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A Qualitative Research Study on How Multicultural Literature Is Implemented in Norwegian EFL Classrooms to Teach About Racial Diversity

Master's thesis in Primary and Lower Secondary Teacher Education
for Years 1-7

Supervisor: Eir-Anne Edgar

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Abstract

The diversity in Norwegian schools has increased during the last fifty years, which indicates the importance of implementing multicultural materials in the classroom. In addition, as textbooks are playing a smaller role in today's teaching, secondary sources are taking up more space and time. These secondary sources are online sources or text found outside the classroom. This research looks at how multicultural literature is beneficial in the EFL classroom to teach pupils about racial diversity. When textbooks are disadvantageous and the cultural representation is growing, one must make room for teaching materials with more depth which pupils can learn, develop values, and acquire cultural understanding from. Multicultural literature is one of these secondary sources. Furthermore, this research investigates how teachers are implementing this type of literature in their teaching and presents their pedagogical approaches and perspectives on the topic. The methodology used is qualitative, with semi-structured interviews of five elementary school English teachers, in addition to literary analysis of the two YA novels *The Black Kids* and *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones*. This thesis presents that the participants are finding textbooks inadequate and is calling for a shift in priorities when materials are being used in the classroom. Moreover, multicultural literature contributes to promote communication between people, develop empathy and cultural understanding, which is beneficial for critical thinking and an acknowledging attitude toward racial diversity.

Keywords: multicultural literature; teachers' implementations; racial diversity; African American literature; literary analysis

Sammendrag

Mangfoldet i norske skole har økt gjennom de siste femti årene, noe som viser viktigheten for å implementere flerkulturelt materiale i klasserommet. I tillegg, samtidig som at lærebøker spiller en mindre rolle i dagens undervisning, tar sekundære kilder opp mer plass og tid. Disse sekundære kildene er blant annet kilder på nett, og tekst funnet utenfor klasserommet. Denne oppgaven utforsker hvordan flerkulturell litteratur er fordelaktig i engelskklasserommet for å lære elever om rasebasert mangfold. Når lærebøkene fungerer ufordelaktig og den kulturelle representasjonen øker, må man lage rom for læringsmaterialer med mer dybde som elever kan lære-, utvikle verdier, og tilegne seg kulturell forståelse fra. Flerkulturell litteratur er en av disse læringsmaterialene. Denne oppgaven forsker på hvordan lærere implementerer denne typen litteratur, og presenterer deres pedagogiske tilnærming og perspektiv på tema. Metoden som er benyttet er kvalitativ, som innebærer semi-strukturerte intervjuer av fem engelsklærere i barneskolen, i tillegg til litterære analyser av ungdomsromanene *The Black Kids* og *The Inincible Summer of Juniper Jones*. Oppgaven formidler at deltakerne mener at dagens lærebøker er utilstrekkelige, og gir uttrykk for et ønsket skifte i prioriteringer når det kommer til bruken av læringsmaterialer i klasserommet. Dessuten bidrar flerkulturell litteratur med å fremme kommunikasjon mellom mennesker, utvikle empati og kulturell forståelse, som er fordelaktig for kritisk tenkning og en anerkjennende holdning mot rasebasert mangfold.

Nøkkelord: flerkulturell litteratur; læreres implementering; rasemangfold; Afrikansk-Amerikansk litteratur; litterær analyse

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I want to dedicate this thesis to my grandfather for his interest in my educational program and the reflective conversations we have had during my time at NTNU. He encouraged me to do my best work possible and has never hidden the feeling of pride he possessed. I wish he could sit in the front row on graduation day.

My time at NTNU has been fun and educational. I am now looking forward to starting a new chapter in my life, as an English teacher!

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1 Introduction

1.1 My motivation for writing

My most memorable experience which has developed me as a person the most, is my time as an exchange student in Florida during my second year in high school. This year was filled with experiences, new relations, knowledge, and language acquisition. However, what stood out the most after finishing my second year of high school in the United States, was how I had acquired a critical view on people. This became an interest of mine, and I later picked up a book called *Sapiens* by Yuval Harari. To read about where the homo sapiens specie comes from and how we have developed and emigrated throughout history became a kind of knowledge that has turned into a value: to see everyone as equal. To see everyone as equal means to me that one meets another person with no prejudices based on their gender, skin color, religion, mood, and more. I have discovered that when encountering new people with a blank sheet of paper, the encounter becomes more significant if two people fill out that "sheet of paper" together, with perspectives and stories from both sides.

Later, my interest in people, developed into an interest in the discourse of hate. As a generally positive and happy man, I came to wonder where hate comes from. My interest grew bigger, and I wanted to educate myself in the racial conflicts between white and black people. This brought me to books like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Go Tell It on The Mountain*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and more. I had heard about racism from a white majority point of view, but I wanted to investigate the black perspective to see and understand how the people who suffered this hate experienced it. Moreover, combining my own interest with great lecturers at the university, it was a given what I wanted to write my master thesis about: the discourse about racial diversity in literature.

Moreover, the topics of racism and diversity has never not been relevant. From the media picture today, especially in the United States with the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, one can unfortunately see that the African American population are still victims of internalized and systematic racism. BLM was founded in 2013 "in response to the killing of an African American boy named Trayvon Martin and has the mission to eradicate white supremacy" (Black Lives Matter, 2022). The man who killed Martin was found not guilty in court, which started a call for justice for black lives all over the world. Moreover, a similar murder where white supremacy was the ideology responsible, was committed in Norway in 2001. This was the killing of Benjamin Hermansen (Bitsch, 2021).

As a person who enjoys literature that reflects society and people's perspectives and feelings, this is something I wish to implement in my own teaching as an English teacher in elementary school. I believe that literature can present stories about the world and represent the people in it, in a more holistic way, to teach pupils about history, people, and themselves.

1.2 Research questions and thesis overview

This thesis is a qualitative research study on multicultural literature's importance in the EFL classroom to teach about racial diversity. The purpose of this study is to analyze two YA novels to see how they can be implemented in the EFL classroom in relation to elementary school English teachers' pedagogical approaches. The literature chosen for this thesis is African American literature and is emphasizing an authentic perspective on the racial discourse. The research questions which will help to answer this thesis are:

- How is multicultural literature valued and implemented in the EFL classroom to teach pupils about racial diversity?
- How can *The Black Kids* and *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* be used as resources to teach about racial diversity in elementary school?

This thesis is divided into six chapters, including chapter 1 which is the introductory chapter. Moreover, the introduction chapter consists of a section where frequently used terminology is defined based on theoretical definitions in addition to my interpretations. Following the introduction, chapter 2 is presented, which provides the theoretical background of the study. In the second chapter, the reader will be presented for multicultural literature's importance in the classroom, teachers' starting point when teaching about racial diversity, and what the Norwegian curriculum states about literature and diversity in Norwegian schools. In chapter 3, I will present the methodology used in this research which includes qualitative interviews and literary analysis, and I will elaborate on why these two methods are combined. Furthermore, I will present my ethical considerations of the study, my role as a researcher, a description of the participants, the validity to this research, and potential results. Chapter 4 presents analysis, findings, and interpretations of my data, which will be discussed in relation to the theoretical background and research questions. This discussion will take place in chapter 5. The final chapter, chapter 6, will present the conclusions for this research, in addition to suggestions for further research.

1.3 Defining terminology

For the reader to experience a clear and explicit paper, the author will present definitions for specific terminology which are frequently used throughout the paper. The reason for such clarifications is because these terms can be understood in different ways. The terminology will be defined by the perception and interpretation of the author, in the light of theoretical justification with a reference that scaffold the definition. If the reader wants a broader understanding of the term, he/she can follow the reference where one can find the definitions elaborated in context.

