and yet, in the words of Toni Morrison, ‘it has assumed a metaphorical life so

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18 Banks refers to these most notably as neo-Marxists, critical theorists and critical race theorists.
19 The article referred to here was originally published in 1995.
completely embedded in daily discourse that it is perhaps more necessary and more on
display than ever before’ (Ibid, 13).

While race may have been examined as an explanation for social inequity together
with gender and class, Ladson-Billings & Tate argue that the same cannot be said when it
comes to the analysis of educational inequality (Ibid, 14). Gender and class on the other
hand, according to Ladson-Billings & Tate, have both been extensively theorised in this
domain. Therefore, without wanting to undermine their importance and view them as
insignificant they point to their ‘shortcomings vis-a-vis race’ (Ibid, 13). The school
experience can vary considerably and to focus on gender and class as ‘stand alone variables’
without acknowledging how they intersect with race would fail to account for attainment
disparities between whites and students of colour (Ibid.). Race, they point out, matters too.

In a society where property rights are inextricably linked to power, Ladson-Billings &
Tate highlight the ongoing tension that exists between property rights and human rights (Ibid,
16). In terms of education they discuss the school curriculum as taking on the form of
‘intellectual property’ with its ‘quality and quantity’ varying depending upon the property
values of the school (Ibid, 17) . This, they point out, not only refers to what students should
know, but also to the teaching resources which assist the students’ learning (Ibid, 18).

In order to understand the centrality of race and property in a critical race theoretical
approach to education, Ladson-Billings & Tate turn to critical race scholar Cheryl Harris and
her analysis of ‘whiteness as the ultimate property’ (Harris in Ladson-Billings & Tate,
2006:22). Harris argues that both slavery, which saw Blacks objectified as property, and the
conquests of Native American lands, ‘supported White privilege … [and] … laid the
foundation for the idea that whiteness - that which Whites alone possess - is valuable and
property’ (Ibid, 22). Ladson-Billings & Tate go on to detail what Harris calls the ‘property
functions of whiteness’ and how these apply to education in the United States\(^\text{20}\).

In the way that critical race legal theory seeks to question who the real beneficiaries
of civil rights law are, critical race theory in education argues that the multicultural paradigm
functions in a similar way. As Ladson-Billings & Tate point out ‘just as traditional civil rights
law is based on a foundation of human rights, the current multicultural paradigm is mired in
liberal ideology that offers no radical change in the current order’ (Ibid, 25). Using the
foundations of critical race theory to challenge the dominant ideology which privileges
whiteness above all else and which they argue schools reproduce, Ladson-Billings & Tate

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\(^{20}\) Such rights include ‘the rights of disposition, rights to use and enjoyment, reputation and status property and
the absolute right to exclude’ (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006:22).
sought to validate the experiences of people of colour by placing them at the centre of a discourse in which they had previously been ignored.

Scholarly discussions centred around white privilege have intensified in recent years; not least with DiAngelo’s publication of *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism* (2018). Her thought provoking rhetoric is primarily directed towards white progressives who she believes ‘cause the most daily damage to people of colour’ (DiAngelo, 2018:5). As a white progressive herself, DiAngelo aims to be less white, meaning in her words: ‘to break with white silence and white solidarity, to stop privileging the comfort of white people over the pain of racism for people of colour, to move past guilt and into action’ (Ibid, 150).

Using the United States as her point of reference, her discussions centre around racism, White supremacy and the societal structures which continue to uphold them. Such conversations, she emphasises, are vital despite the discomfort and defensiveness they trigger in white people - the very responses and behaviours she defines as ‘white fragility’. DiAngelo points out that while ‘individual whites may be “against” racism … they still benefit from a system that privileges whites as a group’ (Ibid, 24). Whiteness, DiAngelo, states, ‘rests on a foundational premise’ (Ibid, 25); one that defines whites as ‘the norm or standard for human’, while people of colour are defined as ‘a deviation from that norm’ (Ibid.).

DiAngelo believes her intended audience has a too simplistic understanding of racism and is critical of the good/bad binary which evolved post-civil rights movement. She calls it a ‘false dichotomy’ (Ibid, 72), whereby racism became associated with intentional ‘isolated and extreme acts of prejudice' (Ibid, 71) in which the ‘good moral person’ played no part (Ibid.). This perception, she states, ‘makes it nearly impossible to talk to white people about racism, what it is, how it shapes all of us, and the inevitable ways that we are conditioned to participate in it’ (Ibid, 72). Thus, by not talking about racism, which is so deeply embedded in societal structures and institutions, Di Angelo states, is ‘a fundamental way in which white people maintain unequal racial power’ (Ibid, 86). DiAngelo is particularly critical of colour blind ideology which, standing by the assumption that ‘if we pretend not to notice race, then there can be no racism ... [only serves] ... to deny the reality of racism and thus hold it in place’ (Ibid, 43). There is therefore a continued call for schools as an institutional space to disrupt such embedded ideology.
3.2 Critical Pedagogy

3.2.1 Who is Paulo Freire?
Critical pedagogy is a theory of teaching which sets out to challenge systems of power and domination which privileges Western/Eurocentric ways of thinking. A key figure of critical pedagogy is Paulo Freire and upon reading his foundational work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000/1970) some fifty years after its first English publication it becomes clear that his key concepts are as prevalent today as they were then. Rooted in his own lived experiences, he set out to challenge the structures of oppression21. This is at the heart of his work as he examines how relations of power play out between the disadvantaged (the oppressed) and those who take advantage of them (the oppressor) and argues that by empowering the former the latter is simultaneously liberated.

For Freire education and oppression are intertwined whereby the former can function either as an oppressive tool in maintaining the status quo or as a means of liberation. In this sense Freire sets out to describe two opposing pedagogies; one that seeks to serve while the other intends to challenge. However challenging existing power relations, according to Freire, can only occur if the students are directly involved in the development of such a pedagogy which would allow them the ability to learn about that which is of most relevance in their own lives and subsequently lead to change. In this sense, Freire sees the students and teacher as equally knowledgeable subjects.

Freire argues that ‘education is suffering from narration sickness’ (Freire, 2000:72) as he sets out to critique the traditional Western classroom in which the banking concept of education dominates. Such a concept conveys a classroom hierarchy whereby the authority of knowledge lies with the teacher, who, as the ‘narrating subject’ is tasked with ‘depositing’ facts into the minds of their students; those ‘patient, listening objects’ whose job is then to memorise and recall them (Ibid, 71). In describing the teacher student relationship Freire draws upon Hegel’s (1977/1807) dialectic of master and slave as ‘the students alienated like the slave … accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher’s existence - but unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher’ (Freire, 2000:72) and instead remain passive.

In the banking system which Freire describes students are taught “facts” that are, to a large extent, disconnected from their own lived experiences and as such ‘words are emptied

21 *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* grew from Freire’s observations of the educational work he conducted in Brazil and while in political exile in Chile.
of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity’ (Ibid, 71). Such a system mirrors the oppressive social structures which allows one group to hold superiority over another and thus determines what is “right” or in other words what is relevant to teach students and what is not. The banking system conceives knowledge as ‘a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing’ (Ibid, 72); that it is something that teachers possess and that students are lacking much in the same way as those without power are presumed ignorant. It seeks to shape the way that the students think and act, teaching them ‘to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them’ (Ibid, 73) rather than have them question or strive to change it. Above all it ‘inhibits their creative power’ (Ibid, 77) and in doing so reinforces existing power relations.

In denouncing such a traditional method of teaching, which leaves minimal room for student input, Freire seeks to disregard such a model and replace it with what he terms a problem-posing education which will, from the outset, resolve what he calls ‘the teacher-student contradiction’ (Ibid, 79). With such a model Freire envisions a dialectic relationship taking place between the teacher and students, carrying the notion that all within the classroom space have something to contribute. Freire sees this as valuable to the learning process whereby the teacher and the students work collaboratively to allow for teaching and learning to occur simultaneously between all parties. In doing so Freire conceives that ‘the teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach’ (Ibid, 80).

For Freire the classroom is a space where every voice should have equal value; that all perspectives should be listened to and that the teacher and students should be mutually involved in the decision making process of what topics should be discussed. In this sense ‘the students - no longer docile listeners - are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher’ (Ibid, 81). Furthermore he emphasises that by incorporating topics which are relevant to the students’ daily lives the students will naturally become more actively involved:

Students, as they are increasingly posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting
comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated.

(Ibid.)

Freire’s problem-posing model strives to empower the students to question their surroundings; teaching them how to view the world with a critical lens. It seeks to engage with the knowledge the students bring with them by allowing them to share their experiences for they do not enter the classroom arena as empty ‘receptacles’ waiting to be filled (Ibid, 72). For Freire such a model gives the students personal agency. It awakens a critical consciousness (conscientização) transforming ‘what Fanon terms “the wretched on the earth” from being for others to being for themselves’ (Macedo in Freire, 2000:25).

3.2.2. An Intersectional Approach: ‘We are all subjects in history’

Freire’s work is about conscious raising and liberation, however understanding that his writing is situated in a specific time and place his theory of power is somewhat binary, with a focus largely based on class. A contemporary reading on the other hand would seek to re-conceptualise his theory to take into account the multiplicity of power relations which recognises the intersecting aspects of identity whereby one single sociocultural category of disadvantage such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality or class does not take precedence over other social factors, but rather sees them as overlapping and thereby considers the multi-level root causes of oppression and the relationship between these factors.

Such an approach is captured in the concept of intersectionality. The concept was initially associated with black feminist theorists, in the 1980s, who rejected the notion that gender, race and class should be viewed as separate entities and that they should instead be seen as ‘interlocking categories of disadvantage’ (Bastia, 2014:3), to be simultaneously called upon when attempting to analyse ‘the multiple sources of oppression’ experienced by different groups of women (Ibid, 2). Coined by the law professor and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), she argued that inequalities cannot be explained through a single category alone for such an explanation would be too simplistic. Instead it is the interplay between social categories of disadvantage such as race, gender and class, which ‘feed from one another’ (Bastia, 2014: 5) that need to be taken into account.

