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## Discrimination as a one-day performance – critically reviewing an anti-racism day at school

### ABSTRACT

This chapter revolves around an educational intervention at a Finnish primary school. The purpose is to examine the benefits and drawbacks of an anti-racist school intervention, which was planned and carried out in a primary school by one of the authors. The research questions can be summarized as: Can the event be described as challenging, or changing, discriminating racist structures? Can the event be described as reinforcing the division between the norm and the Other? And what strategies would be needed for more critical anti-racist interventions at school? The event, which concerned the whole school and was covered by the media, can be described as a role-play: half of the pupils experienced discrimination by their teachers and classmates, and half of them were privileged. At midday, the roles were reversed. The aim was to create empathy for how it feels to be discriminated against. At the end of the day, each class discussed the experiment and related it to discussions about racism in the past and today. The pupils were encouraged to reflect upon their own feelings of being discriminated against. Many pupils were deeply affected by the event. We discuss the benefits and the drawbacks of the event. Even though the intervention may in some ways be described as successful, it can be critiqued from the point of view of critical multicultural education. While raising awareness about inequality and arousing empathy, the pedagogy of the event could still be categorized as "education about the Other" (Kumashiro, 2002), maintaining the structure of the privileged "us" and the poor "them," who need to be understood. This seems to be a common phenomenon within intercultural education, and it shows the need for a norm-critical

approach. We discuss to what extent anti-racist activities based on the concept of privilege deconstruction (Case, 2013) could bring more understanding to the students' own roles in racism and anti-racist action.

## Introduction

Finnish basic education is about to adopt a new curriculum (FNBE, 2014), which states that the core values of Finnish basic education include, for example, an open and respectful attitude towards all pupils. The pupils should be supported to grow as humans, and to strive for truth, goodness, beauty, justice and peace. Human rights are at the core of the school education, as well as a broad understanding of equality. Additionally, basic education should work to enhance dialogue between people from different cultures and with different worldviews. In this way, basic education is expected to provide a basis for global citizenship that encourages pupils to act for positive social change (FNBE, 2014, pp. 15–16). These indisputably powerful guidelines for education have not emerged in a vacuum; instead, the Finnish curricula for basic education have evolved in favor of a more or less actively anti-racist policy. The Finnish national core curriculum has changed from seeing multiculturalism as coming from the outside to seeing diversity, multiculturalism and multilingualism as an integral part of society and the school community (Zilliacus, Holm & Sahlström, in review).

Nonetheless, when it comes to work on anti-racism, several researchers have criticized how the positive discourses on diversity and intercultural competence do not sufficiently highlight the need for changing unequal structures. Ahmed (2012) argues that the language of diversity, which has become widely used in policy statements, is detached from what she calls “scary issues” (p. 66) of a more controversial nature, such as power and inequalities. Hoskins and Sallah (2011) found that there is a focus on intercultural competence at the individual level in European policies, suggesting that this mechanism hides oppressing structures. In Juva and Holm’s (in press) ethnographical study in two Finnish lower secondary schools, the teachers constructed the school as a neutral and equal place where power relations were not relevant. At the same time, students were assessed hierarchically according to how well they were able to perform normality, which was closely tied to Finnishness. When the teachers talked about migrant students’ inappropriate behavior or lack of success in school, they often explained it in terms of their culture; in contrast, Finnish students were seen more as unique individuals. There are also studies that show how perceptions of Finnishness are strongly connected to whiteness (Rastas 2007; Tuori 2009). These should highlight the importance of addressing racism and racialization in Finnish schools. “Scary issues” such as discrimination and racism, as well as means of challenging them, are not explicit in the Finnish curriculum. This could be one of the reasons why the guidelines of the curriculum are not entirely reflected in society. Namely, studies show that prejudiced and racist attitudes are prevalent and even increasing in Finnish schools (Rastas, 2007; Virrankoski, 2005; Souto, 2011; Suutarinen & Törmäkangas, 2012). Alarmingly, the pupils with racist views are increasingly inclined towards the use of violence (Suutarinen & Törmäkangas, 2012). The responsibility of education for these attitudes has been debated. It has been suggested that teachers tend to ignore racism or leave racist attitudes among students unchallenged (Rastas, 2007; Virrankoski 2005; Suutarinen and Törmäkangas, 2012).

