



Nina Alexander and Cayla Heidmann

# An anti-racism approach to early childhood education and care

Perspectives on racism from ECEC teachers and  
child care workers

Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelor of Social Services

Degree Programme in Social Services,

specialising in early childhood education and care

Bachelor's Thesis

31 July 2021

## **Abstract**

Author(s): Nina Alexander and Cayla Heidmann  
Title: An anti-racism approach in early childhood education and care  
Number of Pages: 56 pages + 4 appendices  
Date: 31 July 2021

Degree: Bachelor of Social Services  
Degree Programme: Social Services  
Specialisation option: Early Childhood Education and Care  
Instructor(s): Satu Hakanen, Senior Lecturer  
Jukka Törnroos, Senior Lecturer

---

Keywords: Anti-racism, Early Childhood Education and Care, Racism

**This qualitative research-based thesis aimed to gain knowledge about anti-racist practices in early childhood education and care in two English private kindergartens in Finland and to lay a foundation for future anti-racist training material for teachers and child care workers. Additionally, the research aimed to promote reflective dialogue about anti-racism and racism.**

**Due to the coronavirus, our working partner was not able to offer as many training opportunities as they would normally, thus our thesis provided an opportunity to have a discussion, listen to a presentation and complete a questionnaire as a means of updating their existing expertise. Additionally, this thesis was aimed at preventing bullying, teasing, and harassment of children of colour, thus supporting values, such as equality and diversity as laid out in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018.**

**Findings of our study are that teachers who participated in our research, acknowledge the need for reflective dialogue about racism and anti-racism. Finding ways to effectively deal with racialized situations also seemed to be an aspect that teachers would like to discuss more readily, confirming**

that there is a need for further teacher education in anti-racist education. Thus, the need for teachers to be better equipped to respond to racial incidences is especially evident, which could be remedied by introducing a detailed anti-racism approach as part of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care. Naturally, having a clearly outlined anti-racist approach would decrease the uncertainty that some early childhood educators may have about this subject, which was apparent in our study.

## Tiivistelmä

Tekijät:	Nina Alexander ja Cayla Heidmann
Otsikko:	Rasisminvastainen lähestymistapa varhaiskasvatuksessa
Sivumäärä:	56 sivua + 4 liitettä
Aika:	31 heinäkuuta 2021
Tutkinto:	Sosionomi (AMK)
Tutkinto-ohjelma:	Sosiaalialan tutkinto-ohjelma, Varhaiskasvatus
Ohjaajat:	Satu Hakanen, Lehtori Jukka Törnroos, Lehtori

---

Avainsanat: rasisminvastaisuus, varhaiskasvatus, rasismi

**Tämä kvalitatiiviseen tutkimukseen painottuva opinnäytetyö tähtäsi tiedon saamiseen rasisminvastaisista toimintatavoista varhaiskasvatusympäristössä kahdessa englanninkielisessä yksityisessä suomalaisessa päiväkodissa. Tämän lisäksi opinnäytetyö luo perustaa tuleville rasisminvastaisille opetusmateriaaleille, joita voivat hyödyntää sekä lastentarhanopettajat että lastenhoitajat. Työ edistää samalla keskustelua rasismista ja rasisminvastaisesta työstä.**

**Koronaviruksesta johtuen opinnäytetyön yhteistyökumppani ei kyennyt tarjoamaan opetus- ja koulutusmahdollisuuksia siinä määrin kuin yleensä,**

minkä johdosta opinnäytetyöhön liittyvät keskustelut, esitelmät sekä kyselytutkimus toimivat keinoina päivittää heidän tietotaitojaan aiheeseen liittyen. Opinnäytetyömme tähtäsi myös maahanmuuttajataustaisten lasten kohtaaman kiusaamisen ja häirinnän ehkäisyyn, sekä samalla tasa-arvon ja monimuotoisuuden edistämiseen siten, kuin ne on määritelty Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteissa 2018.

Tutkimuksen kohderyhmänä olivat varhaiskasvatuksen opettajat, lastenhoitajat sekä avustava henkilökunta, joille lähetettiin kyselylomake. Vastausten avulla määriteltiin miten henkilökunta reagoi, jos he kohtaavat rasistisia tilanteita, sekä minkälaisia rasisminvastaisia lähestymistapoja he käyttävät työssään. Tämän ohella vastaajia rohkaistiin arvioimaan heidän suhtautumistaan etnisyyteen sekä mahdollisiin piileviin ennakkoluuloihin. Data kerättiin käyttämällä narratiivista kyselylomaketta, jossa oli myös avoimia kysymyksiä. Kyselytutkimuksen tuloksia voidaan käyttää rasisminvastaisen opetusmateriaalin ja ohjeistuksen kehittämiseen yhteistyötahona toimineessa päiväkodissa. Tämän ohella tulokset voidaan integroida päiväkodin pedagogiikkaan, mikä tukee opettajia heidän päivittäisessä työssään.

Tutkimuksen keskeinen havainto on, että kyselyyn osallistuneet vastaajat tunnistivat rasismiin ja rasisminvastaisuuteen liittyvän reflektiivisen dialogin tarpeen. Tehokkaiden keinojen löytäminen rodullistettujen tilanteiden hoitamiseen oli toinen seikka, johon vastausten perusteella toivotaan lisää keskustelua, mikä myös tukee käsitystä lisäkoulutuksen tarpeesta rasisminvastaisuuteen liittyen. Vastausten perusteella on selvää, että opettajien tulee olla valmiimpia reagoimaan rasistisiin tilanteisiin, mihin voitaisiin vastata ottamalla käyttöön yksityiskohtainen antirasistinen lähestymistapa osana Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelmaa. Selkeästi määritelty rasisminvastainen lähestymistapa luonnollisesti vähentäisi epävarmuutta, jota varhaiskasvatuksen ammattilaiset saattavat tällä hetkellä kokea teemaan liittyen.

## Contents

1	Introduction	7
2	Early Childhood Education and Care	9
2.1	Early childhood education in Finland	9
2.2	Our working life partner	10
2.2.1	The main organization	10
2.2.2	A dual curriculum	11
2.2.3	Multicultural approach	11
2.3	The needs of our working life partner	12
3	Theoretical foundations	13
3.1	Anti-racism	14
3.2	Hidden prejudice	16
3.3	The definition of racism	18
3.4	Classifying racism	21
3.5	Perspectives on racism in Finland	23
3.6	How children assimilate prejudice and racial awareness	26
3.7	Considerations when talking to children about race	30
3.8	Promotion of a positive racial identity in ECEC's curriculum	33
4	Multiculturalism & anti-racism content in educational material	34
5	Anti-racism work underway in Finland	36
5.1	The City of Helsinki	36
5.2	The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman	37
5.3	The Finnish National Agency for Education	37
5.4	Racism in the media in Finland	38
6	Research questions	39
7	Methodology	40
7.1	Consent and data collection	41
7.2	Research ethical principles	41
8	Results	42

8.1	Analysing the data	42
8.1.1	Racial Awareness	43
8.1.2	Responding to racial incidents	46
8.1.3	Comfort level	48
8.1.4	Talking about race and racism with children	50
8.1.5	Supporting anti-racist work in the early years	52
8.2	Summary of the results	54
9	Conclusion	54
10	Discussion	55
10.1	Fulfilling the working life partners' needs	55
10.2	The United Kingdom's early childhood curriculum's role	56
10.3	Ensuring an anti-racist approach in ECEC	57
10.4	Social construction	60
10.5	Lack of research	61
10.6	Uncomfortable feelings	61
10.7	Prevention and furthering our work	61
	References	63
	Appendices	73
	Finnish Immigration Service statistics	73
	Research Permit	74
	Presentation to the kindergarten	75
	Questionnaire sent to the respondents	82

## 1 Introduction

Over the past year, the Finnish Immigration Service granted 14,304 resident permits and citizenship to immigrant children aged zero to thirteen (see appendix 1, Finnish Immigration Service 2021). While it is not known how many children aged between zero and seven are included in those statistics, the amount is probably significant. These statistics taken from the Finnish Immigration service include a wide variety of international demographics, indicating that children from diverse cultures and ethnicities are settling in Finland. With the merging of cultures, there is the chance that people may become exasperated about social concerns such as economics or beliefs. Racist views from the homogenized population may elicit uncomfortable feelings of ostracization or exclusion in immigrant populations.

One of the aims of the Act on early childhood education and care is to ensure that children's equality, cultural heritage, religion, and ideology are respected. (Finlex 2021.) Although race is not specifically mentioned in the Act, it can be assumed that race was not a significant factor since they chose to exclude it from discussion, as education is available to everyone. Incidentally, racism in early childhood education and care in Finland has received little attention over the years, with the focus mainly on schools.

When working at kindergartens in the Uusimaa region in Finland, we have witnessed situations where teachers are unsure about what to do when encountering blatant or subtle race-related situations amongst small children. Teachers dealt with these occurrences with surprising hesitance or dismissiveness, inspiring us to write our thesis about this topic. We were challenged to explore this sensitive problem, asking ourselves how teachers deal with racist situations if they arise in the kindergarten environment?

The purpose of our research is to examine racism as it occurs in early years education, intending to promote active anti-racism as part of the curriculum. This

research will enable us to provide a practical anti-racist framework that our working partner can use in their early childhood education and care environment should racial incidents occur. In addition, our thesis aims to determine the perspectives of kindergarten staff regarding racism, what they do if they encounter it, and what anti-racist approach they use. This will also allow them to reflect on any hidden prejudices that may be involved in the educational and caring process.

One limitation of this study is our lack of fluent Finnish. As a result, our access to all recent, relevant studies was somewhat constraint, especially because the research would have been conducted in Finnish. In addition, we are originally from foreign countries. It is likely that we approached our study from an immigrant perspective. To balance this factor, we collaborated with Finnish teachers, seeking guidance and advice to make the results of our study more relevant. Furthermore, our working life partner already has a strong multicultural approach in place, which may provide us with less data than we could have obtained from a kindergarten that does not have a similar policy.

Even though an educational institution may be committed to a multicultural approach, racialized children are not necessarily protected from being emotionally scarred by racist encounters. We argue that anti-bullying projects are not enough to counteract this topic. Additionally, it is necessary to highlight anti-racism, and not just bullying, in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care. Emphasizing anti-racism pedagogy for early years education will make a difference for children of colour, particularly in regard to their mental health and wellbeing. The addition of anti-racism to early years curricula can work toward alleviating internalized racism when it is focused on a child's first school setting.

Implementing real diversity in educational settings and achieving social justice within the education system will require revising current policies, practices, and pedagogies. We believe that the first port of call lies with the teachers themselves.



We must actively foster anti-racist practice and hold a pedagogical approach that is sensitive to diverse worldviews (Hellman & Lauritsen 2017).

## **2 Early Childhood Education and Care**

In this section, we provide an overview of the societal setting, the social function of early childhood education, our target group of early childhood education and our working life partner, as well as the development of their practices.

### **2.1 Early childhood education in Finland**

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) is the Finnish education system that comprises education and care through an Educare pedagogical model (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021). Further, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018) stipulates that compulsory education is provided to all pre-primary children (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021). Children in Finland who are six and seven years old are referred to as “pre-primary children”. The social function of early childhood education and care (ECEC) is providing children with pedagogical education and care, as well as compulsory education to pre-primary children (“esiopetus” in Finnish).

The target group of early childhood education is children aged between zero and seven years old. According to the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture, early childhood education is available in the form of kindergarten centre activities, family kindergarten activities, or open kindergarten activities (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2021). Naturally, parents, guardians, and families are considered part of the target group, since they decide on their children attending kindergarten and have the most influence in a child's life.

In August 2020, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care changed to ensure that there is equal access to early childhood education and care. Thus, unemployed parents and parents on maternity or paternity leave also have

access to early childhood education and care services for their children (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2020).

Within the early childhood education and care's target group is a group of children with immigrant backgrounds. This group of children includes several family compositions such as having one parent with Finnish origin and one parent with foreign origin, adoptive children, children with two parents from a foreign country, or parents that have one or more foreign origins. According to Finnish statistics, 412,644 people in Finland spoke a language that was not Finnish at the end of 2019. The results indicated that there was a growth of 20,898 people who spoke a foreign language. Additionally, most people speaking a foreign language (71%) are situated in Helsinki (Statistics Finland 2021). These results could suggest that, due to immigration, the target group of this study has grown significantly.

## 2.2 Our working life partner

Our working life partner forms part of a larger organization that fulfils its social role of providing pedagogical education, care, and services to thousands of children across several kindergartens in Finland. Kindergarten employees consist of managers, teachers, and child-carers ("lastenhoitajat").

### 2.2.1 The main organization

The organization is a group of private Finnish, Swedish and English kindergartens spanning Finland. Their target group is children aged zero to seven, who come from diverse backgrounds and speak different native languages. They meet their targets' linguistic needs by providing the children with monolingual or bilingual early childhood education. Languages spoken include Finnish, Swedish, and English, with the kindergartens' staff encouraging children to learn the language spoken at the kindergarten regardless of their parents' mother tongues. Furthermore, the largest number of kindergartens are situated in the Uusimaa region.

### 2.2.2 A dual curriculum

Our working life partner consists of two private English kindergartens. One kindergarten has about fifteen members of staff and seventy children, whilst the other has forty members of staff and one hundred and twenty children.

Our working life partner is distinguished from their parent organisation because they do not only follow the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care. They also incorporate some elements of the United Kingdom's national curriculum. This means that some of their teachers have an English National Vocational Qualification, more commonly known as N.V.Q. The staff can obtain their qualification through an online distance vocational college. Since this is a foreign qualification, it needs to be validated by Finland's national Board of Education if the staff intend to work in Finland. A level 2 NVQ qualification allows a person to assist a teacher in a kindergarten, and a level 3 NVQ entitles a person to practice as a 'nursery officer' who can supervise others. In addition, some members of staff have a Finnish qualification such as a bachelor's degree in Social Services, specializing in early childhood education, whilst some have an early childhood teacher qualification.

Another aspect that differentiates these two kindergartens from their main organization is that they focus on creative learning using a High Scope method. This means that children scaffold their learning by following what interests them. For example, a child might be interested in science and keener to play with magnets in the science area, thus exploring their interests.

### 2.2.3 Multicultural approach

Our working life partner was originally a smaller organization with Finnish and English kindergartens who were taken over by the larger organization. Prior to the merging of the companies, our working life partner had already fostered a strong international and multicultural environment. Their working culture promotes, encourages, and respects differences, focusing on exposing the children to different beliefs, traditions, and cultures. In addition, they have what is

referred to as a multicultural curriculum that outlines stereotypes, gender issues, and families with different backgrounds. Furthermore, they include children's cultural identities and lifestyles in their daily practice. This includes Finnish culture as well as international cultures.

A variety of traditional holidays or festivals are celebrated such as Diwali, the Chinese New Year, or Easter, albeit in a simple manner so that the children can easily understand the tradition. For example, they might engage in arts and crafts related to certain holidays or festivals. In addition, they have books that represent different cultures and stereotypes as well as what they refer to as blended families. In their kindergartens, some posters or pictures illustrate a diverse world where people are working together and getting along. Furthermore, their multicultural approach includes the staff; they show respect toward each other, promoting respect of differences and offering a visible example of equality.

The kindergartens also focus on promoting the development of the Finnish and Swedish languages for those who are native speakers. They refer to a concern in Finland about how a child's Finnish or Swedish language skills may be hampered if their education is conducted in English. To counteract this lack, they provide a weekly focus on Finnish culture. This could, for example, include reading a Finnish book.

In the case of the staff speaking another language in the kindergarten, they are encouraged to speak their language to a child who speaks the same language, thus reinforcing the child's sense of cultural identity. In this way, the foreign language, as well as English, is promoted. Nowadays, it is also important to accept the use of multiple languages since it is quite common for families to speak several languages at home. All-in-all, cultural and physical differences appear to be well covered in the kindergartens' curriculum.

### 2.3 The needs of our working life partner

The primary target group of our thesis is teachers in early childhood and education and child-carers because they deliver pedagogical educational

services to our secondary target group, that is, the children. To connect with our primary target group, we worked closely with our working-life partner.

The kindergartens are governed by Finnish law and comply with the Finnish Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018). They follow the guidelines of the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care as well as the United Kingdom's national curriculum. We suggest that the United Kingdom's curriculum, due to a longer history with diversity, deals with approaches to anti-racism, multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion more extensively than the Finnish National Core Curriculum, and therefore our working life partner appears more organized in their framework for these areas.

