

The “others” in Sweden. Neoliberal policies and the politics of ‘race’ in education

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INTRODUCTION

Why do you want to write about us? Nothing happens here. Really boring. Everything is broken . . . nothing works. Teachers do not stay. No money for extra activities. Ask Johan our teacher where the money came from for last year's graduation day. It came from his own pockets. At least in my brother's school we got a TV, but that was because of the veil stuff. I am sure that my school would get more money if we began to use the veil. We told Johan that, but he did not laugh. He knows that my mother does not allow me to wear it. So, here is our school, poor and boring. (Roshar)

The young student quoted above, is one of many we encountered in our research whose parents migrated to Sweden—in her case from the Kurdish region of Iraq. Although she was laughing most of the time, we could sense the pain in her words, and we had to agree with her. Roshar's class-room was part of the same state-sponsored inclusive public school system as the classroom we had visited in the morning in a wealthier part of the city. However, the deterioration of the building, the quality of the school materials and the predominance of migrant children were visible indications, that the new educational policies acknowledging freedom of choice and diversity are increasing social polarisation. Roshar's words capture the ways discourses on difference enter the public debate and regulate the distribution of resources. In her view, the use of the veil (Scott 2007) could transform her school from a marginal facility to the centre of the public debate. We think she is right. "Diversity" (rather than equality or social justice) became a cornerstone of migration policies in the 1990s. While issues of neo-liberal diversity have been at the core of policy debates in recent years, concern with of re-distribution has been non-existent (Fraser 2005). The quotation that precedes the Introduction, exemplifies a number of debates that are often discussed through concepts of neo-liberal globalisation. Writing on the importance and meaning of globalisation, Bourdieu and Wacquant call it a concept 'with which one argues but about which one does not argue' (1999:41). Migration and neo-liberal restructuring are two of the most discussed phenomena with regard to globalisation. We have in this article sought links between these processes in a Swedish context and the experiences of racialised as they spoke about schooling and the role of parents in their educational situation. We found our informants' experiences shaped by the intersection of the racialisation of their migrant background, the effects of neo-liberal restructuring and increasing class differences.

Sweden has been described as the model of what Esping-Andersen (1991) named the social-democratic welfare regime or to use the concepts of Jessop (2002) the Keynesian welfare state par excellence. In research in the field of international migration and ethnic relations, Sweden has been considered one of the more generous multicultural migration regimes among OECD countries (Castles & Miller 2003; Schierup et al. 2006), although this is changing in a process of 'Europeanization' (Neergaard 2009; Hansen & Hager 2010).

Academic knowledge, with its slow production and dissemination, tends to obscure the fact that Swedish social formation, both with regard to the welfare and migration regime, is undergoing substantial change, as neo-liberal restructuring is rapidly increasing inequalities, although from a quite low initial point (Ankarloo 2008; Persson et al. 2010). Multicultural policies are in retreat at the same time neo-assimilationist policies are growing (Schierup et al. 2006; Dahlstedt 2009). While these processes of change are felt in a number of social spheres, our focus here is on a key arena for building the 'new' Sweden – the educational system.

The aim of the article is to explore school narratives evolving from young pupils of migrant background. Our analytical focus lies on the impact process of racialisation have on the school experience of Swedish citizens of migrant background. Theoretically, our study is inspired by the at times conflictual debates between Marxism and postcolonial theory; aiming at creating bridges between these critical currents of thought. Methodologically, the study is a qualitative case study of four Swedish schools.

THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

Sweden has a well-established tradition of educational research education that are influenced and based on the writings of Bourdieu and his understanding of schools as institutions that tend to reproduce (and naturalise) existing social relations (Arnman & Jönsson 1983; Broady 1998). Class has often been the central analytical category by which subordination and exclusion have been grasped in such studies. While gender was also one of these categories since the late 1970s, other social relations such as ethnicity and sexuality remained theoretically and empirically under-researched until the end of the 1990s, and there are still large gaps in educational research (Ambjörnsson 2004; Hägerström 2004; Sawyer & Kamali 2006).

Pioneer antiracist work in the field of education has explored the centrality of ‘race’/ethnicity in the Swedish educational system (Osman 1999; Gruber 2004). Extensive empirical research shows that ‘race’/ethnicity is a significant component in the process of categorisation, exclusion, and stigmatisation, and that schools and teachers from the majority population play a vital role in these processes. Research also shows how schools tend to reproduce an ethnocentric, nationalistic, and Eurocentric conception of the world (Lahdenperä 1997; Ajagán-Lester 2000; Granberg and Thelin 2002).

Internationally, questions about racism and power relations between teachers and minority students have helped to explain differences among school results (Cashmore & Troyna 1982; Braham et al. 1992; Troyna 1993; Back 1993; Gillborn 1995). Critical race theory (CRT) has been a useful theoretical tool in exploring and challenging racism within educational research (Gillborn 2009). One of the strengths of CRT lies in the productive dialogue it has stimulated between postcolonial and feminist studies resulting in an understanding of the connections between gender, sexuality, and processes of racialisation, especially in studies on education (Mirza 1992; Sewell 1997).

However, CRT, while calling attention to racism, runs the risk of providing a hyperfocus on the category of ‘race’, marginalising the analysis of global political economy, and obscuring the connection between migration, racism, and the appropriation of labour power (Cole 2009; Hill 2009).