Even if the curriculum might not be as progressive as it seems at first glance, there is still a clear distinction between the core values of the Finnish curriculum (FNBE, 2014, pp. 15–16) and increasingly racist attitudes. This suggests that there is a need for schools and teachers to think about anti-racist interventions at schools.

In this chapter, we discuss an anti-racist event that was conducted by one<sup>1</sup> of us, together with her colleagues, in a Finland-Swedish lower basic education school. By doing a critical autoethnographic analysis of the event, we hope to shed light on how different outcomes may be, depending on which approach is taken when doing anti-racist interventions in school. We ask to what extent the event can be described as challenging discriminating racist structures, but also to what extent the event can be seen as reinforcing divisions between the norm and the Other. In order to better understand what was achieved and what should be changed to actually work against oppressive structures, we will use Kevin Kumashiro's (2002) research on anti-oppressive education, theories about deconstructing privilege (Case 2013; Wise & Case 2013), and postcolonial theory in education (Andreotti 2011; Andreotti & Pashby 2013). When researching and developing anti-oppressive education, Kumashiro found that, against the educators' good intentions, a lot of so-called anti-oppressive education still contributes to the othering that makes discrimination possible. He outlined four ways to conceptualize and work against oppression, and he analyzed the way each approach conceptualizes oppression, what implications it has for bringing about change, and its strengths and weaknesses. In the first approach, *Education for the Other*, focus is put on improving the experiences of students who are othered or oppressed in society and at school. The second approach, *Education about the Other*, aims at teaching the majority about marginalized groups to make them feel empathy and understand the Other better. In the third approach, *Education that is critical to privileging and othering*, the focus is no longer on the Other, but on examining both how some groups and identities are othered and how some groups are privileged in society. Kumashiro emphasizes that when it comes to oppression, empathy is not enough, since oppression lies in the societal structures and not in the feelings of individuals. In the fourth approach, *Education that changes students and society*, Kumashiro discusses how to teach and relate to a curriculum that is always partial, as well as how to trouble one's own privileged position and deconstruct the norm/Other binary. To come closer to this change, McIntosh (2011) and Case (2013) recommend privilege deconstruction, turning the focus away from the discriminated and onto the privileged. Studying privilege, or systemic unearned advantage, can be a way for privileged students to locate themselves and their role in the upside of oppression. This can trigger feelings of guilt. Andreotti (2011) suggests that when students experience guilt about being privileged, they can be aided in transforming these feelings into power and agency in order to begin to change the situation. Wise and Case (2013) argue that theories about privilege deconstruction in education should be used in a way that empowers the privileged to use their power constructively. We find these tools by Kumashiro, Wise and Case, and Andreotti to be helpful for the analysis of the event under consideration. This chapter can be categorized as an example of university teacher-researchers engaged in self-study in order to improve the promotion of social justice in their teaching (Copenhaver-Johnson 2010; Leland & Harste 2005). We are using autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner 2000), which means that the description of the event we are analyzing involves a reconstruction of it made by one of its organizers. We present the background of organizing the event, the planning, the instructions given to the teachers, the event's realization, the reflective perspective used in the last lesson, and the reactions as a narrative. Our aim with the detailed description is to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the event in light of othering and privilege in order to suggest how it could have been done differently. With this case-study, we seek to raise consciousness about how good intentions are not necessarily enough when it comes to fighting discrimination and racism. We want to initiate a discussion of the possibilities of anti-racist work in schools, and we look forward to sharing the knowledge we have gained in order to encourage others to

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<sup>1</sup> The sections that describe the practical arrangements for the event, including everything from the preparation at the school to the evaluation of the event, are therefore written in first-person singular (or in first-person plural when referring to the team of teachers). The rest of the text, being a collaboration between both of us, is written in the first-person plural.

make efforts, reflect on those efforts, and make further efforts instead of being scared of doing something wrong.