Regardless of their meticulous framework, they were still interested in partnering with us because they have not been able to provide training as readily as they normally do during the coronavirus period. Coincidentally, the staff has been requesting training and thus they viewed our thesis as an opportunity to provide training. In addition, they mentioned that even though they have an international community of staff and children, it is still possible for subtle racism to occur within the setting.

We proposed that, due to the coronavirus and time constraints, we would give a presentation (see appendix 3), and then the staff could answer questions anonymously as part of our research (see appendix 4). The emphasis of our presentation was to promote discussion as well as to provide the staff with an opportunity to reflect on their practice, whilst gaining a broader understanding of racism and anti-racism. The aim was thus to promote dialogue and update their existing professional knowledge, where applicable.

### **3 Theoretical foundations**

In this section, we outline relevant definitions and theories that have guided us in identifying the questions we should be asking our research participants as well as in formulating our methodology.

### 3.1 Anti-racism

Anti-racism is important to define and understand since it gives us a greater understanding of its opposite, racism. The two are closely interconnected in the sense that sometimes people can be anti-racist, but still be unconsciously racist, this seemingly opposing idea is further examined in the section on hidden prejudice in this paper. We felt it is important to briefly examine anti-racism, as we mean to advocate for in the early years' context. According to Derman-Sparks & Ramsey (2011), anti-racism is the continued dismantling of racism, intended to create a racism-free society. We fully agree that this is where, we as teachers can actively take part in the dismantling of systemic racism.

The presence of racism is determined by cultural and institutional policies and practices, rather than intent. However, just because we lack the intent to judge people by race or inadvertently perpetuate an idea of superiority based on our internalized racial bias, we should remember that the consequences for people of colour will remain the same until we unpack and actively fight to change the presence of racism in our society. To some degree, everyone partakes in the systematic web of racism, and no one is simply a neutral observer.

Some colleges in the United States have already been preparing their future teachers for the challenges and complexities of racism and moving toward becoming anti-racists by offering courses on becoming an anti-racist educator. This professional training is significant in that it does more than simply respond to the symptoms or consequences of racism, such as poor self-esteem, internalized racism, depression, and academic under-achievement. Instead, anti-racism education helps us to understand the problem of racism as it occurs, or before it occurs, to develop effective strategies to respond to it, as well as to ensure that we do all we can to deconstruct its continuation.

In the book entitled, "Teaching/Learning Anti-racism: A Developmental Approach", Derman-Sparks suggests that anti-racist education must specifically address the dynamics of internalized superiority, alongside internalized oppression (Derman-

Sparks & Phillips 1997). Anti-racist education means that, as teachers, we must consciously develop anti-racist behaviours, knowledge, and skills so that we can interrupt and eliminate any manifestations of racism in our immediate environments.

Anti-racist education influences all members of society. However, whites and people of colour have separate and specific issues that we must look at in anti-racist education. For people of colour, the characteristics of an anti-racist identity are a powerful sense of security in one's own ethnic identity, and the ability to view both one's own and other ethnic groups with more objectivity. White anti-racist identity means we must understand and internalize a realistic view of white racial identity and engage in an ongoing self-examination of our participation in structural and institutional racism (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey 2011).

While the promotion of multiculturalism is a step in the right direction, it may also lead to "othering", the exoticizing of a culture or an ethno-racial identity. This causes the alienation of groups who are targets of racism, reinforcing notions of binary identity (Lentin 2005). In Finland, there is an increasing number of biracial children who are still looked on by some as "exotic" and consistently asked where they are from. This connotes that they are somehow "originating in or characteristic of a distant foreign country" and does not consider the presence of multiple identities within the child. Despite the best intentions, this perception serves to racialize children.

The influx of migrants into Finland shows that transnationalism is becoming normalized as current globalization trends show. People simultaneously belong to more than one country and have connections to groups all over the world (Vertovec 2007), thus, creating an environment for multicultural appreciation to thrive. An increasing number of children in early years settings have these multiple identities and transnational roots. As educators, we must alter our beliefs of what it means to belong to a nation and accept that culture and race are ever-changing. If we subscribe to the ethos that the child's wellbeing comes first, we

must be amongst the first to embrace these ideas (Hellman & Lauritsen 2017: 12).

An anti-racist individual is on a lifelong journey to form a new understanding of ways to live their racial identity with increased commitment to, and engagement in, anti-racist action (Barndt 2007). As educators, it is not enough for us to simply teach children to embrace cultural diversity; we must help children and their families to develop a more radical paradigm shift. We must work on the process of developing individual identities as well as group identities, which helps to recognize and resist the notions of racial superiority and white privilege, resulting in the realization that it benefits us all to live in a society free from systematic racism (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey 2011).

An anti-racist approach requires every individual to continuously think, act, and advocate for equality. It requires changing systems and policies that may have gone unexamined for a long time. Ijoema Oluo suggests that “The beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself.”

### 3.2 Hidden prejudice

Through our journey in drafting this thesis, we have discovered that teachers must reflect on their hidden prejudices. It is not a comfortable process, but it is a necessary one if we are to achieve our goals as anti-racist educators.

According to Allport (1954: 6), prejudice can be defined as a feeling or judgement about a person that can be positive or negative without having proper justification. Naturally, it is easier for us to adjust to people who are like ourselves, having experiences of language, food, and education in common (Allport 1954: 18). Having a similar background makes us feel safe (Beattie 2013: 75).

Categorisation is a crucial component of daily decision-making. For example, we may categorise a bear as being dangerous and make decisions that will keep us



safe. In other words, categorisation occurs through cues or prejudgements. In the same way, if our prejudgement about people of colour is negative for whatever reason, then we will make decisions accordingly (for instance, we may avoid them). Allport suggests that categorising is an automatic process resulting from prejudgements (1954: 19-20). Categorisation can sometimes be irrational and certain criteria are not always met during categorisation processes. When this occurs, the person may use a “but,” for example, “the person is nice, but...”, to make what they feel to be irrational, rational. In addition, prejudice comprises emotion and cognition, whereby a feeling leads us to decide what we are going to do (Beattie 2013: 95-96).

There are five motives for prejudice: “group belonging, understanding, controlling perceived threat, enhancing self and trusting ingroup others” (Fiske 2005, cited in Beattie 2013: 92). The first motive for prejudice relates to survival in the sense that people flourish in an environment where there is a common interest as opposed to conflict, implying a group belonging, also known as an ingroup. Thus, prejudices stem from what Fiske and Ruscher refer to as the outgroup goals, which are different from the ingroup interests where there are similarities and no prejudice (1993, cited in Beattie 2013: 92). The second motive is understanding, which occurs when the ingroup has similar beliefs and thoughts and thus feels more comfortable to share their prejudices and may even have a silent understanding that the prejudices are acceptable, indirectly strengthening the prejudices (Fiske & Ruscher 1993; Schaller and Conway 2001, cited in Beattie 2013: 93). The third motive for prejudice is controlling a perceived threat, occurring when the ingroup feels threatened in some way. The threat can relate to beliefs, finances, or anxiousness. This is often one that lacks a specific target – it is a broader, less intentional feeling, however, it is one that can be perceived as overwhelming. The fourth motive is enhancing self, which comes about when the individual sees the ingroup as an extension of self. Thus, when there is a threat, the ingroup acts together, strengthening the self and the ingroup simultaneously. Lastly, there is a trust that develops amongst people of the ingroup, which leads back to a recurring feature - the more comfortable the

person feels in the ingroup, the less anxious they are (Fiske and Ruscher 1993, cited in Beattie 2013: 93-94).

There are times when prejudice and values contradict one another. For example, children may learn values at school which might be different from what they learn at home, causing an internal conflict (Allport 1954: 326). This conflict may result in ambivalent feelings, causing them to feel angry or hypocritical. The internal conflict “pauses” the prejudice and children may control their prejudice to a certain extent (Beattie 2013: 107-108).

Another aspect to keep in mind are cultural stereotypes. Even though a person may start becoming non-prejudiced, it does not necessarily mean they will automatically have non-prejudiced responses. Therefore, the deconstruction of prejudice is described as breaking a bad habit because people are trying to remove years of socialization experiences. People should work towards breaking the habit by recognizing that their biases are unfounded and may not even be their own but inherited and internalised from their cultural milieu (Devine 2005, cited in Beattie 2013: 113-114). This might explain the phenomenon that occurs in studies where both white and black people display negative attitudes towards black people since a positive white cultural bias has been internalised by *all* cultures. An example of white cultural bias in language is white magic, which is perceived as good magic, whilst black magic is thought of as bad (Beattie 2013: 186-187).

Scholarly literature clearly suggests that when we act on checking our biases, it is possible to resolve them and thus work toward ways in which we can change the “insidious processes” of prejudice (Beattie 2013: 259).

### 3.3 The definition of racism

To begin a dialogue with teachers about the importance of teaching anti-racism, we must first define exactly what we mean by racism. A specific definition of racism is the assumption that the colour of a person's skin determines their character and abilities. It includes the systemic social, economic, and political

oppression of people of colour so that the more advantaged race is in the position of power. In addition, the system of racism is the foundation from which all rules are maintained, designed to exclusively benefit one race (Merriam-Webster Incorporated 2021).

Since race relations, racial discrimination, and various forms of racial ideologies are multifaceted phenomena that run deep through all our institutional and social constructs and are deeply rooted in our human histories, there is a long history of scholarly literature across disciplines of research into these areas. However, here we will not attempt to define racism or how it may be understood as a concept. Instead, we will view theories from literature that pertain directly to our argument for the importance of anti-racist education, beginning in the early year's curriculum.

The racism of the past is certainly different from today, and we have come a long way from outright racism. We must all engage in honest and consistent reflection to eradicate inequality as it persists in more pernicious, subtle forms. Today, racists often see the argument of race as a malleable concept that is interchangeable with culture. For example, people might take a stance such as, "to defend our national culture from the onslaught of the 'other' we must remain 'pure' to retain it." Culture "has become the most important and most trusted category for collective identity and belonging." Even without a biological concept of race, racism has survived in the form of cultural essentialism (Berg & Wendt 2011: 9).

After reviewing scholarly literature, we have chosen to use this definition of racism: racism refers to any practice that continues to maintain inequality of opportunity among ethnoracial groups. Racism may be expressed through racist beliefs (internalized, implicit bias), behaviours or practices (discrimination), or prejudice (stereotypes). We believe that if we do not accept the presence of racism in our society, we cannot move toward a society that has true equality and equity for all who live within it (Berman and Paradis 2010).

In the book, “Understanding Everyday Racism,” Essed (1991) discusses the use of the word racism as understood by the general perception of the word, reflecting Kendi’s (2019) premise that it is understood by many as a slur and is immediately followed by denial (“of course I am not a racist”). Kendi maintains that many automatically understand the word ‘racist’ as a personal attack, as if they were labelled a bad person (2019). This prompts an instant denial that closes the door for reflective discussion; we can move no further, frozen in place. The racialized are left to battle with a reality which society continues to deny exists. In Essed’s theory of everyday racism (1991), she focuses on the daily experiences lived by those who are subjectively impacted by racism. As such, racism is described rather than defined by a system of structural and reproduced practices normalized by all of us, shaped by our ideologies.

Bonilla-Silva (2006) describes racism as a part of our social systems that categorises ethnoracial groups into hierarchies that cause disparities in equality between these ethnoracial groups. In the book, “Racism without Racists,” Bonilla-Silva (2017) argues that the “new” racism is characterized through colour-blind racism. Colour-blind racism is an ideology that enables us to maintain and justify seemingly race-neutral practices that are still, albeit covertly, racist. It allows for a country’s social systems to use colour-blindness as a rhetorical strategy whereby the possibility of race impacting social inequalities is dismissed. Thus, solutions that address equity based on race can be dismissed as misplaced. This colour-blindness is pernicious in its subtlety as it allows us to instantly dismiss racism as a thing of the past, without pausing to see that we sustain racial practices, all the while cloaking it in our efforts to ignore that they exist.

The three forms of racism that may occur in an educational setting are institutional, individual, and cultural, which interact and reinforce one another. In an early childhood educational setting, an example of institutional racism may be the predominant use of developmental theories that are, at their core, implicitly based on western (white), cultural perspectives. This may contradict our professional obligation to meet the needs of *all* children. Individual racism is attitudes and behaviour carried out by individuals that wish to maintain power

relationships built upon racism. Such actions may seem to be perpetuated by individuals whose words or deeds are prejudiced or harbour stereotypes about a certain group, but they are fuelled by the institutional and cultural dimensions of racism. Cultural racism reflects the ideologies and beliefs of the dominant group, but while these concepts may feel natural as they are lived out day to day, we should consider that we may be inadvertently endorsing the superiority of western (white) culture (Derman-Sparks & Phillips 1997).

### 3.4 Classifying racism

Allport suggests that two people may be prejudiced against a group of people, but that only one of the two may act out on their prejudice. This acting out can take five different forms, which Allport refers to as 'degrees of negative action' (Allport 1954: 14). Many Finnish researchers such as Puuronen and Front have adopted Allport's "degrees of negative action" as a basis for the classification of racism (Puuronen 2011: 60-61; Front 2019: 12-13). In this section, we examine how racism can be classified.

Allport's degrees of negative action resulting from prejudice can present as antilocution, avoidance, discrimination, physical attack, and extermination, which can be seen in figure 1. The pyramid depicts the least negative action at the top and the most severe action at the bottom. Additionally, explanations of each degree of negative action are shown, such as what prompted the negative action or its results.

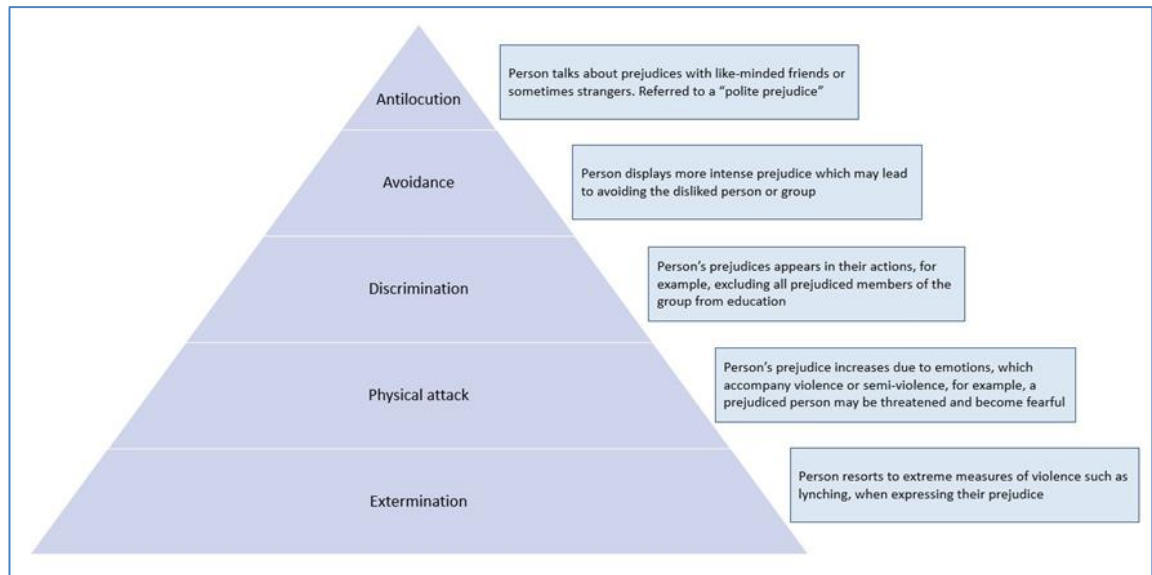


Figure 1. Degrees of negative action resulting from prejudice Ref: Allport 1954: 14-15

On closer examination of the first instance of negative action due to prejudice, antilocution or verbal rejection, we learn that this category includes ingroup gossip to ensure the victim of prejudice remains in the outgroup. In addition, jokes or "friendly" humour used by the ingroup disguises prejudice and makes it appear more acceptable. Jokes put the outgroup or outperson in an inferior position and the ingroup in a superior position. Furthermore, name-calling can also be included in the first category of antilocution (Allport, 1954: 50). The first three categories of Allport's models are especially pertinent to our study, as these are more likely the behaviours that could possibly be displayed in early years educational settings.

According to Allport, there are five differences in groups: anatomical and physiological differences, abilities, personalities of the members, culture, and beliefs. He goes on to suggest that visible differences in individuals include skin colour, features, gestures, expressions on the face, speech or way of speaking, how a person dresses, behavioural modes, religion, food, their name, and where they live. In addition, he claims that it is important to focus on similarities, as well as differences among people since the emphasis on differences only divides people. Also, similarities highlight what humans have in common, thus laying a foundation for cooperation (Allport 1954: 95,116,131).