22 hooks, 1994:139.
23 It is worth noting that ‘intersectionality is just as useful in understanding privilege, as it is in drawing attention and analysing disadvantages; intersectionality can be applied to any group of people, whether they be advantaged or disadvantage’ although the former is not always featured in studies (Bastia, 2014:9).
One of the Black feminists that has developed an intersectional perspective on critical pedagogy is bell hooks. She states that her pedagogical practices have ‘emerged from the mutually illuminating interplay of anti-colonial, critical and feminist pedagogies’ (hooks, 1994:10). Her ambition is to further challenge the traditional ‘systems of domination’ within the educational setting with her calls for an engaged pedagogy that moves beyond the banking system to one in which everyone contributes to the learning process. Inspired by Freire, hooks reiterates the point that learning is strengthened through active participation rather than from being a ‘passive consumer’ (Ibid, 14), and looks to decentering the authority in the classroom space. While this does not mean that the teacher relinquishes all their ‘power’ per se, hooks views the teacher and students as a ‘community of learners’ who share an equal commitment to the creation of a learning context (Ibid, 153). It is through such collective efforts that excitement is generated; something which should be, according to hooks, a visible part of every classroom.

hooks sees the engaged classroom, which is forever changing, as a location of endless possibility. Yet it requires educators to ‘step outside the conventional mind’ (Ibid, 206) and in doing so poses a threat to the institutionally embedded power relations at play whereby the voice of the teacher is seen as the ‘transmitter of knowledge’ and discussions around personal experience are devalued (Ibid, 85). hooks, however, seeks to challenge this by emphasising in her work that experiences should not be judged meaningless and like Freire further rejects the way traditional teaching styles pan to ‘the notion of a single norm of thought and experience’ as universal (Ibid, 35). Instead she points to the fact that our ways of knowing are contrary to this belief and that the knowledge one produces is in actuality situated in a particular time and place; ‘forged in history and relations of power’ (Ibid, 31).

As discourse affects one’s way of thinking, feeling and acting it is therefore crucial to acknowledge that lived experiences shape conceptual knowledge and recognise that this is largely heterogeneous by factoring in interlocking social categories of difference. Such an intersectional perspective saturates hooks’ work; one which sees the classroom as a space ‘populated by individuals doing gender, ethnicity, racialisation, class, nationality, sexuality, disability, age etc. in many different ways’ (Lykke, 2013:3). As such hooks calls for old epistemologies to be deconstructed and ways of knowing to be reconceptualised in order to recognise the diversity which exists across intersecting social contexts (hooks, 1994:29). In doing so lesson content and delivery should therefore factor in the geopolitical and sociocultural diversity ever present in the classroom. At the same time, however, it is crucial
that planned activities avoid essentialism and dualistic representations as well as making a student the token “expert”.

Armstrong & Juhl (2007:4) point out that ‘knowledge emerges through our encounters and especially through our confrontations with one another’ and yet as hooks (1994:39) states there is great reluctance to approach teaching and learning from varying socio-cultural standpoints out of a fear that the space will become uncontrollable. For passion is locked out of the traditional classroom as it does not equate to academic seriousness. Instead students are expected to be motionless, not up nor visibly excited having erased the body from the learning process. In this sense the classroom has been all too ‘privileging of discursive-cognitive-logical-rational knowledges over embodied-felt-emotional ones’ (McDonough et al, 2016:438). Yet the body is vital to the meaning-making process in all its internal and external matter. (Just, 2000). By acknowledging the prominence of the body one seeks to disrupt the notion of the teacher as ‘omnipotent, all-knowing mind’ (hooks, 1994:138). For hooks the two are inseparable in educational contexts and as such educators must stop pretending that the body is removed from the classroom space and instead seek to understand its presence and centrality in teaching and learning.

Yet hooks also acknowledges it is difficult for both teachers and students to shift their paradigms. For example while it is important for teachers to recognise the mood upon entering the classroom and be flexible to it - that planned activities can take another direction and that risk taking is necessary without fearing that by doing so will result in some loss of control or student respect - many remain afraid that any deviation from the set agenda, such as allowing in non-directed thought, can be detrimental to the grading process; something which has become all to consuming in pedagogical practice. Furthermore, students can find it difficult to take up engagement having had it so deeply ingrained that they lack both authority and legitimacy (Ibid, 144). Fear, however, is ‘something classrooms should be designed to explore’ (Armstrong & Juhl, 2007:13). If teachers give into fears and refrain from trying out new methods there is a high chance they will revert back to conventional ways and power will continue to be used in a destructible manner (hooks, 1994:188).

The classroom should be a safe space where all learning experiences are valued and where students can feel empowered knowing that their voices are heard. With this in mind hooks emphasises the importance of not only allowing students to speak but also of teaching students how to listen to one another. In doing so, in hearing the sound of different voices she states is ‘an exercise in recognition’ and ensures that no-one remains invisible in the classroom’ (Ibid, 41).
3.2.3 The Visibility of Difference

Instead of perceiving the students within any one classroom as a homogeneous group, intersectional pedagogy strives to make differences visible while simultaneously seeking to counteract societal norms which exclude and subsequently reinforce inequality (Lykke, 2013:3). Such an approach makes it clear that styles of teaching need to change if the learning experience is to be inclusive. And yet many teachers when faced with diversity aren’t adequately prepared and instead allow old habits to remain, failing to make the necessary changes to their pedagogical practices (hooks, 1994:41). Any shift in approach can bring discomfort yet this is something progressive teaching should embrace rather than fear as it is an important part of working for change.

Operating in line with the idea of working for change, Kumashiro (2000) formulates his own strategy of anti-oppressive education. Taking a post-structuralist perspective of power relations in which certain ways of being are privileged while others are marginalised in society, Kumashiro sets out to define four approaches to anti-oppressive education. He refers to these as 1) Education for the Other; 2) Education about the Other; 3) Education that is critical of privileging and Othering and; 4) Education that changes students and society. Kumashiro uses the term “Other” to refer to those traditionally held at the fringes of society; students marginalised for being “other than the norm”. He defines these as being ‘students of colour, students who are female, or male but not stereotypically “masculine” and students who are, or are perceived to be, queer’ (Kumashiro, 2000:26).

Kumashiro discusses and criticises the first three approaches most notably for the ways they as stand alone strategies have their limitations in that they continue to reproduce the static definition of the Other. While the fourth approach is seen as emerging as a result of the critique and discussions of the first three and is what Kumashiro argues for in terms of posing critical questions towards teaching material in terms of what is included or excluded and from what perspective a material is produced. He is also quick to note that since oppression is dynamic and changing no one strategy of educational practice can work in every situation.

The first approach to anti-oppressive education focuses on improving the educational experiences of the Other. Here oppression is conceptualised in terms of the Other and not in terms of the privileging of what is deemed “normal”. In that sense the approach follows assimilationist ideology as it looks to whom the Other is not but should become or who those privileged must be so as not to become the Other (Ibid, 27). In doing so it implies that the Other is the problem. Kumashiro therefore argues that this approach is somewhat limited as
‘educators cannot focus only on the treatment of the Other, and ignore other ways in which oppression plays out in schools’ (Ibid, 32).

The second approach focuses on what knowledge all students - both privileged and marginalised - have about the Other. Emphasis here is placed on the school curriculum and how knowledge about the Other remains limited as a result of the topics and material selected for study and the relative absence of others. In other instances knowledge acquired from both inside and outside the classroom is a distorted representation based on myths and stereotypes (Ibid, 32). To counteract this Kumashiro adds that researchers have suggested that either specific units of work about the Other are incorporated into the curriculum planning or that it is integrated throughout the curriculum and not limited to the occasional lesson. Kumashiro points to the strength of this approach by stating that:

‘it calls on educators to bring visibility to enrich their students' understandings of different ways of being. In fact, by trying to treat other ways of being as something that is as normal as the normative ways of being, this approach attempts to normalise differences and Otherness’ (Ibid, 33).

At the same time he highlights in a similar way to the first the flaws of this approach if taken alone. For example, he points out that by teaching about the Other ‘a dominant narrative’ of the Other’s experiences could present itself and in doing so ‘Otherness becomes essentialised and remains different from the norm’ therefore reinforcing the binary of “us” and “them” (Ibid.). Instead Kumashiro calls for a reconsideration of lessons which teach about culture and identity. To begin with, given ‘the multiplicity of experiences’ it is far from possible to teach everything in a limited time frame (Ibid, 34). As such it is important that students are made aware that whatever is taught can never provide a holistic picture and can never be representative of a whole group; they need to be made aware that diversity exists. (Ibid.).

The third approach looks at how classroom practices need to not only examine how some groups are Othered, but also why some are favoured and how this ‘dual process is legitimised and maintained by social structures and competing ideologies’ (Ibid, 36). It is therefore important to not only teach about the Other, but also to teach students about the processes which normalise some and marginalise others. Thus it is not only about learning, but also about ‘unlearning what one had previously learned as “normal” and normative' (Ibid, 37).
The fourth and final approach points to how oppression originates in discourse, which in turn frames how one thinks, feels and acts. Furthermore one is not only shaped by what is said, but also by what is not said (Ibid, 42). The problem that anti-oppressive education should strive to address is therefore not only about lack of knowledge and as such a filling of the gap, but also about resistance to knowledge that may disrupt in any way what one already knows. As Kumashiro states:

‘We unconsciously desire learning only that which affirms what we already know and our own sense of self - we unconsciously desire to learn only that which affirms our sense that we are good people and that we resist learning anything that reveals our complicity with racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression’ (Ibid, 43).

Anti-oppressive education subsequently involves one overcoming such a resistance and instead working to embrace change. It sets out to challenge the status quo and in doing so requires a shift in focus from those marginalised to those in a position of privilege, who in turn are required to undertake ‘a soul-searching examination of their privileges’ (Bredström et al, 2019:544). Above all anti-oppression is critical of the positivist idea of the neutral scientific universality of truth and instead calls for transparency24. Furthermore the idea of ‘norms’ is central to anti-oppressive education, which in turn is profoundly connected to power. Both limiting and enabling us “to act” in different ways they create expectations and tell ‘us’ how we are supposed to be based on various categories. Reproduced through language and micro-actions, societal norms become internalised, distributing power and privilege over others.