Our reading of the broad field of Marxist theory provides a point of departure for merging feminist and antiracist efforts to explore hierarchical differences and Marxist analysis of relations of social conflict. Bakan (2008) asserts that while the notion of exploitation is at the core of Marxist thinking, the concepts of alienation and oppression may provide a different perspective in reading concepts such as whiteness and privilege.

We use the concept of racialisation to position our research within a Marxist tradition that attempts to analytically separate racism as an ideology from alternate processes of exclusion, subordination, and categorisation (Miles 1992). Our theoretical efforts explore the role racialisation plays in reproducing inequality (Murji & Solomos 2005). As a sensitising concept, racialisation underscores the creation of ‘race’/ethnicity as a social dynamic shaped by particular individual within particular institutions. The risk for deterministic interpretations

of the relationship between structural location, on the one hand, and individual and collective identity, on the other, is thus reduced..

The term racialisation enables a more complex reading of the social that transcends earlier debates of the ontology primacy of class versus 'race'/ethnicity (or gender). It thus helps to identify how and through which strategies labour power is coded through racist ideologies and explores how 'race'/ethnicity is the way through which class identities are named in the context of migration and super-exploitation (Balibar 1991). Our use of racialisation is also inspired by current feminist debates on intersectionality, which provides a materialistic analysis of class as a gendered and racialised social relation (Acker, 2006).

Methodological context of the study

The empirical material presented here is a part of a larger research project on the role of racism in the Swedish educational system (Dahlsted et al. 2007). The analysis is based on thirty-two in-depth interviews with young students (13 to 16 years old) who identified themselves as of migrant background. The interviews were conducted in 2008 at four schools representing different types of schools with a variety of patterns of inclusion (suburban, ethnically segregated, and rural/small towns). The interviews were complemented by participant observation in schools; interviews with fifteen teachers interested in multicultural issues; relevant policy documents; and secondary literature on the change of the Swedish ethnic regime and the neo-liberal transformation.

In her classic essay, "Can there be a Feminist Ethnography?" Judith Stacey (1988) discusses the violence inherent in qualitative methods when boundaries of insider/outsider and friendship/researcher-are unclear and where women's historically trained capacity of relatedness increase an informant's vulnerability. Scholarship on racism has analysed similar challenges (Bulmer & Solomos 2004; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva 2008). The fact that the present authors share the same process of racialisation as our informants (one author is a Black Swede, the other a political refugee from Latin America) has influenced our theoretical and political agenda and shaped the focus of our analysis. Dorothy Smith's (1986) conceptualization of institutional ethnography has also shaped our methodological approach as an alternative to the objectified subject of knowledge in established social scientific discourse. The way we proceed is similar to extended case method (Burawoy 1998). It acknowledges the central role of reflexivity in the scholar's search for truth and combines it

with an urge to provide an analytical understanding of the social by placing the social utility of knowledge at the core of the research aim.

Many of the fundamental arguments of feminist scholarship, especially its focus on reflexivity have been embraced by the social science and the humanities, and some have been further developed. Sociologist Carol Smart (2009) cites the work of social theorist John Law (2004), who criticizes sociological methods for the way in which they turn ‘mess’ into order. Sociology, according to Law, must find ways to represent this messiness without imposing coherence and logic upon lived experience. Smart also refers to the work of sociologist Les Back (2007) who insists that sociology has the tools to capture and reflect ‘real’ social life if it would only reclaim its status as a craft that operates both ethically and sensitively in relation to the lives it seeks to understand and recount. Back argues for the ‘art of listening’.

In this article we have attempted to listen to and learn from the voices of these young people. We use school narratives to probe the empirical material gathered in the indepths interviews. Our focus seeks to avoid a reductionist focus on the young people with migrant background per se, an approach that in the past has contributed to the culturalisation of social problems; but to understand the classed and racialised social relations, which shape young people’s everyday experience of the Swedish school system.

The Swedish ethnic regime: From subordinated inclusion to subordinated exclusion

The notion of similar social formations that has been based on the idea of a common Nordic welfare model prevalent in much of international research, has been challenged Melby et al. (2000) and Schierup et al. (2006), among others. When concepts as migration and ethnic regimes are entered into the analysis, the assumed similarity of the Nordic social formations breaks down. One difference concerns the size of the foreign-born population. In Finland it is rather small (3.4%), whereas the foreign-born population is of medium size in Denmark (6.5%) and Norway (7.8%), with Sweden in the first tier of Western Europe, with 12.4%, surpassing migrant countries as UK and the US (Dumont & Lemaître 2005).

In an historical perspective Sweden was a country of net emigration, more comparable with Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain than by its neighbouring Nordic countries (Svanberg and Tydén 1998). It was not until the end of WWII that Sweden became a country of net

immigration, basically a result of both WWII and other conflicts in Europe (Poland, Hungary 1956, Greece 1967, Czechoslovakia 1968) producing refugees and a need for labour force (especially from Finland, Italy, Yugoslavia, Turkey). In 1972 labour migration to Sweden was stopped. Ever since then migration to Sweden has been in the form of refugees and family reunification (Latin America, Middle East, Vietnam, Iran, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Somalia) (Svanberg & Tydén 1998; Schierup et al. 2006).