1.3.1 Multicultural literature

Multicultural literature are books by and about people of color, about race or ethnical minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the white majority (Mongillo & Hollan, 2016; Norton, 1995). The term relates to issues of power and is focusing on minority voices to be heard in the school curriculum (Cai & Bishop, 1994). Moreover, Bishop (1997) states that multicultural literature should be comprehensible and inclusive, which challenges teachers to incorporate books that reflect the racial, ethnic,

and social diversity of the society and world we live in (p.3). The authenticity of the text, the issue of power, and the representations of humans are taken into consideration when defining this term. Thus, based on various definitions, *multicultural literature* is defined by the researcher as literature written by, and is about, people of color, where stories are challenging the division between the minority blacks and the majority whites in society.

1.3.2 EFL classroom

EFL stands for *English as a Foreign Language* (Krulatz, Neokleous & Henningsen, 2016). It is used in classroom settings where learners do not speak English as their first language, hence making English a foreign language. When we add the word *classroom* to EFL, we are talking about teaching English as a foreign language in the classroom. This is the setting one finds in Norwegian schools for most pupils because English is not an official language in Norway. Thus, this article will use the term EFL classroom when talking about teaching/learning English as a foreign language in Norwegian classrooms.

1.3.3 Race

It is difficult to define the term *race* in the Norwegian context because it is not a frequently used word when talking about humans in the Norwegian language. When using the Norwegian word for *race* – “rase” – about humans, it is often perceived as a rude and segregating topic (Osler & Lindquist, 2018). Thus, a term which is frequently used in Norway, as a substitution to *race*, is *ethnicity*. Moreover, the term *race* is not mentioned in the Norwegian curriculum either. However, the curriculum does use terms like *cultural diversity* and *minorities* which can be seen in relation to the term *race* (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017d).

In the English language, *race* is a frequently used term, hence the relevance in this paper. Although it is much used in the English language, one may not be conscious on its definition and the correct use of it. In Ruth & Sabis-Burns' (2007) research, 90% of their participants preferred focusing on their culture, stating that they were uncomfortable talking about their race or ethnicity (p. 52). The participants wrote about their families, the town they grew up in or their religion. Moreover, when Berry (2001) is dealing with the term *race*, he rather uses *ethnicity* and *culture*.

Based on these references, and the choice of wording in the Norwegian curriculum, the term *race* will be used in this paper as the subjective identification of what group of people a person belongs to, based on their culture, ethnicity, and heritage.

1.3.4 Diversity

Diversity is a broad term which must be narrowed. However, when talking about diversity in an educational setting, one may say that we are talking about students of culturally diverse backgrounds (Nieto, 2000). This means students with different cultures, ethnicities, genders, religion, linguistic repertoires, starting points in life etc. The Norwegian core curriculum emphasizes that pupils shall develop their identity in an inclusive and diverse environment, which is to be done within a common framework (Kunnskapdepartementet, 2017d). Moreover, it underlines that pupils shall acquire

knowledge about who is represented in society, to develop understanding on where people come from and why things are done in different ways, e.g., traditions (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017d). It does not matter who they are, where they come from, or how they look. The classroom should be a place for everyone to learn with the same starting points. Moreover, teachers must be committed to making their classrooms a forum of celebrating diversity, in addition to focus on power relations in society (Ruth & Sabis-Burns, 2007; Røthing, 2020, p. 32). Based on several references and what is stated in the Norwegian core curriculum, diversity will here be defined as the representation of all humans in society.

1.3.5 Racial diversity

Race is a term which has lost some of its relevance in Norwegian everyday discourse, due to other terms, such as *culture* (Rogstad & Midtbøen, 2009, as cited in Osler & Lindquist, 2018). Moreover, in the Norwegian curriculum, the terminology used, which correlates with race, is cultural diversity and minorities (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017d). Based on these references, in addition to Berry's (2001) and Ruth & Sabis-Burns' (2007) research, the term *racial diversity* will be used in this paper as the representation of humans from different cultural backgrounds. Because the books which will be analyzed in this paper are implementing the discourse about 'us' and 'them', and 'white' and 'black', the cultural backgrounds are referring to a white European background and a black African background.

2 Review of literature

This chapter will present the theoretical framing for this thesis, which will provide the foundation for the analysis and discussion. The purpose of this study is to explain multicultural literature's important role in the classroom to teach pupils about racial diversity, how teachers are implementing it, and suggest how it can be developed further. Thus, this theoretical chapter will look at previous research from the US and Norway, to examine multicultural literature's beneficial factors in the EFL classroom. Moreover, this chapter will look at how teachers' starting points and experiences with the topics of race and diversity are. In addition, it will present the curriculum's justification for why diversity is important to focus on in the Norwegian EFL classroom and how teachers are supposed to implement the discourse about racial diversity when teaching English.

2.1 The importance of implementing multicultural literature in the EFL classroom

Children's literature's role in a multicultural society has been a topic of discourse for several decades. However, it is important that books with a multicultural perspective contain a focus on societal problems, such as racism, which should be a priority to implement in the classroom (Birkeland, 2017; Osler & Lindquist, 2018). According to Biseth (2011), if teachers do not teach and discourse about racism and discrimination with pupils, the opportunity to study democracy is neglected. In a book where the characters are from different ethnical, religious, or cultural backgrounds, their stories must be told in an adequate and authentic way. For example, according to Paul (2009), to portray a black family as poor and urban, is the result of societal assumptions toward a minority race (p. 88). To convey a story where assumptions and stereotypes are nurtured, neglects reality. The color of one's skin does not decide if they are rich or poor. One must therefore be critical toward the literature one reads and how the stories and presentations of people are. When implementing such literature in the classroom, it must have been written authentically and read critically, which means that one is conscious about what the text is about, in addition to how the text is conveying its message (Abusland, 2020).

Multicultural literature is important to implement in the EFL classroom due to the representation of diversity in the Norwegian society and classrooms. When analyzing the socio-cultural statistics in the Norwegian society, one can see that the representation of different cultures and ethnicities have increased during the last fifty years (Appendix 1; Kongslien, 2007; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c). Moreover, Iwai (2013) emphasizes that multicultural literature is more valued today than before because of the global society and the increase of diverse students. This may indicate the important role multicultural literature will potentially play in young children's life. Multicultural literature can here be seen as a resource for pupils in elementary school to acquire adequate knowledge about racial diversity because it includes various representations of people and cultures.

The reason why multicultural literature is a great resource to use when teaching pupils about racial diversity, is because it engages them to challenge and examine assumptions, inconsistencies, and illogical conclusions (as cited in Mongillo & Holland,

2016, p. 24). Harris (1990) emphasizes that the depictions of African Americans in general literature since the seventeenth century has essentially been stereotypical and negative, and generally written by people the stories were not about, making these texts inauthentic. Authentic literature is when the authors themselves come from the cultures the literature reflects (Mansour & Martin, 2020). An example of an inauthentic- and illogical conclusion is the representation of a father in a story about an African American child. Tate (2001) writes that an African American author was told to remove the father in her fictional Black family to make it more realistic. A racial stereotype about black people, which states that many children are raised by a single mom, does not correlate with all black families. If white authors in Norway convey such stereotypes to the public through literature, the meaning and knowledge shaped by it become significant, because stereotypes can shape individuals' perceptions of the world (Harris, 1990, p. 541). A result of fostering stereotypes toward any racial group may lead to an unhealthy and unacceptable attitude toward people of other ethnicities than oneself. However, literature can be used to tackle these social problems because it can raise students' social consciousness and engage them in discussions about diversity, culture, and racism (Hughes-Hassel, Barkley & Koehler, 2009).