Yet as such structures are socially constructed it is therefore also possible to deconstruct them in working for change. It is then from this perspective that norm-critical pedagogy has emerged which seeks to challenge and change passing norms25. Such an approach opens up the authority of the teacher - who can neither be neutral or objective, only transparent - and calls for educators together with their students to map out excluding norms

24 Source: Emilia Åkesson, Lecture at LiU 30 November 2020: ‘Teaching to Transgress - Theorising Anti-Oppressive and Norm Critical Pedagogies’

25 Norm-critical pedagogy as a concept was coined in 2007 by scholars, teachers and activists who gathered to reflect on pedagogical practices. Linked to both feminist and queer pedagogies it critically examines how excluding norms, from an intersectional power dynamic, are reproduced in the classroom space (Bromseth & Sörensdotter, 2013).
reproduced through chosen teaching material by scrutinising concepts and critiquing language in the strive to create new norm alternatives.

3.3 In conclusion

hooks (1994:35) points out that multiculturalism is ‘the recognition, acceptance and preservation of diverse cultures and cultural identities’. Yet adds that teachers are often ill-equipped to teach in classrooms which are culturally diverse having been immersed in an ideology that values one perspective as universal truth as opposed to one which values multiple perspectives (Ibid.). Within critical pedagogy there is therefore a call for the decentering of the West by providing learning which engages with multiple viewpoints. The multicultural paradigm, notwithstanding critique - which Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995) discuss - must award the same level of recognition to the identities and practices of ethnic minority groups as has been given to those in the cultural dominant group and not be reduced to a lesson or unit of work here and there. There is therefore a call to go beyond the normative stance outlined by Banks (2009) and engage in a more critical approach to multicultural education. Furthermore, it is vital that teachers engage in conversations about whiteness in order to ‘form an unbiased, inclusive understanding of multiculturalism’ (hooks, 1994:43) and to recognise the limitations to the ways knowledge has traditionally been shared in the classroom (Ibid, 44). Just in the same way as anti-oppressive pedagogy sets out to challenge the status quo and shift the focus from those marginalised to those privileged in discourse. Such perspectives will be called upon in the analysis of my own research.


4 METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will first describe the local context and setting where the research study takes place. I will then present my chosen methodology for carrying out the study and the rationale behind such choices. This includes data collection and analysis methods as well as reflections over my ethical considerations, including my positionality as researcher in a field of study familiar to me.

4.1 Research Design

Combining theory and practice, the study uses qualitative research methods based on semi-structured interviews to allow for rich empirical data to be generated through the study of the everyday practices and lived experiences of the participants within a specific sociocultural context. Semi-structured interviews allow for flexibility whereby points of view can be expressed and stories told enabling the researcher detailed insight of social processes. Such qualitative methods also allow for new topics to be initiated which may have not been previously considered when participants are given the opportunity to speak more freely; expanding on initial feelings and actions. In this particular instance they allow me to gain an in-depth and interpretative understanding of the teachers’ experiences and perspectives of teaching newly arrived students in the mainstream classroom.

4.2 Local Context and Setting

The study was conducted in a large provincial town in Southern Sweden in a school district which has 20 schools with classes in years 7-9; 11 of which are municipal schools, with the remaining 9 being independent. Student populations vary between the schools, with some schools having a disproportionately higher number of students with foreign backgrounds than others; whether that be students who have recently arrived in Sweden or children of first or second generation migrants. Such variation is reflected in the locality of the different schools. With its numerous districts, urban and rural areas large pockets of migrants reside in specific districts making it a rather segregated town. To attract students many individual schools - municipal and independent alike - promote themselves as having a certain profile, which can either be tied to aesthetic orientated subjects such as music, art and design, or sports or allow students to specialise in science, mathematics, or languages. Extra time is allocated to the chosen profile or specialised subject under study and some require the students to take a test to show their level of skill or prior knowledge.
Mirroring national trends (see 2.1), the town has a long history of receiving migrants beginning in the 1940s with the arrival of labour migrants from Finland and other Nordic countries. This extended to include those coming from Italy and Germany in the early 1950s and 1960s and from Yugoslavia in the early 1970s. Then, as a result of war and political unrest the number of citizens coming from Iran increased in the 1980s, from Bosnia and Herzegovina in the mid 1990s, followed by Iraq at the turn of the century. More recently the town has received large numbers of refugees from Somalia, Afghanistan and Syria. Statistics from the municipality's council reveal that the number of foreign born has more than doubled in the last 15 years. In 2020 nearly 18% of the population were born in a country other than Sweden. Furthermore, 23.5% of the population had a foreign background compared with 10.9% in 2000\textsuperscript{26}.

In terms of schooling, newcomers are received by the education reception unit in the town which carries out the mandatory pedagogical mapping of their prior knowledge and educational backgrounds, with a focus on their strengths. Health controls are also carried out at the unit. In some cases the student is enrolled directly into a new school without first making contact with the reception unit. This is particularly the case when it comes to those children whose parents are labour migrants having been unaware of the reception unit’s existence. In this instance individual mapping needs to be carried out by the initial school that the child enrolls in. Time spent at the reception unit is largely dependent on the student’s individual needs, but should be limited to no more than eight weeks. The decision regarding which year and class a student should be then assigned to is left to the receiving school’s principal in line with the regulations stipulated in the Education Act (Skolverket, 2020c).

4.3 Data Collection

4.3.1 Research Participants

The criteria for selecting participants was first and foremost that they taught newly arrived students in lower secondary school (Years 7-9). Having worked for many years as a teacher myself, I have built up an extensive network of professional acquaintances, therefore such participants could be found through my personal network using the ‘snowballing’ technique. Individual interviews were carried out over a six week period with eleven teachers across

\textsuperscript{26} Foreign background means that the person was either born in a country other than Sweden or that the person was born in Sweden with both parents born abroad.
different subject disciplines (Swedish/SVA\textsuperscript{27}, English, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences). Six female and five male teachers agreed to participate; all with varying degrees of teaching experience both generally (6-35 years) and in the context of teaching newly arrived students. Due to Covid-19 recommendations, participants chose to be interviewed via internet platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet rather than have them conducted in person. Each interview took between 60 - 75 minutes and were conducted in English.

The interviews were conducted with teachers working at two different schools in the district. The majority work at an inner city independent school for children in Years 4-9. The students attending come from an array of sociocultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds, which has steadily increased over recent years. Once catering for a largely “homogenous” group of students, today one third to half of the students are considered ethnic Swedes, while the rest of the students are identified as having other ethnic origins. Some arrived as refugees or were born in Sweden and are the children of first or second generation migrants; others have parents who moved to Sweden for work from both within and beyond EU borders. The majority of the students reside in one or two of the town’s inner districts, while others travel in from the surrounding urban and rural areas. Of the students enrolled it is estimated that 1-3 students in each class fall into the category of newly arrived and for such newcomers no preparatory class currently exists at the school\textsuperscript{28}. Instead they are immersed directly into the mainstream classroom.

The other participants work at a municipal school located in relatively close proximity to the city centre. It is also a school for children in Years 4-9, but has marginally fewer students enrolled than the first. That said, it has a slightly higher number of students defined as newly arrived (4-5 in each class) and with a longer trajectory of receiving such students than the first. These are predominantly refugees and asylum seekers who have mostly arrived with their parents, although a small number are here unaccompanied. Like the first school, the rest of the classes are a mix of ethnic Swedes, Swedish born with other ethnic origins or foreign born and relatively new to Sweden, but no longer defined under the category of ‘newly arrived’, having been enrolled in the Swedish education system for more than four years. Similarly to the first school, no preparation class currently exists for the newcomers. Both schools have average class sizes of 28-30 students in Years 7-9. Furthermore, additional

\textsuperscript{27} As a replacement to the subject Swedish, Swedish as a second language (svenska som andraspråk - SVA) is offered to those students in compulsory school who either 1) have a mother tongue other than Swedish or 2) have Swedish as their mother tongue but have attended school abroad or 3) are an ‘immigrant student’ who converses in Swedish with at least one of their guardians (Nationellt Centrum, 2019).

\textsuperscript{28} It proved quite difficult to obtain exact numbers from the school so this is given as an approximate number based on the information I gathered from the participants.
language support by way of mother tongue guidance is provided to newly arrived students in both schools. Such support, however, is often restricted to once or twice a week and usually takes place outside of the mainstream classroom. Moreover, in line with previous research (Avery, 2016; Nilsson & Bunar, 2016; Obondo et al, 2016), cooperation between the mother tongue guide and the subject teacher is underutilised, with communication very much dependent on the individual.

4.3.2 Interviews

With the use of an interview guide (Appendix 2), the participants were asked a blend of closed and open-ended questions. Creating such a guide allowed me to foresee potential issues and how to address them. It also served as a memory aid and kept me on track in terms of time. The questions were devised with my original research questions and theoretical framework in mind and organised into clusters. The idea was that the interviews would take on a conversational tone without being a conversation. I therefore began with a more straightforward line of questioning to make my participants feel more at ease before asking them to critically reflect over their pedagogical practice; firstly with more positive enquiries before moving on to discuss possible drawbacks or areas which needed improving. I was also prepared for some deviation and the need to be flexible in my questioning, knowing that the interview guide could and should not be rigidly followed in order as one cannot fully predict each participant’s responses.

Asking a series of open-ended questions enables participants to think aloud and allows for what Magnusson & Marecek describe as rich talk - those ‘stories, opinions, recollections that interpretative researchers seek out’ (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015:48). In addition, having also included follow-up questions helps the participants to expand and ‘fill-out their stories’ (Ibid.) providing me, as the researcher, with a wealth of data. At the same time some of the questions asked for more concrete examples to gain a further sense of each participant’s teaching methods and learning activities. I saw this as a necessary step as I was not able to collect this kind of data from lesson observations due to the current Covid-19 restrictions in place.

