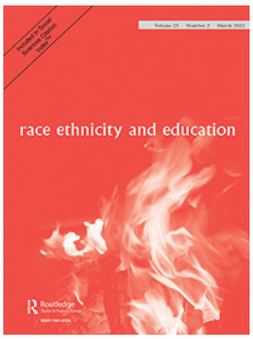

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How to counteract racism in education – A typology of teachers' anti-racist actions

Emma Arneback and Jan Jämte

School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden

ABSTRACT

In this article we develop a typology of anti-racist action in education. Using teachers' practices and experiences, we highlight six approaches on how teachers counter racism in their schools. Each approach entails a different set of actions and aims to address different manifestations of racism. They range from actions that seek to challenge structural racism (the emancipatory, norm-critical and intercultural perspectives), to approaches that engage individualized forms of racism (the relational, democratic and knowledge-focused perspectives). Our analysis makes the complexity of both racism and anti-racism visible. It provides an opportunity to navigate the various types of anti-racist actions, and make conscious decisions regarding what type should be used in relation to different manifestations of racism. The analysis is based on interviews with 27 high-school teachers working in the Swedish educational system.

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Introduction

Ever since WWII, education in many Western countries has been considered an important arena to end racial oppression and discrimination (Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs 2017). The rise of far-right parties and politicians with an anti-immigration agenda (Mudde 2019), widespread negative attitudes towards people seen as 'foreigners' (ECRI 2010–2018) and mobilizations and tensions in civil society based on conflicts over immigration, integration and racial oppression (Buchanan, Bui, and Patel 2020; Hutter and Borbáth 2019; Gattinara and Pirro 2019) have once again brought the issue of racism to the fore. These developments have also come to challenge those who work in schools. In a general sense, we have conceptualized these challenges as *external* and *internal* (Arneback and Jämte 2015). External in the sense that the racism that manifests itself in society also affects schools, for example, when political actors seek admission to schools to mobilize support among youth, in systemic school segregation or in patterns of 'white-flight.' Internal in the sense that the racist opinions, practices and structures that exist in society are present in schools as well, manifesting themselves in prejudice, micro-aggressions, discrimination, exclusionary practices, ethnocentric education, hate-speech and racial violence.

CONTACT Jan Jämte jan.jamte@oru.se

Research indicates that many teachers and school administrators are unclear about how to act on or address these challenges (Arneback and Englund 2020; Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs 2017). In many cases, there is widespread uncertainty among teachers concerning their responsibilities, how to understand and identify racism in educational settings, and how to respond. What types of anti-racist actions can or should be used in relation to different manifestations of racism in education? In this article, we address this uncertainty by developing a typology of anti-racist actions in education. We understand racism as an exclusionary and discriminatory practice grounded in a variable of shifting assumptions, logics and ideational constructs that manifest on individual, social and structural levels (cf. Behtoui and Jonsson 2013; Blaut 1992; Jämte 2013). Inspired by pragmatism (Dewey 1922/1988, 1932/1985), we conduct an empirical investigation of a wide palette of anti-racist actions used in educational settings.

To do this, we draw on the practices of 27 teachers in Sweden who, in different ways, work to counteract racism. Our analysis of the data has been guided by three main research questions: 1) *What anti-racist actions have been developed and used by teachers?* 2) *How do these anti-racist actions intersect with different manifestations of racism?* 3) *What/who are the targets of change in each approach?* The results identify six approaches and show how these perspectives are used in the face of different manifestations of racism, ranging from attempts to affect dominant power structures and norms to affecting individual beliefs and behaviors. Taken together, they produce a typology that makes the complexity of both racism and anti-racism visible and serves as a tool to help educators make active decisions regarding what type of anti-racist action would best be used in relation to the specific form of racism manifested.

Background: racism and anti-racism in the Swedish context

Our typology of anti-racist action is derived from an analysis of interviews with 27 teachers who teach in Swedish upper secondary schools. Upper secondary school has three program streams, all of a three-year duration: introductory, vocational and higher education preparation (Lgy 2011).[1] Enrolment is voluntary, and students range in age from 16 to 19 years. Sweden does not maintain detailed statistics on teacher and student ethnicity, but general school statistics show that 31% of the students in upper secondary schools have a 'foreign background' (SCB 2020), meaning that they or both their parents were born outside of Sweden.

How individual teachers work to counteract racism in upper secondary school is influenced by a range of internal and external factors, teachers' individual experiences, their personal and professional lives and the particularities of local school contexts. More generally, counteracting racism is also affected by Sweden's educational policies and regulations and how racism has been conceptualized in Sweden. We now turn to a discussion of these two factors.

Racism and Swedish educational policy

Since the emergence of a national school system in the mid-1800s, the values governing education in Sweden have shifted over time (Arneback 2012). After WWII and its racist atrocities, the curriculum began to emphasize the democratic task of education: teaching

students the knowledge, skills and values needed to be active democratic citizens, as well as instilling an awareness of and commitment to the equality of all people, equal rights and equal opportunities (Englund 1986/2005).