Before moving on to the detailed description of the event, we want to point out that the school in focus is a Swedish-speaking school in Southern Finland. Such schools consist mainly of children from the Swedish-speaking minority, having either two parents with Swedish as a native language or one parent with Swedish and one parent with Finnish as a native language (FNBE, 2015). The Swedish-language schools in the southern part of Finland are in an exceptional situation, considering their relative lack of racialized students and students with other ethnic backgrounds than Finnish. In this particular school, there were four racialized students out of approximately 150, and one racialized teacher out of approximately 15. Since Swedish is the first language of only 5% of the Finnish population (Statistics Finland, 2014), by far most of the people who arrive in Finland from abroad, many of whom are racialized, become integrated in Finnish rather than Swedish and, accordingly, choose a school with Finnish language rather than Swedish. This can be seen as rational for migrant<sup>2</sup> families. For a child to learn a language spoken by the vast majority in the country, rather than by a minority, would seem to be a better guarantee of securing a place in the labor market. Newly arrived persons may also not have been informed about the possibility of becoming integrated in the Swedish language. Additionally, there have been reports about migrants getting “steered away” against their will from being integrated in Swedish language (Helander, 2015; Bruun, 2016). Efforts have been made to increase the number of migrants who choose the Swedish path of integration (Grönqvist, 2016). The school included in this study is situated in a district where the majority of the families are upper middle class and white. For the vast majority of the students, racialized people are thus people they meet on the streets, when taking local transportation, and as workers doing dishwashing or cleaning at the school or in their homes. From an educational point of view, the fact that the school settings are ethnically homogenous and dominantly white suggests that the teachers in Swedish-speaking schools bear a particularly heavy responsibility for multicultural awareness and critical examination of the privilege of whiteness (Ahmed 2011).

## The event

This section consists of a narrative by one of the authors regarding the preparation for and realization of the event, as well as her personal reflections about it.

### Background and preparation

Working as a primary school teacher, I continually tried to find ways of promoting equality and appreciation for diversity in my teaching, as well as in themes for the whole school. The theme of the year for the whole municipality was sustainable development, and I led a team that worked towards its realization. We were using every sub-sector of sustainable development (ecological, cultural, social and economic sustainability) to raise awareness among students about these issues, both locally and globally. Questions about social and cultural sustainability – or, in other words, equality and global consciousness – have been especially close to my heart for a long time. I have been concerned with problems of racism and ethnical discrimination and how to work against them in our school.

During a meeting with our sustainable development team, I therefore insisted that we should try out something that would make a difference and that the students would not easily forget, something that would

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<sup>2</sup> By ‘migrant,’ we refer to a person who was not born in Finland, but moved here.

make them realize why injustice hurts and have them feel it in their own skin for a while. My colleague had watched a documentary about a teacher in Iowa who tried out an interesting experiment<sup>3</sup> of discrimination with her students in 1968, the day after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., and thought it could inspire us. In the experiment, the teacher Jane Elliot divided her class into two groups, according to their eye color. She told the blue-eyed students to discriminate against the brown-eyed ones, and she did the same. The following day, they changed roles. The students got to feel discrimination in a practical way when the blue-eyed group was privileged to do nicer things, while the brown-eyed students did not get the same rights and the teacher called them stupid, dirty and unreliable. During the experiment the students started to behave more and more according to the category to which they belonged. Afterwards they discussed their feelings and reflections of how privileges work and how black people did not have the same possibilities in society. The experiment has received a great deal of publicity over the years, with several documentaries and interviews made with Jane Elliot and a follow-up with the students as young adults. We discussed for a long time if it was ethical to try this on young children (7–12 years) and what reactions it may cause among the parents and other teachers. We decided that we wanted to do it for two main reasons: the role-play would make the students understand how it hurts to be discriminated against, which would make it less likely for them to engage in discrimination themselves. The other reason was that by having everybody engaged in the role-play, it would also show students how the mechanism of discrimination works: when people talk in a belittling way about a certain group, it justifies and encourages them to treat members of that group worse than others, even if it starts on the basis of a difference that does not have a sensitized meaning – like eye color. The idea was that the students would then hopefully realize how certain traits like skin color are used to differentiate people and make conclusions about behavior or qualifications which have nothing to do with those traits.

When our team agreed on the idea, we asked our principal for permission to realize it. She was positive towards the idea and said she would support it because of its important aim, to prevent racism. We started planning our version of the experiment, which was to take place on Anti-Racism Day, on March 21<sup>st</sup>. In the weekly letter to the parents, we wrote a description of the upcoming role-play and the aims of equality behind it. As part of the preparations, I collected a vast body of material used as resources (see Appendix) for the teachers to be able to discuss discrimination in a historical perspective and in relation to what happens in society today. The material was categorized according to the following themes: people in history, personal experiences from the Holocaust, apartheid, segregation in the US, the genocide in Rwanda, and racism today from different perspectives. The sources included texts and video material to be used in class.