Prior to the actual interviews I conducted a pretest - a mock interview with a friend where feedback was given and some of my questions subsequently revised - and then after the initial interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim I reassessed my guide before

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29 It is also worth noting that the answers given were indicative of the situation pre-covid.
carrying out the following ones. I thought about what had worked well and what needed to be modified. For example, whether questions needed to be re-ordered, added or removed, expanded upon or condensed. During the interviews I guided the interview, maintained structure and kept track of time. I took on the role as an active listener, which means ‘taking a position of ignorance, in the sense of acknowledging that the participant is expert on what he or she has to tell’ (Ibid, 64). Furthermore, as I wanted to invite the participants ‘to tell full stories without fear of contradiction, criticism or disapproval’ (Ibid, 49), I disclosed very little about my own thoughts being somewhat ‘cautious about concurring or taking exception to a participant’s view (Ibid, 50). At the same time, while one should minimise influence on what is said, some divulgence on my part, on occasion, helped the participant to feel more at ease and willing to reveal their own experiences and opinions, particularly if one experiences ‘taciturn participants’ (Ibid, 65).

4.3.3 Positionality as researcher
Having worked as a teacher within the Swedish education system for over sixteen years, I therefore approach the subject of this study with some pre-existing experience and knowledge. Taking Haraway’s (1988) viewpoint that ‘knowledge is always situated and particular to the person with this knowledge and the place where the knowledge was acquired’ (Haraway, 1988:586), it is important to acknowledge how your position as researcher affects the direction you take. In this way there is no pretence in being objective; rather you are making more of a truth claim by stating how you arrived there instead. Haraway points out that as our perspectives are limited to our experiences, what one considers objective is not at all (Ibid.). Instead one should seek ‘to carry out research in consciousness of its socially situated character and to make the researcher’s position vis-a-vis the research process transparent’ (Rooney, 2005:9). It is therefore important that I take into consideration my ‘insider’ positionality as a researcher as it not only shapes my study, but also influences my understanding and interpretation of the data I collect and the way that I analyse it.

My insider position is reflected in my years of working within education. Trained as an English and Drama teacher as well as a teacher of English as a second language, I have taught students aged 11-18 and adults in the UK, Poland and Sweden. Over the years I have been Head of an English Department, an Advanced Skills teacher and Academic Coordinator, working with teachers to develop teaching and learning. Such insider status allows me to gain insight which is perhaps not so accessible to those on the ‘outside’. Familiarity with the
study context, having lived the experience, gives me insights which may pass an ‘outsider’ by.

Having prior knowledge and pre-understanding of how the education system works, what the job entails and what pressures teachers face support the research process and can prove invaluable to the study and helps in formulating the sorts of questions to ask. Included in this is an awareness of the informal side of schools as opposed to that which is outwardly displayed through, for example, formal documentation (Teusner, 2016:85). As an insider researcher there is a risk that ‘one can assume too much during the interview process and not draw out the responses as would occur when a researcher has an external positioning’ (Ibid, 90). With this in mind, I therefore had the participants clarify or elaborate on points which appeared somewhat vague or could be viewed as taken for granted assumptions which, while familiar to me, would not be as clear to an outsider.

4.4 Analytical Approach

In analysing the qualitative data gathered from the interviews I decided to take a thematic approach whereby I set out to identify, code and analyse themes or repeated patterns related to my research questions and guided by my broader theoretical framework. Such an approach involves ‘a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data you are producing’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006:86).

Applying the six phases of thematic analysis outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006:87), which they describe as 1) Familiarising yourself with the data; 2) Generating initial codes; 3) Searching for themes; 4) Reviewing themes; 5) Defining and naming themes and; 6) Producing the report, I first set out to transcribe the interviews verbatim and in the process began noting down initial ideas. In doing so I acknowledge that this is ‘a key phase of data analysis within qualitative methodology’ (Bird in Braun & Clarke, 2006:87), for the process allows for meanings to be created ‘rather than simply a mechanical act of putting spoken sounds on paper’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006:88). Once the interviews had been fully transcribed I then set about re-reading the data with the aim of identifying potential patterns and themes taking shape. While this was driven by my theoretical framework I did not let this blindside me and understood the importance of having an awareness of all aspects of the data. Furthermore it was also important ‘to consider other obvious alternative readings of the data, or ... consider variation (and even contradiction) in the account that is produced’ (Ibid, 95).
Having familiarised myself with the interview data in its entirety I proceeded to systematically set about coding it. In order to organise the data relevant to each code I, in the first instance, made handwritten notes in the text before annotating certain words and phrases with colour codes in order to identify recurring themes and subthemes. I looked for pieces of statements rather than focus exclusively on the questions asked as it is ‘the participants talk [which] should always be at the centre of your thinking and writing, for your task is to learn about the ways the participants give meaning to the phenomenon you are studying’ (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015:98) After identifying most compelling excerpts I proceeded to write these up onto post-it notes and arranged them into clusters. Using the post it notes allowed me the flexibility to easily move the excerpts between the identified themes and sub-themes and ultimately provide me with a visual ‘thematic map’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006:87) of the analysed data. In turn this allowed me to ‘write a brief integrative summary that captures the repeating idea that unifies’ them (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015:94).

When analysing the stories divulged it was important for me to take into account both what was told (i.e. content) and how it was told (i.e. form) as it is those together which provide meaning. It must also be remembered that stories are selective and ‘edited versions of reality [reliant on memories] which are inevitably coloured by the teller’s present understanding of [past] events’ (Ibid, 103). The stories can thus reveal the moral and ethical stance of the participant and therefore need to be understood in terms of the sociocultural context in which they are told. Moreover, using open-ended questioning it is near impossible to foresee what the participant will divulge during the interview. One may have their own ideas based on findings from the research carried out or from what one identifies as the ‘norm’. However, through close examination of the interview transcript one becomes inevitably aware that the participant can give opinions as well as contradictions and refer to experiences which may not have been originally considered at the outset (Ibid, 84). In doing so, this can add new dimensions to one’s initial research topic.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

For ethical reasons the town and names of the two schools have been withheld as has any information pertaining to their possible profiles. While I am aware that this could affect parts of my analysis, for example, the participants might make reference to certain techniques used in the classroom which are derivative of the school as a whole, I have however chosen not to incorporate such data which may relate to this. This is done so as not to reveal the school and then quite possibly the participants’ identities. Similarly, due to the small sample that I am
working with, I have also chosen not to give away details concerning the ethnicity of my participants. While I recognise that this could have been interesting for my analysis, for ethical reasons I have decided not to discuss this.

Following the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council\(^\text{30}\) an information letter (Appendix 1) was sent to all prospective participants prior to the fieldwork commencing and written consent was obtained. The same information was also verbally replicated at the start of each interview. The letter informed the participants about the research aims, that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Furthermore, participants were told that while the interviews would be recorded steps would be taken to de-identify during the transcription process in that no real names or places would be referred to. Subsequently any established code-keys would be securely stored separately from other collected data. Participants were also told that the information they provide would be used solely for this research. Furthermore, they were informed that any data collected would be stored in accordance with GDPR; making a note of what kinds of personal information has been collected. Benefits and risks were also outlined in the letter and at the start of each interview.

5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the main findings from the interviews by analysing the key themes which cut across the entire data set. The themes emerge from the teachers’ personal reflections into their pedagogical practices and are also in connection to the overarching research questions and the theory and concepts guiding this research. I have therefore divided the findings into four sections. Firstly, the discussion centres around the teachers’ position and the institutional challenges they encounter in teaching newcomers. Secondly, the focus shifts to how race and ethnicity are narrated in the interviews and through a critical lens I analyse how stereotypes are reproduced in the teachers’ pedagogical practices. Thirdly, I reflect over the teachers’ attempts at incorporating cultural, racial and ethnic differences into the learning. In the last section I discuss the ways in which some of the teachers strive towards a more critical pedagogy that seeks to challenge stereotypes and disrupt the status quo.

5.1 Institutional constraints to participatory learning

As the role of the teacher is central to any discussion in working for change, I was keen to have the participants reflect over what they envisioned this to be. For the most part their responses mirrored normative practice as they aspired to a participatory model of teaching which sees the teacher as a guide in the learning process; a moving presence and not a stationary figure at the front (Skolverket, 2016). Someone who introduces or presents a topic of study and who provides the students with the necessary tools to become independent thinkers by understanding, analysing and critically reflecting over that which is studied. As one teacher puts it:

I think we have moved away from the I have all the knowledge and I am going to impart the knowledge on you. I think now we are trying to guide learners through knowledge and gaining skills rather than just hey here’s a whole bunch of factual information repeat it and you can pass.

Classrooms are described as places which cater for open discussions; sometimes heated, which is ‘good … cause then they perhaps start to think about what we were discussing and … they change their minds’. That said, students who are defined as newly arrived remain at the periphery of such discussions, rarely engaging in dialogue until as one teacher puts it:
they find their place’. Overwhelmingly, and concurrent with previous empirical studies (see 2.3) the majority of the teachers, across the different subject areas, put the students’ lack of participation down to linguistic capabilities, and moreover, the lack of adequate language skills deemed necessary for the students to actively engage in lessons. Some teachers place a heavy reliance on using English as a backup plan, however not all new students can communicate in English either, therefore ostracising some students even more. Others rely on the assistance of other students who have the same mother tongue:

I mean they get help from people who speak their own mother language, mother tongue or people who speak English IF they speak English. There are those students who don’t speak English at all and less Swedish but it is very lucky they have someone to talk to in their own language to help them.

Many of the teachers interviewed favoured the idea of having a preparation class, but pointed out that such a class did not exist at their school due to either organisational constraints or to the municipality consensus that direct immersion into the mainstream classroom is ‘the right direction’ to take towards positive integration of these students. At the same time there is also a degree of skepticism and doubt (also see 2.2.1) from some teachers who see the downside to both yet still believe that having a preparation class in some form would be the most beneficial for the newcomers:

I’m not oblivious to the fact to what that would create by separating, not separating but removing, them from the class environment for long periods of time I know that has its own complications and difficulties and, but almost just to give them a three week crash course you know or to get the foundations within a really short concentrated amount of time, just to get them to the basics where they feel like they can contribute within the class environment. I think you are doing more harm by leaving them in an environment where they don’t feel they can produce or contribute rather than addressing the problem quickly at the beginning so that they can flourish without struggling for four years to get to a point where they feel comfortable.

Another teacher admits that the students are often forgotten about in his classroom, which is something he must grapple with:
I would say my constant struggle is that I always feel like I tend to forget them and I always tend to do too, what do you say, too little for them or I can’t reach them and depending that they are so different individuals erm it’s a pattern that they would be sitting still being quiet and not do that much unfortunately.