That said, it has only been in the last 25 years that counteracting racism has been an explicit component of the curriculum and educational law. During the 1960s and 70s, issues of racism were not featured in educational law or curriculum, and throughout the 1980s, anti-racist work took the form of general anti-bullying measures (Arneback 2012). The mandate to counter racism was officially introduced into curricula in 1994, with the addition of a policy measure stating that 'xenophobia and intolerance must be actively confronted with knowledge, open discussion and effective measures' (Lpf 1994), a formulation that remains a part of curricula today, with only slight variation (Lgy 2011). This change was also reflected in the Swedish Education Act that highlighted that all education should 'actively oppose all forms of abusive behavior, such as bullying and racism' (SFS 1999:886, 1:2). The emphasis on the need for educational action against racism was mirrored in an increased political and societal focus on white supremacists in Sweden, in the 1990s. From being considered a minor issue for decades, the activities of the far-right, embodied in the violent skinhead movement, brought the issue of racism to the fore, triggering a wide range of measures by actors in institutionalized politics, civil society and education (Jämte 2013).

During the 2000s, words such as 'racism' and 'racist behavior' were gradually replaced by juridical terms that emphasized that schools had to work against all forms of *discrimination*, including harassment or disadvantaging based on religion, ethnicity, skin color, nationality or 'similar circumstances,' the latter covering unfounded misconceptions based on "race" (SFS 2008:567, 2010:800). These changes mirrored an adjustment to EU policy, which emphasized the obligation of all member states to work against discrimination (Arneback and Quennerstedt 2016).

In sum, the policy mandate to counter racism in Sweden encompasses all school employees and rests on two pillars. First, to work *for* values such as democracy, the equal value of all people, and equal rights and opportunities. Second, to actively work *against* ideas and practices that stands in contrast to these values. This includes racist beliefs, as well as ethnic and religious discrimination and harassment. How this mandate is understood and implemented in practice is, however, an empirical matter, and depends on how racism is understood in local contexts.

(Challenging) the dominant view of racism

Since WWII, the historically dominant view of racism in Sweden has been heavily influenced by institutionalized forms of racist ideas and practices, most notably the Holocaust and South Africa's apartheid system (Jämte 2013). In line with this focus, racism has primarily been defined as an idea or ideology based on the assumption that biological races exist and that they should be valued hierarchically (Pripp and Öhlander 2008; SOU 2005:56). This understanding has been used in governmental campaigns, official definitions as well as everyday teaching in many Swedish schools (Forum för levande historia 2010).

This understanding of racism has also influenced who has been seen as racist and what constitutes a racist act. A racist is, by this definition, someone who has fixed ideas about race and openly expresses hostility towards other ethnic groups, while a racist act is

something that is intentionally carried out by an individual as an outgrowth of these beliefs. Thus, racism has been seen as an individualized and ideological problem, most clearly expressed by persons or groups sympathizing with outspoken racist beliefs (Schmauch 2006; SOU 2005:56).

Throughout the second half of the 1900s, this definition affected how the problem of racism was understood in a Swedish context. For a long time, the general view was that racism was unacceptable, but marginal, in Swedish society, mostly tied to small extremist groups and 'young, angry, frustrated' men on the political margins (Lööw 2007, 82–83; Schmauch 2006). Sweden, in general, has been seen as resting on the laurels of an 'anti-racist norm' that also characterizes Swedish institutions, policies and public morality (Ålund and Schierup 1991). This means that in an educational setting, schools have primarily focused on responding to student behavior that clearly expresses or is in accordance with racist beliefs, while paying less attention to institutional and structural manifestations of racism (Arneback 2012; Arneback and Quennerstedt 2016).

This has begun to change in the last decade. Political developments, as well as research on different forms of racism, have challenged the historically dominant view of racism as a marginal problem within Swedish society. As in many other Western countries, studies and reports highlight the existence of widespread intolerance, structural discrimination of ethnic minorities and a growing number of right-wing parties that advocate for curtailing immigration (Manga and Rosales 2017; Rydgren and Ruth 2011). Research and reports have also shown how racism can manifest itself in myriad ways within the educational system (Jämte 2012; León Rosales 2010; SOU 2005:56, 2006:79). In practice, the problems range from explicit manifestations of racism, such as psychological abuse and physical violence, to more subtle expressions such as discrimination, micro-aggression and social exclusion.

In sum, anti-racist practices in the Swedish educational context have often focused on individualized, ideational and explicit forms of racism. During the last decade, increased attention has been paid to structural racism, a trend that is also advocated in educational policy and manifested in educational material developed by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Arneback and Jämte 2017; Arneback and Quennerstedt 2016; SFS 2008:567, 2010:800). In this article we will focus on how teachers develop and deploy anti-racist practices to counter both individualized and structural manifestations of racism. Given the context outlined above, the Swedish case provides an opportunity to illustrate the complexity of both racist and anti-racist practices, as well as analyze how different anti-racist actions are used to counteract multiple racisms.

Research on educational responses to racism

Since WWII, there has been an increased emphasis in many Western countries on the need for educational responses to racism (Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs 2017). These efforts have resulted in the establishment of a wide range of theoretical and educational traditions, from multicultural, critical multicultural, and intercultural pedagogy to anti-racist, critical race, post-colonial, anti-oppressive, intersectional, and post-structural education, as well as critical pedagogy (Boler 2004; Ladson-Billings and Gillborn 2004; Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs 2017; Dei, George, and McDermott 2014). On the one hand, these different framings all have the overarching aim to achieve greater equality and a world

without racism. On the other hand, many of them differ substantially in their underlying theoretical assumptions and definitions of racism, as well as their interrelated practices.