Finnish researcher, Puuronen (2011: 60-61) used Allport's degrees of negative action to compile a classification referred to as "forms of everyday racism", which are connected to prejudices. He suggests that forms of everyday racism can present in six ways (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. Forms of everyday racism Ref: Puuronen 2011: 60-61

### 3.5 Perspectives on racism in Finland

In Finland, there has been much discussion about the word "racism" since it was only added to the Finnish language in the 1960s (Maamies 1996, cited by Pantti et al. 2019). Previously, the Finnish word "rotusorto" ("race oppression" in English) was used in public discourse throughout the 1960s and 70s. The word racism entered public usage during the 1980s and 90s and was used to discuss discrimination against new migrants to Finland (Puuronen 2011). Many of today's teachers, who grew up in the years when Finland had just begun to have a greater number of immigrants and asylum seekers in the homogenized population, may experience conflict with the word "racism." (Pantti et al. 2019.)

Since Finland has the official stance of being opposed to discrimination – a position enshrined in its constitution – racism is often assigned to right-wing

political parties, and to the words and hateful actions of ‘racists’ who belong to such parties (Augoustinos and Every 2010). This popular understanding precludes us *all* from reflecting on how we may actively fight racism. Thus, talking about racism in Finland is not something that is readily done, even though we see signs of it in all areas of our society. There is a gap between official conversations on non-discrimination, equality, and anti-racism, and the documented everyday racism described by those who live it (Rastas 2005).

Goldberg (2015, cited in Alemanji 2016: 32) argues that since the existence of racism is denied in Finland, it remains a challenge to prevent it, and victims struggle to express their experiences because there is supposedly no racism. Additionally, media output and political debates in Finland often implicitly hinge on the notion that here there is no history of racism because Finland has never colonised another nation (Alemanji 2016).

In their book, “Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation”, Berg and Wendt argue that “history does not talk about races, but about nations. None of those nations represents a pure race because they all emerged from a racial mixture. What holds them together is not the same blood, but language and culture” (2011: 72). Words like “culture” and “ethnicity” have replaced race because they are perceived as being more acceptable, and the word immigrant has become a euphemism for race (Lentin & Titley 2011; Jorenen & Solonen 2006; cited in Alemanji 2016: 3, 10).

For the most part, immigrants can never live up to the Finnish ideal as they lack the “right” characteristics; therefore, they will always be perceived as being inferior. In Finland, being white is not predominantly about colour, but rather about being a westerner, and whiteness is synonymous with Finnishness. This pervasive idea means that immigrants, people from ethnic minorities, and those with transnational roots experience racism in Finland, even if they are legally Finnish, and especially if they are non-white (Rastas 2007, cited in Alemanji 2016: 29).



If we do not acknowledge the racialized child's experience by accepting what they and their families face as a reality in this society we are, at the core, rejecting the premise of our fundamental curriculum – “every child matters.” Everyone has a right to belong, feel comfortable, and have a good life, as well as retain their cultural identity and to feel at home in Finland (Rastas 2009: 40-41). Research suggests that white people believe that talking to their own children about racism is not necessary, in contrast to immigrants who must approach the subject since their children have been forced to grapple with some form of racism ever since they entered society (Alemanji 2016: 62).

In her data collection, Anna Rastas carried out her research in schools, kindergartens, and youth centres, which led to new information about racism in the specific context of Finnish educational institutions, offering opportunities for teachers and professionals who work with children to give their perspectives about their experiences. Her findings indicated that the racialized are mostly bullied at school and in public and in certain cases, violence is involved. She found that, in schools and kindergartens, teachers do not readily admit that there is racism. Incidents involving name-calling or racial labels are widespread practice and are often not even recognized by the adults in the setting because the children use a kind of children's code language to categorise others. It was felt by participants in her research that teachers at school did not see racist incidents, and if they did, they did nothing about it or claimed that the child involved was too sensitive. In addition, teachers may dismiss racism by saying that the bullying child is not deliberately engaging in racist speech and behaviour, and as a result, the bullied child cannot disclose the way they feel because they are not taken seriously (Rastas 2009: 32-39.)

Children are sensitive to differences between people, and avoiding talking about these differences only strengthens prejudice, since children do not learn how to adequately deal with differences (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey 2011; Nieto 2012: 73; cited in Front 2019: 15). In her research, Front argues that educators should not have an attitude of colour-blindness, especially because children are quite aware of differences, and avoiding answering questions about colour only causes

misunderstandings and prejudice (Front 2019: 51). Front's overall findings were that everyday racism is a major problem in early childhood education, in the sense that Finnish staff may be racist towards immigrant staff or immigrant children in the kindergartens (Front 2019: 49).

Earlier research demonstrates that there is much work to be done in rectifying some specific problems relating to diversity in the educational arena (Dervin et al. 2012). One aspect is dealing with the assumption that "culture" in educational settings is looked at as exoticism relating to "non-white" and "others". This exoticism may be compounded through the way we introduce other cultures only by means of celebrations in educational settings, we may even place clothes and items for the children to wear and touch, but if we call them costumes, we are intimating that they are not part of everyday wear and is tantamount to dress up. We as teachers are inadvertently perpetuating the notion of exoticism. Majority positions should be viewed through the same lens so that their "normativity" – what it means to be Finnish – is problematized (Hellman & Lauritsen 2017: 15).

### 3.6 How children assimilate prejudice and racial awareness

Children are influenced by their home environment and adopt their family's or cultural environment's existing ethnic attitudes, animosities, and stereotypes. If the environment is "infected" with prejudice, then the child is likely to develop prejudice as a way of life (Allport 1954: 297-300). This process is analogous to any other form of assimilation, whereby an individual or minority group assumes the values, behaviour, and norms of the majority group.

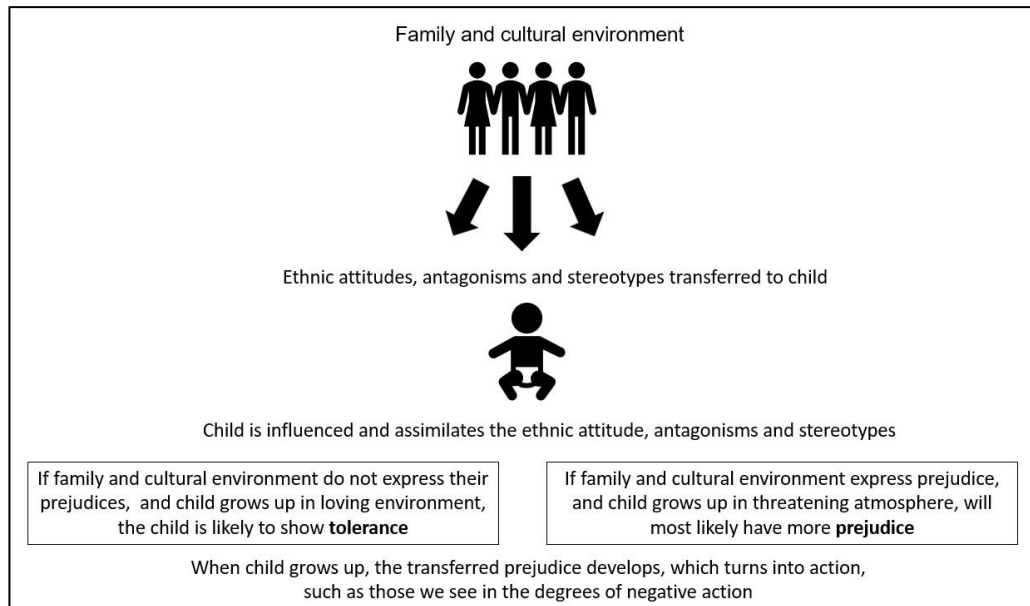


Figure 3. Assimilation of prejudice Ref: Allport 1954: 297-300

For instance, if a child grows up in a threatening atmosphere, they are more likely to be suspicious, fearful, or experience hate, which they may project onto others in degrees of negative action (Allport 1954) and everyday racism (Puuronen 2011), illustrated earlier in our paper.

Bigler's research contrasts with Allport's, in that Bigler suggests that three-year-olds practice their own ingroup personal preferences that, coincidentally, they develop on their own. Thus, prejudices are not entirely transferred to children by their parents or cultural environment, as was seen in figure 3, depicting how prejudice is assimilated by children. Bigler's research, however, suggests that children categorise everything, from toys to people (see Figure 4). Children generally only use two attributes to categorise, that is, first identifying the characteristic which is the most clearly visible, and second by identifying a person that resembles themselves the most. In the case of people categorisation, the child categorises a "shared appearance", from which the child believes that their "chosen" person or ingroup likes everything that he or she does, thus attributing everything he or she does not like to those who look the least like him or her. This is essentialism, the assumption that the ingroup people are the same as you.

In addition, Bigler claims that through categorisation, children make references to skin colour on their own, regardless of anyone telling them about race. We might think that we are doing children a favour by making environments colour-blind, when in fact, children see differences such as skin colour or hair anyway because they are clearly visible. Bigler claims that children see differences in race as easily as they see differences in t-shirt colours (see Figure 4). Hence, Bigler suggests that talking to children about race should begin as young as three years old, since they are already deducing preferences and shared appearances through their own categorisation processes.

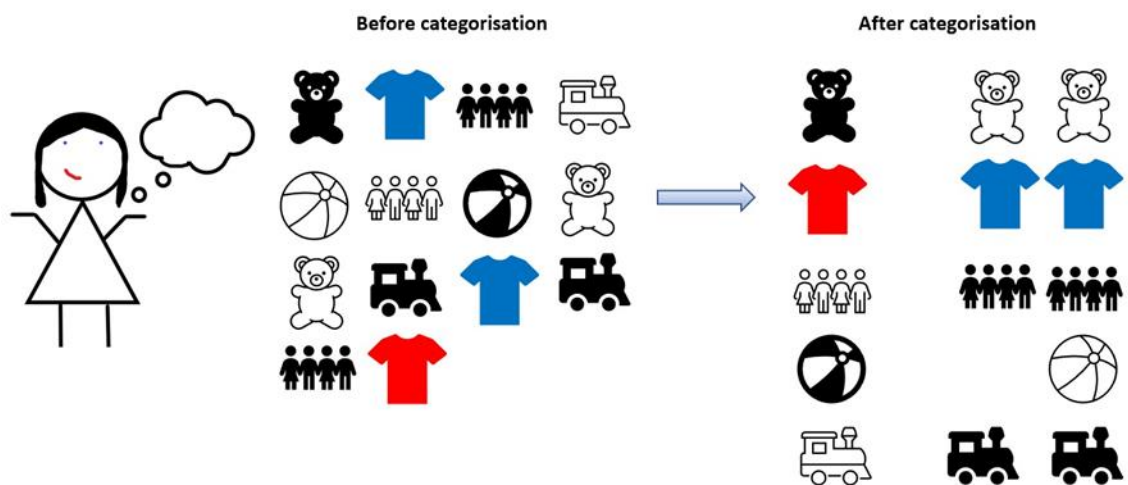


Figure 4. Child categorises characteristics most clearly visible Ref: Dr. Rebecca Bigler's research about children's categorisation processes, cited in "Nurture Shock", Bronson & Merryman 2009

Dr. Phyllis Katz, a clinical and developmental psychologist researching the development of children's attitudes towards race and gender, suggests that even a six-month-old baby can already see race. This is demonstrated by showing several babies photographs of different faces, and if the babies look at a particular face for a longer period, it implies that the face is different from the faces that they have been exposed to – they are processing the face in their minds to understand its meaning. For example, faces of different races to that of the babies' parents, will be looked at for longer periods because there is more information to process (Bronson & Merryman, 2009).

Later, when the children were three years old, Katz used photographs of children and questioned the three-year-olds who would they “choose” as friends. Consequently, 86% of the white children’s “chosen” friends from the photographs were white. At age five and six, the children were asked to sort cards of people into any order they wanted. 68% of the children chose to sort by race, 16% by gender, and the remaining 16% sorted the cards for other reasons such as age. These findings illuminate the importance of discussing race in early childhood because that is the period when the child draws their own conclusions about race. Additionally, Katz argues that parents should invest time in talking about race, similar to how they talk about gender. For example, parents might say to their child, “girls also play with cars”, which feels quite comfortable and easy to do. Hence, Katz suggests that we use a similar, casual, gender-type model when we talk about race.

Bronson & Merryman (2009) devised a theory, which they call the Diverse Environment Theory. This is when people raise their children with a high amount of exposure to people of colour and diverse cultures so that the environment itself conveys the message of racial diversity. Therefore, there is no need to talk about race, and it is better not to talk about race so that the child can believe the diverse environment is normalised, these types of diverse environments are not available to all children which brings us full circle to the argument of discussing race with children. However, naturally, children mingle with each other, and one child may influence another with their views, using phrases like, “skin like ours”, or “parents don’t like us to talk about our skin, so don’t let them hear you.” Thus, the effort of some white guardians, to provide a diverse environment may be “infected” by other children’s conclusions, or guardian-influenced perceptions. Additionally, when searching for their identity, children “choose” role models that have something they feel resembles themselves, such as hair colour. Thus, their categorisation expands to include race and hairstyle in their identity.

In Winkler’s (2009) article entitled, “Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race”, several researchers, such as Hirschfeld (2008), Katz (2003), and Patterson & Bigler (2006), support the claim that racial bias is not

only learnt through direct teaching, nor is it completely related to their guardians' biases. Instead, children learn cultural and social mannerisms from society, which benefits them by inculcating norms that enable them to cope with, and function in, their community. Family norms are too limited to support the child to function in society and so the child takes on community norms as well as macro, socially established categories. For example, people that live in the same area may be of a similar height or have similar skin colours. Thus, children may think that they need to avoid others who have a different skin colour to them, regardless of anyone saying so (Aboud 2005, cited in Winkler 2009). Similarly, they might assume that people with a certain skin colour belong to certain occupations, if they only see people with that skin colour working in that occupation, for example, doctors. A visual representation of factors influencing the assimilation of racial bias by children is figured below.

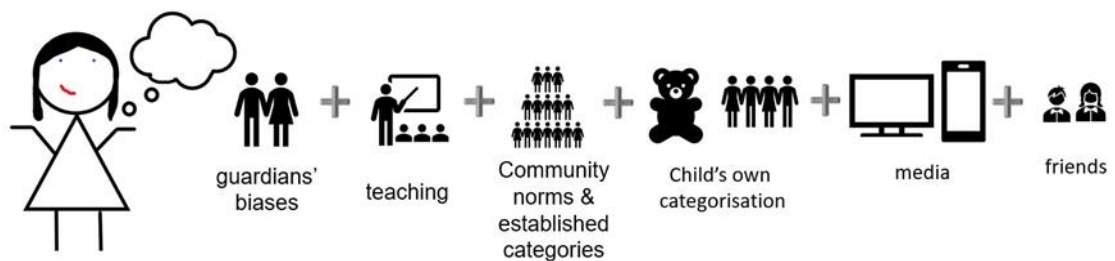


Figure 5. Factors influencing children's racial bias

### 3.7 Considerations when talking to children about race

In the book, "Nurture Shock", Bronson & Merryman (2009) discuss psychology professor Dr. Rebecca Bigler's and doctoral student Birgitte Vittrup's research about why white people do not readily talk to their children about race. Talking about race, or not talking about race with children may be influenced by factors like those depicted below in Table 1.

Table 1. Considerations regarding race relating to white guardians Ref: Bronson & Merryman 2009

<b>Regarding race, white guardians may:</b>
use phrases that are too vague
not discuss aspects related to race at all
feel that discussing race teaches children a racial construct
feel unsure about what to say to their children
want their children to see things how their children see things
think that their children will figure race out on their own
assume that children will become aware of race when shown to them by others
think that professionals will sort out race issues because it is a societal issue
fear that children might say the wrong thing when discussing it with others
worry about being embarrassed in public
fear that they say something wrong

The usage of phrases like, “we’re all friends”, or “everybody’s equal”, is too vague because children cannot make the connection that the adult is referring to skin colour when using such phrases. These phrases may also be used when referring to interracial friendships. President Obama has been used by some parents as an example to illustrate that brown-skinned people or anyone can become a leader, a friend, or be loved. White guardians may say something like, “It’s wonderful that a black person can be president”.

Rebecca Bigler argues that white parents or guardians need to try to speak about race, especially since they tend to avoid the subject altogether. For example, a white parent can say something like, “some people have a different skin colour to us. White children, black children, brown children, or any colour skinned person often like the same things, even though they come from diverse backgrounds. You can be their friend if you want to.”