The Swedish ethnic and migration regime has been shaped both by a need for labour and an autonomous foreign policy, especially between the 1960s and 1980s partially influencing refugee policy and from where refugees came. This has long been part of the tripartite arrangement that characterised the Swedish model. It has arisen within a context of strong working class organisation by reformist trade union and political representation through the social democratic party that has held government power from 1932 to 2006 (with the exceptions of 1976 to 1982 and 1991 to 1994). While post-WWII migration was shaped by the same assimilationist policies that were applied to the Sami and Roma people at the time (Montesino 2002; Kvist 1992), a general social radicalisation in connection with the class politics of the blue collar trade union movement in particular began to change this at the end of the 1960s. Sweden launched its policies of multiculturalism in 1975, shifting focus from immigration to immigrants' policy that in 1998 was converted into a policy of integration. The political documents underwriting them emphasised rights (1975) and mutuality (1998). For this, the government has been acclaimed in international comparative perspectives, although more critical analyses have emphasised the distance between the words and practices of the policies (Ålund & Schierup 1991; Schierup et al. 2006). In 1975 the focus was on rights, under the headings of equality, freedom, and cooperation. It was an attempt to avoid a guest worker system and its consequences in a context in which migrants labour force participation rate was higher (in case of women substantially higher), but segmented into the lower echelons of the labour market and bore the hardships of poor health and low wages. By contrast, the integration policy of 1998 aimed to increase employment among migrants, who had at that time much higher rates of unemployment. It also sought to combat the perception of integrations as synonymous with assimilation. The early 2000s were characterised by a progressive integration policy, research on racism and discrimination, in an increasingly neo-liberal economic policy context. It was also a time shaped by antiterrorist sentiments and a retreat to socially conservative concepts as social cohesion and core value debates expressed.

Therefore, Swedish immigrant policy has differed greatly in comparison to the guest worker systems developed in countries like West Germany and Switzerland (Castles & Miller 2003). The Swedish strategy has been one of ‘subordinate inclusion’ (Mulinari & Neergaard 2004); racialised groups have been granted citizenship, but forced into subordinated positions in the labour market and the welfare state. Sayings such as ‘Sweden *and* our migrants’, capture the tension between acknowledging the presence of racialised groups and locating this category of people in a hierarchical relation (despite formal citizenship) towards the ‘majority’ population. While the racialised subordinated exclusion characterising migrants in the labour market – particularly since the economic crisis of the early 1990s – is one part of a central shift (Neergaard 2006, 2009) The second is the adoption of increasingly more repressive policies towards (racialised) migrants, rationalised by conjuring up threats to social cohesion and core values (Schierup & Ålund 2010).

The ethnic composition of the Swedish population has changed considerably with the migration (Schierup et al. 2006). This has been accompanied by harsher migration and integration policies that may be summarised as a neo-assimilationist and racialised social cohesion project. While these changes have been accentuated the last decade, the ‘Swedish model’ has been confronted with several challenges over the past thirty years. There has been a great transformation in the workforce and labour conditions within an environment of decreasing public expenditure on welfare and the production of welfare services, a topic we now turn to.

The Swedish path towards neo-liberalism

The Swedish economic crisis of 1991 is often referred to as symbolic of the structural and economic changes which have befallen the Swedish welfare state model. Privatisation, streamlining, and cuts within the social security system during a period of increasing unemployment have resulted in unequal conditions for different groups of citizens (de los Reyes 2007). Historically, and compared to other countries (Great Britain, for example), Sweden has implemented certain reforms within the framework of a somewhat inclusive welfare state. Cultural geographer David Harvey (2005) describes this development as a ‘circumscribed neo-liberalisation’:

Probably nowhere in the Western world was the power of capital more democratically threatened in the 1970s than in Sweden. . . The real shift towards neo-liberalism came

with the Conservative government in 1991. But the way had been partially prepared by the Social Democrats, who were increasingly pressed to find ways out of economic stagnation. . . Embedded liberalism was eroded, but by no means fully dismantled. (115)

Beginning with Social Democratic governments in the mid-1980s, the macroeconomic institutional setting of Keynesian economics was dismantled, followed by rapid and continuous transformations according to neo-liberal ideas. With these changes, neo-liberal interventions became more prevalent inside and outside of government, and concepts such as cost efficiency, customer orientation, privatisation, deregulation, tax reductions, and increasingly financing welfare services through fees were introduced within welfare institutions (Nygren 1999; Boréus 1994).

Robert Jessop speaks of a system transformation both as an accumulation regime (the birth of post-Fordism) and through the creation of a neo-liberal post-national workfare regime (2002). Together with the USA and the UK, Sweden has been one of the OECD countries with more rapidly increasing inequalities, although beginning from a much more equal situation.

To understand the Swedish path towards neo-liberalisation of the welfare regime, it central to grasp the importance of a working class movement that through trade union struggle and with social democratic governments had reduced wage dispersion both within the working class and between blue collar, white collar workers and professionals. Furthermore, social insurance schemes have redistributed income and public welfare institutions did partially compensate for class inequalities. However, the core of the Swedish model (health, education, etc.), while continuing as nodal points within the organisation of the Swedish nation state, is in transformation towards a system increasingly dominated by profits and privatisation, as well as outsourcing and lower levels of social security (Vogel, 2000, p. 34).

Thus in turning to our informants, in order to grasp their experience of Swedish schools, it is important to understand how migration and welfare regimes are interwoven. In summarising the Swedish changes over the last thirty years, we find that there has been a shift from a Keynesian welfare state towards a neoliberal welfare regime, and a parallel process (starting later) from a multicultural migration regime towards a regime characterised by a neo-assimilationist and racialised social cohesion project.