The development of multicultural education often marks the starting point for descriptions of educational efforts to counteract racism in the post-war era (Ladson-Billings and Gillborn 2004). Since the 1960s, advocates for multicultural education have striven to show how ethnocentrism operates in education and stressed the need for educational reform. For instance, proponents have argued for a multicultural curriculum and cultural plurality in schools in order to develop increased acceptance and celebration of cultural diversity, intergroup harmony and equal opportunities in education (Banks and McGee Banks 2009; Díaz 2001). In parts of Europe, the question of cultural diversity has been addressed in terms of intercultural education (Faas, Hajisoteriou, and Angelides 2014; Leeman and Reid 2006). With the focus on *inter* (in between), the proponents of this perspective argue for the need to create open-ended and flexible communicative conditions that make it possible for people with different cultural backgrounds to learn from each other. To avoid the status quo and hierarchization of cultural groups, researchers have also argued that there is a need to infuse intercultural education with postcolonial perspectives (Coulby 2006; Gorski 2008).

These perspectives present in multicultural education (and partly also in interculturalism) have been critiqued by researchers in the field of antiracist education and critical race theory (Gillborn 2008; Lynn and Dixson 2013; Troyna 1987) who have emphasized the need to critically assess structures, systems and institutions. This means focusing on systemic racism and the power imbalance between different racial identities in order to take action on inequity and achieve social justice. A literature review by Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs (2017) on research of anti-racist education from 2000 to 2015 reveals three aspects that unite the diverse research in the field: '(1) identifying or making visible systemic oppression; (2) challenging denial of complicity in such oppression ... [with the] ambitions of (3) ultimately transforming structural inequality' (135).

Anti-racist education has been criticized for being politicized and focusing too narrowly on race (Lund and Carr 2008). In recent years, these perspectives have been infused by a debate on intersectionality and the need to give increased attention to structures that perpetuate discrimination based on class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture and race (Gillborn 2008; Dei, George, and McDermott 2014). Recent developments also emphasize the need to identify who teachers and students actually are (Kohli 2014; Ohito 2019), how they create diversity in pathways to transformation, and the importance of understanding and drawing on emotions such as discomfort, fear, anger and love in anti-racist education (Matias 2016; Zembylas 2010).

In relation to the theoretical developments mentioned above, few studies have focused on the anti-racist actions that teachers actually develop and deploy on the ground in their professional work. Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs (2017) conclude their literature review by pointing out that even if researchers in the field debate the need for anti-racist action, they 'typically do not offer descriptions of what such transformation looks like' (135). To help fill this gap, this study connects to a small but growing field of research on *anti-racist action* in education. These scholars emphasize that no single approach works as a 'quick fix' (Arneback 2012; Jämte 2012; Dei, George, and McDermott 2014). Instead, research shows that a variety of anti-racist actions are needed in the face of different forms of racism (Arneback and Jämte 2017). To navigate among the approaches available, it is

important to analyze racism and teachers' responses to it in specific, local educational contexts.

In this article we are interested in the *variety* of approaches that have been developed and used by teachers to counteract racism in education. To make room for the plurality of anti-racist actions used by teachers, we use a broad conceptualization of racism. We refrain from taking an evaluative stance of the different approaches teachers use; neither do we primarily engage in the underlying theoretical debate that marks the research field of educational responses to racism. Instead, we contribute a typology that enables researchers and educators to reflect on and engage different approaches to anti-racist action in educational practice.

Analytical framework

Racism as practice

Given that this article focuses on anti-racist actions, we also address the conceptualizations of racism. In line with our focus on anti-racism as practice, we begin with a definition that recognizes racism through its practices (Behtoui and Jonsson 2013; Blaut 1992; Jämte 2013). Rather than defining racism as a specific set of ideational constructs (such as a clearly demarcated theory or ideology), we emphasize action and function. In essence, racism is an exclusionary and discriminatory practice that is grounded in a range of shifting, yet interlocking, assumptions, theories and ideational constructs, each dependent on the historical and social contexts in which they emerge (Balibar 1991; Bethencourt 2015; Goldberg 1990). We argue that our focus on action allows for a broad understanding that acknowledges the historical continuity of racist practices, as well as the variable combinations of ideas, logics and theories that have supported them.

From this perspective, racism (or, more accurately, racisms) has functioned to differentiate groups of people based on race, ethnicity, religion and nationality, something that is often ascribed to observable characteristics of an individual (e.g., skin color). These categorizations have facilitated practices of exclusion, exploitation, discrimination, killings, and at times, eradication of groups. Racist acts can be manifested on an individual, social or structural level. On the individual level, racist practices can be driven by ideational motives or not, be intended or unintended, and take both subtle and explicit forms. They range from social exclusion, ridiculing and othering, to micro-aggressions, threats, fear mongering and violence. On a social level, acts of discrimination and exclusion are institutionalized through rules and regulations, everyday practices and social norms. Taken together, racist practices produce and reproduce structures in society in which certain ethnic, racial and religious groups run a higher risk of being the subject of harassment or discrimination and have diminished access to power, resources, status, privilege as well as opportunities in life (Behtoui and Jonsson 2013; Jämte 2013; SOU 2005: 56).

This understanding of racism as a practice allows us to recognize different expressions of it in educational settings, whether as thoughts, feelings and individual acts, as social norms and institutionalized practices, or as unequal distribution of power, privilege and life opportunities. Along with examining how teachers work to counteract explicit forms

of racism, our definition also allows us to scrutinize how teachers address subtle and implicit manifestations of racism.