Through their research, authors Bronson & Merryman claim that constant, open communication about equality and the pitfall of discrimination eventually pays off, even if the child appears to have a reasonable “argument” for why they chose friends who closely resemble themselves, instead of children of colour. In addition, forcing children of different races together may not be a solution to close

the racial divide either, since they tend to automatically “self-segregate” anyway (Bronson & Merryman 2009). This is similar to the “staying-apart” phenomenon that we refer to later in our paper. According to Moody (cited in Bronson & Merryman 2009), the more diverse the school is, the more self-segregation by race or ethnicity takes place.

Telling children to be quiet if they say something inappropriate is not an effective method for dealing with race issues. “Inappropriately” saying something about race stems from children’s categorisation processes and asking children to be quiet about it sends a message that the child should not be talking about race-related aspects at all, which in turn makes the topic even more problematic (Bronson & Merryman 2009).

Clinical psychologist and professor, Dr. April Harris-Britt, claims that parents from minorities talk about discrimination with their children, even when it is not necessarily brought up by the children themselves. The topic is brought up by the minority guardians because they have had racial encounters, so they want to prepare their children for the inevitable, even if it has not already happened. In addition, they motivate their children by telling them that they should not let discrimination get in their way. Minority guardians also instil a sense of ethnic pride in their children by telling them to be proud of their history and background, which strengthens their children’s confidence. On the contrary, white children do not need to be told that they should be proud of their history, since they have already realised that they are part of the race that has more power in society, because it is reflected to a significant extent everywhere, for example, in the media (Bronson & Merryman 2009).

In kindergartens, when children express themselves about race, teachers may ignore the instance by saying something like, “they don’t know what they are saying”. Sometimes teachers blame the parents or others and talk amongst themselves saying, “the parents must have said that at home”. Also, teachers may pass the occurrence off as bad behaviour by saying, “you shouldn’t say things like that because it hurts your friend”. This approach is incorrect since



children are aware of race from a very young age and they develop racial biases between three and five, which may not necessarily correspond with their parents' attitudes, as seen in figure 5 (Winkler 2009).

Instead of telling a child to be quiet if they have made an inappropriate comment, one can help them along by explaining. For example, "that child is as clean as you are, their skin is just a different colour. It's the same as you have black hair, and that child has brown hair. There are different skin colours too" (Tatum 1997, cited in Winkler 2009). Additionally, when racial encounters between children occur, teachers should refrain from using phrases like, "you've hurt their feelings", or "what you said was quite nasty", since these responses are too vague. Instead, teachers should discuss the racial encounter in a more specific way (Winkler 2009), they may for instance turn the conversation toward looking at all the wonderful skin tones we have in the world and look for a book that teaches appreciating and understanding differences.

### 3.8 Promotion of a positive racial identity in ECEC's curriculum

To help *all* children "love their own racial identity, as well as others' diverse backgrounds, schools, families, and community members" (Sanders & Hardy 2021: 2), teachers should promote positive racial identities. Teachers might talk about different cultures, skin colours, racism, and read books or show movies featuring diverse characters. The promotion of a positive racial identity could be added to ECEC's curriculum, thus prioritising race (Sanders & Hardy 2021).

Pedagogical goals could include, for example, opportunities for children to speak their home language in the kindergarten. Other activities might involve helping children to identify positive characteristics in other people instead of only discussing skin colour. Certainly, pedagogical goals should include communication about discrimination. For instance, just as in cases of bullying, children should be encouraged to mention instances when they see other children being discriminated against (Winkler 2009: 6,9).

## **4 Multiculturalism and anti-racism content in educational material**

The discussion on multiculturalism and diversity in education is relatively new in Finland, in comparison to countries that have had a long history of immigration and diverse populations (Hahl, Niemi, Longfor & Dervin 2015: 27). The contribution of media and political platforms to anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric is ever-present in our society and must be deconstructed and acknowledged as current, ongoing ideation that can be fought through education.

Most early years curricula have already incorporated elements of multicultural education into their syllabus as this concept has been discussed at length in the field of education in both the United States and the United Kingdom for many years. James Banks, an American scholar, suggests that multiculturalism is more than being foreign or an immigrant. It should include the intersectionality of multiple identities such as ethnic, racial groups, gender, language, religion, and social class, etc. Banks argues that these elements should be brought from the margins of the curriculum to the centre (1996). This shift in perspective would set children on a path to understanding the complex ways in which the interactions between diverse groups make up our society today (Siraj-Blatchford & Siraj-Blatchford 1999). One of the ways this can be carried out is in educational books and fictional stories that are vital to every learning program. In Finland, we can generally see a lack of diversity in material content which is still highly homogenized.

The Finnish national core curriculum offers a framework for teachers to follow. However, teachers may choose how to implement it and what materials they choose to deliver the content. In early years, representations of diversity are sorely lacking in visual content within many classrooms. This includes storybooks with diverse representations of characters, and toys with diverse skin tones, etc.

In a chapter entitled, “The Alphabet Gone Wrong? Diversities in Three Finnish ABC Books”, Heini Paavola and Fred Dervin suggest that further investigation is

needed in seeing how multicultural topics are represented through books. The authors of *Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks: Finland as an Example* suggest that there is still a glorification of the “dominant culture” with a tokenish nod to multiculturalism (Hahl, Niemi, Longfor & Dervin 2015: 24). Visual content in The Golden ABC book was examined by Emilia Turpeinen from a multicultural viewpoint, and she found that the position and power of the main characters overshadowed the “multicultural” ones. They appeared in illustrations 180 times, while the representation of the minorities appeared only 30 times. This ratio was even less in the verbal utterances given to the characters, standing at 100:5. The inequality of these ratios is a form of passive and inadvertent racism and continues to perpetuate the notion that immigrant children have a lesser status in Finnish society. The pictorial representations also tend to highlight cultural stereotypes, defining “other cultures” from an ethnocentric view. They are scaffolding the idea that “others” are exotic and Finnish culture is superior and normal (Hahl, Niemi, Longfor & Dervin 2015: 26-27).

The authors of the study conclude that although representations of diversity are present there are still problematic issues in all three books. These include the caricaturing of characters of non-Finnish origins, the lack of information specific to being an immigrant, language, and identity duality. Power, wisdom, and desirable behavioural traits are all reserved for the white majority characters (Hahl, Niemi, Longfor & Dervin 2015: 30-31).

We agree with the conclusion of this study, and it supports our argument that we not only need to reflect on the way we as teachers present multiculturalism but that we must also include anti-racism in designing curricula. In Kendi’s teachers’ guide, *Antiracist Baby*, he suggests that teachers can curate diverse books for the classroom that aim to show positive racial identities. This should not only be shown in characters within the stories but should include authors and traditional stories across ethnoracial groups that provide an “inside” cultural perspective (Kendi, 2020).

## 5 Anti-racism work underway in Finland

Recently, bullying at schools and kindergartens has been highlighted due to a chain of unfortunate violent events connected to early childhood bullying. Considering recent events, the City of Helsinki has stepped up its anti-racist approach. It is also important to examine other anti-racist work in Finland in order to assess the efficacy of ongoing anti-racist projects. In this section we review the work that is being done on municipal levels to show that this topic is beginning to gain more prominent focus within the field of education on both municipal and national levels.

### 5.1 The City of Helsinki

The Education Division of the City of Helsinki has compiled a development plan for immigrant education in 2018–2021 (“Maahanmuuttajien kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen kehittämissuunnitelma”). One of the objectives of the plan is to reduce experiences of discrimination and racism and work towards the prevention of conflict related to racism and prejudice through a program called, “I See You See” (“Minun Silmin – Sinun Silmin”). Through the training, educators’ ability to recognize discrimination and racism will be strengthened and they will gain the knowledge and ability to rectify these situations (City of Helsinki 2019: 6-10).

The City of Helsinki is funding an anti-racist training program in Finnish, managed by The Peace Education Institute, which comprises 165 anti-racism workshops and will continue until the end of 2021. This training program is entitled, “Jumping into the boots of an anti-racist early childhood educator” (“Hyppy antirasistisen varhaiskasvattajan saappaisiin” in Finnish), aimed at training teachers in the early childhood education and care sector, as well as teachers in schools about anti-racism (Peace Education Institute, 2019). Project planner, Pia Aaltonen, points out the importance of identifying and addressing racism. The idea behind the training is to enhance educators’ ability to recognize racism and discrimination and reduce the occurrence of racial experiences. In addition, bullying that has a

discriminatory nature, such as bullying relating to skin colour is now being reported (Toivanen 2020).

## 5.2 The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman

The need for anti-racist education has also been reflected in a report by the equality ombudsman which has identified that racism experienced by children at school comes from teachers, staff, and the majority student population. In 2019, a report by the Equality Commissioner was compiled using an online questionnaire and individual interviews. Findings show that most people with African backgrounds face daily discrimination. The respondents revealed that their first experience with racism began in early years or within the first grades of primary school. The report further describes that most of the racialized incidences take place in interactions between the students and are most often not noticed by the teachers (Hiltunen 2020). This confirms earlier research into racism in Finland, and that it is present within Finnish society. If we refuse to acknowledge it and continue to tell ourselves that it does not exist, we are not living by the laws of our constitution. We do not live in a society that has equality and equity for all of us who live here, an aspiration clearly stated in Finland's national core curriculum. Therefore, our argument for anti-racist education for teachers and staff is vital for the improvement of our society and *all* its members.

## 5.3 The Finnish National Agency for Education

The Finnish National Agency for Education (2019) has published a guide entitled, the "Prevention of violent radicalisation in early childhood education and care". The guide recommends that we teach children to understand diversity and similarity and, teach them ways in which they can live in peace, and respect each other. The teacher should act as a positive role model in their attitude to diversity. In addition, the guide outlines the need to prevent and intervene in cases where there is harassment or hate speech in early childhood education and care. Furthermore, it indicates that feelings of injustice, social exclusion, meaninglessness, and bullying are factors that may contribute to hate speech

and racist behaviour. The Finnish National Agency for Education's solution to combat this problem is to increase participation, interaction, and to strengthen empathetic abilities. Further, they recommend that teachers intervene in hate speech and racism by acting fast and working in ways that prevent this negative trend.

The teacher can also discuss ethical and moral issues with children such as good and evil, friendship, telling right from wrong, justice, or causes of fear, sadness, and joy. Ethical questions are discussed with children so that they feel safe and accepted. If matters such as immigration and issues related to it are discussed constructively in the work communities of ECEC, it will be possible to develop pedagogical discussion and understanding in the working environment. In addition, it will also help to develop the anti-racist operating culture based on the National core curriculum for ECEC. Besides, ECEC's work communities continually develop and update structures that ensure professional discussion practices.

## 5.4 Racism in the media in Finland

The prevalence of racism on various media platforms has been well documented and studied in academic literature. Our purpose here is to briefly discuss how media exerts an influence on all of us and shapes our views on racism 'and contributes to its conceptual ambiguity by treating it as a personal moral transgression' (Hesse 2004). Considering racism as a personal character trait is counterproductive to the discussion of racism because white individuals view it as a personal slur; rather than looking at how they may have perpetuated racism, they spend time defending themselves against the accusation.

In the media, we see much discussion over what constitutes as racism (Herkman & Matikainen 2019; Titley 2019). A political remark or campaign poster may be decried as racist by some media outlets and social media platforms, while defended on others.

The current municipal elections in Finland are proving those right-wing ideologies (also popular in many other western majority-white countries) have shifted focus from race to the argument that they are fighting for the survival of their nations' cultural identity, and that this is a natural concept. This only shows that the term "race" has been removed from the argument and been replaced with the notion of culture (Berg & Wendt 2011: 81). A current example of this is the "Anti-immigrant" Finns Party (Perussuomalaiset) election advertisements that were eventually removed from Helsinki streets. The advertisement provoked a good deal of debate on social media. While some considered it to be racist and anti-immigrant (Yle Uutiset 2021), others argued that it was merely pointing out a flaw in the system and that Finns can no longer have what is due to them, as immigrants have been given priority within the government systems.

Since many may recognize racism as a social inequality, it is unlikely that we would see overt expressions of racism in mainstream media due to our strong social sense of justice and the repercussions of racist sentiments (Lentin 2016). However, this is not reflected in digital platforms where explicit racist expression prevails, and individuals continue to perpetuate notions of "cultural and biological essentialism" (Cisneros & Nakayama 2015). These sentiments can filter through to children in early years through direct interaction via media, or more likely through indirect interactions via ideas discussed in the child's socio-ecological environment. Teachers can counteract implicit or explicit racism by introducing anti-racist education from a child's first school experience or in kindergartens.

## **6 Research questions**

To develop the practices of our working life partner, as well as to satisfy their need to train their staff by having a dialogue and updating their knowledge where applicable, we examined their perspectives about racism as well as how they support anti-racism work in their early childhood education setting. Through qualitative research, in the form of a questionnaire, we attempted to explore the experiences and perspectives of the employees when they encounter racism and what anti-racist approach they use, if applicable.

Our central research question is: How do early childhood teachers and child-carers at kindergartens deal with racist situations that may occur amongst children? Followed by a sub-question: How do early childhood teachers and child-carers at the kindergarten describe the racial incidents that they experience, should they occur?

Once our qualitative research and analysis are complete and we have a greater understanding of the situation at the kindergartens, we will most likely be faced with questions such as: What are the effective anti-racist approaches when dealing with racist situations? And how can we develop the teachers' and child care workers' methods so that they can deal with racist incidents more efficiently? Naturally, it is also possible that we may be faced with other questions depending on the answers and perspectives that we receive from the respondents.

The formulation of our research questions also supports the notion of our theory that there is racism in early childhood education and care, which the working partner had found that more work was needed in this area. To remain unbiased, we will question ourselves throughout the process of our study and remind ourselves of why our topic is important. This should help us to effectively analyse how teachers manage racist incidents, since it is a subject that is not easily being acknowledged, for reasons that will become clear through our research.

## **7 Methodology**

The research method that we chose to use was in the form of a qualitative participant questionnaire, a multiple-choice question, and open-ended, reflective questions. The questions were aimed at determining the kindergartens' best anti-racist practices in early childhood education and care that may be used for research as well as laying a foundation for future training material. In addition, the questions targeted the participants' perspectives about racism or anti-racism.



## 7.1 Consent and data collection

Before presenting our topic to the kindergartens, we obtained consent from the kindergartens' manager in the form of a research permit (see appendix 2). The research permit outlined the consent to collect reflective and voluntary data from the staff of the kindergartens.

Google Forms software was used to distribute the questionnaire and the participants completed the questionnaire without obligation. Data were collected electronically through Google Forms, which follows the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The participants were assured that the data will only be used by the authors of the study and that the material was collected and analysed anonymously. In addition, the participants were assured that no individuals were identifiable from the participants' responses and no personal information was collected. Furthermore, we informed the participants that the data will be stored on Google Forms and will be kept until December 2021.

To ensure equality and reliable results, teachers and child care workers with similar educational backgrounds and qualifications were chosen for the study. In addition, the presentation that we gave, encouraged the teachers and child care workers to reflect on how they felt about race and their hidden prejudices, to increase the validity of the outcome.

## 7.2 Research ethical principles

During our research process, we used the research ethical principles as outlined by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK (2012). We undertook to credit other researchers in our thesis by citing their names. The authors of the thesis planned, analysed, and reported the results that were received during the research process. A research permit was obtained (see appendix 2). And we had a meeting with our working partner and agreed on terms, such as the handling of data.

In our research process, we took data protection legislation into account by, for example, informing our participants that we would store their data on Google Forms until December 2021. As part of the thesis process at the university of applied sciences, a peer review system was done twice to promote responsible research. We did not gain financially because of our research, nor did we give anyone money during the process. In addition, care was taken not to fabricate or falsify data to achieve our desired outcome. Furthermore, a plagiarism check was carried out before publishing the thesis to avoid plagiarizing someone else's material.

To prevent misappropriation of authors' material, the material was read and cited very carefully. Care was taken to present the results methodically and understandably. Storage of the results was transcribed and added into the thesis to ensure adequate record-keeping. We prevented our participants' identities from becoming known and we gave them a guarantee to make them feel comfortable before completing the questionnaire. To assist our participants to answer our questions with ease, we offered examples and defined concepts such as racism and anti-racism. In addition, we made the questionnaire as short as possible, to avoid them spending a lot of time completing a lengthy survey. Furthermore, the authors respected the dignity and autonomy of the participants.