Neo-liberal shifts in school regimes

Schools, along with other welfare services, are a symbol of the historical success of the welfare state, and as such have been symbolic institutions targeted for neo-liberal interventions. An inclusive, public, and successful school system has been one of the historical marks of the social democratic welfare state (Englund 2005). Schools have become a cut-off point in the political conflict between the social democratic welfare regime that conceptualises them as a central actor in ‘integration’, and the ideological challenges from neo-liberal and neo-conservative directions.

Criticism that freedom of choice is absent, the punishment of ‘clever’ children, and the lack of respect for authority within the Swedish school system have been systematically present in the media since the beginning of the 1990s, and today define the public agenda of ‘the problem of Swedish schools’. Historian of ideas Sverker Sörlin (2006) articulates this process as follows:

I have always wondered why liberals¹ like Jan Björklund can be so sure that their patent medicine – earlier grades, more private schools, more discipline – really creates the desired results. . . International experts are sceptical towards the freedoms propaganda standing behind the Swedish school reform in the nineties: why are you reducing your excellent schools? (Sörlin, 2006, our translation)

In a parliamentary debate on 5 February 2001, Anders Sjödin, a member of the Conservative Party, stated that the more resources school are given, the worse they get, and that only increased discipline and greater authority vested in teachers could solve the problems of the Swedish school system (Larsson 2001). Similar arguments have evolved within the academy. Researcher Inger Enkvist in a book entitled *Feltänkt* [Badly Thought], describes how Swedish schools are going through a crisis that requires nothing less than a total transformation (2001). The writer considers it her duty to ‘show how it really is’ (LUM, 2001). She claims that too much student autonomy has caused a decrease in student knowledge input and that in the name of equality schools have lost their position as knowledge-producing and knowledge-mediating institutions. Neo-liberal and neo-conservative interventions agree in defining the social democratic school regime as a ‘school of muddledness’ in great need of changing into a

¹ At the end of the 1990s there was a marked shift in the Liberal party’s ideology from social liberalism to neo-liberal economic policies combined with conservative reforms on law and order. This was described by themselves as leaving an ideology of “kindness” behind, and by adversaries as truncheon liberals.

‘school of knowledge’. Ljunghill & Svensson (2006), the editors-in-chief of *Pedagogical Magazine*, have tried to explain this process:

Ever since the so-called knowledge campaign started at the end of eighties, a systematic slander campaign has been going on which has been given considerable space in newspaper editorials and op-ed pages. Almost every new reform has been opposed and the Swedish school is being portrayed as a school in crisis – a disaster of chaos and knowledge degeneration’. (7, translation by the authors)

Discipline and order were central topics for the conservative alliance which has been in government since 2006. Three months after the election, a prohibition against the use of any language other than Swedish in the classroom was proposed by the ‘People’s party, the Liberals’ in the Malmö municipality (the third largest city in Sweden) with the intention of strengthening the authority of the teachers. One of the initiators of this proposal, Allan Widman, a member of parliament, referred to it as similar to the ban against talking on the phone or chewing gum in the classroom (Aftonbladet 2007). While the new agenda of the rightist government after 2006 has been more radical on these issues, neo-liberal ideology has been implemented within the school system starting with the centre right-wing government of the early 1990s.

The notion of education as a public good, according to Lundahl (2000), was transformed into the notion of education as a matter of individual choice, where parental responsibility for their children’s education is emphasised, and where efficiency, competence, and facts aiming to increase the authority of teachers have become keywords among school managers and politicians. At the same time, cuts in municipal budgets have had a serious impact on school resources, resulting in more students per class and less support for children with special needs, school health and additional school staff.

These discourses have meant that in practice Sweden has moved from one of the most unitary and publicly organised school systems into a school regime where individual schools must profile themselves. Private schools – often profit-seeking – that are paid for by a publically financed student price tag (and assigned to the school chosen by the student or parents) expand, and ethnic segregation is mirrored in the greater polarisation between the achievements of different groups of pupils (Lindensjö & Lundgren 2000).

While individual choices for students have expanded, symbolic and cultural capital together with increased complexities in the school system, has severely affected unprivileged groups. A student's future is decided by an early choice of educational alternatives, with few possibilities of later changing educational paths. The new developments within the Swedish school system have reinforced and increased inequalities. Something that that is extremely evident in large Swedish cities and that combines both class and racialised markers.

Neo-liberal shifts and racism

During the last decade, as Arnman et al (2004) and Ljunghill & Svensson (2006) have argued, Swedish schools have become increasingly differentiated along class lines, despite the fact that the advocates of 'free school reform' claim that the neighbourhood principle² is the cause of class segregation in schools. The category of 'race'/ethnicity is very present in the struggle to define the Swedish school regime. It has been used as a symbol of the chaos in schools coded as 'ethnic', as an example of the failed social democratic integration politics regarding migration, and as an illustration of the need for private schools to grapple with the heterogeneity of the student population. So-called 'free schools' (municipality-sponsored private schools) have expanded (Gustafson 2004). Political scientists Blomqvist and Rothstein (2000, p. 185) identify serious indicators of the effects of 'freedom of choice' within the Swedish school regime: mostly children from privileged Swedish background are the ones who leave the public school for the 'free schools', and privileged parents use this freedom of choice to move away from schools with high concentrations of children of migrant background. In short, the system reinforces ethnic and class polarisation.