Anti-racist action

Our understanding of racism facilitates an empirical investigation of a wide palette of anti-racist actions and creates opportunities for a theoretical discussion about how different actions are used to counteract different expressions of racism. Taking a pragmatic approach, we use the concept of *anti-racist action* to capture the variety of actions that are being used to counteract racism in educational settings (Dewey 1922/1988, 1932/1985; see also Arneback 2012). To identify the different forms of anti-racist actions, we gathered empirical data from teachers working in diverse educational settings (see Methods, data sources and analysis). An underlying assumption of our research is that actions arise through life experience (Dewey 1922/1988) and that different experiences and understandings of racism give rise to different kinds of actions. A basic component of pragmatism is the emphasis on the need for continual reflection in relation to actions, especially when it comes to moral and political issues. By reflecting on our actions, we can consider and challenge them and thereby change ourselves and our societies. In this sense, we advocate a reflective relation to anti-racist actions and point out that we need to continually reshape our actions.

With this approach, it follows that different anti-racist actions need to be understood in relation to past events (teachers' previous life experiences), the present (current context and local tensions) and the future (as possibilities for further actions). This is in line with our intention to present a typology of anti-racist actions that can be used for further reflection and action. The strength of our approach is that it opens up the possibility for a plurality of actions, reflecting how efforts to counteract racism are put into practice in real life and how they seek to address different targets of change, ranging from structural to individual manifestations of racism. This said, it is important to note that individual teachers are conditioned and limited by a range of external factors, meaning that their actions are one of several important aspects for understanding educational efforts to counteract racism.

Methods, data sources and analysis

The main data used in this article are interviews with 27 high-school teachers regarding the anti-racist actions they have developed and used in their professional work. To arrive at a nuanced picture, we interviewed teachers in three different settings: 1) teachers who are organized in anti-racist networks (N = 10), 2) teachers working in schools where racism is a manifest problem (N = 9) and 3) teachers working in schools where racism is considered a minor issue (N = 8). Each teacher was interviewed twice (N = 53).[2] The interviews were conducted in 2017 and 2018 and were 1–2 hours in length. The initial interview was semi-structured (Patton 2002) and covered three main themes: the teachers' backgrounds and personal experiences of racism, their understanding and experience of racism in education and the anti-racist actions they had developed and used in their school. In the second interview, we presented the teachers with specific cases generated from the first round of interviews. This was done in order to capture the

reflexive processes underlying different types of actions in relation to different forms of racism in education. All the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

In our analysis of the interview transcripts, we used NVivo for a three-step meaning analysis (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). The first step consisted of reading the transcripts line by line. Based on our previous research on anti-racist actions (Arneback 2012; Arneback and Jämte 2017), we created an initial analytical scheme of different possible approaches but made sure to remain open to new types of action and expressions of racism. We coded the material by breaking the texts into small segments and attaching nodes to highlight the meaning of different parts of the text. In the second step, we sorted the nodes into broad themes, or categories, searching for overall patterns of anti-racist actions. This part of the analysis focused on the first research question: *What anti-racist actions were developed and used by the teachers*? Based on this step, it was possible to get a general overview of how often different types of actions were employed, which we grouped into the broad categories of 'uncommon' (1–9 informants), 'common' (10–18 informants) and 'very common' (19–27 informants). The third step consisted of a deeper interpretation of the themes, focusing on the second and third research questions: (2) *How do these anti-racist actions intersect with different expressions of racism?* (3) *What/who are the targets of change in each approach?* By searching for patterns within different anti-racist approaches, we focused our analysis on their intersection with different expressions of racism and *what* or *who* was the main target of change.

We present the end-result of our analysis as a typology of different anti-racist actions, in which we distinguish between (1) different sets of actions, (2) how they address different manifestations of racism and (3) how they involve different targets of change. We also analyzed the connection between teachers' anti-racist action and previous research on educational responses to racism, relating our typology to established traditions within the field. Our analytical focus on creating a typology of different types of anti-racist actions means we pay less attention to the individual teachers and their background. We have provided information to contextualize the actions of interviewees but refrained from going into further detail.

A typology of anti-racist actions

In our analysis of interviews, we identified six types of anti-racist action. Three address structural manifestations of racism (emancipatory, norm-critical and intercultural actions) and three engage individualized expressions of racism (relational, democratic and knowledge-focused actions).

Emancipatory action

The teachers who used an emancipatory approach have often been treated unequally or experienced harassment themselves. They believe that their and their students' experiences of discrimination can be used in the critical examination of societal power structures, based on race, ethnicity and religion. By providing opportunities for students to explore their own experiences of racism and connecting them to the experience of others, the goal of this approach is to make visible the underlying structures that cause inequality. Teachers working with this approach see their students as political subjects.

Their task involves helping students develop the tools needed to challenge structures and mechanisms that perpetuate inequality and learn how to respond to racism when it happens to them or they witness it. The learning ranges from knowing how to organize, protest and participate in public debate to coping and responding to negative treatment and stereotypes.

The emancipatory approach was uncommonly used by the teachers we interviewed, although some did. Anna, a white teacher working in higher education preparatory programs in a large city, described how she devoted much of her time to teaching students the skills needed to counter racism in 'everyday life,' for example, 'when they arrive at school in the morning broken because someone yelled at them [on the subway] because they wear a veil or are from Somalia.' Anna tries to empower her students by giving them the opportunity to develop strategies to handle these types of situations. According to Anna, students often experience empowerment when they have deliberated on how to respond; they manage to keep their composure and self-control, while still taking a clear stand against their harassers.