By reading texts that focus on others' experiences, students will not only learn how historical and cultural events happened but also what it was like for those events to happen (Edgar, 2020). Children are taught and influenced by teachers which later may result in either positive or negative views on different matters. Therefore, it is important that teachers introduce multicultural literature to pupils, in a conscious and thought-through way, for children to understand where different voices in historical and cultural events come from. A significant factor when reading text about diversity is that the pupils may feel empathy with a character, which potentially is the strongest affect to getting students to consider their actions beyond literature (Edgar, 2020, p. 68). Reading can therefore be seen as a resource when developing one's perspective on race.

Texts that can be resources to trigger pupils' level of empathy, are what Sims (1982) calls "Social Conscience" Books. This type of literature is aimed to non-African American readers, to encourage them to develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance toward African American children. Moreover, Bishop (1990) emphasizes that text should provide windows to view the world and mirrors that reflect our lives and experiences. However, if books are to provide these windows and mirrors, the stories must be genuine, relevant, and true. Sims (1982) noted that many books perpetuated undesirable attitudes and stereotypes about African Americans and were therefore culturally inauthentic (p. 12). For example, African American children were described as speaking in nonstandard dialect in comparison to white children. In these types of books, the windows may give a false representation of what the reality is, and the mirrors may show irrelevant reflections of either the white or black reader. Thus, teachers must be critical and conscious to what books they implement in the classroom and how the literature represents racial diversity.

The representation of racial diversity is important to consider because it is easy to fall into a situation where one is talking about "us" and "them". Reed (2020) writes on the back of her YA novel *The Black Kids*: "Who is the 'us'? and who is the 'them'?". If this question is not talked about critically in the classroom, it may lead to a more divided environment rather than an inclusive one. When pupils are learning about people who look like them, in addition to people who does not look like them, pupils may develop a perception of people which results in putting different appearances in categories. The category oneself identifies with, becomes the "us", while the other category becomes the

“them”. If such attitudes are not talked about in the classroom, pupils may not acquire knowledge or develop understanding on who the people around them are, which may be damaging for the diversity due to potential alienations. Birkeland (2017) states that looking at other people as “the others” is influential in the way we construct our own identity and understanding on who we are. While building stereotypical group identities toward people that have a different ethnicity or follow a different religion than oneself, may neglect the fact that one’s own culture also is complex. Out in the world, the unfamiliar may be seen as something exotic, while back home it is seen as uncivilized and frightening (Birkeland, 2017). To erase the borders between groups of people within the diversity, and rather build bridges and acknowledgement, is one of many important roles a teacher must approach in their profession, which can be accomplished through the use of multicultural literature.

For children to feel that they are seen, acknowledged, and included, when working with literature, they must have the opportunity to see themselves represented in the books they read. Unfortunately, this is not given for everyone, but it is however easier for white pupils. In research done by Hughes-Hassell, Barkley & Koehler (2009), where their purpose was to “examine books that support transitional readers to determine the representation of people of color”, they found that out of 556 books, 83.5% had main- or secondary characters that were white (p. 9). In addition, out of 151 books, 76.2% of the authors were white (Hughes-Hassel, Barkley & Koehler, 2009, p. 11). They call this skewed distribution of diversity in literature a source of racism. Furthermore, the reason why it is important to address questions and encourage discourse about the topic, is because white students often think that racism is not about them and is something that happened in the past (Gregory, 2005). Gregory (2005) states that white students have been taught that multiculturalism is a “celebration of differences”, which may result in neglecting unity and equity.

In Scandinavia, Sweden has the longest tradition with multicultural literature, in relation to Norway and Denmark. The emergence of multicultural literature dates from the 1970’s in Sweden, 1980’s in Norway, and early 1990’s in Denmark (Kongslien, 2007). Literature contributes to new perspectives from immigrants, brings new themes and fields of reference into the Nordic national literature, while challenging an expansion of the literary canons in the respective countries (Kongslien, 2007). Moreover, in research done by Mansour & Martin (2020), about what Danish multicultural children’s literature and African American children’s literature can learn from each other, they stress the need for more diversity in the genre in both the US and Denmark because of the increase in the number of minorities. Multicultural literature from a wider variety of backgrounds needs to be available in both the US and Denmark. Publishers must give more opportunities to authors with different ethnicities than the majority. Thus, more books can provide windows to view the world and to mirror an authentic representation of people’s life and experiences (Bishop, 1990). In Norway, books written by representatives from different ethnical groups can give positive input to the general debate about immigration and integration (Kongslien, 2007). This may lead to pupils in Norway developing an inclusive point of view on the diversity in society.

If multicultural literature is implemented in a critical way, where teachers and pupils read and reflect on texts, there will be benefits. It can cultivate pupils’ awareness “to other cultural customs and values, promote communication with people from other countries, and enhance experience involving theirs and others’ cultures” (Lowery & Sabis-Burns, 2007, p. 50). Furthermore, it contributes to reflecting on one’s attitudes and understanding

on where people come from and their cultures (Cai, 2008; Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). However, for multicultural literature to be implemented in an efficient way and be beneficial, teachers must possess adequate knowledge about the topic, both theoretically and didactic.

2.2 Teachers' starting point in teaching about racial diversity

2.2.1 The classroom's demographic

To be a teacher is both demanding and giving (Melby, 2021). Having to teach pupils both the theoretical materials such as math, language, and about the political system in Norway, teachers must also teach pupils about culture, acknowledgement, and respect. There are expectations toward teachers to fulfill the pupils' needs both socially and in terms of knowledge. To do this in a satisfactory and fulfilling way there is need for helpful colleagues, a healthy working environment, and an inner motivation for doing the best job one can possibly do. The last aspect mentioned, inner motivation, starts within the person itself, and is perhaps the most important factor if one is to be a good teacher.

Given the fact that the representation of different cultures and ethnicities have increased during the last fifty years in Norway (Appendix 1), it is crucial for teachers today to acquire cultural and ethnic self-reflection practice, to understand how culture and ethnicity affect their attitudes toward other people's differentness (Gay & Howard, 2000). The reason why self-reflection is important for teachers, is because they must believe in what they teach. Gay & Howard (2000) emphasize that unless teachers have the right attitudes, it is difficult to teach them further to the pupils.

Before teachers start their teaching careers, they are students who must develop multicultural and pedagogical skills (Gay & Howard, 2000). They must acquire knowledge about different cultures, religions, and ethnicities to meet children in a respectable and acknowledgeable manner. In Haddix & Price-Dennis' (2013) paper *Urban Fiction and Multicultural Literature as Transformative Tools for Preparing English Teachers for Diverse Classrooms*, they draw from multiple sources that there is a concern surrounding the fact that an increasingly homogeneous population of teachers is educating an increasingly heterogeneous population of students. Haddix & Price-Dennis write:

From current research, we know that (1) the majority of incoming teachers are white, monolingual, and female; (2) today's classrooms are increasingly multilingual and multi-ethnic; and (3) teacher education programs are underprepared to address thus cultural and linguistic disconnect (p. 249).

Although this research is from the US, it is relevant in Norway because (1) ≈75% of teachers in elementary school are women (Statistisk Sentralbyrå, 2021), where only ≈5% of these women are immigrants or second-generation immigrants (Appendix 2). Furthermore, (2) 19% of children in schools are immigrants, or born in Norway by immigrants, which is an increase of 8% since 2011 (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c), and (3) teacher education programs in Norway seem to fail in teaching pre-service teachers about the topic because lecturers from universities are positioned far away from challenges in the multicultural classroom (Dyrnes, Johansen, & Jónsdóttir, 2015). To elaborate on the

last note, Dyrnes et al. (2015) refers to Tolo (2014) who states that there is vague guidance from the government to what competence teachers shall possess when they encounter a multicultural classroom. Despite more focus on multicultural pedagogy in Norway, Dyrnes et al. (2015) states that the teacher education programs' contribution to the multicultural is inadequate and must be improved.