## **8 Results**

Below we explore the details of the findings that emerged from our research. We based our analysis on the responses to the questionnaire (see appendix 4) that we sent to the respondents. In the data analysis, we opened our topics, and we used the form of narrative analysis to deconstruct the data and make connections to the literature.

### **8.1 Analysing the data**

The total responses that we received from our data collection amounted to four from forty-five members of staff. The lack of responses may indicate a variety of

factors, such as time constraints, or the method which we used in the form of a questionnaire, or that it may have been more useful to conduct interviews to get a more in-depth response. However, due to the covid-19 restrictions, this was not possible. Naturally, it is also likely that the lack of participation of the respondents is due to the sensitivity of the subject matter. This can be seen in, for example, Front's research (2019: 46–47), in which she suggests that there is a fear of being identified, and thus people do not eagerly participate in surveys or questionnaires on the topic of racism.

A good example of what appeared to be hesitance to participate is that we initially encountered a problem with a kindergarten that we contacted to ask if they wished to participate in our data collection, however, they felt that this topic did not apply to their centre and as a result, we had to find a new partner. This may suggest that there is a reluctance to engage in reflection on the meaning and consequences of racism or anti-racism education in the early year's sector in Finland.

Furthermore, because our respondents come from various backgrounds and are not a homogenized group, this data cannot be used as an indicator of the feelings of teachers toward anti-racist education in a Finnish context. Below we present a detailed analysis of the responses that we received from our data collection.

### 8.1.1 Racial Awareness

We began with the question, “When and how did I become aware of my racial identity?”, intending to shed light on teachers' and child care workers' experiences that could be interpreted from a Finnish or foreign perspective. By questioning the early childhood education staff about their racial awareness, they could reflect on their own childhood experiences. In addition, we aimed to show at what age children become aware of their racial identity.

Four of four participants responded to the first question. Two of the respondents experienced personal racism, one as a child while the other only experienced it when they came to Finland. However, they did not mention the age that they

became aware of race. The other two respondents said that they became aware of race as young children. In three of the responses, it appears that they became aware of race through their interactions in the world around them. Therefore, we realize the importance, as suggested by Genishi & Goodwin (2008), that early childhood professionals need to engage with children in dialogue from an informed base, to create learning environments that adhere to the curriculum's principles of social justice and equity.

Finland appears to still be in the initial stages of working with migration and immigration because they have only become exposed to increasing diversity within the past few years. As a result, they continue to discover ways to manage aspects such as assimilation and integration. Because diversity is on the increase, early years educators need to learn to accommodate the demand through learning to find their own biases and reflecting on the normalization of their sense of white superiority, where applicable. To accomplish this, they should view COC (children of colour) as individuals, who have multiple identities and cater to those identities with a sense of equality and respect for their family culture. In addition, teachers should not feel uncomfortable talking about race with their students. And it has been thought by some that opening this topic would make children notice race and inequality for the first time, which can be seen in studies done by, for example, Hughes et al. 2006 or Stevenson 2005.

The first response to the question, see below in bold, may indicate some unease in saying anything personal about their own experience with race, although they were aware of the existence of POC (people of colour) within their community.

***“I guess from since quite a young age. Living in Finland in the 90's our neighbourhood was, in a way, quite "white", so there weren't that many families from other races, but we had children in our daycare and school, but there weren't as many as compared to now.”***

This response may underline the importance that teachers have in the communities where children have less exposure to diversity in a wider context. Derman-Sparks (2015) suggests that it is important for teachers to provide a role

model in social justice issues so that they become part of the everyday curriculum, as opposed to only looking at diversity and difference when problematic situations arise. Teachers should become central to effecting change in combating their own negative attitudes toward COC and their families. Additionally, a child acquires a cultural way of being, which affects their identity and occurs through nurturing the child's ability to interact and navigate the socio-emotional world of family and community. This goes beyond art, music, or dress, which people normally associate with culture.

Furthermore, teachers may supply a model for how children and their families react to bias behaviour and work towards social justice for all members of the school community. Bias should not only be identified when issues arise, as is most commonly the case, instead pre-emptive antibias work should be embedded into the curriculum. In this way, we can engage in the ongoing building of an appreciation and understanding of difference and diversity (Gordon-Burns et al. 2012: 7).

The second response, as seen below, acknowledged that the community in which they grew up was subject to prejudice and race talk, although their family seems to have been exempt from biases.

*“Somehow it’s a very difficult question, maybe because I can’t name a specific time or event. I’m sure it was in my somewhat early childhood though.... We were always a very open and accepting family in a countryside town where everyone was not as open-minded to e.g., foreigners. During my adult life, I’ve been exposed much more to racial talk and understanding different cultures and ways of life through my family, husband, friends and work.”*

It is interesting that “racial talk” and “understanding different cultures” are linked as topics and that they are inextricably bound together. This supports what we pointed out earlier in our paper, that Lentin argued that we have merely shifted our discourse on anti-racism by replacing race with culture. This idea is deeply entrenched and may even be a subconscious bias. In addition, the response

reflects the same response as the first because it reiterates the importance of the role that schools, and teachers play in the discourse on anti-racist education.

The third respondent, see below, had an internalised and subjective experience with racism in childhood. This coincides with the multiple studies that have concluded that racism is prevalent on a global scale and is internalised by those who are subjected to it.

***“I became aware of my racial identity when I was a child in my home country. I was born in a border area and there is a lot of racism against my people, who are the majority in the country, but the minority in that region.”***

Respondent four, as seen below, did not mention their age, but it appears that Finland is the first place the individual has experienced personal racism. In addition, they make no specific mention of experiencing it in childhood. This points to previous research, and reports by the Equality Commissioner (2019) that racism is a very real issue in Finland, and we must work toward its eradication in all areas of the education system.

***“When I move to this country, Finland, where I come from a minority.”***

### 8.1.2 Responding to racial incidents

Only three of four participants responded to our second question which was, “Have you had or witnessed any encounters regarding race as a teacher? How did you respond?” Upon examination of the answers, we noticed that they varied greatly.

In the first response, see in bold below, the participant highlighted culture and identity, indicating that the person understood that a teacher should know the importance of multiple identities. Also, the answer revealed that the teacher had to intervene in possible racialized exchanges, however, the comments do appear slightly ambiguous in that there is little detail about the actual exchanges. Nevertheless, the encounters are still relevant because they did occur, and we learn that they occurred between parents, or between a teacher and a parent.

Furthermore, the importance of equality was reflected in the response, and to resolve the dispute, respect and equality had to be emphasized. This could also indicate that dialogue about equality should take place between parents and teachers.

***“I encounter different races every day though I don’t really think of it that way. To me, it’s important that we celebrate the different cultures and identities we have in our daycare and can learn from them and understand each other better. No race is above other, no culture or belief considered less worthy. I’ve had a few slightly unpleasant times when I’ve had to intervene between either two parents or a colleague and a parent. Both cases were different but ultimately about respecting others and considering everyone equal.”***

The second answer below includes a clear “yes” and is a good example of what a teacher in early years might expect when encountering hidden prejudice or “othering” from the children.

***“Yes. In our day care we have children of many different origins. Once, a little girl said to a playmate: “here, it smells badly”, probably referring to the spice smell coming from his dresses. The teacher replied: “Do not say this sentence, it hurts him.”***

This specific instance is one that we have also experienced as teachers more than once, and in the past have responded similarly. However, if faced with the same situation today, our response would be different. This shows the need for teachers to be better equipped to respond to such incidences.

Engaging in a conversation with the child who believes that a spice smell may be unpleasant, could help them to understand that everyone has different tastes, and what one person likes, another might not. It could also be approached as a scientific, historical, or geographical topic that would broaden the worldview of *all* children. Thus, instead of shutting the child down, we show respect to both children by confirming the fact that one child does not like the smell, but it is a matter of respect in how or when it is pointed out. Additionally, the presumed

racialized child could be given a chance to talk about their favourite foods and the rich spices used by their family when cooking.

When teachers answer by saying that the other child is hurt by the reference to a physical feature, in this instance a smell, we are saying that they should be hurt by it as it is upsetting thus inducing the internalisation of racism. This may position the child as a passive victim, instead of one who can actively construct their multiple identities. Instead, the child should be shown that they can be proud of a long history of rich food, and a spice-smelling activity could follow. Mealtimes are a potential site for reinforcing learning about differences, and food is a significant aspect of all cultures, thus discussing socially relevant issues while eating can help to build community as well as highlight traditional practices of various cultures.

Our third participant, see below, expressed that they had not encountered any racialized incidents. However, after viewing the presentation the author of this thesis shared about anti-racism, they felt more confident to deal with racial incidents should they arise. This could indicate that teachers would like to have more information and conversation on the topic to ensure that we are prepared to discuss questions from the children about skin colour, religion, and culture. In the duration of our work on this thesis, we have seen the importance of sharing our own experiences with others in education, to better understand, together, how we may reshape some of the ways we have responded to children that may have inadvertently perpetuated our own biases.

***“I have not dealt with any situation yet, but now I am well equipped especially after listening to your thesis presentation”***

### 8.1.3 Comfort level

The total number of respondents to our multiple-choice question, surrounding comfort level experienced when talking about race or racism, is four out of four. Upon examining the graph representing the participants' feelings of comfort when discussing race, as seen in figure 4 below, we can also make connections based



on the participants' previous comments. For example, we notice that two of them previously talked about their personal experience with being racialized and were comfortable when talking about race. This seems to correlate with earlier studies that those who have been racialized must have conversations about race and their interactions with it. While those who are white may experience feelings of discomfort or would rather not discuss race or racism.



Figure. 4 Graphical representation of comfort level when discussing race

First, the purple shaded area represents 50 % of the respondents, that is two of four, who appear to be usually comfortable talking about race or racism. Second, the light blue coloured area represents 25 % of the participants, that is one of four, that is very comfortable talking about race. Third, the green shaded area also represents 25 % of the total respondents, that is one of four, who is sometimes uncomfortable talking about race or racism. All-in-all, this may illustrate that none of the participants are opposed to discussing race or racism, as seen in table 2 below. In other words, we get a sense that if we decided to arrange a dialogue at the kindergarten, the staff would most likely be more cooperative and open to dialogue, as opposed to being completely against it.

Table 2. Table illustrating the level of comfort when discussing race

Number of respondents	Percentage of participants	Comfort level when discussing race
2	50 %	<b>Usually</b> comfortable
1	25 %	<b>Very</b> comfortable
1	25 %	<b>Sometimes</b> uncomfortable

The table allows us at a glance to realise that the participants are not opposed to talking about race or racism.

#### 8.1.4 Talking about race and racism with children

Four of four participants responded to our fourth question which was, “Do you worry about your ability to answer the children's questions, feelings, or non-verbal communications about race and racism? Yes/No, please explain.”

When mulling over the first respondent’s answer, seen below in bold, we get a glimpse into the fear this person may have of being conceived of as being a white person, who has feelings that may be construed as racialized talk. This may represent the reluctance of many white people to enter any kind of discourse on race for the fear of being called a racist, which we have discussed earlier in this thesis. Many teachers appear uncomfortable and seem to avoid talking about race or racism, which may come from a fear of misspeaking or unintentionally sounding racist. Further, this individual has had positive individual experiences with their own children of dual nationalities, which may be as a result of them teaching their children to embrace their dual identity cultures. When closing, they imply that they actively discuss racism with their children.

*“Yes, I do sometimes, because I feel very **CONSCIOUS** about what I say could be misinterpreted because I’m Caucasian. I don’t want to hurt anyone with*

*what I say or how I explain things, especially when I don't have the same experiences of them as people who face racism in their daily life. I have xxx children who are xxx xxx, xxx xxx and I've always experienced only positive reactions from others about them. I've always told them they are super special because they have both xxx (certain country) and xxx (certain country) in them and they have two cultures to embrace. I realize that might not always be the case and I need to talk about e.g., racism and give tools how to deal with it, with them more."* [xxx represents possible identifiable information that was removed to protect the participant's identity].

The other three respondents, seen in bold below, all answered that they are in no way uncomfortable with discussing race. One respondent has personal experience with race talk and feels fully equipped to deal with any discussion that may arise. This again reflects the finding on studies done across the globe, where those who are non-white must be prepared to discuss their own race and hone the skill of answering tough questions about themselves on an everyday basis, thus proving once again that it is those of us in the white majority who need this discussion the most.

***"No. I think teacher are responsible to educate themselves and then educate the children and as long as we have an open mindset."***

***"No. I believe that it is very important to educate children towards integration and therefore the awareness that we are all different, unique and wonderful. I feel the responsibility to intervene actively."***

***"No, I do not feel uncomfortable. I come from a minority race, and I have gained skills on answering such questions, since I encounter them on a regular basis"***

In addition, two of the respondents felt that it was part of the teacher's responsibility. As teachers, we have a social responsibility to understand that people of colour in Finland, do not have the privilege of not thinking about or not discussing race with their children. It should become part of educational curriculums, to ensure that we are all aware of social injustices so that we can build a future of equality. Furthermore, in the transversal competencies of the

National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018 (Finnish National Agency for Education 2018), it says that ECE teachers should actively “provide the children with a model for encountering other people and diversity in languages, cultures, and worldviews positively”. Part of this should be anti-racist teaching.

The authors of this thesis believe that through pondering the questions that were posed in the questionnaire, the respondents have already begun to see how much discourse teachers, and those who work in education, should have when practicing anti-racist education. Paulo Freire (1975) repeatedly suggests in the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” that no education system is neutral, and bias is inherent in the ordering and selecting of facts. If we can acknowledge that as educators, we use our own histories and learned social interactions when teaching the children, we can unpack how it has influenced our identities and consequently understand how this affects us in our professional setting.

#### 8.1.5 Supporting anti-racist work in the early years

All the respondents, that is four of four, answered our fifth question, which is “How are you supporting anti-racist work in your early years setting?” In their responses, the participants wrote about cultural events, a multicultural community, and treating each child and their families with equality and respect. Thus, illustrating that the environment in which the participants work is diverse and that they have strong core values on equality and multicultural activities. The recurring themes in the respondents’ answers are equality, respect, fairness, uniqueness, and multiculturalism. However, we reiterate that cultural distinctiveness, and the celebration of these differences is different from anti-racism. While multiculturalism presents a positive, solution-based perspective (Berman & Paradies 2010), it does not include more nuanced aspects such as the covert, societal, and systematic factors of racism that feature in Finland. Also, multicultural programs have no specific reflection on racism, since it is assumed that all those that live within the community are equally positioned within it. (Ang 2001, cited by Berman & Paradies 2010.)

The first participant's response showed that after self-reflecting, they were able to distinguish between multicultural activities and anti-racism activities. Consequently, justifying that the questionnaire gave the person pause for thought. In addition, the person realised that more anti-racism work, such as planning anti-racism activities, needed to be carried out after they had identified the void, perhaps as a result of reflection.

***“We bring different cultural events and customs very close to the children during the school year, for them to learn and understand about our similarities and differences, to empower children to feel safe and part of a multicultural community. Having said that, I definitely have more work to be done for anti-racism in early childhood setting and will come up with more ideas and activities to do with children to help to support it.”***

The second response is a typical one that is given by many early years' teachers, but also shows, as we have argued in our thesis that simply stating that we are all treated equally is not adequate in supporting anti-racist education.

***“We treat each child, and adult as equal and no matter where they come from, what their family status is or what race they are, it shouldn't affect the way we treat each other.”***

When looking at the final sentence in the third response, seen in bold below, we realise that racialized incidences may happen more times than are identified by teachers. Also, we were pleased to see that the respondent could explain why racism is not acceptable, which is sometimes difficult for people and especially white people.

***“With both verbal and non-verbal daily example. I welcome everyone with respect and fairness. I am careful to give all the children the same opportunities in the class. I value the uniqueness of each one: I often say that each person is unique in the world, even if s/he belongs to the same people. Comparisons are not to be made. I value intercultural richness and awareness, talking about religions, different festivals, cultures, different languages, (even my country of origin) in lot of my circles. I intervene immediately when I see gestures or phrases of racism and explain why.”***

## 8.2 Summary of the results

All the participants of this questionnaire agree that anti-racist education is important and believe that they are already actively teaching the values of equality and respect in terms of multiculturalism. They all agreed with the idea that it is our responsibility as teachers to be part of a dialogue that will lead to an increase in anti-racist education and ways in which we can effectively deal with racialized situations should they arise within the setting.