With its focus on societal inequality, the emancipatory approach also addresses internalized racism, a form of oppression in which experiences of unequal treatment, negative attitudes and harassment are appropriated and turned into internal restrictions such as a negative self-image or feelings of inferiority. Sandro, a colored teacher in a large city with experience in both vocational and higher education preparatory programs, tries to address internalized racism among his colored students. He emphasizes the importance of getting students to understand the 'mechanisms that control their way of thinking' in order to liberate them from the 'preconceptions, expectations and demands that come from the outside.' He gave an example of trying to tell a young racialized girl that 'she wasn't actually black; she had been *made* black by a system that divides people into black and white.' As he told her, this was a 'social construct filled with preconceptions, not something that defines who you are.' Sandro was clear that their shared experiences of oppression made it possible to have this kind of communication (cf. Kohli 2014). But even then it was hard to discuss how racism operates and restricts their lives. Sandro also works with social mobilization in his teaching and creates situations where students take part in local society, for example, by writing articles or demonstrating.

Given that societal structures intersect in patterns of inequality, the emancipatory approach is used to highlight the complexity of power relations and show how individuals are positioned differently in relation to these structures. Even as teachers using the emancipatory approach seek to help the structurally disadvantaged and oppressed find their voice, they also work with the privileged to help them understand what it means to be privileged. In order to create mutual awareness and solidarity among students from different backgrounds, the teachers we interviewed worked to transfer experiences of power and privilege from one power structure (along the lines of class, ethnicity, gender, etc.) to another, highlighting the uniqueness of different structures, but also their similarities and intersectionality.

In sum, the emancipatory approach targets *structural* racism, and teachers who used it acknowledged how power structures and systems of subordination based on class, gender, ethnicity and other forms of social stratification permeate society. This perspective relates to the field of anti-racist education and critical pedagogy through its focus on

visualizing and challenging systemic oppression (Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs 2017) and the importance of acknowledging *who* the teacher is in order to create educational processes of change (Ohito 2019), especially in relation to internalized racism (Kohli 2014). Despite their differences, teachers who used an emancipatory approach were united in their belief in the necessity – and possibility – of *structural change*. For them, schools were an arena in which students were being prepared for life and to work to transform societies marked by inequality.

Norm-critical action

Teachers who used *norm-critical action* sought to make visible, critically examine and challenge dominant social norms in society, schools and education. This mode of anti-racist action uses norms as a way to make visible informal and formal social rules of what is considered normal, desirable or superior in a given context, such as a school. This is done to help students critically engage norms that include and exclude, and create unequal systems of privilege and disadvantage.

A norm-critical approach was commonly used by the teachers we interviewed, and several of them referred to it as integral to their anti-racist teaching. The norm-critical approach provided teachers with concepts and tools to address structural dimensions of racism. By focusing on social norms in their teaching, they have become more aware of the unequal opportunities in society and how to challenge power structures that perpetuate this inequity. This perspective encourages processes of change and self-reflexivity on the part of the individual teacher, students and schools as a community.

Erik, a white teacher working at a higher education preparatory program in a large city, described how the norm-critical approach affected his teaching: '[I] too constantly question my own prejudices by constantly examining myself; to constantly recognize myself as imperfect.' Erik works to become aware of his own privileges as a white man and struggles with how to challenge his position within dominant structures. Often he uses experiences from his own life to show students how he unwillingly plays a part in reproducing the norms and structures that run through society. By doing this, Erik hopes to inspire his students to self-scrutinize: '[If] I also do this, then it will be easier for others [students] to do the same.'

Teachers were creative in how they had students discuss norms, privilege and prejudice in society. Fatima, a black teacher working with newly arrived students with migrant backgrounds in a small town, uses an exercise where the students are given pictures of famous Swedes from various ethnic and racial backgrounds to identify their occupation. Very often students link white Swedes to occupations associated with professional and higher social classes, while people of color are associated with unskilled working-class occupations. In reality, the people of color in the exercise are lawyers, authors or musicians. Fatima uses this exercise to discuss stereotypes and prejudice, with the aim of 'trying to make them [students] see that a Swedish person from Sweden can look different [than expected].'

In sum, the norm-critical approach can be used on different levels: teachers' individual reflections (on their own position and norms), collegial reflections (on an institutional level), and as a perspective in teaching (norm-critical education). The specific teaching relates to a norm-critical approach that has been developed in Sweden

during the last two decades (Björkman and Bromseth 2019; Reimers and Martinsson 2017). On a general level, it also relates to the field of anti-racist education and intersectional pedagogy (cf. Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs 2017) through its *structural understanding* of racism that emphasizes how dominant social norms help create unequal opportunities in society and schools. Therefore, the long-term desired change is *structural change*, whether of schools or society, and students and staff must be involved in this transformation.

Intercultural action

Teachers using the *intercultural approach* focus on visualizing and creating spaces for cultural diversity and intercultural processes. This is done through the content of their teaching, by fostering a school environment that includes and makes visible all students and by raising awareness of the multiplicity of ways of living and being that exist in their school and society.

In our data, intercultural action was common and mostly used in schools with a large number of colored students, especially students who had recently arrived in Sweden. Teachers in these schools repeatedly noted the importance of one particular practice: facilitating meetings of students from different backgrounds. Teachers saw this as creating positive conditions for students to live and learn together in a society marked by diversity. Tove, a white teacher who works in a small town with a large number of students who recently arrived in Sweden, creates opportunities for meetings through intercultural cafés at the school: 'They [students with different backgrounds] sit down, have a drink together and talk about things that may not necessarily have anything to do with background or racialization . . . . For example, we discussed questions like "how do you flirt?" And then the students see that "okay that person might not be as strange as I thought at the beginning."' For Tove, it is important to create communicative spaces for intercultural meetings to counteract internal segregation at her school.