## Realization

We wrote instructions for all the teachers and explained the idea during a teacher meeting. Every teacher was supposed to divide her or his class into two groups, according to eye color, and mark the discriminated students with scotch tape. Both the teachers and the privileged group of students were told to treat the discriminated group in an unfair way, giving them worse conditions than the privileged and talking about them in a disrespectful way. The following examples were given of how to discriminate:

- talking in a belittling way about the marked group (always referring to the group, not the individual), showing that he/she did not expect any good achievements from its members

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<sup>3</sup> The film *A Class Divided* by Frontline can be found online, together with descriptions, transcripts and plans for lessons about discrimination and racism: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/film/class-divided/>

- suspecting the marked students of dishonesty and mischief
- explaining good things that happened as due to the non-marked pupils and bad things as the fault of the marked students
- changing the seating order so that the marked students would sit in the back
- not allowing the marked and non-marked students to work or play together during recess

We also suggested some more practical ways of discriminating, in order to make sure that the teachers who were less comfortable with the role-play would also know how to act:

- giving the marked group few possibilities to ask questions, tell opinions and participate
- not praising the marked group after achievements
- giving less material (no coloring crayons, less paper, one pair of scissors for the whole group, etc.) and less time to the marked group
- making the marked group write by hand while the unmarked could write on a tablet/computer
- making the marked group clean up while the unmarked went to recess
- giving the unmarked a head start in competitions
- not allowing the marked group to play games at the end of the lesson
- arranging the lunch queue so that the marked were last

The classes changed roles in the middle of the day, which made third to sixth graders play each role for about two hours and first and second graders for about 1.5 hours, according to the length of their school day. All classes reserved the last lesson for reflections on the experiment, making connections to historical and societal events, and discussion on what was learned from the experiment. For the last part of the event, the teachers were given the following instructions to reflect upon the role-play with the students:

Let every student tell what it felt like to be part of the “us” group and the “them” group. Then discuss how discrimination like this has happened in history, tell them about the Holocaust, apartheid, and genocide in Rwanda, and show them one of the video clips or read the story. Ask them to think about the following questions:

- What determined to which group a person belonged?
- Who decided to which group a person belonged?
- Why do you think it was important to divide people into groups?
- How were some groups discriminated against, according to witnesses in the videos?

Then discuss:

- Are there groups that often encounter intolerance in today’s society?
- If so, what is it that makes these groups victims of intolerance?
- What possible advantages or disadvantages are there with belonging to a discriminated group versus a group that is not discriminated against?
- Tell about how people of different skin color or cultural or linguistic backgrounds get discriminated against by not getting the same jobs in society today.
- How should society treat people and groups of people?
- What could each of us think about in our everyday life?

All classes discussed the students' own experiences about the event, about discrimination today, and then more or less about historical connections, depending on how young the pupils were.

### Reactions of pupils, teachers, parents and myself

All students reacted in some way to the role-play. The younger children had stronger emotions, with some crying and wanting to go help those on the other side, which was being discriminated against. In my own class, comprised of 5<sup>th</sup> graders, some got more and more frustrated or angry over the time they were discriminated against, especially when they realized I was serious in my role as a discriminator and that the classmates they normally played with were also treating them unfairly. One boy who had studied segregation in the US and the history of Black Panthers during his free time wanted to create a group of "Panthers" to hit back, not accepting his position as discriminated against. I was glad to see his initiative about not accepting to be treated worse than others, but I realized that there was not enough room for this kind of reaction in the role-play, since the whole point of feeling oppression would not have been made if the role of the discriminated was too easily escaped. Even if the students' reactions were not as strong as in the original experiment where the duration was longer (two entire days), the same kinds of mechanisms came into play: many students started to hang out with those who belonged to the same group, and those who were privileged sometimes used their superior role for their own benefit.

Unfortunately, we did not organize a session with all the teachers to reflect on the event afterwards. This is something that would have definitely been of importance, both for the development of the teachers and the event itself. Therefore, I do not have detailed information about the discussions that took place in all the classes after the role-play or how every teacher experienced it. From the comments I heard, both younger and older students had engaged in discussions about the harm of discrimination and agreed that it was wrong. One teacher I met in the middle of the day told me about young students reacting strongly to half of the class being discriminated against. She was touched by this, and we had a short discussion about racism in everyday life in Finland, something she had not thought about so much before.