There appears a common consensus that teachers feel out of depth and at a loss as to what to do with these newcomers. Using words such as ‘frustration’, ‘overwhelmed’, ‘excluded’, ‘isolated’ and ‘worthless’ to describe how they imagine the students must feel in their lessons and yet many of them struggle to shift their paradigms, continuing instead to teach largely as before. As one Swedish support teacher proclaims: ‘I understand that the classroom teacher rarely sees it as a reasonable or viable situation for them to teach them during their lesson’. The “issue” seems notably visible in the Swedish lessons in which the classroom is described as being occupied by three distinct groups of language learners - Swedish as a first language, as a second language and for beginners. With such a divide in linguistic abilities within any given group, the teachers describe how they struggle to come up with any clear strategies in how to work with this as one Swedish teacher points out:

Working with something in general adapted for Swedish as a second language and Swedish with still requires quite a high level of the language anyway so if a newly arrived was supposed to follow that that would be very hard for them, so in a way it feels like they shouldn’t be in my classroom until they’re basically have a higher level of knowledge but in reality that’s not so sometimes it feels like they’re just sitting off the time with me and it’s not much I can do to help them to be honest.

As the school policy mandates direct immersion of newly arrived students into the mainstream classroom, the teacher, in this instance, is at a loss when it comes to teaching students with limited to no basic Swedish at the same time that he has to teach students with a higher level of language competence31. With ‘heads down’, the newcomers are therefore

31 Much debate has centred around whether the teaching of Swedish as a second language should be conducted within the framework of the Swedish lesson or separately. This is particularly prevalent in current discussions regarding the planned revisions to the curriculum which are scheduled to commence in the Autumn term of 2022 that will see the differences between the two syllabi increase with clearer subject specific content in the subject of Swedish as a second language (Nationellt Centrum, 2021).
largely left to their own devices. Often completing completely different tasks to their peers, the sole responsibility for their learning appears to lie with them. As a result, although present, these students remain at the margins of the classroom. Instead, unengaged, the students’ interaction with the other students who occupy the same space is severely lacking. Thus, the newly arrived students sit in silence; marginalised and voiceless, which further cements their already vulnerable position, including their ability to achieve future academic success (Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013; Obondo et al, 2016; Svensson, 2019).

In addition to institutional factors which see newcomers entering the mainstream classroom with very limited Swedish and insufficient support, the teachers point to other issues which constrain their work. For example, teachers indicate that the pressures to teach to a prescribed curriculum afford them little time to diversify their lesson content and incorporate a wider variety of material into an already tight agenda as one explains:

We have so much in the central content that you just need to go through. I feel that quite often that to scratch on the surface a little bit cause you have to squeeze it in and move on.

It also felt that the teacher considers this to be something that deviates from that which is required of her to teach rather than seeing it as something to naturally incorporate into her planning. At the same time, many teachers acknowledge that the syllabus (LGR11) is open to the exploration of ‘diversity’ and that subject specific criteria often requires it\textsuperscript{32}. However, as one of the teachers points out the way that the curriculum is interpreted is largely dependent on the individual teacher:

I think it allows me quite a lot regarding too when you look at the syllabus or the larareplan for Swedish as a subject you could find that you could pretty much fill it with whatever content you want as long as it follows or I mean you shouldn’t, I mean you can’t exclude for example Scandinavian authors but you could still add quite a lot of other ones if you want to. So we could read for example German, Middle East, African if you want to, so I think that’s more it comes more down to the teacher that plans the lesson or the syllabus.

\textsuperscript{32} As part of the \textit{Fundamental Values} of the 2011 Swedish school curriculum (LGR11) emphasis is placed on the importance of ‘developing an understanding of cultural diversity within the country’ (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2011:8) and that learning based on the students’ ‘background, earlier experiences and language and knowledge’ (Ibid, 6) should be promoted.
Other teachers indicated that an extensive revision of their existing planning would be required in order to diversify their material. As a time consuming task there was therefore a hint of reluctance in having to shift their paradigms unless teaching resources were readily available as one English teacher points out:

We’re looking at novels that have a lot of resources for teachers already so we don’t have to kind of redevelop the wheel but again you limit yourself in the types of novels you can use ‘cause not all novels will have a lot of resources to teachers.

The teacher himself admits how problematic this is. By basing the department’s choice of material on what resources have already been produced the students' exposure to alternative literature by those writers considered “marginal” remains limited to the select few which have deemed “worthy” of study by educational publishing houses normally in line with governmental agencies who devise national curriculums. As such the voices of so many more marginal authors, with their unique perspectives and experiences remain silenced in the classroom; something which will be further explored in 5.3 and 5.4.

To sum up, while teachers have ambitions of being participatory in their pedagogical practices and include the students in the learning process, the handful of newcomers in each of the classes remain at the periphery, lacking a sense of belonging. Institutional factors hinder teachers from doing more with many unsure about how to accommodate these students. The classroom therefore becomes an environment of exclusion for many newcomers who are often left to work on their own. This in turn places undue responsibility on the individual for their own academic success and failure (Nilsson & Axelsson, 2013). Furthermore, lack of interaction with the rest of the class can leave the students feeling isolated, resulting in ‘a two fold struggle - both to learn the language and make contact with the other students’ (Ibid, 156). The latter of which will now be addressed.

5.2 Common sense and stereotypical notions of race and ethnicity
Teaching in multicultural classrooms, the students’ racial and ethnic identities permeated the interviews in several different ways, from the mundane talk about who students relate to and socialise with, to more sophisticated reflections on how to incorporate diversity into
pedagogical practices. In this section of the Chapter and through a critical lens I analyse how stereotypes are reproduced in the teachers’ pedagogical practices\(^\text{33}\).

To begin with, the teachers expressed a common sense understanding of ethnicity and social relations when discussing the newcomers' well-being. Most are of the opinion that the newcomers are generally accepted by the other students. They see the other students as largely empathetic towards them with many having been as one teacher puts it: ‘in the same boat or in the same culture’ while another adds:

> I would say they are well taken care of... I mean it’s an international environment … they, I guess most [of] them, understand how it was when they arrived because there are enough people who, students who have arrived who are not, who were not born in Sweden so they can relate to the situation in which this person is at the moment I guess.

Here the teacher points to how the students use their own experiences in order to meet others. It is what draws the students together, but it is also what separates them from the rest of the student population, maintaining an ‘us and them’ in the classroom. A further teacher adds:

> I see a lot on a day to day basis where kids who are newly arrived struggle to almost become accepted and just be kids you know. Often their friend groups are people who come from the same place as them or just speak the language … I’ve seen students who clearly don’t like each other but call each other friends because those are the only two people who speak the same language as each other.

While it is maybe natural to orientate oneself towards that which is familiar in an unfamiliar environment, what the teacher’s comment shows is how the notion of who is familiar to whom is constructed on the basis of race and ethnicity. Defined by what the students have in common - a shared language and origin - ‘cultural markers’ are used to identify people as belonging to a particular ethnic group (Puskas & Ålund 2015:13) As a socially constructed entity the students become their ethnic identity and make alliances with other students who ‘share’ the same background.

In other instances, the teachers talk about topics with the students as though they just

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\(^{33}\) Stuart Hall (1997) points out that stereotyping reduces a person to a few simple and exaggerated characteristics which are fixed and neutral.
exist with no connection to power structures in society. For example, while teaching about minorities as required in the Swedish Social Studies curriculum, one teacher fails to see the parallels between the racialised migrant experience and that of minorities, which in this instance are the indigenous Sami people:

If we take some criteria about minorities for example obviously the Swedish minorities are in focus there and maybe that’s not so relevant for someone who came to Sweden two years ago to read about the Sami people. It doesn’t say so much about them but at the same time I think, I think it’s not, like it’s hard to get around and I don’t know if we want to get around that either that that is the focus the teaching what is happening here in Sweden, but I think it is important for newly arrived too to know the history of Sweden even if it is not a history they maybe share now but in for them to understand the country and want to have like to adopt a new country in the future I think it's important for them to so yeah … I try to take in examples, for example like this is a minority in Sweden, in this country this is a minority and a minority in general is this and then we do have examples of minorities in some other countries mostly in the Middle East but ... sometimes it feels a bit, a bit odd to teach about certain things in Sweden to a group that is mainly quite new to Sweden like they have maybe lived here 5 to 10 years erm sometimes it feels hard to make that seem relevant … For example if you are born in Sweden you have probably heard about Sami people all your life and it makes sense to read about it in school, but for someone who came two years ago I can see that it is not that relevant to read about that part of history maybe erm yeah.

Both migrants and minorities have a history of marginalisation, exclusion and discrimination (Eriksen, 2010), yet the teacher fails to make reference to such power structures. Not only from a Global perspective, but also in the way migrants and minorities are Othered in relation to Swedishness. Furthermore, by stating on the one hand that he believes it is important for those new to Sweden to learn about Swedish history and on the other, that he struggles to see the relevance of them learning about Sami people, he determines which parts of history are worthy of being studied. In this way by prioritising some stories in his teaching of history he marginalises others. Thus, the dominant narrative prevails, while alternative stories remain silent, just like those occupied within them. Here is a missed opportunity.
Additionally, despite efforts by some of the teachers to try and meet the students, in other instances there is a reluctance to engage in certain topics or incorporate specific material into lessons which they deem “taboo” or too controversial as one teacher explains:

I have just recently read a book by a Swedish Kurdish author and I talked to [another Swedish teacher] about that and he agreed that the students as a whole cannot read that book because it is too controversial because it is, I mean it’s like marriages, arranged marriages and stuff like that and the father beating up everybody including his wife in the family and … only the women have access to the kitchen and stuff like that … I think that’s a problem also that they, but I mean there’s enough people, some of the strongest feminists are among erm the Middle Eastern girls and the Muslim girls. They are very much for equality and well yeah … controversial yes because if you would discuss, if you would read a book and well probably families, if you have 19 as I said different nationalities probably you can take 5 families that live like that, the girls have to work 2 or 3 hours every day in the household and perhaps the father beats them up and stuff like that, so I mean then it’s touchy so to speak, I mean you can’t, you must, you cannot explain to them to the nature of the other students if you understand what I mean.