Dennis is a colored teacher working in a vocational program in a rural area. He has similar goals to create intercultural meetings but focuses on the content of educational programs. For example, he described how he assigned students the task of presenting their program to newly arrived students with migrant backgrounds: 'Then they [newly arrived students] go around to different stations and test practical things, so we get positive meetings. They may get to know each other, say who they are and give their names; they do things together.' For Dennis this was not a 'miracle medicine' but only the first of many steps that would make it possible for students to change their attitudes about each other: 'We don't assume that they will become the best friends in the world. They may say hello to each other, some may play billiards . . . and we may succeed in reducing some of their fears. And then, in the long run, it perhaps makes you feel better and less suspicious and afraid of others.'

One critical aspect raised by teachers was the power imbalance that often exists between white students with a Swedish background and colored students with migrant backgrounds. Dennis described resistance to intercultural meetings from both students and colleagues born in Sweden. Still, Dennis is convinced that despite the difficult and painful beginning of his plan, it is the only way forward if the school is to mitigate segregation and racism in the long run.

In our data, intercultural action primarily focuses on *structural dimensions* of racism by challenging monocultural, segregated and ethnocentric school environments where some students are treated as 'other.' This form of action relates to the perspective of intercultural education (cf. Faas, Hajisoteriou, and Angelides 2014; Leeman and Reid 2006). The objective of this action is structural change in the sense that patterns of segregation and power imbalances within multicultural educational settings are to be transformed by establishing intercultural processes and developing intercultural competence among students and teachers. In the long run, teachers intend for these altered patterns to move beyond the school setting, challenging patterns of segregation in society.

Democratic action

Teachers using *democratic action* to counteract racism seek to involve students in democratic dialogue and deliberative communication on political and moral issues. This reflects the belief that democratic dialogue is a useful tool to counteract racism in educational contexts.

Democratic action was a common strategy used by the teachers we interviewed. In our data, democratic action was mainly expressed through communicative and dialogical approaches in education, but also entailed reflection on the necessary conditions to make this type of communication possible. Teachers undertook democratic action in several ways. Some strove for open, deliberative communication in their classrooms and others for dialogue among students with the aim to make visible, challenge and transform the racist views present. For Måns, a white teacher working in both vocational and higher education preparatory programs in a small town, a democratic dialogue is important to achieve a communicative climate where he meets the students 'as a citizen to a citizen, or a human to a human,' rather than as a 'teacher to students.' In his democratic discussions on topics related to racism, it is important for him to be 'here and now, we, together' and that 'students can put themselves into the situation.' According to Måns, democratic action works best when it is 'for real.' One of his students said that he appreciated these discussions because 'it was not like a lesson. It was like if we talked together.' Such a perspective highlights authenticity in communication to avoid creating distance and hierarchies in conversations about controversial issues in education. By Måns bringing himself into the conversation as a person (and not as a teacher), he gets students to do the same and to meet in a democratic fashion in the face of difficult and controversial issues.

However, in tandem with the growing societal polarization on issues such as racism, nationalism, migration and immigration, there have been discussions about the limits of freedom of speech in education, followed by policy changes in the Swedish Educational Act (SFS 2010:800, 2008:567) that influence the kind of space available for democratic dialogue (Arneback 2012). This was also highlighted by the teachers interviewed. Anna is a white teacher working in higher education preparatory programs in a large Swedish city. She works extensively with boundaries in democratic communication to make room for what she describes as 'productive democratic dialogue.' This includes 'differentiating between a person and the aim' and keeping students from thinking that the discussion is 'a debate or a seminar where you put up a fight,' like 'politicians on TV.' She tells her students that they are not allowed 'to violate another person' in the discussions. This

means there is no room for students to use the excuse of freedom of speech to say anything they like.

This approach to anti-racist action focuses on the need to create a democratic space for dialogue in the classroom among students with different views and experiences. By letting students meet, talk and listen in a respectful and authentic way, teachers sought to engage students with views and beliefs that made them gravitate to socially isolated milieus. This kind of action relates to research on the possibility and impossibility of transformation through democratic communication in education (cf. Arneback and Englund 2020; Boler 2004). The focus of this approach is mainly *individual expressions of racism* and the need to foster democratic citizens through education, as the object is to change *students' views and beliefs*.

Relational action

Teachers who used *relational action* to counteract racism emphasized the need to foster strong positive relations with and among their students, characterized by care, respect and solidarity. Their goal was to help students develop a positive relationship with themselves, others and the unknown. The main idea behind this kind of action is that racist attitudes and practices develop through problematic socialization, which leads to negative self-worth, detachment and a lack of trust of society. In contrast, students who develop positive self-worth will be less likely to offend and judge others. This type of action is often promoted in relation to students who are isolated in school and/or society and are at risk of being drawn to right-wing extremist milieus.