Results from the questionnaires indicate that there is a need for further teacher education in anti-racist education. It would be useful to have a larger study done by the municipalities of Helsinki, Vantaa, and Espoo so that we can involve more teaching staff in the importance of this discussion. We hope that our thesis may be used to further the goals of anti-racist teaching in both interactions with the children and the formulation of teaching materials and guides for teachers not only in our partner kindergartens, but also in Finnish municipal kindergartens.

## 9 Conclusion

Our research is unique because we are white immigrants and we have also had experiences of inequality relating to being foreigners in Finland. Naturally, this does not mean that we understand what it means to be racialized, and we realise that we are still in a position of white privilege. Additionally, we have friends who are people of colour, whose children have had racial experiences, thus the anti-racist approaches that we choose are more justifiable. Our study will broaden the scope of research to include the perspectives of early childhood employees about what they do when they encounter racial incidents, for which there is very little research material in Finland, as far as we know. Furthermore, it would be beneficial for research in general, to add more information about the types of racial incidents that occur especially since little has been written about it thus far.

The usage of reflective dialogue was a successful method in the training of the working life partner, in that it created an opportunity for people to openly talk

about racism or anti-racism and to express any concerns that they felt comfortable talking about. Most importantly, since we are early childhood teachers, we work with the child's best interest at heart. Thus, if a child is distressed, we need to know how to help them or guide others to treat others with dignity and respect. What better way to do that than to refer to our study and be able to make decisions based on our data when faced with racial situations? Even if we start small, by introducing anti-racism strategies at one or two kindergartens after our study, in the future, the organisation may use the research in their other kindergartens. Additionally, if the teachers at the kindergarten transfer to other kindergarten centres, they will use the knowledge and expertise that they gained in this process wherever they work, thus also increasing the quality of early education and care all around. Moreover, the results can be integrated into the kindergartens' pedagogy to aid teachers in their daily practice.

## **10 Discussion**

In this section we discuss aspects and give suggestions based on our theory after our research was complete.

### **10.1 Fulfilling the working life partners' needs**

According to Bohm, a discussion is the bouncing of ideas around intending to win everyone over with your idea, thus a win-lose outcome. In contrast, in a dialogue, no one has an aim to win. Instead, the outcome of dialogue is a win-win in that everyone wins, and it surrounds common participation. (Bohm 1996: 7.) Dialogue aims to help people to refrain from analysing things or trying to get one's opinion to be the best, thus everyone instead suspends their opinion and finds something in common, that is, a common meaning. (Bohm 1996: 26 - 27.)

We believe that the first step to introducing an intentional and unambiguous anti-racist pedagogy, is in reflective dialogue amongst the staff. The practice of dialogue has been used successfully to open many difficult and sensitive topics, and we are certain that it will make a difference in how racial encounters are

managed. The purpose of a dialogue is to create a space in which one is not judged by what one says, but one can rather speak openly, which helps us to identify our own prejudices or bias. In addition, a dialogue is not aimed at assigning blame, but rather to rectify and break down ingrained racism. To introduce dialogue is extremely easy, since no special materials are needed, and can take place anywhere, such as in a staff meeting setting. It is part of our social duty as educators to participate in the fight against systemic and institutional racism, and dialogue can help to bring us closer to that goal.

## 10.2 The United Kingdom's early childhood curriculum's role

We refer to section 2.3., where we suggest that the English curriculum could be a reason for our working life partners' organised approach to anti-racism, multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion. After discussions with our working life partner, we realize that their hiring policies influence their approach since they hire people with an international background more readily, and thus do not have a predominantly Finnish environment. Additionally, we realise that the anti-racist and multicultural approaches are also promoted by the unit managers of the kindergartens. In other words, if the kindergarten manager has a strong anti-racist approach or values, it has a positive effect on the unit's developmental practices, favouring an anti-racist approach.

When researching the United Kingdom's Statutory framework for the early year's foundation stage 2021, which is like the equivalent to the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018, we were surprised to learn that a similar situation occurs in the United Kingdom as in Finland, where very little, if nothing at all is mentioned about race. In fact, the only reference to race in the United Kingdom's early year's curriculum is that practitioners must be treated fairly regardless of race. (Gov.uk 2021). Thus, it appears that, like Finland, the main focus on racism has been on schools and not in the early years in the United Kingdom.



### 10.3 Ensuring an anti-racist approach in ECEC

What inspired one of the authors of this thesis to study and write about the subject of racism and anti-racism, was their first experience of blatant and overt racism. It took place in 2020, at a Finnish municipal kindergarten, between two 5-year-old boys and another non-white Finn. One of the authors of the thesis was shocked and horrified by the words spoken by the children, and because they were a substitute teacher in the situation, they went to ask the other teacher on staff what is normally done in these kinds of situations. The response was that it was a frequent occurrence in the setting, and they did not know what to do about it, even though it had gone on for the whole term. The teacher seemed tired and exasperated and she did admit that what was happening, was wrong, but she felt inadequate to deal with the situation effectively.

If we leave children's expressions of racism to go unchecked or unchallenged, we are helping to legitimatise and actively allowing the perpetuation of racist discourse (Epstein 1993). We still hear of many teachers saying that racism does not happen in their settings or in their schools. This notion is inherently flawed, since we have argued that institutional and systematic racism exists in Finland, how then can kindergartens be exempt from it?

We have seen that in many predominantly white kindergarten settings, a lack of diversity expressed in the choice of toys, posters and children's literature, this absence speaks to how we deal with the question of anti-racism in early years. Thus, these absences surely suggest that we live in a country and world which is populated exclusively by white people. Also, Alemanji (2016) suggests that in children's literature, we see Finland being portrayed as being civilized, and Africa as uncivilised in that the authors focus on traditional people, instead of the general population of Africa. In fact, Alemanji suggests changing from a multiculturalism approach to an anti-racism approach, to highlight racism and thus abolish the practice. (Alemanji 2016: 45-46; 59; 61-62.)

When looking at Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Härkönen 2001), we learn that early childhood learning is a product of the influence of the world around a child. These influences may teach the child racism or divisive biases, or they can support the child in forging connections that are based on social justice for all. Here we will give some practical ideas for implementing an anti-bias or anti-racist pedagogy in early years. These ideas are taken from a variety of sources of those who have been writing about teaching anti-racism in early years:

- focus should be placed on similarities as well as differences, thus laying a foundation for cooperation
- make anti-racism part of early childhood education and care curriculum
- infuse anti-racist education in early childhood to counteract bias by equipping children with cognitive, linguistic, and social tools needed for identifying, deconstructing, and countering racially biased information (Husband 2011)
- introduce anti-racist education in early childhood, so that children will learn to see racial inequality as an abnormal part of life. Thus, they will be more likely to actively combat racism in their environment (Tatum 1992, cited in Husband 2011)
- many teachers are concerned whether it is appropriate to teach children about race (Ramsey 2004). Also, teachers may worry about potential backlashes that may occur among colleagues or the community as a result of teaching about race and racism (Derman-Sparks 1998)
- early childhood educators should examine how racism operates in the institutions where they teach (Husband 2011)

- be willing to deal with any conflicts that may result between parents, children or managers from having discussions about race or racism (Derman-Sparks and Ramsey 2006)

In the book, “What If All the Kids Are White”, the authors suggest using the term anti-bias or multicultural education (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey 2011). This term seems to effectively encapsulate the core issues of working toward social justice, while simultaneously allowing us to continue the course of appreciating our increasing cultural diversity within Finland. In some discussions that we had with other people during our own journey of authoring this thesis, we noticed that when broaching the subject of anti-racism, many white people simply had a knee-jerk reaction to any word that had the word race in it. In his book, “How to be an Anti-racist”, Kendi (2019) says that the word racist has become akin to a slur that we throw around, meaning that it is something a person is.

People often seem to think that racism is something that you are, or you are not. For example, how many times have we heard, “I am not a racist”. Being a racist is not a condition, and it is not a state of being that suddenly reveals a well-hidden character trait. For white people it is a word we have come to fear: to be labelled a “racist”. However, if we can reframe the way in which we think and teach our children to see racism for what it is, that is, an idea that is expressed in cultures, institutions and personal action and behaviours, then we must also rethink the way we teach about racism. It is an idea rather than something that a person is. “Accusations of racism... tend to be seen as more serious social infractions than racist attitudes or actions themselves” (Van Dijk 1992: 90). How can we develop effective anti-racist practices when we continue to argue about how we should identify, name, and categorise people, groups, or practices as racist? (Augoustinos and Every 2010.)

Banks (1996) suggests that if educators adopt a variety of teaching styles that reflect the learning styles used by various cultural groups, to be used alongside the culturally dominant one, it may be beneficial to racialized children. Also, it can

help teachers and children within the majority, to lose the sense of superiority that is often held by the western, white majority.

#### 10.4 Social construction

Our research has shed some light on the complexity of racism, as well as the support of its socially constructed structures. It is possible that many people in Finland have not even thought of concepts like exceptionalism, colonialism, whiteness, and denial because they may not have had any reason to think about it because of their white privilege, or they have not made the connections that the researchers have made. If people are, as the researchers suggest, benefitting from the existing structures that are in place, it is understandable that they would not like to change anything. However, we predict that with the growing number of immigrants, there will be an increase in racial incidents, especially if immigrants cannot live up to the ideals of “Finnishness”. Nevertheless, more opportunities are needed to talk about racism because it brings the subject to the fore and helps us to overcome our feelings of uncomfortableness.

In addition, we must provide children with experiences that will sow the seeds of change toward an equitable society, which will be internalised into their way of being, and with time has the potential to change society. Furthermore, most white adults have not been educated about racism and thus are not in a position to give children the correct knowledge and the critical thinking skills. These skills are also needed in anti-bias work in the early year’s setting. It is up to us to bring about these changes, which begins with us openly talking about issues based around race and racism. No matter how much discomfort we feel as white people, the inequality in our societal structures that each of us perpetuate through our silence will remain. The racialized will continue their conversations with their own children to prepare them for a world, in which they will feel less appreciated, and in which we continue to show them that nothing changes. Also, we will continue to confirm through our actions, that people of colour, are indeed not welcome. We do not consider this to be a kind of world that our children should grow up in. There is

hope for change, and we as educators must join the conversation in influencing this change.

### 10.5 Lack of research

We do not know the reasons for the lack of research about how early education staff is dealing with racial incidents or the extent of their occurrence. However, we suspect that staff at kindergartens are apprehensive to talk about racism due to lack of skills and knowledge in dealing with racialized situations, or they simply do not see the relevance in early years pedagogy. Alternatively, employees are bound by confidentiality relating to children, and thus they may feel like they are violating their ethical code if they speak out. Therefore, as researchers such as Front suggest, using the least identifiable methods of data collection was essential for this study to encourage people to take part.

### 10.6 Uncomfortable feelings

Undoubtedly, our study was difficult and unsettling to carry out because it evoked so many emotions and challenged existing beliefs, in ourselves as we embarked on this journey. In the beginning, we also felt the unsettling feelings that this subject seems to evoke in white people. It was even harder to write about, especially because we did not want to unintentionally offend anybody. However, as we progressed in our own learning, we could see how many areas of white privilege existed in our own lives, which turned out to be a catalyst in spurring us along to actively promote engaging in anti-racism dialogue, which we passionately believe is the only way to an equal and fair society.

### 10.7 Prevention and furthering our work

More discussion and dialogue should take place amongst white Finns and white immigrants, so that we can understand why we hold on to beliefs that cause us to feel culturally threatened by non-white Finns and non-white immigrants. Once we have all recognized that institutional racism is firmly embedded in this society, we can begin to deconstruct it, this will supply a foundation for anti-racist

education which, we should, as morally aware teachers begin to give to our children from the earliest parts of their education.

To help us to strengthen our early childhood education and care curriculum, we could perhaps learn from other countries' early year's curriculums in that they have a solid foundation in terms of their incorporation of multiple cultures. For example, the Te Whāriki early childhood curriculum of New Zealand. The curriculum has critical theoretical lenses to examine the influence of social conditions, global influences, and equity of opportunity on children's learning and development. Critical theory enables early childhood educators to challenge disparities, injustices, inequalities, and perceived norms. The usage of Te Whāriki's critical theory can strengthen the Finnish early childhood education curriculum in anti-racist teaching. For example, it is quite specific in that it seeks human "emancipation from slavery", acts as a "liberating ... influence", and works "to create a world which satisfies the needs and powers of" human beings (Horkheimer 1972, cited by Bohman).

Aspects of the Te Whāriki early childhood curriculum of New Zealand could perhaps be used in conjunction with a Freirean perspective of dialogic encounters within the early years setting. Freire's premise is that we are all, "beings in the process of becoming – unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire 2002). Teachers can incorporate this pedagogical practice of activism in their everyday interactions with the children. Furthermore, we can teach them to name their own limitations and prejudices in the fight for racial justice within the foundation stages of education.

In the global discussion on racism, we can see that it is equally important to view the experiences of the white ethnic majority when addressing hidden bias and racial equality in education. This majority must be offered a comprehensive anti-racist education as it is in their attitudes and behaviours that we recognise racism, and this is learnt from the wider community in which they live. This is an issue that affects us all. It is not simply enough to say, that a person is a racist and so

the person is bad. As a nation, we need an anti-racist education programme.

## References

Alemanji, A., 2016. Is there such a thing...? A study of education in Finland. Doctorate Degree. 1-71. <[https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/167781\\_1-71](https://helda.helsinki.fi/handle/10138/167781_1-71)>. Referred 25.2.2021.

Allport, G., 1954. The nature of prejudice. Perseus Books Group: New York.

Augoustinos, M. & Every, D., 2010. Accusations and denials of racism: Managing moral accountability in public discourse. *Discourse & Society*. 21(3): 251–256. <<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0957926509360650>>. Referred 22.06.2021.

Banks, J.A., 1996. Multicultural Education, Transformative Knowledge, and Action Historical and Contemporary Perspectives. Teachers College Press: New York.

Beattie, G., 2013. Our racist heart? Routledge: East Sussex

Berg, M., & Wendt, S., (eds) 2011. Racism in the Modern World: Historical Perspectives on Cultural Transfer and Adaptation. Berghahn Books Incorporated: New York.

Berman, G. & Paradies, Y., 2010. Racism, disadvantage and multiculturalism: towards effective anti-racist praxis, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33:2. 214-232. DOI: 10.1080/01419870802302272 Referred 19.05.2021.

Bohm, D., 1996. On Dialogue. Taylor & Francis Group: London.

Bohman, J., 2021. "Critical Theory", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Spring 2021 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),

<<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2021/entries/critical-theory/>>. Referred 30.6.2021.

Bonilla-Silva, E., 2006. Racism without racists: Color-blind racism and the persistence of racial inequality in the United States. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: London.

<<http://ndl.ethernet.edu.et/bitstream/123456789/32178/1/2669.pdf>>. Referred 30.6.2021.

Brandt, J., 2007. Understanding and dismantling racism: The twenty-first century challenge to white America. Fortress Press: Minneapolis.

Bronson, P., & Merryman, A., 2009. Nurture Shock. Chapter 3 "Why White Parents Don't Talk About Race". Hachette Book Group: New York.

<<https://teensneedsleep.files.wordpress.com/2011/04/bronson-nurture-shock.pdf>>. Referred 30.6.2021.

Cisneros, D. & Nakayama T., 2015. New Media, Old Racisms: Twitter, Miss America, and Cultural Logics of Race. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 8:2, 108-127, DOI: 10.1080/17513057.2015.1025328 Referred 28.06.2021

City of Helsinki, 2019. Development Plan for Immigrant Education.

<<https://www.hel.fi/maahanmuuttajat/en/education/development-plan-for-immigrant-education/>>. Referred 4.4.2021.

Department for Education 2014. The Equality Act 2010 and school's Departmental advice for school leaders, school staff, governing bodies and local authorities.

<[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/315587/Equality\\_Act\\_Advice\\_Final.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf)>. Referred 4.4.2021.

Derman-Sparks, L. & Phillips, C.B., 1997. Teaching/learning Anti-racism: A Developmental Approach. Teachers College Press: New York.



Derman-Sparks, L. & Ramsey, P. G., 2015. What if all the kids are white? anti-bias multicultural education with young children and families. Teachers College Press: New York.

Dominelli, L., 1999. Neo-liberalism, social exclusion and welfare clients in a global economy. *Int J Soc Welfare*. 8. 14-22. Referred 28.06.2021

Epstein D., 1993. Too Small to Notice? Constructions of Childhood and Discourses of 'Race' in Predominantly White Contexts. *Curriculum Studies*, 1:3, 317-334, DOI: 10.1080/0965975930010302

Equality Commissioner 2019. Recommendations for Finland from the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance <<https://valtioneuvosto.fi/-/recommendations-for-finland-from-the-european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance>>. Referred 30.6.2021.