Based on ethnocentric assumptions the teacher makes sweeping generalisations here which only reinforce existing stereotypes. It is a prime example of a familiar Western discourse which essentialises the Other, in which women from the Global South are seen as ‘passive, traditional [and] lacking democratic traditions in patriarchal cultures’ (Mulinari, 2007: 167). Such cultural presumptions are particularly attributed to Muslim societies where all women, regardless of ‘social class and ethnic identities’ are defined as a homogeneous oppressed group in contrast to the empowered Western woman (Mohanty, 1984:344). Prevailing discourse also attributes negative actions, such as the domestic violence the teacher describes, to the culture of the Other while the same actions tend to be individualised when it concerns a ‘Swede’ (Bredström & Bolander, 2019:76). Furthermore, by choosing not to talk about the issues the novel addresses there is a high risk that it reinforces the notion that it is acceptable. The classroom, however, is an important platform for being able to reach vulnerable people and to make visible to others certain realities rather than silencing them.
In other instances teachers implied that talking to students about differences was something many felt uncomfortable doing out of concern that accusations of racism would enter the classroom, with one stating: ‘I think maybe … especially in Sweden we try to not talk about people’s cultural differences because that is seen as racist in some ways’, while another teacher adds:

Teachers are often scared of talking about differences and diversity ‘cause you don’t want to offend someone or stereotype someone and I think it is quite sad actually sometimes that you feel like that but then you don’t really use what you could use like all the different experiences you have ‘cause you are a bit scared of saying something wrong or stepping on someone’s toes so you are overly careful and then you treat everyone like there were no differences but instead you should.

In this reluctance to engage in discussion about cultural differences out of fear, teachers fail to examine their own bias and privileged position in society. The comments pan to the belief, which is dominant in Western discourse, that cultural differences are related to Otherness and what Yuval-Davis (1997) refers to as ‘boundary management’ in that customs and values which differ from the “norm” have traditionally been viewed as a failure to assimilate. Furthermore, they resonate with the colourblind ideology DiAngelo (2018) refers to that promotes the notion that racial differences are of no relevance (see 3.1.1). In denying such disparities exist and refusing to take up the discussion the teachers ignore the very realities of systemic racism.

As DiAngelo (2018:86) points out ‘the refusal to acknowledge racial difference and power dynamics actually maintains racial inequality’. In addition, the fear of being called racist reflects the notion of ‘the good/bad binary’, which is built on the premise that racism is associated with ‘isolated and extreme acts of prejudice’ (Ibid, 71). This DiAngelo states is a too simplistic understanding of racism, yet it is a perception which makes it difficult, she argues, to talk to white people about racism. As a result of their fears the teachers therefore become complicit, failing to disrupt the status quo and allowing existing power dynamics to remain intact.

At the same time, other teachers welcomed dialogue and even intense emotions in the classroom:
I know some people are very frightened and they think it’s hard to talk about for example, racism and culture and what if I say something that’s not correct or someone takes, is sad, because I said something. Well if you don’t talk about it then you let these ideas perhaps grow so it’s much better. Everyone can do wrong and you can say the wrong thing but if you don’t talk about it then it will be a big issue … you have to talk about it and not be frightened to talk about racism or talk about that some in every, I think it’s important to show there are extremists in every, for example, religion or in every political area there are always people that trying to be more radical and show them that they are in every kind of ideology or religion or so on, but of course you have to, you have to talk about it because if you don’t talk about it then they will be stereotypical.

In this example the teacher constructs racism as something which belongs to extremism and not only the common sense cultural racism which the previous example pertains to. She begins by indicating that racism can be located in everyday practice and that by connecting religion with extremism it ties into the mainstream dominant Islamophobia discourse (Berggren & Neergaard, 2015). However, in the way that she proceeds, she does not problematise racism as everyday structural racism, but rather that it is located elsewhere; that it is something extreme. Those that deny racism either see it as something belonging to the past or to right wing ideology, which is another prime example of the good/bad binary that DiAngelo (2018) is referring to.

Different teachers describe how students turn to their own personal history when assigned certain tasks. For example, one Social Studies teacher describes a project her students were doing about International conflicts. Here the students were first tasked with researching a conflict in the world and then asked to present their findings to the rest of the class. As the students were allowed to choose whatever conflict they wanted, the teacher points out that ‘many of the kids picked the countries that were close to their own heart, so … the Greek newly arrived girl, for example … her group worked with the conflict between Greece and Cyprus.’ She describes the project as ‘super fun’ and goes on to say how proud the students were to talk about “home” and also how focused the rest of the class were at listening to their peers:

‘cause then it was something that was really important and then you could see that it was important to everyone and everybody found that interesting to just, even if
you are a native Swede you find that interesting because you learn about why do we have the situations we have today and they get this … and like all the ones that have fled from Syria for example … they listen when it is something which touches their hearts I think.

While students’ experience is also emphasised in critical pedagogy - and something which will be returned to in the following sections - the ways in which this teacher describes students’ experiences reflects a quite naive and even stereotypical understanding of race relations. Focusing on conflict as a sole determinant of one country’s relationship with another fails to account for a whole host of factors. With the absence of a critical perspective complex situations, like this, therefore become understood in reductionist terms.

Kumashiro (2009:95) believes that ‘teaching about differences can be a very contradictory process’ and is concerned that such teaching either reinforces stereotypes or risks objectifying the Other as such practices primarily focus on anything deemed different from the “norm”. He points out that what often occurs when creating lessons which focus on different cultures is that teaching and learning is “simplified”; condensed down to fit into a manageable lesson (Ibid, 93). As a result the partial story becomes generalised to account for all - which occurs in many of the examples I describe here - with students acquiring knowledge about a particular place, ethnicity, culture or religion through stereotyping, which Kumashiro points out was precisely what such a lesson set out to change (Ibid.).

In sum, the teachers in their narratives often express a common sense understanding of culture, race and ethnicity to more explicit forms of stereotyping in their pedagogical practices. In this way, they adhere to a Eurocentric discourse which continues to privilege Western perspectives and essentialise those of the marginal Other. The next section, however, points to attempts by some of the teachers to create a learning environment which moves beyond stereotyping and cultural essentialism.

5.3 Managing diversity

Despite structural drawbacks (outlined in 5.1) it was clear from the responses of all those interviewed that the teachers recognise the benefits in exploring “diversity” within the classroom by acknowledging differences and having the students engage with alternative perspectives. Both the Swedish and English teachers, for example, recognise that their assigned literature should offer greater variety and exposure to meet the diversity of their students:
(Swedish teacher) There’s a big variety of background and ethnicity among the Swedish authors we could use but also when it comes to, especially when it comes to, poetry and like lyrics and music and stuff and we work with that, but I think we could be much better when it comes for example short stories or actually regular novels … when you look at for example topics like literature history in Swedish that we go through we can broaden the what do you say the arena for literature.

(English teacher) I think we need to have more books that represent our students, like more books with kids of colour, more books … with characters who are women. I think that the majority of the novels are male characters, white and it would be really beneficial I think for them to see themselves reflected in the books.

Allowing the students to see themselves reflected in the literature and using the characters as a good ‘springboard’ for conversations about real life experiences is reiterated by a number of teachers; who feel that by broadening the literature scope allows those students who have previously felt ‘absent’ from the material to engage more with the texts and simultaneously boost their attainment. As one teacher explains when preparing material for newly arrived students:

I think it does help them feel more included. I think the kind of text you give them to read particularly if you want to test their knowledge or form an assessment or if they are going to be graded or assessed I think it is extremely important to choose something which is close to them … they are more engaged if it is closer to them. … I feel, I believe very strongly that the material is very important, what you do, the kind of work you give them to do.

This way of reasoning resonates with Kumashiro (2009) who argues that in order to challenge oppression teachers must change what they assign students to read. For example, they cannot only read classical works from the traditional Western literary canon wherein students only learn about certain perspectives and experiences, which more often or not are those of white middle class men. Moreover, works by those considered ‘marginal’ should not
be included as an act of ‘tokenism’; squeezed in at the end of a term or covered in a one off unit which focuses on difference and race (hooks, 1994:38). Such literary work should receive the same amount of ‘respect and consideration’ that is given to any other piece of work (Ibid.).

The ways in which the teachers recognise the importance of diversifying their choice of study material can thus be seen as one step towards a critical approach suggested by Kumashiro. However, the mere adding of information about different socio-cultural and ethnic groups to curriculum planning, Kumashiro (2009) would argue is not enough. What is crucial is that the teacher is tasked with teaching students to think critically and creatively in an independent manner, about whatever ‘story’ is being taught; be it the ‘dominant narrative’ or one which presents an alternative perspective (Ibid, xxv).

The notion that learning should not be abstract and detached from the students’ own experiences (Ibid, 29) is also reiterated by one of the science teachers who consciously takes this into consideration when planning her lessons. Firstly, when devising activity sheets and tests she states:

If I’m giving, you know, stories about people I’m not always using Maria and Oskar. It’s like I try to go find, you know, common Arabic names or common Vietnamese names and I’m trying to make connections there for the students … ‘cause I want them to see themselves in the science. I don’t want them to think of it as external to themselves.

And secondly, when describing a recent project her students completed, she describes how:

I wanted them to make connections to their daily lives so I put up articles and youtube videos and I gave them a choice board where it is like do you want to learn about sound in construction of concert halls or do you want to learn about sound in airplanes or do you want to learn about sound in music … so they had about 6 choices to figure out how the content connected most interestingly to them … for their body systems project they could choose to do a slideshow, they could do a board game and they could make a song, they could write a story, they can do whatever they want, they can do an art piece to connect their knowledge and there was a set of criteria they had to meet but they could decide how they wanted to meet it.
In the science teacher’s reflection on her pedagogical practice above she appears to assert attributes in line with Freire’s vision for a ‘problem posing model’ of education. Giving the students choices to how and what they want to learn and in connection to their daily lives provides her students with the tools to become more critically aware by reflecting over and analysing the material and creatively showing their knowledge. Furthermore she demonstrates a very communitarian way of thinking about anti-racism by ensuring representation of different groups in the resources she devises through the careful selection of names commonly associated with a particular ethnicity. In keeping with the other examples presented in this section, the teacher recognises the importance of incorporating different perspectives into the classroom space. However this alone is not enough. As Kumasiro (2000:34) points out ‘changing oppression requires disruptive knowledge not simply more knowledge’.