It was common for teachers to highlight that a positive relationship between teachers and students formed the basis for all types of anti-racist work, since it creates a positive starting-point for learning and developing values and knowledge, as well as challenging social norms and privilege. The relational approach was often seen as especially important with students who engage in racist speech and behavior. Showing care for and recognizing these students is an important step for teachers in opening doors for them to alternative communities that foster positive self-worth. This was highlighted by Carl, a white teacher in a large city with experience in higher education preparatory and vocational programs. He shared his experiences of teaching a student who was a part of a right-wing extremist group that expressed openly racist views and insisted on his right to a 'Turk-free city.' Carl admitted that 'it was damn tiring in many ways' but instead of confronting the student's political views, he found ways to establish a positive relationship with the student while at the same time standing for democratic values and introducing the student to alternative ideas. 'He was interested in history, and I thought, that's good. I teach history and I can meet him there.' By focusing on their common interest, Carl was able to interact positively with the student on history as a subject, which could, in the long run, lead to the student changing his self-perception, his position in school and society, and how he experiences the 'other.' In Carl's mind, it was important that teachers believe 'that everyone has the possibility to change his mind.'

Another example of relational action came from Maj, a white teacher working in higher education preparatory and vocational programs in a small town. When asked how she counteracts racism in her teaching, she replied: 'I think it is about the personal meeting. That you . . . meet them [students] with respect.' Her work is similar to Carl's,

but she focuses on students who experience racism. She described how colored students, especially with migrant backgrounds, in her school regularly experience school and life as negative; they feel excluded and as if they don't belong, almost to the point of giving up. Given this, it takes her a while to establish a meaningful and positive relationship with a student. She emphasized the need for relational work in classrooms to avoid conflict, especially when students are new. By establishing personal contacts, she tries to make sure 'that everybody is part of the group, and that there are no differences.' From Maj's perspective, relational work forms the basis of preventing racism on which other types of action can be built.

A relational approach focuses on the need to create a positive relational experience in education, characterized by care, respect and solidarity. In doing so, teachers try to prevent the development of *individual expressions of racism* as well as assist those who are the targets of racist acts. This relates to research that highlights the importance of positive relations and the need for recognition when working with students who experience social exclusion (Mattsson and Johansson 2020; Noddings 2005). In order to be open to others, students must have a positive sense of self. In the relational approach, the object of change is *students* and their views on how to relate to themselves, and in the long run, the world in which they live.

Knowledge-focused action

Teachers working with knowledge-focused action seek to provide students with information that counteracts racism, as well as the skills necessary to critically examine information gleaned from the surrounding society. In practice, this means learning about the complex history of racist ideas and practices, racism's contemporary expressions and how to critically assess relevant sources.

It was common for teachers to highlight different topics as important for their knowledge-focused action. Some pointed to education about ethnic minorities and religions, others to the history of racism, yet others to its contemporary expression. One common reference that created both possibilities and limits was the recurring emphasis on educating students about the Holocaust and Nazism, the dominant narrative on racism in northern Europe. A common approach is to visit Holocaust sites with groups of students. Learning from history allows students to contrast historical events with the societal development of today. Georgios, a colored teacher in an urban area working in all three types of programs, leads such trips. He described them as emotional and knowledge-focused journeys that teachers and students take together: 'doing travels with students to the most awful places in history gives the students so much experience and so much knowledge.' Before traveling, they prepare themselves by reading about the history of racism and WWII, and afterward the students make documentaries and exhibits based on what they have learned. According to Georgios, the impact on students is significant. As Georgios said, when you have witnessed and learned about those places you 'gain a greater understanding of why it is so important to work with questions of democracy . . . . It is always important, it applies to everything and everyone, regardless of time and space, and we cannot take it for granted.'

This said, most of the knowledge-focused teaching described by the teachers was done in the classroom. For instance, Jonas, a white teacher who works at a school in

a large city in both vocational and higher education preparatory programs, described how in his history class he teaches about 'colonial heritage, colonialism through imperialism, and the white man's burden.' He also teaches about 'economic differences among regions of the world that lead to ethnic cleansing, in Rwanda for example.' In civic education classes, he addresses 'different categorizations that we humans impose and how they divide us, such as gender, sexuality … ethnicity, skin color, culture and so on' and also how they relate to each other. Overall, Jonas is an example of a teacher who uses the subjects he teaches to address aspects of knowledge that he has experienced as having the potential to prevent the development of racist ideas and practices among students.

In sum, knowledge-focused anti-racist action seeks to provide students with different types of knowledge that prevent *individual expressions of racism*. This approach builds on the assumption that racism stems from a lack of knowledge and that the 'right' kind of knowledge will impede the development of students' racist beliefs (Arneback 2012; Arneback and Jämte 2017). The types of knowledge taught differ from educational subject to subject and range from learning from historical events to analyzing contemporary developments. Since it is the students who require knowledge, there is a strong focus on the *student* as the target of change.

Discussion

The conceptualization of racism as practice allows for the recognition of the various ways racism manifests itself in educational settings and society. While some teachers emphasize the need to counter individual students' expressions of racism, others work to challenge social norms of exclusion, institutional discrimination, monocultural learning environments or internalized restrictions. The complexity of the problem calls for a wide range of anti-racist actions, something that our data also showed. No single approach has the potential to address all manifestations of racism. Instead, teachers have developed various approaches to counter different forms of racism that address different targets of change. The Table 1 below summarizes the main characteristics of each approach through a focus on (1) the type of action, (2) the manifestation of racism in focus and (3) the main target of change.

Even though our results showcase a broad palette of actions, some approaches are more common than others. In line with the historically dominant view of racism in Sweden (cf. Jämte 2013; Pripp and Öhlander 2008), we see how the three perspectives that seek to address individual expressions of racism are still more common than approaches that seek to redress structural manifestations of racism. In these approaches, individual students are the targets of change, and racism is understood as a problem that primarily enters into the school through certain problematic youth (Arneback 2012; Arneback and Quennerstedt 2016). Schools, and those who work in them, are most often seen as part of the solution, not the problem.