Essed, P., 1991. Understanding Everyday Racism: An Interdisciplinary Theory. SAGE Publications: Thousand Oaks.

Finlex 2021. Act on Early Childhood Education and Care (540/2018). <<https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2018/en20180540>>. Referred 5.2.2021.

Finnish Immigration Service, 2021. Decisions. <<https://tilastot.migri.fi/index.html#decisions?l=en&section=gender>>. Referred 16.2.2021.

Finnish National Agency for Education, 2018. National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2018. Regulations and guidelines 2018: 3C. Helsinki.

Finnish National Agency for Education, 2019. Prevention of violent radicalisation in early childhood education and care.

<[https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/oph\\_ekstremismi\\_eng\\_210x210\\_130519\\_net.pdf](https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/oph_ekstremismi_eng_210x210_130519_net.pdf)>. Referred 17.6.2021.

Finnish National Agency for Education, 2021. Early childhood education and care. <<https://www.oph.fi/en/education-system/early-childhood-education-and-care-finland>>. Referred 5.2.2021.

Finnish National Board on Research Integrity TENK, 2012. Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland. <<https://tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials/RCR-Guidelines-2012>>. Referred 1.5.2021.

Freire, P., 1975. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Herder and Herder: New York.

Freire, P., 2000. *The Oppressed*. Herder and Herder: New York.  
<<http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/~mma/teaching/MS101/reading/Freire-2.pdf>>. Referred 16.6.2021.

Front, S., 2019. Arjen rasismi varhaiskasvatuksessa: varhaiskasvatuksen suomenopettajien näkemyksiä arjen rasismista päiväkodeissa [Everyday racism in early childhood education: Finnish teachers of early childhood education's views on everyday racism in kindergartens]. Master Thesis. 1–62.  
<[https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/309396/Sanna-Kaisa\\_Front\\_Pro\\_Gradu\\_2019.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y](https://helda.helsinki.fi/bitstream/handle/10138/309396/Sanna-Kaisa_Front_Pro_Gradu_2019.pdf?sequence=2&isAllowed=y)>. Referred 16.2.2021.

Genishi, C., Goodwin, A.L. and Goodwin, A.L. eds., 2008. *Diversities in early childhood education: Rethinking and doing*. Routledge.  
<[https://books.google.fi/books?hl=en&lr=&id=6bNfPpL7364C&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&dq=Genishi+%26+Goodwin+\(2008\)&ots=8MO4VggGyk&sig=i6NjdA64Y09PCB OBxfgNp1LehF4&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Genishi%20%26%20Goodwin%20\(2008\)&f=false](https://books.google.fi/books?hl=en&lr=&id=6bNfPpL7364C&oi=fnd&pg=PR3&dq=Genishi+%26+Goodwin+(2008)&ots=8MO4VggGyk&sig=i6NjdA64Y09PCB OBxfgNp1LehF4&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Genishi%20%26%20Goodwin%20(2008)&f=false)>. Referred 28.06.2021.

Gillborn, D., 2008. *Racism and Education: Coincidence or Conspiracy?* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Gordon-Burns, D., Gunn, A., Purdue, K., & Surtees, N., 2012. Introduction: Thinking differently about early childhood inclusive education in Aotearoa New Zealand. In D. Gordon-Burns, A. Gunn, K. Purdue, & N. Surtees (Eds.), *Te Aotūroa Tātaki inclusive early childhood education: Perspectives on inclusion, social justice and equity from Aotearoa New Zealand*. 1-20. New Zealand Council for Educational Research: Wellington, New Zealand.

Govt.uk 2021. Early years foundation stage (EYFS) statutory framework: Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five Published: 31 March 2021 Effective: 1 September 2021  
<<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-foundation-stage-framework--2>>. Referred 28.06.2021.

Hahl, K., Niemi, P., Longfor, R.J. & Dervin, F., (eds) 2015. *Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks: Finland as an Example*. Cambridge Scholars Publisher: Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Hellman, A. & Lauritsen, K., (eds) 2017. *Diversity and Social Justice in Early Childhood Education: Nordic Perspectives*. Cambridge Scholars Publisher: Newcastle-upon-Tyne.

Herkman, J. & Matikainen, J., 2019. Right-wing populism, media and political scandal. *The Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal*. 147-155.  
<[https://books.google.fi/books?hl=en&lr=&id=7HGPDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT359&dq=Herkman+and+Matikainen,+2019&ots=zHh4lm5S2M&sig=OXwBdbL7wqG86O6kJKr37Y\\_7IVg&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Herkman%20and%20Matikainen%2C%202019&f=false](https://books.google.fi/books?hl=en&lr=&id=7HGPDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT359&dq=Herkman+and+Matikainen,+2019&ots=zHh4lm5S2M&sig=OXwBdbL7wqG86O6kJKr37Y_7IVg&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Herkman%20and%20Matikainen%2C%202019&f=false)>. Referred 29.06.2021.

Hilliard, A., 1992. Behavioral Style, Culture, and Teaching and Learning: *The Journal of Negro Education*. 61(3). Africentrism and Multiculturalism: Conflict or

Consonance (Summer, 1992), 370-377. <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2295254>>. Referred 20.06.2021.

Hiltunen, R., 2020. Report of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman: Racism and discrimination - everyday experiences for People of African descent in Finland. <<https://syrijinta.fi/en/-/report-of-the-non-discrimination-ombudsman-racism-and-discrimination-everyday-experiences-for-people-of-african-descent-in-finland>>. Referred 1.5.2021.

Hughes, D. & Chen. L., 1997. When and What Parents Tell Children About Race: An Examination of Race-Related Socialization Among African American. *Applied Developmental Science*. 1:4, 200-214. <[https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0104\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0104_4)>. Referred 2.7.2021.

Hughes, D., Rodriguez, J., Smith, E.P., Johnson, D.J., Stevenson, H.C. & Spicer, P., 2006. Parents' ethnic-racial socialization practices: a review of research and directions for future study. *Dev Psychol*. 42(5):747-70. DOI: 10.1037/0012-1649.42.5.747. Referred 17.06.2021.

Husband, T., 2011. "I Don't See Color": Challenging Assumptions about Discussing Race with Young Children. *Early Childhood Educ J* (2012) 39: 365–371. <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-011-0458-9>>. Referred 2.07.2021.

Härkönen, U., 2001. The Bronfenbrenner ecological systems theory of human development. <[http://www.oppi.uef.fi/wanda/users/uharkone/tuotoksia/Bronfenbrenner\\_in\\_%20English\\_07\\_sent.pdf](http://www.oppi.uef.fi/wanda/users/uharkone/tuotoksia/Bronfenbrenner_in_%20English_07_sent.pdf)>. Referred 18.06.2021.

Kelly, D., Quinn, P., Slater, A., Lee, K., Gibson, A., Smith, M., Ge, L. & Pascalis, O., 2005. Three-month-olds, but not newborns, prefer own-race faces. *Developmental Science*. 8(6). 31-36. <<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2566511/>>. Referred 15.06.2021.

Kendi, I., 2019. *How to be an Antiracist*. Penguin Random House: USA

Kendi, I., 2020. *A Learning Guide to Antiracist Baby*

<[https://images.randomhouse.com/teachers\\_guides/9780593110416.pdf](https://images.randomhouse.com/teachers_guides/9780593110416.pdf)>.

Referred 15.06.2021.

Lentin, A., 2005. Replacing 'race', historicizing 'culture' in multiculturalism.

*Patterns of Prejudice*. 39:4, 379-396. DOI: 10.1080/00313220500347832

Referred 19.05.2021.

Lentin, A., 2016. Racism in public or public racism: doing anti-racism in 'post-

racial' times. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39:1, 33-48, DOI:

10.1080/01419870.2016.1096409 Referred 28.06.2021.

Lentin, A. & Titley, G., 2011. *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a*

*Neoliberal Age*. Zed Books: New York.

Maamies, S., 1996. Rotu ja rasismi [Race and racism]. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 15

March. <[https://www.kotus.fi/nyt/kolumnit\\_artikkelit\\_ja\\_esitelmat/kieli-](https://www.kotus.fi/nyt/kolumnit_artikkelit_ja_esitelmat/kieli-ikkuna_%281996_2010%29/rotu_ja_rasismi)

[ikkuna\\_%281996\\_2010%29/rotu\\_ja\\_rasismi](https://www.kotus.fi/nyt/kolumnit_artikkelit_ja_esitelmat/kieli-ikkuna_%281996_2010%29/rotu_ja_rasismi)>. Referred 27.6.2021.

Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2021. Racism. <[https://www.merriam-](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism)

[webster.com/dictionary/racism](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism)>. Referred 27.3.2021.

Ministry of Education and Culture. Early childhood education and care services.

<<https://minedu.fi/en/early-childhood-education-and-care-services>>. Referred

5.2.2021.

Müller-Wille S., 2014. Race and History: Comments from an Epistemological

Point of View. *Science, technology & human values*. 39(4). 597–606.

<<https://doi.org/10.1177/0162243913517759>>. Referred 30.6.2021.

Oluo, I. Human Rights Careers. 10 Quotes on Racial Injustice.

<https://www.humanrightscareers.com/issues/quotes-on-racial-injustice/>.

Referred 1.5.2021.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. OECD Country Note Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in the United Kingdom.

<http://www.oecd.org/general/searchresults/?q=Early%20Childhood%20Education%20and%20Care%20Policy%20in%20the%20United%20Kingdom&cx=012432601748511391518:xzeadub0b0a&cof=FORID:11&ie=UTF-8>. Referred

18.2.2021.

Paavola, H. & Dervin, F., 2015. The alphabet gone wrong? Diversities in three Finnish ABC books. in K Hahl, P-M Niemi, R Johnson Longfor & F Dervin (eds), *Diversities and Interculturality in Textbooks: Finland as an Example*. Post-intercultural communication and education. 17-35. Cambridge Scholars Publishing: Newcastle upon Tyne.

<http://www.cambridgescholars.com/diversities-and-interculturality-in-textbooks>. Referred 15.6.2021.

Pantti, M., Nelimarkka, M., Nikunen, K. & Titley, G., 2019. The meanings of racism: Public discourses about racism in Finnish news media and online discussion forums. *European Journal of Communication*. 34(5). 503–519.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323119874253>. Referred 15.6.2021.

Peace Education Institute, 2019. Hyppy antirasistisen varhaiskasvattajan saappaisiin [Jumping into the boots of an anti-racist early childhood educator].

<https://rauhankasvatus.fi/hyppy-antirasistisen-varhaiskasvattajan-saappaisiin/>. Referred 17.2.2021.

Puuronen, V., 2011. *Rasistinen Suomi [Racist Finland]*. Helsinki University Press: Helsinki.

Rastas, A., 2005. Racializing categorization among young people in Finland. *Young*, 13(2), 147–166.

<<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1103308805051319>>. Referred 30.6.2021.

Rastas, A., 2009 Racism in the everyday life of Finnish children with transnational roots. Based on Rastas' 2007a doctoral dissertation "Rasismi lasten ja nuorten arjessa" [Racism in the daily lives of children and young people].

<[https://www.academia.edu/37333856/Racism\\_in\\_the\\_everyday\\_life\\_of\\_Finnish\\_children\\_with\\_transnational\\_roots](https://www.academia.edu/37333856/Racism_in_the_everyday_life_of_Finnish_children_with_transnational_roots)>. Referred 16.2.2021.

Sanders, J. & Hardy, K., 2021. Developing Positive Racial Identity. *Humanities Senior Seminar Spring 2021: The Neighbourhood Academy*,

<<https://www.theneighborhoodacademy.org/search.cfm?cof=FORID%3A11&ie=UTF-8&sa=&q=humanities+Senior+Seminar+Spring+2021/>>. Referred 1.7.2021.

Siraj-Blatchford, I., 1994. *The Early Years: Laying the Foundations for Racial Equality*. Trentham Books Limited: Staffordshire.

Siraj-Blatchford, I. & Siraj-Blatchford, J., 1999. 'Race', Research and Reform: the impact of the three Rs on anti-racist pre-school and primary education in the UK. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 2:1, 127-148, DOI: 10.1080/1361332990020109 Referred 19.05.2021.

Statistics Finland, 2021. Foreign-language speakers increased the population of the Helsinki region, Kouvola lost over one thousand inhabitants for the third successive year. <[https://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2019/vaerak\\_2019\\_2020-03-24\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html/](https://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2019/vaerak_2019_2020-03-24_tie_001_en.html/)>. Referred 17.2.2021.

Statistics Finland, 2021. Population grew because of foreign-language speaking population. <[https://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2019/vaerak\\_2019\\_2020-03-24\\_tie\\_001\\_en.html/](https://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/2019/vaerak_2019_2020-03-24_tie_001_en.html/)>. Referred 17.2.2021.

Stevenson, H., 2005. Influence of Perceived Neighborhood Diversity and Racism Experience on the Racial Socialization of Black Youth. *Journal of Black Psychology*. 31. 273-290. 10.1177/0095798405278453.

Titley, G., 2019. Racism and media. Sage: New York.

Toivanen, Pauliina, 2020. Ensimmäisenä Suomessa: koulujen ja päiväkotien työntekijöille rasisminvastaista koulutusta Helsingissä [First in Finland: anti-racism training for school and kindergarten employees in Helsinki]. <<https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11396797>>. Referred 18.2.2021.

UNESCO Statements on Race 1950. Encyclopedia of Race and Racism. Encyclopedia.com. <<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/unesco-statements-race>>. Referred 21.06.2021.

Van Dijk, T.A., 1992. Discourse and the denial of racism. *Discourse & society*. 3(1), 87-118. <<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.510.673&rep=rep1&type=pdf>>. Referred 30.06.2021.

Vertovec, S., 2007. Super-diversity and its implications. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. 30:6, 1024-1054, DOI: 10.1080/01419870701599465

Winkler, E., 2009. Children Are Not Colorblind: How Young Children Learn Race. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. PACE 3(3) HighReach Learning® Inc <<https://inclusions.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Children-are-Not-Colorblind.pdf>>. Referred 30.06.2021.

Yle Uutiset 2021. 'Anti-immigrant' Finns Party election adverts removed from Helsinki streets. <[https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/anti-immigrant\\_finns\\_party\\_election\\_adverts\\_removed\\_from\\_helsinki\\_streets/11969548](https://yle.fi/uutiset/osasto/news/anti-immigrant_finns_party_election_adverts_removed_from_helsinki_streets/11969548)>. Referred 27.06.2021.



## Appendices

### Finnish Immigration Service statistics

	Positive Decisions
2020	
February	1314
March	1433
April	1227
May	1192
June	1066
July	968
August	865
September	1143
October	1335
November	1336
December	1234
2021	
January	1191
	<b>14304</b>

An explanation of the statistics taken from the Finnish Immigration Service from February 2020 to January 2021:

The Finnish Immigration Service granted 14 304 positive decisions on resident permits and citizenship to immigrant children aged between zero and thirteen. (Finnish Immigration Service 2021.) The countries from which the children originate are countries worldwide, showing that children from diverse cultures and races are settling in Finland.

## Research Permit

Nina Alexander and Cayla Heidmann  
 Degree: Bachelor of Social Services  
 Degree Programme: Social Services  
 Specialisation: Early Childhood Education and Care  
 Instructor(s): Satu Hakanen, Senior Lecturer  
 Jukka Törnroos, Senior Lecturer

---

The research we wish to conduct for our bachelor thesis titled: *An antiracism approach in early childhood education and care - Perspectives about racism from ECEC teachers*. Will be collected through qualitative research, in the form of a questionnaire.

This project will be conducted under the supervision of Satu Hakanen and Jukka Törnroos (senior lecturers at Metropolia) and xxx. We are hereby seeking consent to collect data from the teachers and teaching staff to fill in a reflective voluntary questionnaire. The survey will be conducted as a qualitative survey with multiple choice and open-ended questions. The data is collected electronically through Google Forms, and complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and is only used by the authors of the study. The material is collected anonymously and analyzed anonymously. No individuals are identifiable from the participants' responses and no personal information is collected. The data is stored on google forms and will be kept until December 2021.

We have provided you with a copy of the questions which will be given to the teaching staff. There is to be no personal information or distinguishing information given to us. The link will be shared at the end of the presentation given out to the staff should they wish to participate. The answers will be analyzed and used in the thesis (anonymously), they may also be used to develop future good practice in early years. Responses will be collected within two weeks, and a reminder will be emailed to the teaching staff via the manager near the deadline. The survey will be conducted in May 2021. The research findings will be shared with xxx once the thesis has been completed.