Few parents gave feedback particularly relating to the event. Those who did were all positive, except for one parent. She had expressed beforehand that she considered the event to be harmful, since it would teach children to discriminate, and that her child did not need this kind of teaching since he was already used to being with different kinds of people. However, the positive comments included parents saying that they were very pleased with the fact that the school engaged in working against racism. Since studies show that even very small children pick up attitudes and acknowledge power structures (particularly related to whiteness), the concerned mother's argument can be challenged (Van Ausdale & Feagin, 1996).

On the whole, I felt very pleased with the event. All the teachers had participated by playing their roles and the students had had thought-provoking discussions about injustice and discrimination. Only one parent had reacted negatively before the event, and some had commented on it as being a positive initiative. My class was filmed for the national broadcast news in Swedish. I was satisfied both with the interviews with my students, in which they showed empathy for the discriminated, and with my own contribution of getting to talk on TV about the importance of addressing racism in school and that we are all responsible for creating norms. It was not until half a year later, when I went to a course about norm-critical education and learned of Kumashiro's model of four approaches of anti-oppressive education, that I realized it may not be enough even when students are feeling empathy for the marginalized; namely, we need to look at the norms that make it possible to marginalize and, even more importantly, the norms that privilege some – in this case,

white people – over others. If we don't, we may end up contributing to the othering we are seeking to work against.

## Critical reflections on the event

Two years after the event, there was reason to look back at the event more critically. Both authors of this chapter, currently PhD students in education, have a background in teaching. We thought it would be meaningful for ourselves to write a critical analysis of the event, something that would potentially benefit other educators in the field, too.

In light of relevant research about anti-oppressive and critical multicultural education, we considered that there are many aspects of the event that can be challenged. However, before this, we found that there were some positive aspects to be considered. First of all, the intent was good. While we do agree with Gorski (2008) that good intentions are not enough, it should be stated that neither anti-racism education in general nor role-plays about racial discrimination are very common in schools in Finland. Knowing how difficult it usually is to get all the teachers in a school to agree on... well, anything... we also see the collaboration and joint efforts to pay attention to the problem of racism as positive outcomes of the event. Many teachers were teaching outside of their comfort zones when playing roles, and yet they still took part.

Secondly, we recognized that the event was not, as so many intercultural education attempts seem to be (Gorski 2008; Kumashiro 2002), focusing on difference or on normalizing difference. For a long time, many school events touching on global or intercultural issues have been about giving students more knowledge about the Other, in order to make them understand and feel empathy for the Other. This has often resulted in essentializing non-dominant groups and reinforcing stereotypes and the hierarchy of “us and them.” The event did not essentialize a certain group, but the aim of empathy was indeed of importance, with the thought that by making pupils feel discrimination in their own skin, they would understand that it is bad. The idea was also that realizing an emotionally powerful event would leave less room for it to merely be a problem that was distant from the comfortable reality of the pupils. Empathy is, of course, an important ability to learn, but as Kumashiro (2002, pp. 44) states, “the roots of oppression do not reside solely in the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of individuals.” Discrimination and oppression are structural problems; therefore, they cannot be overcome only by empathy for the oppressed, since that does not change the fundamental division between those who are privileged and those who are othered.

The other main idea of the event, to make power and discrimination visible, was a step forward from just looking at the harm of discrimination. This aspect could actually be categorized as what Kumashiro (2002) describes as *education that is critical to privileging and othering*, because the idea was to show the mechanism of differentiating people based on a certain quality (such as eye color) and how that results in different possibilities for those categorized as being of lesser value. The classroom discussions following the event, too, included elements that were critical to othering structures. For instance, there were discussions about how the division into good and bad people was made and who got to make the decision about that. There were also questions about the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to a discriminated versus non-discriminated group, which aimed at also seeing the privileged position. The last question “What could each of us think about in our everyday life?” had the potential to be categorized as *education that changes students and society*, because of its aim to make everyone take action against discrimination. But since there was not more elaboration on what kind of actions this could include, it simply stayed at the level of



“remember not to discriminate against anybody” and “treat everybody equally,” thereby not questioning the privileged position of the pupils.