This said, the predominance of actions that seek to address individual expressions of racism is noteworthy in comparison to earlier work within the field of educational responses to racism. In relation to broad definitions, it can be said that all the approaches adopted or developed to oppose racism in education seek to achieve systematic change. If we, however, turn to more specific definitions, as provided by Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs (2017), then we must ask whether all of the anti-racist actions in our data can be considered as *anti-racist education*. In fact, only two of them, the emancipatory and norm-critical

Table 1. A typology of anti-racist actions.

	Anti- racist action	Manifestation of racism	Main target of change
Emancipatory action	• Critically examine lived experiences and develop students' ability to counter racism and rid them selves of internalized oppression.	Structural: A focus on power structures and systemic inequality, as well as internalized racism.	• Societal inequality • School, as (re)producer of unequal opportunity. • Students, as possible victims of internalized racism.
Norm-critical action	• Make visible, critically examine and challenge social norms through (self-)reflexion.	Structural: A focus on dominant norms that create exclusion, discrimination, harassment and unequal opportunities.	• Society, as producer of social norms that lead to oppression • Schools, teachers and students as (re)producers of norms and privileges.
Intercultural action	• Create space for cultural diversity and intercultural processes in education.	Structural: A focus on monocultural education, segregation and lack of representation.	• Society, as characterized by segregation • Schools, teachers and students as possible reproducers of ethnocentrism.
Democratic action	• Involve students (often from different backgrounds and with different opinions and values) in democratic dialogue.	Individual: A focus on views and beliefs that grow in isolated social milieus.	• Students as possible reproducers of anti-democratic perspectives and practices.
Relational action	• Enable positive self-worth in students through recognition, care, respect and solidarity.	Individual: A focus on racism as a consequence of problematic socialization.	• Students as possible carriers of negative self-worth.
Knowledge-focused action	• Provide opportunities for knowledge development and critical evaluation of sources of knowledge to prevent racism.	Individual: A focus on how racism stems from a lack of knowledge.	• Students as possibly uninformed.

approaches, clearly reflect Lynch, Swartz and Isaacs's three criteria outlined at the beginning of this article. These two approaches unequivocally identify racism as systemic oppression and offer students and teachers tools to transform structural inequality. Intercultural processes also address structural dimensions of racism but do so with different terminology, focusing on the need for intercultural communication to counter school segregation (cf. Faas, Hajisoteriou, and Angelides 2014; Leeman and Reid 2006). In practice, this means focusing less on the systemic causes of racism and more on the path forward, which teachers primarily did by creating meeting spaces that fostered intercultural competence. As acknowledged by some interviewees, there is a risk that this type of teaching reinforces inequalities in education if it does not include a focus on power imbalances and inequity (see Coulby 2006; Gorki 2008).

The other anti-racist actions in this typology are all centered on individuals, rather than systemic issues. They seek to affect students who express racist values and beliefs (cf. Arneback and Englund 2020; Mattsson and Johansson 2020). In our view, however, it is important to also treat them as anti-racist actions. Since the manifestation and challenges of racism are complex and broad, anti-racist work needs to entail a plurality of actions and targets of change. Based on the analysis of teacher action in Sweden, we, however, share the view that structural perspectives need to be highlighted and pushed to the fore, since they are often overshadowed by individual perspectives (cf. Lynch, Swartz, and Isaacs 2017).

In our view, a broad perspective of anti-racist action opens up a discussion on several fronts. Based on pragmatism (Dewey 1922/1988, 1932/1985), we highlighted the need to understand different anti-racist actions in relation to the context in which they arise; the past (teachers' experiences of racism), the present (experiences in the current local school context) and their future (possibilities for future actions). This means that the typology itself provides opportunities for further reflection and action on the part of teachers, policy-makers and researchers.

For those working in schools, the typology of anti-racist action creates possibilities to navigate among a plurality of actions and implement them vis-à-vis different racisms. As such, it gives room for further reflection and action. This paper also makes a contribution to the on-going debate about theoretical perspectives on educational responses to racism, highlighting the need for a complementary, rather than a competitive perspective on anti-racist action in practice. On a theoretical level, the debate on how to understand and address racism in education will continue, but the appropriate response will depend on the local context. Based on the knowledge that racism can be manifested differently on different levels, teachers need to be able to use various anti-racist actions in order to fulfill their national task to counteract racism in education.

Notes

1. The introductory program is for students who do not have adequate marks to attend a vocational or higher education preparatory program. In 2019, 70% of these students had a 'foreign background' (SCB), compared to 23% of students in vocational programs and 26% of students in higher education preparatory programs.
2. One of the interviewees was not able to participate in a second interview.

Biographical note

Emma Arneback is an Associate Professor in Education at Örebro University in Sweden and is active within the research fields of Didactics (teaching), Curriculum Theory and Educational Philosophy. Central hubs in her research are change processes initiated in order to create more equal opportunities in educational contexts.

Jan Jämte is a political scientist and senior lecturer in the School of Humanities, Education and Social Sciences at Örebro University in Sweden. Jämte's research focuses on how to counteract racism in education, processes to end school segregation, and create more equal opportunities for students with different backgrounds.

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ORCID

Emma Arneback http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0481-1586
Jan Jämte http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0491-6588

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