Research is conducted in accordance with research ethical principles.

- the researcher respects the dignity and autonomy of the subjects
- the researcher respects the tangible and intangible cultural heritage and biodiversity
- the researcher conducts his / her research in such a way that it does not cause significant risks, harm or inconvenience to the people, community or other research subjects.

And the researcher undertakes to follow the guidelines and recommendations developed by the Research Ethics Advisory Board (TENK).

Nina Alexander

Cayla Heidmann

xxx

---

Date:

## Presentation to the kindergarten



An antiracism approach in early childhood education and care

Nina Alexander and Cayla Heidmann  
Social service students

 Metropolia

## Antiracism.....

- Requires every individual to choose every day to think, act and advocate for equality, which will require changing systems and policies that may have gone unexamined for a long time.
- The beauty of anti-racism is that you don't have to pretend to be free of racism to be an anti-racist. Anti-racism is the commitment to fight racism wherever you find it, including in yourself. And it's the only way forward. — Ijeoma Oluo (author of *So You Want to Talk About Race*)
- Remember that just because you have never experienced or witnessed these things doesn't mean that they don't happen. Reflect on things you may have done or believed that might have been rooted in racism.
- <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/54999/how-ibram-x-kendis-definition-of-antiracism-applies-to-schools>



## Definition of racism

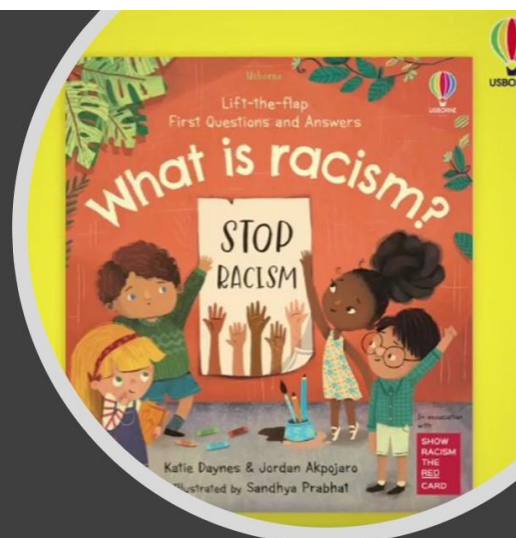
- An assumption that the colour of a person's skin determines their character and ability of a superior nature relating to their race
- It includes the systemic oppression of the people of colour socially, economically and politically so that the more advantaged race is in the position of power
- In addition, the system of racism is the foundation from which all rules are maintained, designed to benefit the exclusive race

Merriam-Webster, Incorporated 2021. Racism. <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/racism>>. Referred 27.3.2021.

## What is racism?

Racism can be classified into six categories:

1. Speaking badly about someone else or a group of people amongst each other
2. Name-calling
3. Insulting gestures and facial expressions
4. Avoidance
5. Discrimination and exclusion
6. Aggression and violence



(Puuronen 2011: 60–61; cited in Front 2019: 12–13.)



## Racism in Finland

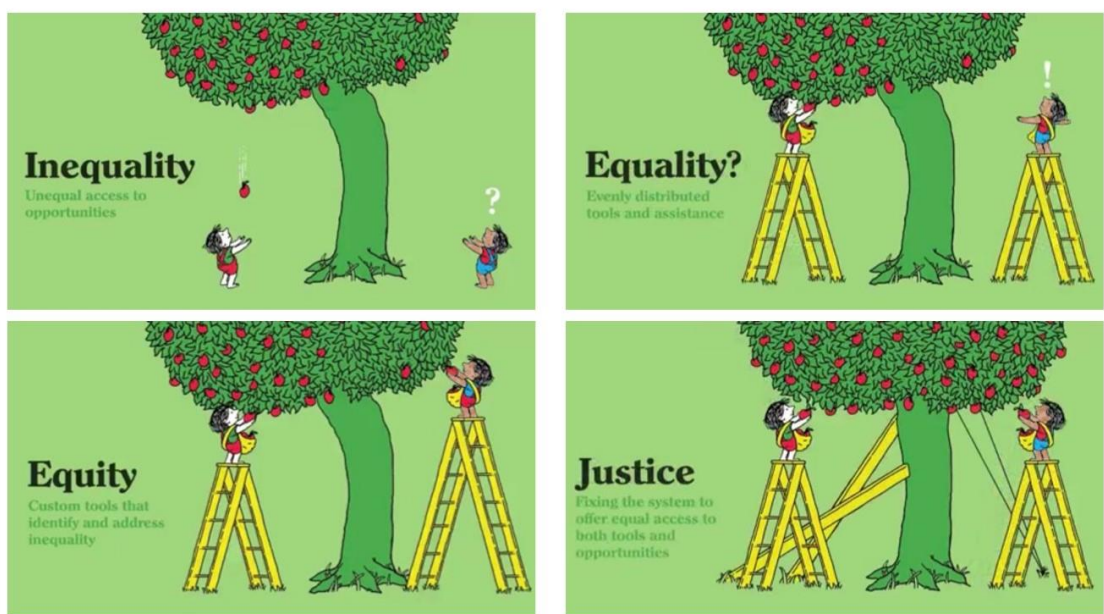
- Although Finland doesn't have a history as a colonizing country, we have culturally assimilated its influence- colonialism has left its echo in our society and collective consciousness, this is seen in ethno- and eurocentrism, prejudices, stereotypes.
- The visual pedagogies produced by the imaging of Black people of these products is deep – popular culture is social pedagogy. As teachers and carers, we must acknowledge we carry our own prejudices and through reflection we can change our thinking.



## Racism experienced by children in Finland

- The everyday racism often means that it is also invisible and self-evident
- Young people internalize racism as part of their everyday life and as part of their identity
- Weakening of trust pushes oneself further away from the nearby communities and from the society
- The wall of silence: the one who doesn't care, is considered as strong
- The experiences of being worthless

'Havaintoja rasismista nuorten elämässä' Leena Suurpää 'Ei rasismille' -seminar 24.10.2017



**Are your kids too young to talk about race?**

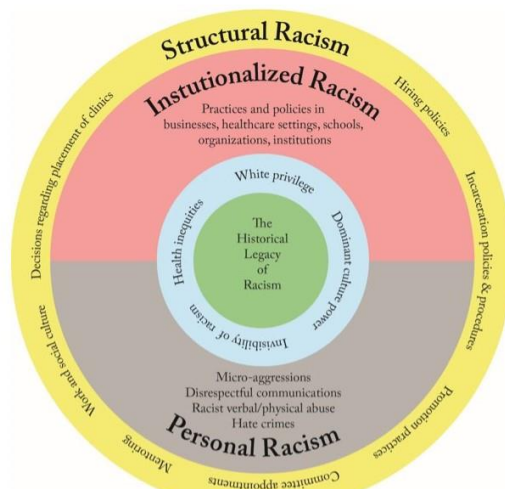
Nope. Silence about race can reinforce racism by letting children draw their own conclusions.

<p><b>0-1 year</b></p> <p>At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers.</p> <p><small>Kelly et al., 2002</small></p>	<p><b>2 years</b></p> <p>Children as young as 2 use race to reason about people's behaviors.</p> <p><small>Hirschfeld, 2008</small></p>	<p><b>2.5 years</b></p> <p>By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates.</p> <p><small>Katz &amp; Kofkin, 1997</small></p>	<p><b>4-5 years</b></p> <p>Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5.</p> <p><small>Ahmed, 2008</small></p>
<p><b>5 years</b></p> <p>Black and latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups, as compared to white children at this age, who are more likely to be strongly biased in favor of whiteness.</p> <p><small>Dunham et al., 2008</small></p>	<p><b>5 years</b></p> <p>By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes held by adults in our culture. They have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others.</p> <p><small>Kinzler, 2016</small></p>	<p><b>5-7 years</b></p> <p>Explicit conversations with 5-7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week.</p> <p><small>Brunson &amp; Merryman, 2009</small></p>	<p>Adapted from work by the Children's Community School.</p> <p>More info at <a href="http://childrenscommunityschool.org/social-justice-resources/">childrenscommunityschool.org/social-justice-resources/</a></p> <p><small>Design provided by prettygooddesign.org</small></p>

<https://www.mayflowermontessori.org/anti-racism-resources.html>

## Systemic racism

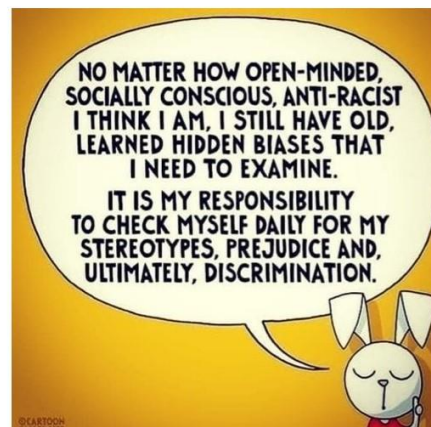
- The way racism manifests itself within various institutions in society include, policies and practices that perpetuate a cycle of racial inequity and are promoted (overtly or subtly) by institutions (i.e., schools, government, housing, media).
- It is manifested by, but not limited to, exhibiting patterns of thinking that one's racial group is inferior (i.e., as questioning ones' self-worth based on their racial identity) or/and or thinking aspects of the dominant culture are superior (i.e., assuming Whiteness is the 'normal').



## Hidden prejudice

'Prejudice' is 'thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant' (Beattie, Geoffrey 2013: 63.)

- Presents as a baseless positive or negative feeling about a person.
- Easier to interact with people who are like ourselves and share the same history.
- Categorisation assists us to make decisions, thus we make prejudgments about the people that we categorise and if the judgement is negative, we might act by avoiding or rejecting the person.
- Reasons for prejudice may include group belonging; understanding the group you belong to such as their opinions; controlling a perceived threat; enhancing self and trusting others within your own group.





(BBC Four 2013. Racism - A History part 1-3)  
(Beattie, Geoffrey 2013: 63-260. Our racist heart? Routledge: East Sussex.)

- People might only express their prejudice in the privacy of their homes, or in the absence of the group they have categorised, thus supporting the idea that there is an inner conflict within the person's prejudice.
- Inner conflicts may be managed by denial, rationalising, compromising or integrating.
- Some might look for ways to resolve the contradictions of their values.
- A halo effect is when we make positive or negative judgements based on pre-existing beliefs about the person. These judgements may be unconscious or spontaneous.
- Prejudices are deeply rooted in history resulting in unfortunate outcomes such as slavery, segregation, and institutional racism.
- To experience your hidden prejudice, we recommend you try this test: click on the link [Test Yourself for Hidden Bias | Learning for Justice](#) and select race IAT

## How do we become antiracist educators?

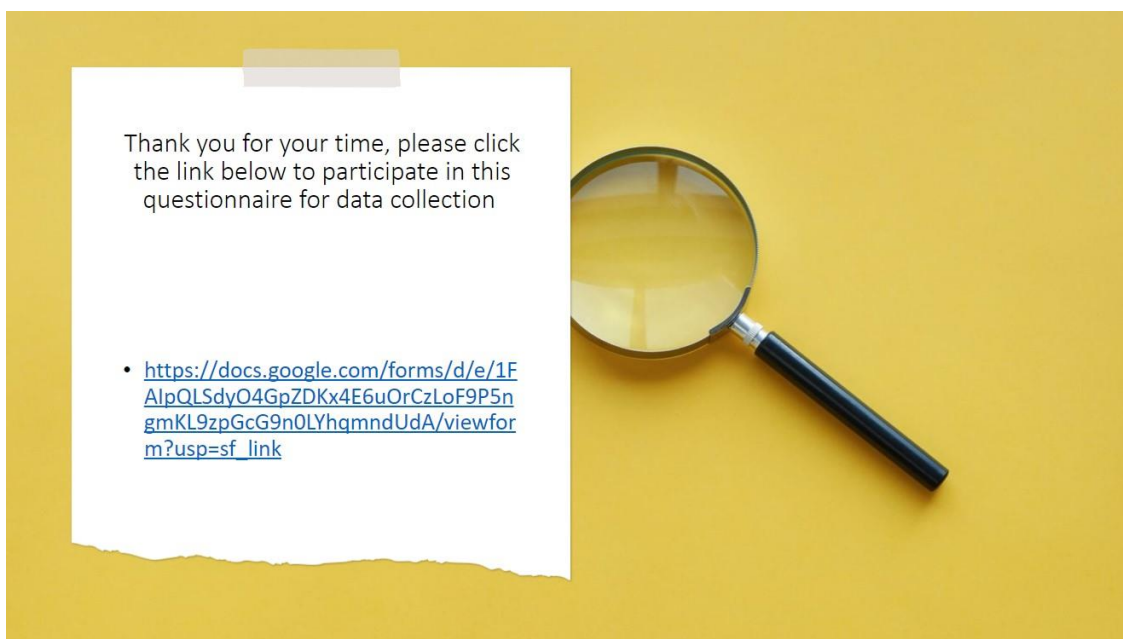
- In a racist society, it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be antiracist.
- Angela Davis
- We can make a difference in the fight to combat racism and to build a future for our society in which our children are anti-racists.

### Teaching Your Toddler To Be

#### *Anti Racism*







Antiracist material for your consideration

- Implicit Bias | Concepts Unwrapped <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OoBvzl-YZf4>
- RACISM PART 1: WHAT IS RACISM? Child-led learning resource [http://allianceforlearning.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EconomistFoundation\\_Racism-Part-1\\_09-1.pdf](http://allianceforlearning.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/EconomistFoundation_Racism-Part-1_09-1.pdf)
- Best Anti-Racism Toys for Kids <https://happytoddlerplaytime.com/how-to-build-a-diverse-playroom/>
- Let's Talk <https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/general/TT%20Difficult%20Conversations%20web.pdf>
- My first gaming video / Afrikan tähti <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbRr9NFZWhc>
- <https://theconversation.com/9-tips-teachers-can-use-when-talking-about-racism-140837>
- Becoming Upended: Teaching and Learning about Race and Racism with Young Children and Their Families <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/may2018/teaching-learning-race-and-racism>

## Questionnaire sent to the respondents

# Data Collection Form

After joining our presentation, we trust that you have gained a greater understanding of antiracism and why it is important for us as early years educators to reflect on this topic. The main purpose of the collection of data is to provide a practical pedagogical antiracism approach in early childhood education and care. Your perspectives will help us to shape this approach so that it can be used in your daily practice as well as to assist you to become an antiracist educator or to enhance the pedagogical antiracist practices that you are already using.

A personal guarantee from the social services students, studying through Metropolia: "This questionnaire is completely anonymous and can be accessed only through google docs by the two students who have made the questionnaire. We recommend that you avoid using the children's or teachers' real names when you describe situations in a storytelling format. We will most likely use some of the material for our thesis, but we will not be using any identifying means such as the usage of names or the organization that you work for. The name of the organization you work for will also remain anonymous throughout our thesis due to the wishes of your manager, with the interest of protecting your identity, as well as the sensitive nature of the topic."

We thank you in advance for your time, participation, and valuable perspectives about recognizing racism and what you do when you encounter it. In early years there are usually more subtle forms of 'racism' and as such they may be harder to identify. Please remember that we do not wish to label anyone a racist and the point of this thesis is to see what we can do to become activists in this important path toward a truly equal society.

Here are some examples of subtle racism as experienced from a racialized perspective of a child:

Example 1: "When speaking to a friend of mine about putting on sunscreen on the children at kindy she mentioned that her daughter had been told, 'You don't need sunscreen, your skin is dark, so it does not burn.'"

Example 2: "One child said to another, 'your skin is the colour of poo.' The teacher in the setting says in passing 'don't say that it's not nice.'"

Example 3: "My daughter is consistently asked, 'where are you from?' She is Finnish but lives her life in a society where this is not an acceptable answer, she does not have the 'typical' blond hair, blue eyes...even when she replies that she is Finnish in fluent Finnish the response is still often, 'But where are you from?'"

Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Every bit of information is valuable even if you think it is insignificant.

When and how did I become aware of my racial identity?

Your answer

---

Have you had or witnessed any encounters regarding race as a teacher? How did you respond? Please describe the situation in storytelling format as we did in examples 1-3.

Your answer

---

Consider the following statements and select the one that best describes how you feel:

- I would rather not talk about race/racism.
- I am very uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually comfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am very comfortable talking about race/racism.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you worry about your ability to answer the children's questions, feelings or nonverbal communications about race and racism? Yes/No, please explain:

Your answer

---

How are you supporting antiracist work in your early years setting?

Your answer

---