5.5 Challenging stereotypes
For the most part a mainstream way of thinking about culture and racial/ethnic differences plays out in the interviews. However, a few of the teachers in their approaches to teaching and learning demonstrate attempts at practising anti-racist pedagogy by moving beyond normative approaches to a more critical outlook in an effort to avoid stereotyping and in turn challenge the status quo. For example, one of the Social Studies teachers explains how she tries to avoid generalisations in her teaching while at the same time acknowledging that she can never provide her students with the complete picture:

I try to show them many ways of one topic depending on the countries. It can be about how it is to be a woman and then you cannot just talk about oh this one time you can be woman in Hinduism in India everyone is doing this because it is very different from if you live on the countryside, in a big city, if you are in the Northern, the Southern of India so try to like get the picture from everyone, but I don’t think you can do the whole picture as well but try as many perspectives as possible … I try to make sure that I don’t give like well Islam is like this and it’s all the 5 ground stones [pillars] and they do this because that’s not typical for all the Islamic, you can go for example one country and look in Indonesia it is the most of the for example Islamic Muslims live there but you often believe they are more Muslims in Middle East, Iran, Iraq and so on but they are quite different if you look … you can’t say like Christianity in Sweden is the same as in Rome or
in Brazil or in Russia because it look very different because it’s different countries with different histories and I think that’s important to show.

While it is important to incorporate a wide range of material into the lessons, with the aim of enriching the students understanding of a particular place, culture or ethnic group as the Social Studies teacher implies she also emphasises, in line with Kumashiro (2009:93), that the teaching of such topics ‘can never be fully inclusive’. Instead teachers have a responsibility to make clear the partiality of what is taught and challenge the different ways it can stereotype as she further explains:

I think it’s much better to try to find material that are showing diversity and different types of people in different cultures and so on and try. I often use films because students like films, short films for example we talk about Hinduism right now and I show them like pictures and movies from Varanasi and then you see like not the Indian person in the book they are very beautiful with different colours and so on you see like ordinary people at Varanasi they are cremating the dead people, you can see that and they get more a picture of actually how it looks than what the books just want to show.

Here the teacher describes how she, along with her department colleagues, seek out resources that incorporate different perspectives and while she also points out that resources produced for schools have improved over the last 10 years, she is quite critical of the information textbooks contain. At the same time she adds: ‘if you find a picture that you think is very strange take it up and discuss it’. In this way she is working to change the dominant narrative by being critical of the excluding norms reproduced in textbooks and discussing with her students new norm alternatives. As Kumashiro (2000: 35) points out ‘approaches are needed that address normalcy - approaches that work against the privileging of certain identities and that make visible these processes’.

In addition, critical pedagogy advocates that the geopolitical as well as intersecting social categories of difference such as gender, ethnicity, religion, educational background and class need to be factored into any discussion as they ‘can distinguish one cultural group or individual experience from another’ (Ibid, 94). At the same time changes constantly occur as people interact and begin to incorporate different lifestyles with a mix of customs and values into their daily lives (Ibid.). It is imperative that such factors are made a visible part of the
teaching and learning as one of the Science teachers explains:

… telling them how we live depends on where you are in geography, where you are, like the society, the family you are living in so I say this really and then I also like to say how we think and how we do things changes with time.

The same teacher is also keen to share how she consciously tries to incorporate ethnic and gender diversity into her lessons. From the posters displayed on the walls of her science lab, which highlight scientists from different ethnic backgrounds, including women, to using inventions from a particular culture or different parts of the world in order to as she points out, ‘to get away from this white European man stereotype of that is scientist’. Further adding:

Starting next week we had an assignment about a historical programmer and I made sure to include a lot of old ancient Arabic people in this list so they were talking about the mathematicians of Ancient Persia, those are important in the development of mathematics. I’ve also included some Iranian women who have been really important in programming so I’m trying to find examples of non-white and non-male examples to share with the students

Similarly another Social Studies teacher describes how she approaches the topics she teaches with an eye to ensuring as much as possible that she incorporates in ‘global perspectives’ rather than narrowly focusing on material from a Western perspective:

I try to make sure that I have like images and films from every part of the world, try to make sure when we talk about news for example, not being used from just Europe, try to find something from Africa try to find something from Asia, from every part of the world because otherwise they just hear about the United States, Europe often.

In these instances both the Science and Social Studies teachers are critical of the power asymmetries between the West and everywhere else; of the former’s perceived superiority and claims to ‘universal validity’ (Jonsson, 2008:166) as opposed to the inferior status given to the rest. In drawing the students’ attention to alternative perspectives and experiences through
the aesthetic forms of film and image to news stories from Africa and Asia or through the inclusion of prominent yet marginalised figures, who are ‘non-white and non-male’ in the study of science, the teachers seek to challenge the dominant discourse which continues to prevade the Western classroom.

In another instance, a teacher describes the approach she takes when teaching the students about fairytales:

Recently we read three different versions of Little Red Riding Hood in Swedish with a group Year 6 & 7 and one was a traditional story in Swedish, the second was Chinese version from an illustrated children’s book. The Little Riding the Girl was blind in the Chinese version and then we also read a modern version in Swedish where everything took place in a suburb of an unnamed Swedish city and … it wasn’t different cultures in that way, but the fact that they can see that once they have known, they have heard and read something the fact that they can see that there are different ways of saying the same thing I think it means something to them and ... I see they are very sensitive through these things. They really enjoy seeing things from different perspectives. That's my observation over the years that these groups of students are particularly keen to explore differences between phenomena. They are very sensitive to that.

By introducing students to different versions of the same story, situated across a different time and place, the teacher not only creates enjoyment in the learning process but also provides her students with alternative ways of knowing, thus diminishing the traditional notion about the universality of truth. Furthermore, as individuals shaped by ‘unique identities and life experiences’ (Kumashiro, 2009:76), each student (and teacher) looks at a literary text through a different coloured lens. Subsequently, any interpretation of a novel, poem or short story is partial as the same Swedish teacher observes:

It became very obvious that we, you know the newly arrived students from Europe or even from Northern Africa, they had a very different understanding of the story than someone who comes from another part of the world. It is not at all self-evident that they will be able to get into the world of the text in the same way so it is a very important aspect of teaching and learning.
Here the teacher acknowledges that her students will look at stories in very different ways depending upon where they come from geographically and that a teacher needs to be aware of this in their teaching. A critical approach would also ensure that the students are made aware of the partiality of any given “story”; no longer adhering to the notion that the students are presented with neutral objective “facts” (hooks, 1994:139). Lived experiences shape conceptual knowledge and with each individual embodied and embedded in different social contexts, space should be created for each of these distinct voices to be heard. This is never more apparent than in the multicultural, multilingual classroom and for some of the teachers interviewed, such space is created in a more spontaneous manner and is largely triggered by the students themselves:

Especially with one class we have common sidetracks where they explain something that they have experienced or something that they know someone has experienced or something like that so I think yes I do and mostly on the students’ own initiative cause I also try to be quite careful when it comes to pointing someone out like you for there and you from there, I don’t do it like that. I have quite a few that chip in to the discussion and tell a story about something they have experienced or something they heard

The teacher shows a willingness to be flexible by allowing the lesson to deviate from his original plan and devote time for the students to share personal experiences. Allowing these discussions to occur validates the students’ experiences as a way of knowing, particularly as the implication is there that it happens regularly and is an established part of his classroom practice. As such if the students’ experiences are already established in the classroom as a way of knowing - in a ‘non-hierarchical way’ - then the likelihood of the students using their voice to silence others will be lessened (hooks, 1994:84). Furthermore, his justification that such discussions are largely something his students initiate is that he does not want to put his students on the spot or single them out. This is a common response from other teachers too, with one stating:

I don’t like you can ask the student how do you do for example because you have many differences but I think it can be if they want to and they come to me and they say I want to show how we celebrate blah blah then they can do it but I won’t like “so Ida how are you …” because I think it’s more then you like distances
them from the other group

The teacher makes it clear that looking toward an individual student to speak on behalf of a larger group is something educators should refrain from doing. As another points out “it is not good if I am putting him or her in an uncomfortable place”. Not only can this place an unfair responsibility on the student, it can result in him or her being ‘objectified by others and forced to assume the role of native informant’ (Ibid, 44). Instead teachers need to clarify from the start that just because someone has experience does not make them the expert (Ibid.). Moreover, it is necessary that a particular experience is not solely attributed to a person’s ethnicity, culture or religion (Bredström & Bolander, 2019:77).

At the same time, experiences do matter and focusing on them as hooks (1994:148) points out ‘allows students to claim a knowledge base from which they can speak’. Some of the teachers pertained to this by using scaffolding techniques to help individual students by building on their prior experiences in order to teach new knowledge and key concepts. For example, one social studies teacher explains how she was able to take a familiar and important aspect of a student’s life, prior to coming to Sweden, and apply it to the context of study despite them appearing on the surface to be quite apart from each other:

I once had a student, he had never gone to school, he’s a, what he had done in his home country was that he was guarding sheep and it’s important for him and that’s all he done in his whole life, make sure the sheeps are in fine shape, food and water and so on. Then it’s quite, when they come to Sweden then we make sure they have to know a lot of things that he perhaps hasn’t thought about before, but he has experience from his point of view that you can like make sure that how he take care of his sheep and how he’s working with his family to make sure that everyone has a big role in his family, you can compare it with how, for example, the Swedish welfare system is working, you make sure that everyone have safety that they are, we take care of people so you try to find something that they can relate their knowledge on.