This paints a picture of a 21st century classroom where diversity, which should be a top priority to teach the pupils, is underrepresented. If most teachers in a school are white women, many pupils cannot see their teachers as a representation of themselves, hence leading to pupils having to find a cultural-, ethnical-, or racial representation of themselves somewhere else. Multicultural literature can here give the minority pupils the insight into- and understanding of their own cultures and people (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). However, it is important to stress that it is not adequate to pick a book because it is about a specific ethnic group, race, or religion and from that point think it will be beneficial for the pupils. Teachers must encourage critical literacy to provide young people with tools to reflect about what they read in relation to the world they live in (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013). Critical literacy, in a school setting, is a framework for reading and studying multicultural literature to explore complicated themes in the larger world and is beneficial because it includes varied lived experiences of youth and communities of color (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013, p. 254). In addition, Jenks (2013) defines critical literacy as a way of "reading the words and the world in relation to power, identity, and differences" (p. 227). Broad knowledge about literature is important to possess by a teacher to help pupils to develop a critical point of view of what they read and in the setting those texts are written.

Given that teachers are a homogeneous group that teach a heterogeneous group of pupils, an understanding of where pupils come from and who they are, is important. To find out how preservice English teachers can think more acutely about their understanding of race, Glenn (2012) conducted research where she used literature in a counter-narrative way. Counter-narration "embodies a method of telling the stories of those whose voices have been historically silenced and analyzing and challenging the stories of those who are in power to explore alternative ways of knowing and understanding" (as cited in Glenn, 2012, p. 327). In the same way one can use literature to teach pupils about race and diversity, one can also use it with adults. Participants in Glenn's research expressed feelings of empathy with and connection to characters whose cultural realities are different from their own. This is supported by Edgar (2020), who writes that as an English teacher, one should select texts that provide opportunities for readers to develop an empathic understanding. However, to select texts that are authentic, the teacher must have knowledge about them, in addition to knowledge about how to use them. Moreover, due to an increasingly diverse population of students, the new generation of teachers need experiences that will prepare them to acknowledge and engage multiple worldviews. Literature is a great resource to do so (as cited in Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013, p. 247).

2.2.2 Textbooks

A relevant topic when talking about ethnicity and multiculturalism, is racism, which may be defined as the "unfair treatment of someone because of his or her race" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Teachers often address textbooks as resources when teaching about this topic. However, considering what is stated in the textbooks and to be critical toward them as sources, is important. It may not be adequate to teach what is written in a textbook if it only addresses a few famous names in the civil rights movement in the US.

Bade, Pettersen & Tømmerbakke (2021) starts their chapter about African Americans from where slavery was “over”, and continues with small sections about Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King and Barack Obama (p. 110), while Tudor Edwards, Omland, Royer & Solli (2021) starts their discourse about racism with the Black Lives Matter movement (p. 188). However, when talking about racism, there is more to grasp in such an important social problem which can be accomplished through secondary sources. Moreover, pupils need historical examples from a Norwegian context to discuss relations in society, structures, and different ways of understanding (Røthing, 2020, p. 40). An example that is relevant to present in the Norwegian classroom is the killing of Benjamin Hermansen in 2001, which was a racist motivated murder, where three Neo-Nazis were convicted for- or involved in, the killing of the Norwegian-Ghanaian (Bitsch, 2021).

One aspect of the pedagogy teachers and pre-service teachers could explore more of, is norm-critical pedagogy. Røthing (2020) explains this type of pedagogy as something that makes pupils more critical toward norms in society (p. 53). She argues that this is necessary to recognize and challenge norms that are contributing to discrimination and reproduction of stereotypes. Ultimately, the goal of this pedagogy, is to strengthen children’s attitudes and attention about diversity, which will develop into moral values that children bring with them outside the classroom. For children to acquire these critical views, tasks given in school should develop pupils’ perspectives instead of reproducing limited norms (Røthing, 2020, p. 57). Pupils shall learn to not take on trust what they are told, but rather ask questions toward the matter, and understand where that information comes from. This can be done by using secondary sources like YA novels instead of textbooks, when textbooks may be experienced as inadequate when talking about a topic. Thus, young learners will develop independence and critical views through a method of learning which contributes to increased in-depth learning, which includes analyzing, discussing, and evaluating the materials one is to learn from (Hjardemaal, 2021).

2.2.3 Pre-service teachers’ starting point

Preservice teachers often have limited experience with people of color in conjunction with the demographic (Glenn, 2012), which highlights the importance of teachers’ knowledge and perspective on people in general. It is not adequate to have sufficient knowledge about the topic one is to teach, teachers must also know their pupils, build relations, and possess a wide pedagogic repertoire to customize the teaching for each pupil (Opplæringsloven, 1998, §1-3). This process starts at the university. However, for this work to be done, preservice teachers need supervisors in their beginning years of their professional careers, who can challenge their implementations and curriculum planning with multicultural literature (Lejonberg, 2018). To get feedback on how one wants to present a certain discourse in the classroom may be beneficial for the teacher if the topic can be seen as fragile or violent, e.g., racism.

Teachers’ potential fear when it comes to teaching about diversity (Gay & Howard, 2000), is unfortunate for the pupils. If children do not get adequate teaching about such important topics, they may not develop acknowledgement and the inclusive abilities needed in today’s multicultural society. Moreover, teachers have a responsibility to create discourse about uncomfortable topics to educate their pupils (Mongillo & Holland, 2016), which may be seen as more important today than fifty years ago due to the increasingly diverse classroom. Although pre-service teachers have a richer understanding of how to develop knowledge related to the educational needs of students from racial diverse

backgrounds, students often have limited experience with the diversity represented in society (Glenn, 2012, p. 327). Thus, teacher education programs must be more conscious on teaching its pre-service teachers about topics of race to enhance their multicultural knowledge.

In an article by Gay & Howard (2000), where they explain why multiculturalism in teacher education is important, they emphasize that elementary preservice teachers, who are mostly white, are afraid of engaging different ethnic groups and multicultural education content in their classroom because they do not have the confidence nor the knowledge to do so. This is unfortunate for the pupils. However, despite this reluctance, Røthing (2020) argues that this discomfort can be understood and used as a resource for critical reflection about one's own ways of understanding and classroom practice (p. 37). She emphasizes the term Pedagogy of discomfort, first introduced in 1999 by Megan Boler, which aims to "engage pupils, students, and teachers to work on topics about difference, social justice, and racism, in ways that challenges their emotional comfort zones" (as cited in Røthing, 2020, p. 60). This may be the trigger a teacher needs to reflect on their own perspective and attitudes toward race and diversity, and from there be able to teach and convey the discourse in a better and more understandable way to pupils.

Research conducted by Iwai (2013), where she used multicultural literature with pre-service teachers, discovered that they did not know much about it. However, after having learned about the topic, their attitudes changed to where they now view it as crucial to use in the classroom. The educational function of multicultural literature emphasizes the important role that teachers play in addressing issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion in school. The goal is for every child to feel welcome, respects others, and build cultural awareness and skills that are essential for becoming global citizens (Mansour & Martin, 2020).

Teachers do not possess adequate knowledge about racial diversity which gives them a responsibility to educate themselves before educating their pupils. They must acquire this knowledge before they enter the classroom so that pupils can explore authentic texts and understand where themselves are positioned in relation to other cultures and ethnicities in the world. Moreover, teachers must also know how to use literature for language acquisition, for pupils to be able to communicate and build relations to other people with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020a). They must follow the core curriculum in addition to the subject curriculum to accomplish this.