At the beginning of the 1990s, individual rights and freedom of choice were prioritised over collective school goals as well as redistributive group rights, with financial cutbacks resulting, among other things, in home language tuition (an earlier right for migrant children) being no longer compulsory (Borevi, 2002). However, individualisation often catered to Swedish students, while students from migrant background were conceptualised as a homogenous group, fixedly located in traditional cultures (Gruber 2008). Trends began to emerge from the 1980s onwards concerning the relative failure of ethnic minority students (Fredriksson & Taube 2001). Causes for these failures have mostly been assigned to the students themselves and their parents. While government documents argue that cultural diversity should be seen as

² Schooling in Sweden has traditionally been based on attendance at neighbourhood schools, thereby partially reproducing the class composition of housing segregation pattern.

a resource, it is generally left to classroom teachers to decide what this means in practice (Runfors 2003). One of the most impressive historical achievements since 1977 was that the home language reform regarding children whose first language was not Swedish gained the right to home language tuition at schools. Financial cutbacks forced municipalities to restrict mother-tongue teaching, but many of these cutbacks were legitimated by arguments challenging bilingualism as a pedagogical failure, arguing for the centrality of the Swedish language, and even for the need to establish a unitary Swedish literature canon. The most central intervention, however, has been the role schools are given in mediating specific values (LPO 1994). The aim is to educate students within a worldview in which notions of democracy and social justice are narrowly defined as the property of specific groups of people.

Swedish integration policy has changed from a pluralistic (subordinated inclusion) strategy to new assimilation policies (Schierup et al. 2006; Ålund and Schierup 1991). While the creation of an oppressed group of ethnic minority women at the core of Swedish identity is not new, what is new has been the repressive state-regulated demands on the minority ethnic population regarding identification with national values (Bredström 2003). Discourses have moved from migrant women as a ‘problem’ to discourses on their cultures (especially the Muslim culture), seen as a ‘threat’ to democratic (that is, European) values. Such values are understood to reflect ‘the ethics governed by the Christian tradition and Western world humanism’ and to be imparted ‘through the individual’s education into a sense of law abidingness, generosity, tolerance and responsibility’ (LPO, 1994, p. 5) (translation by the author). The use of such phrases within school directives illustrates the change that has taken place in Sweden: from integration policies focused on diversity to new assimilation policies in which what are perceived to be the ‘other’s’ conceptions of the world are viewed as threats against the national body.

Many ethnic minority parents who have been forced to migrate from areas where Western humanism is viewed as linked to the exploitation of bodies and natural resources might see this particular worldview as problematic, rather than as a vantage point from which fundamental values in school are upheld. Such parents know that ‘a sense of justice, generosity, tolerance and responsibility’ does not necessarily correlate only with a Christian ethic (Fekete 2009), but with fundamental human values that are recur within most religions and conceptions of the world. A further illustration of the new assimilation policies is

provided by debates about the right of school boards to prohibit children's native language from being spoken in schools, a practice that is already standard in some public educational institutions (Ibarra & Aracena 2009).

Young students and their parents: racialisation of migrants in education

A central theme in our informants' narratives about schools is the racialisation of their parents. Racism in school is an everyday experience for many young people (Rädda Barnen, 2002). Motsieloa (2003) and Granstedt (2006) have documented the occurrence of abusive language in reports from teachers, such as the use of the word 'neger' (a pejorative word, both negro and 'nigger') and, some teachers report feeling more unsafe in schools with higher numbers of migrant children. A significant proportion of teachers in one study expressed negative attitudes towards immigrants (Lange and Hedlund 1998). Despite the fact that teachers from the majority population) have the power to define what should be understood as racist (Parszyks 1999; Dahl & Lundgren 2006), in a recent study from the Swedish National Board of Education (Skolverket 2004), one in four students and one in five teachers asserted that racism was a central component in their experience of everyday interactions at school. Feminist scholars Weiner and Hällgren (2006) summarise the Swedish situation as follows:

Denial of racism is a key point taken up in this and other recent Swedish government enquiries. . . From a critical race perspective this denial is an example of how racism is interlaced and 'normal' and thus becomes *invisible* (and thus deniable). As argued in the inquiry, the actions of teachers and other school staff, and the pedagogical legacy they inherit, reproduce established social hierarchies that we see in society as a whole. Since teachers are in an important power position, they tend to have monopoly over 'the truth' and can therefore produce their worldview as the only legitimate view. They simultaneously render illegitimate alternative understandings by, for instance, ignoring or ridiculing racist or discriminatory incidents when they occur. (5)

The effects of racism as a class-coded, and the effects of class as racialised are a very present experience in our informants' reflections about their future, especially in how they think about the connection between education and job opportunities:

My mother wants me to continue studying. . . She tells me this every day, as far back as I can remember. . . That she does not want me to live the same life she had to live. . . She came from Bosnia, and even if she had an education, they never allowed her to get

a job, she never managed to get a real job. She says that she doesn't want me to destroy my back by cleaning for the Swedes that I have to study. I will apply to a natural science program. (Ali)

The impact of racism can also be experienced as paralysing:

They say different things all the time. On one hand they nag about working hard, devoting oneself to the school. My brother and I have been told that since we were kids. On the other hand we know that the hope they had when they came here is totally lost now. Working hard and study haven't been helping them at all. I know what Sweden has done to them. . . And sometimes I wonder why it would work out good for me, just for me, when it goes down the drain for most people (Abdullah)