This chapter began by outlining the structural challenges teachers face in trying to accommodate newcomers in the mainstream classroom. Despite aspiring to a participatory model of teaching the newcomers are left largely excluded, further cementing their marginalised status. From there the analysis points to the ways the students’ racial and ethnic
identities permeated the interviews, firstly by highlighting how stereotypes are reproduced in the classroom setting in several different ways before moving on to more sophisticated reflections on how to incorporate diversity into pedagogical practices albeit still mainstream. Then, in this final part of the chapter, the teachers demonstrate ways of moving beyond normative practice towards a more critical pedagogy. By providing alternative ways of knowing that avoid generalisations and make clear the partiality of any given story the classroom becomes a space where stereotypes are challenged.
6 CONCLUSION

In line with my research questions (see 1.1) this thesis has shown how teachers, in their pedagogical practices, navigate dominant discourses around race, ethnicity and cultural diversity in classrooms which are multilingual and multicultural. Many times the teachers end up reproducing stereotypes or simply rely on common sense understandings of otherness which do not challenge the status quo. Thus failing to address diversity which moves beyond cultural essentialism and dualistic representations. However, the study has also shown that there are situations and instances where teachers manage to act differently and employ strategies which provide seed for change and work against the stereotyping and marginalisation of the Other.

Teachers today all face pressures to teach to a prescribed curriculum and adhere to testing regimes, yet it is also important to both acknowledge and affirm the differences amongst the students and as such adapt teaching to take this into account. To paraphrase Freire (2000) students do not enter the classroom as empty ‘receptacles’ into which knowledge should be poured; in the classroom everyone contributes to the learning process. Pedagogical practice should therefore look to build upon students prior knowledge and experiences in order to teach new knowledge and key concepts in the curriculum. As Obondo et al (2016:189) point out ‘teaching from the students strengths i.e. respecting the cultural and linguistic knowledge the children bring to the learning contexts, impacts positively on their self esteem and academic success’.

In creating a classroom which includes rather than excludes it becomes increasingly important for teachers to challenge the dominant discourse and provide students with alternative spaces for learning. Teachers therefore need to work with diversity in ways that avoid essentialism and dualistic representation by challenging systemic oppression and acknowledging the experiences of marginalised groups. Yet for many it is no easy feat to break from existing norms which continue to favour us over them. However, as this research study has shown, with quite little means teachers are able to work towards change and create learning which corresponds with some of the hallmarks of critical pedagogy. As the teachers’ reflections - in the final section of Chapter 5 - show and in the words of Kumashiro (2000:34):

students need to learn that what is being learned can never tell the whole story, that there is always more to be sought out, and in particular, that there is always
diversity in a group, and that one story, lesson, or voice can never be representative of all.

Social contexts, practices, discourse and power relations we all experience ultimately shape our conceptual knowledge (Just, 2020) and as such we all interpret any given material through a different lens; the teacher too. It is therefore important that the teacher steps outside of their comfort zone, addresses their own vulnerabilities and critiques the lens through which they come to analyse and interpret any given text, having in most cases only paid attention to aspects which they feel most at ease and familiar with. In doing so they should no longer ‘gloss over complexities, contradictions and diversity’ which purports the false notion that entire cultures and groups are homogeneous thus reinforcing stereotypes and generalisations (Kumashiro, 2009:71). The crux of the matter is in how the students are asked to analyse the material. For example, the teacher could have the students reflect over the ways certain perspectives and experiences are privileged over others or discuss the different ways in which each of them interprets the material under study (Ibid.). Such an approach shifts the focus towards the norm.

Learning about cultures which appear foreign to us, Kumashiro points out, have become somewhat of a fascination as it ‘allows us to continue to focus our gaze on them and not really change how we think about us’. (Ibid, 96). Yet such lessons which focus on other cultures and groups of people do not have to solely be about teaching and learning about the Other. More importantly, they can teach us about ourselves; how we do things and how we find other ways 'strange', how we talk about certain subjects and why we firmly believe that our ways are the most correct (Ibid.). How the cultural assumptions and norms we inherently place on others can allow us to reflect over our own (Ibid, 97). However, it is not only about learning about ourselves and critiquing ethnocentric bias. Generalisations about the cultural Other need to be avoided and stereotypes challenged. No group is homogeneous and the concept of culture is ever evolving; never static. Only when this becomes a part of pedagogical practice can we expect change to occur and start to see the classroom as inclusionary.

The main aim of this study is therefore to contribute to what is seen as ongoing work for change. Work that seeks to change the dominant narrative ever present in the classroom today by creating new norm alternatives. Not only with the aim of meeting the newcomers which was where this study began but reaching all those who occupy the classroom space whether it be a multicultural one or not.
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Natasha Smith

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Natasha Smith


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Dear Invitee,

My name is Natasha Smith and I am currently completing my Master’s programme in Ethnic and Migration Studies at Linköping University.

I am kindly requesting your participation in my research study for my master’s thesis, which aims to examine the views and pedagogical practices of teachers in schools with large numbers of newly arrived students. The main focus of the research study is on the challenges this brings as well as practical examples of how teachers can work towards an inclusionary classroom space.

The study involves interviewing participants who have experience in teaching newly arrived students currently enrolled in a Swedish school in Years 7-9. The individual interview should take approximately 60-75 minutes and would be carried out in the next week or so. Due to the current Covid-19 situation this can be done remotely via zoom or an alternative platform.

I am following the ethical guidelines of the Swedish Research Council which means that participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. The interview will be recorded and transcribed verbatim and processes of anonymisation will be conducted, such as no real names or places will be included. In addition, any data collected will be securely stored in accordance with GDPR.

Your participation in the research will contribute immensely to addressing an important yet fairly under examined area of educational research. There are also no foreseeable risks or discomfort to you by participating in this study.

If you wish to be involved in my research study please let me know via return of mail along with a suggestion of times you can meet (in person or remotely). Furthermore, if you require any further information about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me via phone (0736306925) or email (natsm987@student.liu.se). My supervisor is Dr. Anna Bredstrom (anna.bredstrom@liu.se).

Sincerely,
Natasha Smith
Master’s Student, Linköping University
Informed Consent

I have read the above information regarding the research study on the pedagogical practices of teachers teaching newly arrived students in Sweden. I have understood the nature of this project and consent to participate. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature ____________________________ Date ________

(Participant)

Signature ____________________________ Date ________

(Researcher)
APPENDIX 2

Interview Guide
Arrive early to set up the room, check audio equipment & review agenda
Note: Important to stick to the agreed time duration!!

Upon Informant’s Arrival (customary pleasantries)
- Introduce self

Opening ‘Questions’ (to break the ice)
- Go through the project as stated in the information letter, reiterating that this is voluntary, that they can withdraw participation at any time, that it is recorded & will be transcribed verbatim with anonymity held.
- Then: Where are you from?
- How long have you lived here?

Warm-up Questions (turn to more related questions)
- How long have you been teaching?
- How long have you worked at your current school?
- Which subjects are you qualified to teach and in which year groups/age groups?
- Which subjects do you teach at your current school?
- Which year groups do you teach and how many classes?
- On average, how big are the classes? (How many students are in each class?)
- How many newly arrived students do you teach? And are these in different classes or in the same? How much experience have you had at teaching newly arrived students?
- Where do the current newly arrived students come from? Why are they in Sweden? (Are they here as children of worker migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, undocumented?)
- Are there many newly arrived students at your school? Has it always been like this?
- Who makes up the rest of your classes?

Main Body (critique questions to gather stories, experiences & reflections; need to think about theory & research questions when devising)

Teacher Role/Types of Lessons/Classroom Space
- In general, what would you define as a ‘successful’ lesson?
- How would you define your role as a teacher in the classroom? (Are your lessons student focused or teacher led? Or a mix? Can you give examples?)
- How do you utilize the classroom space?
- What are the social relations like between the students in the class, especially when a new student arrives?
- When you plan a lesson for a class does it matter which students you have? (Do you take this into account? In what way? Or do you teach the same lesson to another class in the same year group?)
Student Involvement/Engagement
- How do you ensure that all students have the opportunity to participate in your lessons? Can you provide examples?
- With this in mind, how involved are the newly arrived students? Are they as active as other students?
- Can you describe some of the teaching strategies which you find have been most useful in engaging the newly arrived students in your lessons?

Cultural Differences
- What does the word ‘culture’ mean to you? How would you define it?
- Are the students aware of each other's ‘cultural’ differences?
- Thinking about the subjects you teach, how do you explore different perspectives in the classroom space?
- Do you think such exploration adds to the learning process? (In what ways?)
- Do the teaching resources you use reflect the diversity of your students? Can you give some examples of the types of resources you use?
- Do you feel the curriculum allows you the opportunity to incorporate & explore different perspectives into your lessons while ensuring required content is covered? If so, can you give some examples of how?
- Do you think by focusing on such topics will assist students to be more accepting of each other? Do you think it would assist newly arrived students in feeling included? (Why/why not?)

Prior Knowledge
- How well-informed are you about the newly arrived students’ prior knowledge and experiences?
- How do you incorporate this into your lessons? For example, do you use what they bring with them to teach new knowledge? Do you build on it?
- Do the students learn from each other? Do you learn from your students? (In what ways?)
- How much emphasis is given to ‘listening’ to other students share thoughts as opposed to ‘speaking’ in the classroom?

Issues/Difficulties
- What have you found to be the most difficult when teaching the newly arrived students in your different classes?
- Can you describe some of the ways in which you have dealt with these?
- What, if anything has not worked in the way you had hoped?
- What would you say is the biggest challenge for the newly arrived students?
**Support**

- Do these students receive any additional support? If so, how is this organised?
- How do you think this could be improved?
- How do you make use of the students’ first language to support the second? In what way is mother tongue guidance utilised? *(What do you see are the benefits to this, if any? Could it be better used?)*
- Have you experienced any of your newly arrived students finding it difficult to fit in/feel included, both socially & academically? In what ways?
- Ultimately, what do you think, from a pedagogical perspective, will help newly arrived students the most to succeed socially and academically in the mainstream classroom?

**Closing Questions**

- Reflect & ask for a moment to review guide to ensure no key points have been missed
- Is there anything else you would like to tell me?
- Is there something I have perhaps forgotten?
- Is there something else you would like to ask me about my study? (time allowing)
- Thank the informant for their time (also send them an email)

Remember FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS but AVOID what do you mean? Think instead about: ‘Why is that? Could you expand on that? Anything else? Also:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Follow-up questions:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- I would like you to tell me more about that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What did that make you think about?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What did you do then?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I would like to hear if you know of more examples of that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Could you walk me through that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What did that mean to you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- How did you feel about that?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- What did you think was going on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- I’m not sure if I understood you right ..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Would you mind explaining that to me again so I can make sure I understand?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Magnusson & Marecek, 55)