2.3 The (Core) Curriculum – Norwegian schools' foundation for education

The interaction between the teacher and the pupils is the essence of schools' intention and mission (Gaare, 2017). This may indicate that the interaction between a teacher and a pupil, based on good relations and trust, is the foundation for a good learning environment. Moreover, the Education Act emphasizes that education shall be implemented in collaboration with the pupils' homes, provide insight into cultural diversity, and learn pupils to think critically and act ethically (Opplæringsloven, 1998, §1-1). These values, which are parts of the foundation of our democracy, shall help us to live, learn and work together in a complex world (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017a).

The core curriculum consists of six chapters: (1) human dignity, (2) identity and cultural diversity, (3) critical thinking and ethical awareness, (4) the joy of creating, engagement, and the urge to explore, (5) respect for nature and environmental awareness, and (6) democracy and participation (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017a). However, the chapters that are relevant for this paper and will be further discussed, are chapter one, two, and three.

The objective clause is based on the inviolability of (1) human dignity and that all people are equal regardless of what makes us different (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017c). Moreover, the core curriculum emphasizes that equality and equal rights are values that are in constant need of protection. Furthermore, when speaking of (2) identity and cultural diversity, it is stated that pupils shall learn about the values and traditions which contribute to uniting people in Norway, in addition to give room for diversity and the development of cultural understanding (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017d). To implement multicultural literature to reach the goals of the core curriculum is beneficial because this type of literature is addressing these values as mentioned previous in this chapter. Furthermore, one may view (3) critical thinking and ethical awareness as the starting point for the two previous core values. When acquiring an equal perspective on humans, and to be comfortable with giving room for diversity, it is an advantage to think critically while being ethically aware, so that one is open for several point of views and a constructive discourse. Critical thinking and ethical awareness are requirements for and part of what it means to learn in different contexts. Pupils must be able to think critically about how knowledge is developed, in addition to balancing different considerations (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017b).

To understand why multicultural literature is relevant to implement in the classroom and how it is said to be done, one must look at the Norwegian curriculum in more detail. If one looks at the curriculum for English in 7th grade, there are six competence aims that explicitly says something about working with text. Amongst these, pupils are to read and convey content, listen, and understand words and expressions in authentic texts, and read and listen to English children- and young adult literature and converse about what they have read (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). In addition, there are two competence aims in the curriculum which involves exploring traditions and cultures in the English-speaking world to reflect and talk about what role the English language plays, both nationally and internationally.

The intention of the core curriculum is to implement values in Norwegian schools that unite the Norwegian society. It is not favorable toward any culture, race or group of people and is emphasizing that these values shall influence the schools' and teachers' approach when meeting children and their parents. However, the core curriculum acknowledges that there may occur some tension between different interests and point of view in a school- or societal setting and is therefore stressing the importance of teachers' professional judgement when interacting with pupils in an increasingly diverse society (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017a). Moreover, when implementing YA novels in the classroom which address topics about racial diversity, tension may occur because the topic of race and diversity may be experienced as fragile to some. However, it is important that teachers are knowledgeable and critical toward the materials, for the conversations to be appropriate. To combine these values from the curriculum as a foundation with specific competence aims for each subject, shows a Norwegian school system that focuses on acknowledging the diversity represented which gives room for the implementation of multicultural literature in EFL classrooms.

3 Methodology

In this chapter I will elaborate on and explain the methods that were used for data collection. This chapter will give the reader an insight and description on why the choice of methods were implemented and an understanding of how these methods correlate with the approach. In addition, a short summary of the texts chosen for this research will be presented. Furthermore, a justification of these novels will be elaborated on, where the intention is to convey why these books, in combination with interviews, are relevant for this research. Moreover, the role of the researcher will be presented in addition to the ethical considerations and who the participants are. However, the participants identifications will not be presented in the paper. Hence, pseudonyms will be used. At the end, the validity of the paper and its limitations will be briefly discussed in addition to what the researcher sees as potential results.

3.1 The Qualitative Research Method

This research examines how five EFL teachers in Norway are implementing multicultural literature in the classroom. In addition, the teachers' perspectives, and experiences with this type of literature will be examined. To discover their perspectives and to understand the teachers' implementations, interviews are being conducted as the main source for data collection. The interviews are conducted one-on-one, as semi-structured. This means that the researcher does follow an interview guide (appendix 3), but questions and topics can vary depending on the course of the interview (Johannessen, Tufte & Christoffersen, 2011, p. 137). The reason for this choice of method is because it opens for rich, detailed descriptions and reflections from its participants (Johannessen et.al., 2011, p. 135). Moreover, to ask the same questions to all participants, helps the researcher to discover similarities and differences between them. Furthermore, follow-up-questions during interviews opens for clarifications and elaborations from the participants' answers for the researcher to understand what is conveyed. This is beneficial for the overall outcome, for the researcher's interpretation of the data to be as precise as possible.

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative researchers typically work inductively, building patterns, categories, and themes from the bottom up by organizing the data into increasingly more abstract units of information (p. 181). After having conducted all interviews and having them recorded, the researcher followed Creswell & Creswell's (2018) research tips when it comes to qualitative data: (1) organize and prepare data for analysis, (2) read or look at all the data, and (3) start coding the data (p. 193). The organization process was done by transcribing the interviews to make them physical rather than abstract recordings. This makes it easier when finding the codes one wants to use in the analysis. To find these codes, I listened and read through the interviews to see what was relevant in relation to this thesis. The codes resulted in *perspective*, *implementation*, and *experience*.

Perspective: it is relevant to examine what attitudes/perspectives the teachers have in relation to multicultural literature. Their perspective on multicultural literature may influence how important they view its implementation in the classroom and their motivation

to accomplish this. Due to a homogeneous representation of teachers in Norway, their perspectives may be similar, which may lead to a consensus toward multicultural literature's importance in the classroom.

Implementation: it is relevant to examine because it is the implementation of the topic, and the teachers' pedagogical approaches, which are the foundation for discussion and learning in the classroom. The implementations will most likely be influenced by the participants' perspectives. Furthermore, to investigate their choice of methodology in the classroom will set the foundation for further discussions from the novels analyzed. The analysis process will elaborate on the participants' implementations, to examine how the YA novels can support their choice of method, and potentially discuss further ways for learning in the classroom.

Experience: experience from life in general and the classroom, may be factors that lead teachers in a certain direction when working with multicultural literature. Moreover, the teachers may have experienced racism, or observed racism in action, which has developed their perspective, motivation, and the search for knowledge on the topic. If this is the case, it will be interesting to see how the teachers' approach to the situation were. Furthermore, teachers with much experience may have clearer methods and approaches when implementing multicultural literature in the classroom because they most likely have done something similar before.

3.2 Literary Analysis

Literary analysis of the books *The Black Kids* (2020) by Christina Hammond Reed and *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* (2020) by Daven McQueen will be accomplished. The authors' intention for writing the stories and how the YA novels are interpreted by the researcher will be essential in the analysis. Because this paper is examining multicultural literature's importance in the classroom and how it is implemented, the researcher will discuss the potential these books have as secondary resources in the classroom. The literary analysis will focus on the main characters' position, discrimination, the issue of power, and the author's message, resulting in how and why the books are relevant in the EFL classroom today. In addition, due to the focus on power relations and discrimination toward black people, racism is also a relevant topic of discussion throughout this thesis.

The reason for why these books have been chosen is because they are YA novels that are suitable for pupils in upper elementary school. In addition, they highlight important topics to discuss in the classroom such as racism, issue of power, justice, and identity. These topics are often discussed in school setting and are part of the Core Curriculum in Norway (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017a).

The Black Kids (2020) is about an African American girl named Ashley who comes from a relatively wealthy family. She goes to a good school with her friends and her parents have good jobs. The novel is based in the aftermath of the Rodney King beating and is a story about racism, injustice, and being "the others". Being a wealthy black girl with mainly white friends, Ashley starts to see her friends' true values toward black people as the violent protests engulf in the city. Moreover, her father's comments about race and what she must do to survive as a black person, influences Ashley, and she starts to reflect on who is the "us" and who is the "them".