How does the stigmatisation and humiliation of the parents affect the self-image of the students? What consequences do these experiences have for their future and their sense of belonging? The last two quotations and the ones to follow conceptualise a repertoire of ambivalent emotions, from feelings of shame and guilt, to pride and gratitude, to anger, affection, and powerlessness. Ambivalence is mirrored in the first quotation by the tensions between not being allowed to work and not managing to get a job, tensions that shift the responsibility from the system to the individual. Some students, like the first ones manage to find strength in the struggles of their parents and subsequently focus on their education and future careers. Others, as in the second quotation, start from the same experience but come to different conclusions. Most of our informants began with the notion that their families had been exposed to unfair treatment in Sweden:

My mother worked all her life. She destroyed her back. There were days when she couldn't get out of bed. Still she has to fill in a bunch of papers and wait for calls from the Office for Social Insurance. I went with her last week... I felt like telling the lady... 'We're immigrants, not criminals'. But I had promised my mother not to create a scene. (Ismail)

In racist representations there are claims that migrant parents demand adulthood from their children by forcing them to act as interpreters in their contacts with welfare authorities who seldom provide state-sponsored interpreters. The pain these teenagers feel when forced to witness how their parents are humiliated in front of welfare bureaucrats is obvious:

I feel so sorry for them – all the crap that they must have dealt with. Especially I feel sorry for my dad, who's forced to attend all these courses for the unemployed. . . I know he feels ashamed every time I have to fill in all these forms from school and state that he's unemployed. . . but it's not his fault. They don't want immigrants, people like my parents. . . I love him, I'm proud of my dad. . . I don't care if he has a job or not.
(Maryam)

This quotation may be read and interpreted in different ways. From one perspective it is about competing feelings. From another it characterises a gender regime that emerges when a man's position within the family weakens and his identity as paternal provider decreases in the context of unemployment.³ But it also shows how exclusion can be experienced-in this case when a student must fill in a form at school that asks for the parent's phone number at work. The following quotation illustrates how the term *unemployed* can be a racialised classification targeting working class migrant parents:

And then I said [to a teacher whom she had been in conflict with] 'you can't call home. My parents aren't unemployed. They both have jobs. They both have real jobs.' And then she suddenly became very cautious. (Nela)

We do not know the facts behind this encounter, and the teacher's actions are not part of the analysis. But the preceding and following quotations underline how these adolescents perceive the way their teachers distinguish different groups of parents solely on the basis of their employment.

My parents are from Iran. My father is an engineer and my mother is an architect. Their education was worth nothing here, but then they attended a bunch of different courses and now they both have jobs. My teachers know my parents understand school and all that (Laleh)

This is one of many examples of how class is being racialised in Sweden and how 'race'/ethnicity are experienced through class relations. Not all parents who have migrated are categorised as 'migrant parents'-not even all parents who have migrated from countries normally described as 'the others' within the Swedish conception of the world. Parents identified as working class are the ones most common looked upon as migrant parents. School

³ This is one of many examples of problems and conflicts being ethnified. One wonders if the same thing would happen in 'Swedish families' if the father was outside the labour market. In other words, is it really a question of ethnicity, or is it about the fact that racialisation and discrimination produce this effect for some but not for others?

engagement varies as much among migrant parents as within any group of other parents. However, migrant parents do sometimes experience difficulties in interpreting how 'engagement' should be expressed within Swedish school regimes.

I've been explaining to [my mother] over and over again that you're just supposed to be there, be there and socialise a little, but nothing more. But she actually believes that the teachers are interested in her point of view. . . She just doesn't get it. It isn't the language. She doesn't understand that when they write 'You are welcome to present your ideas', they don't really mean that. (Sepideh)

Auerbach (2002) gives several examples of the importance of questioning the official discourses about school. She explores how racist practices in schools are constructed through technocracy, formal decisions, and regulations. The social democratic regime has been trying to regulate parental engagement in school within a discourse in which the teacher represents the child's (and the nation's) collective interest against the individual focus of parents on the needs of their 'own' children. Our study tends to show how 'migrant parents' are expected to follow these norms and thereby accept (i.e. subordinate themselves to) the school's view of the children or adolescents, even when these views are based on racist or racialised interpretations. Parents are also expected to support the school practices by participating in such activities as organised gatherings ('multicultural day') and thereby taking an active part in school projects. Parents should also be repressive agents towards their children when the school fails as a mediator of knowledge.

Privileged parents know very well that school policies originate elsewhere, such as at the municipal school board, and that it is there that it is possible to influence school agenda. But meetings at school may be used by more powerful parents to create hierarchies within the classroom. The demands of privileged groups of parents are more difficult to challenge today in a context where individual schools compete for students, and where private schools are always an option for dissatisfied parents. Demands of parents have also expanded in a context of neo-liberal discourses about the Swedish school system discriminating against 'smart children':

At one parents meeting, my father got so upset he kept saying, 'No place for bad boy! No place for bad boys!' [laugh.] I can imagine him in his terrible Swedish, screaming. Everyone must have thought that he was crazy. But our teacher was really good and

said that in her classroom nobody will be left out. She said so because some parents are worried that their ‘Swedish kids cannot learn, since they have to share the classrooms with us. (Enrico)

It is difficult to read exclusively ‘race’/ethnicity in these quotations if ‘race’ is not understood as a way through which a class is experienced and named, in this case in terms of ‘bad boys’, namely those being marginalised by the educational system.

We have argued that there are clear processes of a new form of language in which the *other* (read ‘migrant’) is to be included and civilised. However, such processes of racialisation of both migrant parents and children have different effects on various groups of migrants. While there is research corroborating the stories of our informants pointing out that migrants seen as ‘non-Western’ are the target of ethnic discrimination and constructed as a monolithic category, other research shows that the educational background of migrant parents (read ‘class position before migration’) is central to their children’s school careers. We will explore some of the tensions evolving from our material as expressed within different schools through the narratives of our informants.