The experiment also shows that role-play and drama as methods for anti-racist education have their strengths and weaknesses, depending on how they are used. In this intervention, an effort was made to have everybody remain in their roles as either discriminated or non-discriminated, in order to force the pupils to realize the harm and mechanisms of discrimination. In other words, not much agency was left for the pupils during the role-play, as shown by the example of the child who began resisting the discrimination by forming his own version of the Black Panthers. If he had succeeded in convincing his classmates to protest against the situation, the event might have had a different ending. The actual experiment would have failed, however, the pupils might have developed a sense of agency, thinking that they could do something to change unwanted conditions. However, the downside of this would have been the image given to the pupils that victims of discrimination can quite easily challenge their positions, making the problem of structural discrimination seem smaller than it is. To open up agency and action against oppression by means of role-play and drama, the Forum theatre created by Boal (2000) could be a good alternative. Members of the audience are there asked to stop a performance in which a character is being oppressed and to suggest different actions for the actors to try and change the outcome to a less oppressive one. However, using drama as a method, it may be challenging in the same experiment to both encompass the agency for change and make the severity of racist structures visible for the pupils. This is not to say that drama should not be used for anti-racist education, but that different approaches with different focuses could complement each other.

We realized that there were other reasons to look critically at the event, too. During Anti-Racism Day, the pupils were given the chance to experience what it felt like to walk in different people’s shoes. However, whether they were playing the role of oppressors or the role of the discriminated, they were acting a role that belonged to somebody else. Even though some of the participants might have personally identified with either of the roles, perhaps recognizing how it had felt to be discriminated against, the role-playing nature of the event turned the attention away from the pupils’ own positions and contributions to oppression. Gorski (2008) has suggested that if intercultural education practices mainly work to give students from dominant groups experiences of personal growth and fulfillment, they should really be seen as the epitome of colonizing education. This may seem like an unnecessarily harsh conclusion. However, it cannot be denied that there is a point to be made.

Looking back at the discussions that were encouraged in the classrooms, we consider that there were some missing elements. The pupils were asked to discuss how it felt to be part of the discriminated group as well as the group that was not discriminated against. Now we would direct more attention to this latter group. What does “not being discriminated against” actually mean? We suggest that the concept of privilege (McIntosh, 2013; Case, 2013) would have brought a necessary dimension to the discussions. The idea behind privilege deconstruction in education is to make privilege visible. In the classroom discussions after the event, the students were able to discuss what it felt like to be discriminated against and what it felt like to not be discriminated against and to have more benefits than the others; however, both of these were roles to be played. If the discussions had turned to how privilege works, the students could not have comfortably remained as neutral players assuming different roles. They would have needed to face their own privilege and learn to see how privilege, as well as discrimination, works to assign people the positions they have. Just as discrimination can lead to one pupil’s university-educated parent cleaning the corridors, privilege can help another pupil’s parent with much less education running a successful company. This obviously would have meant turning the level of controversy up a few notches, since it is less controversial to study racial

discrimination (which, in the context of the Finland-Swedish school system, concerns relatively few pupils, whose voices are rarely heard) than to study privilege. Additionally, we realize that in the classroom discussions after the event, there would have been a need to bring information about racism into a context that was closer to the students. Focusing on racism as a phenomenon in faraway places (geographically or historically) might, in the worst case, have strengthened the notion of Finnish or Nordic exceptionalism (Lóftsdóttir & Jensen, 2012). The reason for using these resources was that there was more pedagogical material ready to be used, as most of the teachers did not feel informed enough to lead a reflective discussion without such material. However, it can also be interpreted as more “safe” to discuss racism in the context of, say, apartheid than to focus on racist structures in contemporary, local settings.

Still, the benefits of studying privilege within anti-racist education are tangible. Finnish students are often told that being born in Finland is like winning the lottery. Privilege deconstruction could teach students to question the preferable position of Finnish children as being simply a matter of luck or meritocracy (Mikander, 2016). There are other benefits to privilege deconstruction, too. It can help educators evade the trap of falling into either a passive feeling of “feeling sorry for others” or feelings of deflation, such as “the world is so bad, there is nothing we can do.” As Wise and Case (2013) argue, teaching about privilege means refraining from personal guilt and shame, but also from consolation. They suggest that a privileged position should be seen as a powerful position, like having a bank account to withdraw from. “Just as a hammer can be used to build a home or commit a violent assault, privilege can be used for constructive or destructive purposes” (Wise & Case, 2013, p. 30). The idea is that teaching about privilege is a way to empower, not deflate, students from privileged positions. Andreotti (2011) shows that guilt can be the reflection of a need to exercise power and agency. The first step, however, is acknowledging one’s own position. For a predominantly privileged group such as pupils in Finland-Swedish schools, it is important to realize that they do not occupy a “neutral” position.