The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones (2020) is set in 1955 and is about a multiracial boy named Ethan who is sent to a small town in Alabama to spend his summer with his white grandparents. His father, who is white, is the one who sends him, due to a fight Ethan got into. During the summer, Ethan discovers that he is not welcome in this town. However, one day he meets Juniper Jones, a white girl from the town who sees Ethan as the "new kid" rather than the "black kid". This is a book about friendship, adventures, and being young. However, while Ethan and Juniper are exploring and having fun, their plans are constantly interfered by people with hostile intentions and racist attitudes toward Ethan. Although it is a YA novel which conveys joy and the beauty of being young, it includes racism, hate, ignorance, and alienations.

3.3 The purpose of interviews and literary analysis combined

Considering the research questions for this paper, the combination between semi-structured interviews and literary analysis is important. This is because this paper is examining how multicultural literature is implement in the classroom and how the two YA novels can be used as resources to teach about racial diversity.

Interviews are being conducted to examine and discover the teachers' point of view and methodology on the topics, while the literary analysis are accomplished to elaborate on different ways to implement this topic and to add on to the field of research. To combine these two methods and approaches to the topic, will give the reader an understanding on how a selection of teachers is practicing this today, in addition to how the discourse and classroom practices can be further developed and challenged with the use of literature. Based on the participants' answers, this paper will discuss how the chosen YA novels can be implemented in the EFL classroom to teach pupils about racial diversity. However, it must be mentioned that the participants in this research are not familiar with the YA novels analyzed. The participants give their answers based on their preferred pedagogical approach when implementing multicultural literature in the classroom.

3.4 Role of the researcher

It is important to emphasize that the researcher in this paper identifies himself as a white, Norwegian man. The reason for its importance, is the paper's topic about race and multiculturalism. The researcher's positionality is outside of the topic itself, hence making the analysis and discussion section rooted in an outside perspective. Moreover, what is conveyed through the literary analysis, is reflected on, and taken from a majority perspective.

During interviews, the researcher did not give any criteria to the participants, giving them the opportunity to answer the questions as freely as possible. Given that qualitative research is interpretive research, the researcher wanted reflective answers that emphasize challenges in the classroom in addition to successful classroom practices. The intention with the interviews is to develop a complex picture of the issue under study, to understand how the participants view and operate in the classroom (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 182).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Before the data collection started, an application was sent to the NSD - *Norwegian Center of Research Data* (my translation) – to get an approval for this type of research. Answers from the interviews were recorded on a dictaphone from the university's possession which keeps the data safe by not making it public on any internet server. During the process, the researcher kept a focus on learning the meaning that the participants hold about the issue, not the meaning that the researcher bring to the research or that writers express in the literature (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 182). Moreover, the researcher has taken it into consideration that the questions asked shall not be too personal. Given that this interview is about multiculturalism, race and diversity, uncomfortable experiences from the participants' point of view may occur. The researcher was therefore conscious on conducting the interviews on the participants' terms.

3.6 Participants

The participants in this research are English teachers, teaching in the intermediate stage in elementary school. This means grade 5-7. Their experience as English teachers vary from 6 months to 25 years of teaching practice, and their academic background varies from having 60 study points in English through further education, to have written an MA in the English subject. To have participants with a variety of experience was not consciously intended but did however end up as the result. Moreover, due to this wide range of experience, the interviews are richer because they discuss several perspectives from different generations of teachers about how their classroom practices are. The reason why these teachers are the participants, is because the researcher either know them from before, have common acquaintances, or they have been interested when the researcher has reached out to the school looking for volunteers. Moreover, when referring to the participants in the analysis- and discussion chapters, the researcher will use pseudonyms, which are made up names, to completely cover the participants' identities. These pseudonyms, which only the researcher knows the identity behind, are: Agathe, Linda, Olaf, Nepal, and Vibeke.

3.7 Limitations/Validity

This research cannot be generalized because it gives an insight into a small amount of teachers' perspectives, implementations, and experiences. Moreover, due to this limited amount, a narrow perspective on racial diversity and multicultural literature may be found in the interviews. However, one must face the reality of the homogeneous representation of teachers in the Norwegian classroom. Therefore, what is found and discussed in this research may be an indication of how teachers in Norway are implementing multicultural literature in the classroom. Moreover, the research may be a starting point and an informative source for teachers in Norway to see why the topic of racial diversity is important and how it can be implemented and discussed in the EFL classroom.

The books chosen for the literary analysis are relatively new books which may be a challenge because there is not much research on them from before. Moreover, to implement YA novels in elementary school may also be a challenge for teachers. However, one must consider the whole range of pupils that are represented in the classroom. Some children are good readers while others are reluctant. One can use a YA novel for pupils

who are strong readers, while also work with certain excerpts with the reluctant readers. This supports the choice of literature and is therefore a source of validity in this paper.

3.8 Potential results

What this research may find is a general positive perspective on the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. However, I do not think the participants have many thoughts on how to implement this sufficiently. In the interviews I think the younger generation of teachers is more positive and have more reflections on the topic, while the older generation may have developed a positive perspective during the last years of their practice. I do not think there was much focus on this 20-30 years ago.

The literature that is analyzed is honest, authentic, and dichotomous. This type of multicultural literature is a good starting point for teachers to implement in the classroom. The books' content, and how they deal with racial issues, may correlate with teachers' concerns. Moreover, I do think these books are highlighting important aspects about racism and are therefore great resources to use to develop critical discourses in the classroom. What the participants convey in the interviews, I think will correlate with the theory from outside of Norway, stressing the importance of focusing on racial diversity in Norway as well.

3.9 Conclusion of method

The reason for this choice of method, is that through interviews one gets the insight into teachers' attitudes, experiences, and knowledge on the topic. Considering that today's society is a place where cultures, ethnicities, and beliefs meet, it is an advantage to interview teachers because one gets the perspectives from the main source. Teachers who have a long career behind them, may have experienced a big change in the representation of ethnicities in the classroom, while teachers who has a long career ahead of them, may see this as the normal.

To combine teachers' perspectives with literary analysis, may give an indication on how discourse about important themes and topics are accomplished in the classroom. The literature presented in this paper are authentic texts written by African American women, about African American protagonists, to give the reader of these texts a genuine representation of how they, as African Americans, experience to live in a world where they are not adequately acknowledged. To investigate both the teachers view and implementations, and compare with these authentic texts, may shed light on what beneficial approaches we are accomplishing, while shedding new light on the ones we might have missed out on until now. Thus, what this research can contribute with, is to see how we can create a better and more efficient classroom practice and discourse about racial diversity by implementing multicultural literature.

4 Analysis

In the following chapter, I will present and analyze the data for this research which was collected through interviews and literary analysis. When referring to what the participants said throughout this chapter, paraphrasing and quotations will be implemented and referred to by the participants' pseudonyms. The analysis and findings from the interviews will be presented first. The intention is to examine and understand why and how teachers are implementing multicultural literature in the classroom and their motivation for accomplishing their goals. Furthermore, when analyzing the two YA novels, the authors' intention for writing the novels and a brief explanation on how the books are interpreted, will be presented first. Further, there will be an analysis in more detail, where the researcher looks at the YA novels in more depth. Here, an analysis of the main characters' position, discrimination, the issue of power, and the author's message will be elaborated on. These two components of data analysis will be analyzed independently and further discussed in correlation to each other in the next chapter.