School regimes: How class, gender and racialisation are woven together

From the very first interviews, it became clear that it was impossible to speak of ‘the Swedish school’ (in the singular) with regard to the intersection of class and ‘race’/ethnicity, and around questions about the analytical category of ‘race’/ethnicity. The broad variation in the experiences of young people cannot be adequately captured in a case study that embraces a great number of categories-especially class. The diverse experiences are connected with (class-based) differences between schools, differences that can be conceptualised in terms of variations in ethnic school types.

Farin (a pseudonym) attended an old school located in a small municipal community in the rural part of southern Sweden. It is dominated by children of farmers and small businesses. Some parents belong to the successful extreme right wing racist populist party, the Sweden Democrats. She talks about how these children would scream at her and her friends ‘Something smells like a monkey!’ every time they saw them. Her school is an illustration on in which extreme right wing organisations and their propaganda have been occupying a great deal of space (Lodenius & Larsson 1991). Farin was continuously harassed until her parents

decided to move her to another school where students of migrant background were in the majority:

The Nazis used to walk around saying that something smelled like a monkey . . . and the headmaster did nothing. Some of the students in my new school complain about the racism here, but they don't know what they're talking about. . . Here in [Big City] almost everybody's a foreigner. But in other places. . . if I had gone to a Swedish school, let's say Privhood [privileged 'white' Neighbourhood in the major city], over there everybody would glare at me. I actually drove by once with my brother and it felt like everybody was looking at us. (Sarah)

While Farin's first school experience was in an area with considerable Swedish ethnic dominance where her migrant background became extremely visible and was viewed as a threat, her new school is in a city district with predominantly migrant inhabitants. Like many others students we spoke to, Farin attributes the absence of racism to the number of students of migrant background. She laughs at the idea of someone even thinking of overtly identifying themselves as 'Nazis' at a school where most of the students are foreigners. Her definition of places and boundaries, and especially of what is Swedish, is strongly connected with the presence of racism. The rich, predominantly 'foreigner-free' district is, on the one hand, conceptualised as Swedish (together with racism) and, on the other, as not belonging to the Sweden that she identifies with-the Sweden of multicultural cities.

Marcelo tells a different story, one about a privileged white ethnically segregated area outside a big city:

I'm more or less the only foreigner. Things had been so that I didn't even know that I was a foreigner, until one day my father told me off because I had said something – I don't remember exactly – but I had said something like 'We don't want them in our school'. (Marcelo)

Marcelo's experience of a wealthy and privileged school illustrates how identification with his friends called for a dis-identification with his origin. He reports that he is often told that he is not like 'them'. Sofia's school is located in a smaller town, but it still has a significant number of students of foreign background. She points out that 'foreigners' and 'Swedes' do not often interact outside of school, but she does remember once when a 'Swedish' student, a 'poor creature' as she called him, began to dress up like a Nazi and got so bullied that later the 'foreign' girls had to take care of him.

Sarah is from Lebanon and goes to school with Sofia. She uses the word ‘poor’ and ‘boring’ to describe her school, and would rather go to school in a neighbouring university town. She says that despite its being safe in her school, no one ‘cares to do anything for the students’, and it feels hard to tell friends from a nearby multicultural city who attend ‘very cool’ schools that ‘I go to this “poor” school’.

‘Many of us are foreigners here’, says Nadja who dresses as a punk rocker. She looks around the school yard, pointing out classmates. ‘My parents are Kurds from Iran, her parents are from Palestine, and her mother is from Chile.’ Nadja’s understanding of her own identity and others’ is framed within an environment where both the school and the parents who have migrated have their own cultural and economical resources (Nadja’s parents are medical doctors).

Studies on education that examine the situation for students of foreign background have mainly concentrated on suburban areas outside of big cities where many people of foreign background live (Bunar, 2001). Our interviews covered several locations representing different types of schools (see Table 1 below). From this perspective we analysed how school types can be connected to alternate models of racialisation. The pattern we found emerged from the interviews, from official statistical documents concerning the composition of certain districts, and from secondary literature. The analysis was compiled in order to discern the differences between schools in urban and rural areas as well as between the big city areas and the small towns, and between schools with a significant number of students of foreign background and those with few. In Table 1, we attempt to capture these variations of school type and relate them to racialisation and indirectly to class.

In the material we gathered, both class (taking into consideration both socio-economic status and cultural capital) and place are regarded as essential for understanding how the analytical category of ‘race’/ethnicity is woven into everyday life. There is a clear connection between privileged class positions (as in the case of Marcelo, but also of Nadja) and experiences of de-racialisation; and there is an evident connection between underprivileged class positions and processes of racialisation, as in the cases of Roshar, Sofia, Farin, and Sarah.

The interviews reveal how these young people possess different experiences of racism. The informants from schools with a large number of students of foreign background (in both urban and rural areas) seem to feel safe within their school surroundings. According to the students, while such a school generates a feeling of safety, they are also stigmatised and often lack resources.

It stands out as an interesting pattern how class and ‘race’/ethnicity mutually define not only different positions but also the variations among schools, as we try to illustrate in Table 1.