## Final comments

In this chapter, we have discussed the benefits and drawbacks of an anti-racist event in school by asking in what way the event challenged, or changed, discriminating racist structures, and in what way it reinforced the division between the norm and the Other. We have shown that the good intentions and co-operation between teachers, even for such a large-scale event, worked well. We also consider to be beneficial the idea of not focusing on “cultural differences” but on making structures of power and hierarchy visible. We have critiqued the event mainly for not turning the focus on the student’s own positions and for not incorporating into the discussion how the students could participate in changing the structures.

The way we see it, anti-racist education necessitates pupils to relate personally to global structures of oppression. It means that anti-racist education also needs to include learning about global inequality. This can be done, for instance, through critical global citizenship education, asking critical literacy questions. The idea behind critical global citizenship is that many pedagogical initiatives tend to ignore historical power inequalities that are embedded in today’s global issues and relations (de Oliveira & de Souza, 2012; Andreotti & Pashby, 2013). Advocates for critical global citizenship, such as Andreotti and Pashby (2013), urge educators to focus on questions such as “How do different lives have different value? How are these two things connected? What are the relationships between social groups that are over-exploited and social groups that are over-exploiting? How are these relationships maintained? How do people justify inequalities? What are the roles of schooling in the reproduction and contestation of inequalities in society? What possibilities and problems are created by different stories about what is real and ideal in society?” (ibid., pp.

423–424). When students seek answers to these questions, they can learn to relate their material reality, such as the food they eat and the clothes they wear, to a historical, structural and material context. Even if critical global citizenship education may be easier to use in education with older pupils, one should not downplay the possibility of also working with critical awareness with young children. Guided by the teacher, the students can analyze, for instance, images in children’s books, school textbooks and media, focusing on how different people are given different roles and which people are not represented at all in some of the books, and be encouraged to think about what happens when the norms are questioned.

In order to promote the values of the curriculum and to tackle racism in Finnish society, we suggest that there is more work to be done. As noted by Janhonen-Abreu, Paavola and Layne (2016), there is a need to make more of an effort to include teachers with migrant backgrounds in Finnish schools. We agree with Sitomaniemi-San (2015) that there is room for improvement in teacher education, moving the focus away from promoting individualist growth among pupils and towards a more socially just approach. We also consider it important to keep in mind that the profession of teaching is about promoting cultural change. As Gorski (2008) argues, to criticize existing structures may make one lose likeability by the powerful, but it is necessary to accept that in order to not be complicit in discrimination. There is a need to step outside the discourse of “the Finnish school is already equal” (Juva & Holm, in press) and take on the “scary issues.” The potentials of anti-racist education are huge. First of all, we teachers and researchers need to make an effort to become aware of our own role as part of unequal hierarchical structures. Then we need to have the courage to challenge these structures and to have a critical perspective in mind during all planning and realization of anti-racist interventions.

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Appendix: Examples of sources used in the classroom discussions.

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/vittnesmal-med-klassrumsovningar/tema-toleransintolerans/1-att-dela-manniskor-i-grupper>

About racism

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/fakta-fordjupning/rasism/rasism-och-framlingsfientlighet>

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/rasism-och-framlingsfientlighet/vetenskapen-tror-inte-pa-raser>

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/rasism-och-framlingsfientlighet/rasism-idag>

<http://omvardera.mearra.com/sisalto/rasism-i-barn-och-ungas-liv>

Holocaust survivor testaments

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/film/tema-tolerans-intolerans-julia-lentini?project=1567>

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/film/tema-offer-forovare-askadare-hjalpare-margareta-kellner?project=1567>

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/film/tema-offer-forovare-askadare-hjalpare-franciska-levy-1?project=1567>

About apartheid:

<http://www.ur.se/Tema/Vaga-bemota-framlingsfientlighet/Rasismens-historia/Apartheid>

About segregation in the US:

[http://vetamix.net/video/ramp-kamp-mot-segregation-svensk-textning\\_3758](http://vetamix.net/video/ramp-kamp-mot-segregation-svensk-textning_3758)

[http://vetamix.net/video/ramp-gloria-ray-karlmark-svensk-texning\\_3755](http://vetamix.net/video/ramp-gloria-ray-karlmark-svensk-texning_3755)

About the Rwanda genocide

<http://www.levandehistoria.se/folkmordet-i-rwanda/alice-mukarurinda>