4.1 The interviews

4.1.1 Experience

Three of the participants, Agathe, Linda, and Nepal, have been teaching English for about 20 years with a formal education of 60 study points in English. This is equivalent to one full year of English studies. The remaining two participants, Olaf and Vibeke, have been teaching for respectively 6 months and 8 years and have written a master thesis in English. Moreover, Agathe, Linda, and Nepal did study English as a part of their further education, while Olaf and Vibeke studied English as their main subject to become teachers. The reason for why this information is important, is because Agathe, Linda, and Nepal said in the interviews that the focus on multiculturalism and diversity was not as present during their teacher education program. However, when they did their further education several years into their teaching practice, they noticed a significant change in focus and priority when it comes to literature and diversity in the English subject:

Researcher: When you were in university, do you feel like you acquired adequate knowledge about multicultural literature and racial diversity in schools?

Agathe: On the other part of my English course, which was further education, absolutely.

And:

Nepal: I think that the literature we had... it showed a part of the diversity, but the teachers that taught... the tasks we wrote about back then was very little about the multicultural. But when I took the additional education 10 years ago it was more focus on the literature, write tasks, reflect, and see how to use literature to vary teaching... so there it was a clear development.

These answers emphasize that Agathe and Nepal did not experience much focus on multiculturalism and diversity in the English subject when they were in their teacher education program. Indeed, they read books and stories about other cultures, but to talk about them, reflect, and learn how to teach about it, was not prioritized. However, after they had worked as teachers for about a decade, they took a further education program which focused more on diversity and literature. Agathe and Nepal express that it has been a shift in priorities within the English subject during the past decades. What may be a factor for this shift in focus, is the globalization where cultures, ethnicities, religions, and identities are being mixed in all societies. Vibeke, who has written a master thesis in English supports this claim: "in today's society it is very important to learn about it [multicultural literature] and talk about it... so I would like to focus more on that".

Furthermore, a significant finding in this research is that three of the participants, Agathe, Linda, and Nepal, said that the textbooks, which are used in English teaching today, are inadequate, disadvantageous, and boring. In addition, Vibeke mentions that the school she works at, has been buying less textbook for the past few years, resulting in a bigger responsibility for the teachers when it comes to finding secondary sources to implement in the classroom. This may indicate a shift, or a potentially needed shift in elementary school English teaching today, where schools should prioritize the implementation of more secondary sources for teachers when teaching about topics like racial diversity. When textbooks are boring and inadequate when it comes to conveying topics like multiculturalism, diversity, and racism, the textbooks' intention to be an artefact in the classroom, will lose its credibility because teachers may stop trusting in the materials. Thus, secondary sources, such as YA novels, may be what teachers today should be taught how to use in a more beneficial, exploring, and motivating way, for pupils to acquire knowledge and develop understanding about racial diversity.

To develop a teaching environment where this practice is supported and emphasized, the administration at the schools should be involved as well. Unfortunately for Nepal, Linda, and Agathe, this is not something they hear much about. However, Vibeke states: "We have a school library where we are allowed to order close to as many books as we want... and to come with wishes and stuff... and even though the school doesn't have the biggest budget, I feel like this is often prioritized". In addition, even though Olaf does not experience any explicit encouragement from the administration, he has their full support when supplementing literature in the classroom: "it is rather looked at as an advantage". Furthermore, all five of the participants wish to use *more* multicultural literature in their teaching practice, which indicates the value and role multicultural literature plays today, in addition to the potential it can contribute with.

For pupils to develop understanding and acquire knowledge about racial diversity, it is important for them to have a teacher who conveys and teaches the materials in an understandable and authentic way. Linda says this is important because of her experience with a diverse representation of lecturers at her further education program, where she saw the value of discussing multicultural literature with people who see themselves represented in that given literature:

Linda: I was fortunate that my main lecturer was American, in addition to a lecturer who was from Australia... through the Australian professor, we were presented for children's literature that we would not be presented for other places. We are not surrounded by

Australian children's- and YA books for example. There are English and American we can find the most. For me, even though a Norwegian professor could convey much of the same, it gets more authentic...

Linda is emphasizing the importance of authenticity when it comes to multicultural literature. However, when talking about a diverse representation of lecturers, Vibeke, who is Vietnamese-Norwegian, says:

Vibeke: And when talking about myself... because I don't "look" Norwegian, I feel like I can talk very freely about such topics without being afraid of insulting anybody because I am not 100% Norwegian myself... but I hear that pupils with Norwegian parents are afraid of insulting someone else with feeling that they shall not say anything wrong or... which I also see with my colleagues as well... that they feel like they must be aware.

Linda and Vibeke emphasize the importance of not only implementing multicultural literature in the classroom, but also people who are represented in the literature. As a result, when teachers identify themselves with the culture represented, pupils get a deeper understanding and an authentic presentation of the literature being discussed. One gets to hear from an inside perspective which is the essence of authenticity.

4.1.2 Perspective

4.1.2.1 Teachers' definitions of diversity and multicultural literature

The researcher finds that the participants in this research do have similar perceptions of the terminologies *diversity* and *multicultural literature*. When talking about the terminology *diversity*, all of them emphasize that it means to show the differences that are represented in the world when it comes to cultures and ethnicities. In addition, they emphasize the importance of acknowledging these differences. Moreover, Olaf draws his definition a step further when he mentions that *diversity* for him means to include the minority groups in society. His explanation is that people get the majority's perspective on things, subconsciously, through the majority culture represented in society, for example through media. What he sees as important within the diversity of humans, is to give the minority more place in society for them to use their voice and educate the majority about their positions. Furthermore, one can see that Nepal supports Olaf's point of view where she says that when one is talking about diversity, one must focus on the unity and "that all cultures have something to contribute with".

When speaking of *multicultural literature*, the participants define this terminology with similar thoughts as they do with diversity. Vibeke, Olaf, and Nepal think that multicultural literature should show different cultures in society for a story to be multicultural, while Agathe and Linda focus on the text's authenticity. For a text to be authentic, Agathe says: "if it is literature from Australia, it is an Australian author who has written that book". This indicates that if Agathe is to use an authentic text about African Americans, she will use a text written by an African American person for the story to convey an authentic perspective and story.

4.1.2.2 Teachers' perspectives on multicultural literature's benefits in the classroom

As mentioned, all participants want to use more multicultural literature in their teaching practice. Although Nepal does not mention this wish explicitly, she shows a positive perspective on the use of it throughout her interview. The reason behind these positive perspectives and wishes to use this type of methodology in class, can be seen and understood in their answers to why multicultural literature is beneficial in the classroom: Nepal mentions that multicultural literature leads to better attitudes and perspective on diversity. Vibeke states: "it creates engagement... they [the pupils] may discover something about themselves". Olaf says: "multicultural literature is kind of a window into another culture that the pupils not necessarily have much knowledge or familiarity with". Agathe says it is: "eye opening. Widens one's horizon". And Linda says: "pupils learn empathy and to understand the world around themselves and to see themselves reflected in things... to compare one's own life to someone else".

There is a consensus amongst the teachers' perspectives on multicultural literature's benefits, that it contributes to give pupils different point of views and perspectives on cultures in the world. Furthermore, Linda has additional experience with teaching and talking about different perspectives with her pupils when it comes to diversity. At the school she works at, they have a collaboration with a school in Ghana, where they have visited each other both ways, both teachers and pupils. What Linda has experienced through this project, is the increase of curiosity, engagement, and knowledge this type of projects lead to. She mentions in the interview that "we", the people in the western world, often have "this perception that kids in Africa are starving and living in cottages because that is the picture we are presented for, but what is important is that children here get to know that there are contrasts in addition to that there is more than meets the eye". To move away from this perception and rather educate children about the differences is important. It is not the reality that all children in Africa are poor, which is something Linda emphasizes as important to convey to her pupils. For children to acquire a critical perspective on the stories one is told about the world is important, and this can be done through a collaboration as Linda has experience with, or through multicultural literature.