Table 1. School types		
	Small population of foreign background	Large population of foreign background
Cities	Racism is directed to other places and other bodies De-racialisation based on class privileges Low ethnic identification among students of foreign background	Safety, class heterogeneity among students of foreign background Collective racialisation Collective identities such as ‘foreigner’
Rural/small-town areas	Petty bourgeois direct racism Racialisation and stigmatisation processes	Safety, class homogeneity between students of foreign and Swedish background Racialisation grounded in class practices Ethnic identities grounded in individual ethnic communities

The stories of our informants show how a significant number of students of foreign background create a buffer against the phenomenon of racism. Several of the informants from schools with many students of foreign background pointed out that school ‘is not like outside society’. School, to these young people, symbolises a place free from racist practices and threats. Although students in schools with a great number of students of foreign background do not experience racism does not mean there is a lack of racialisation processes within school as an institution or its personnel. Racialisation in these schools is directed towards a large group of students and tends to be seen as the norm. Within this norm there is often a strong ethnic identification, including students calling each other ‘foreigner’ and referring to each

other as bearers of different ethnic qualities. In schools with a small number of students of foreign background in rural/small-town areas, such minority students feel the opposite. These schools are experienced as unsafe and threatening places where racism is more confrontational and where racialisation practices have a more individual impact on students of foreign background.

In urban areas more obvious socioeconomic segregation, schools (augmented by segregated communities as the base for enrolment) with a low number of students of foreign background are characterised by a type of racism that is directed towards other bodies and places. This is strengthened by the fact that children of better educated parents born abroad often live in the same type of suburban areas as those foreign-born parents with little education (Molina 1997). Privileged districts tend thereby to be areas with low numbers of students of foreign background. School in such ethnically-privileged areas of the majority population are marked by an active racism directed outward, towards the 'others'. Those of foreign background attending these schools are often de-racialised ('You are like us, not like them') based on the merging process of a privileged class position and a hegemonic 'Swedish' ethnic identification.

Rural areas and some small towns are characterised, on the one hand, by schools with a low number of students of foreign background in which racism is expressed in a direct and petit bourgeois manner (Laclau 1977) and where racialisation processes are connected to stigmatisation practices. On the other, there are some schools in smaller towns with a large number of students of foreign background that have a high degree of class homogeneity between students of different ethnic background. Here racialisation processes are grounded in class practices. Students in these types of schools possess a stronger ethnic identification with specific ethnic qualities.

Despite the limited empirical basis for generalising this model, it could hopefully serve as a heuristic analytical tool for further research.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this article has been to develop a dialogue between the abstract processes of contentious social change and the concrete experiences of young students identifying themselves as of migrant background. Based on an analysis of earlier research and the socio-

political debate, we argue that the school is one of the arenas in which two central processes of change are taking place. On the one side we see a neo-liberal transformation in which unified public education is restructured into public financed but privately run (and increasingly classed and racialised) segregation, coupled with a new hegemony in which knowledge is defined against all forms of egalitarian and inclusive school practices. On the other, we note a change from an inclusive (yet subordinating) multiculturalism towards an exclusive (and subordinating) neo-assimilationist policy towards racialised migrants.

Our analysis concludes that one cannot a priori position class or 'race'/ethnicity as the main causal factor in shaping a polarized and increasingly unequal school system. In much of today's Marxist class analysis this is a recognized factor. It is also true of some antiracism research. However certain strands of CRT take a strong, and deterministic position on the causal strength of 'race'. We have tried to demonstrate that in certain contexts 'race'/ethnicity seems to be more influential in producing these outcomes. In other cases class is clearly the causal factor. The changing Swedish social formation, as exemplified by increasing racial and class polarization within schooling, needs a theoretical frame capable of capturing the interrelations and dynamics of both class and race at work.

While not retold in a theoretically systematic form, our informants tell stories that are closely linked to the processes of classed and racialised restructuring of education. As a consequence, there are some questions that we have been able to answer through a critical dialogue with these young adolescents, confirming what earlier studies have brought to light: that, as an institution, schools construct boundaries and categorises according to 'race'/ethnicity. The qualitative approach in this study, it is hoped, will facilitate an understanding of the variation and heterogeneity within the Swedish school regime and make it possible to see the nuances in the interactions of class and 'race'/ethnicity.

Our informants tend to contextualise the general and systemic processes in which school restructuring interface with class and racialised segregation. Different school types create unique understandings of 'race'/ethnicity, and racialisation processes vary (and are experienced differently) in a marginal deprived school compared to a privileged school in a exclusive 'Swedish' area. The stories told by our informants are stories of exclusion and subordination by both class and 'race': class may predominate in one instance and 'race' in another, but both are generally present. A quite pessimistic picture emerges of the future that

awaits these students. But resistance is also part of their birthright, as revealed in the interviews. In general it is a defensive resistance in which security and tranquillity are equated with withdrawing from-or at least bracketing-what is perceived as a racist and classist society. To a certain extent the negative aspects of this society may be held at bay through collectives, i.e., the presence and numeric dominance of racialised pupils in the school, or the support and ethnicised or racialised consciousness in some of the pupils' families.

While defensive strategies of resistance may play a positive role in the well-being of these pupils, they are still defensive phenomena-ways of coping with an increasingly harsh society. Resistance in an offensive, reformist, or transformative sense was less frequent in the accounts of the students. Some of the informants seemed willing to change their situations, but were uncertain about how to proceed. While conducting this study we have also been searching for ways to articulate these methods, i.e. to outline credible strategies of fighting subordination and exclusion, but without discerning concrete answers through the stories told by our informants. Thus, in concluding this article, we feel an imminent need for future studies capable of discerning successful strategies not only of resistance but also of positive change.

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