There are additional benefits to the use of multicultural literature in the classroom. Vibeke, who has a generally positive attitude toward literature, thinks that using multicultural literature in the classroom leads to better learning than short texts in textbooks do. By using literature in her teaching, she has acquired a positive perspective on it. This is due to her experience from the classroom where she has discovered that pupils remember more from a book they have read in comparison to a text in their textbooks. However, what may be a challenge for teachers, is to acquire suitable- and enough books for the whole class. Nepal and Linda states that much of the literature they have encountered, either lack the representation of diversity, or has implemented a multicultural character "because one is supposed to be multicultural". They miss literature where diversity is the normal. Their perspective on multicultural literature is that there is too much focus on people being different which contributes to division rather than inclusion. Nepal and Linda are calling for multicultural literature which celebrates diversity without emphasizing how people are different.

4.1.3 Implementation

4.1.3.1 Teachers' goals when implementing multicultural literature

The participants have motivations and intended goals for the pupils when implementing multicultural literature in their teaching. Nepal's goal is for her pupils to learn about "equality", while Vibeke's goal is: "to see something from several point of views and to bring this ability outside the classroom into their everyday life". Linda says: "increased understanding and curiosity toward other humans no matter the type of diversity". Agathe mentions that her intention is to "erase the differences but at the same time acknowledge the differences", and Olaf says: "the pupils will acquire a deeper cultural understanding".

Linda, Agathe, and Olaf are emphasizing the importance of cultural understanding and acknowledgement. As Agathe says: "to erase the differences but at the same time know that they are there", is a good argument when wanting to develop cultural understanding. The reality is that we are different, and to acknowledge these differences and nurture a curiosity toward people may be a good starting point when wanting to develop cultural understanding. Vibeke, as a Vietnamese-Norwegian, view other people's curiosity toward her as multicultural, as exclusively positive.

Furthermore, Nepal and Vibeke view their goal more broadly by mentioning equality and everyday life. Nepal has taught abroad and has experienced how different life is in different countries. She wants to convey and teach her pupils about these differences, and at the same time understand that people may not be as different as one thinks. What her goal in the classroom is, when teaching about diversity, is to show that we are all equal in the essence. She says: "When everyone is different, we are all the same in at least one way: to be different". Vibeke may seem to agree with Nepal. What Nepal wants to convey to her pupils about equality, is interpreted as a value which the pupils are intended to adapt into their everyday life. Although Vibeke does not mention any values explicitly, she does want her pupils "to see something from several point of views and to bring this ability outside the classroom into their everyday life".

4.1.3.2 Teachers' methods for implementing multicultural literature in the classroom

Before one implements multicultural literature in the classroom, materials are necessary. To find these materials, which in this case are literature about racial diversity, the participants say that they often look to the internet for inspiration. Agathe, Linda, and Nepal state that videos online, internet forums on facebook, and English web pages are useful in their search for materials to use in the classroom. Moreover, for these materials to be useful and appropriate, Agathe, Olaf, and Vibeke mention that proficiency is important which means that pupils must be able to understand the materials. If a teacher is implementing a long novel with difficult vocabulary in an intermediate stage classroom, some pupils may understand the text, and some pupils may not. Therefore, proficiency is valued as a priority when choosing literature to implement in the classroom. Moreover, Vibeke states that "YA novels are suitable for the intermediate stage" if one has the ability to adjust the tasks based on what grade one is to teach.

Vibeke, Nepal, and Olaf focus on an interdisciplinary approach when implementing new topics in a subject. Vibeke, who works at a relatively small school and is teaching in many subjects, says that this approach is necessary for her to create an overview:

Vibeke: I have a one year plan for what I am to teach... if I know that we for example will have a literature week in Norwegian and we will teach about multiculturalism in social science... then I will implement in my English plan that we will have about literature which will match the topics in other subjects... so that I can have much interdisciplinary teaching

Furthermore, Nepal also has an interdisciplinary approach to her teaching because she teaches social science and religion in addition to English. She mentions that she often combines English and religion because she can then teach history through the English language. Moreover, she mentions ethics as an important value to emphasize to her pupils, which is a significant term in the religion subject. Olaf's intentions when using multicultural literature, is to use materials which are familiar to the pupils, so the learning experience can be easier to overcome. To use materials which are familiar to the pupils can be accomplished through interdisciplinary work by implementing materials from other subjects in the EFL classroom, which is what Nepal does. Olaf says: "It will most likely be interdisciplinary which is not necessarily a problem, but rather a possibility".

The teachers have many of the same visions when implementing multicultural literature:

Nepal: I want them to be a little provoked over how they see things are in the world and that they should reflect.

Agathe: I am for an open dialogue, a positive open dialogue where the goal is for the pupils to get an honest and good understanding of what the topic involves, and reflections of course.

Linda: I often start with letting the kids discover themselves. I think it is important that I don't tell them... I think it is important that they are curious and explore themselves... and if they don't find anything themselves...but often do that... they get shocked about what goes on.

Vibeke: ... reflect, analyzing, and go in depth... the class I am in now like this kind of practice, likes to read books and talk about it.

Olaf: it would be... for example that one touches upon the majority's side of the story when talking about the pupils' experience and further turn it into what the minority has experienced.

Didactic approaches which focus on reflections, exploration, and dialogue, are what the teachers want their pupils to accomplish. They want their class to share thoughts, be critical to what they read, and develop understanding and acquire knowledge about their position in the world in addition to knowledge about people who are different than oneself. Moreover, when working with a book or a text which is about racial diversity, it is important to go in depth and understand the voices one read and hears about. As Vibeke mentions, to go in depth creates engagement from the pupils because it leads to increased curiosity

and constructive dialogue. Furthermore, to facilitate for these dialogues, Olaf mentions that it is important to implement authentic texts which Linda and Agathe support.

4.1.3.3 Pupils' reactions to multicultural literature and racial diversity

By implementing their preferred methods in the classroom, the teachers have experiences with how pupils react when learning about topics like diversity, multiculturalism and racial diversity. Nepal has taught her pupils about the apartheid regime where race and skin color are relevant topics for discussion. When talking and learning about how people were treated because of the color of their skin, Nepal says that it "provokes the kids", which also is her intention when implementing materials about such topics. Nepal states that these provocations should lead to reflections. Moreover, Linda has experienced that her pupils have been "shocked about what goes on" when they are learning about racial diversity. Furthermore, it is important to be critical to what one exposes pupils for. However, Linda states that one "can talk about almost anything in a classroom as long as you facilitate it to the given age".

4.2 The YA novels

4.2.1 The authors' intention for writing their stories

Christina Hammonds Reed, the author of *The Black Kids* is an African American woman. When she was young, her parents got her a children's book that she felt reflected her and her family. She mentions in a video on YouTube that YA books are important to help kids see themselves and what they can do, and see their families reflected in both positive and complicated ways (Simon & Schuster Books, 2020, 1:27). With *The Black Kids* one can see Reed contributing with giving the next generation what her parents gave her: a source to see people like oneself overcoming challenges, creating opportunities, and being true to who one is.

In comparison with Hammonds Reed, Daven McQueen does implement an author's note in the beginning of her novel to explicitly explain her intention for writing her story. *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* does contain depictions of racism, which is one of the most significant topics in the YA novel. McQueen writes in her note that the choices she made when describing certain scenes of racism were not made lightly, but her intention is to show the historical and (unfortunately) continuing reality. She writes:

"Sometimes, content like this is kept away from teens and younger readers because it might be hard to handle. It is hard to handle. But even though this book is fiction, anti-blackness is an undeniable reality. These characters have lived; I've lived it, and maybe you have too. That's why it was important to me to tell this story as honestly as I knew how – in hopes that one person might read it and empathize with someone different from them, and that another might read it and feel seen". (p. I-II)

4.2.2 How the books are interpreted

On the back of *The Black Kids*, one reads: "who is the 'us' and who is the 'them'?". Reading this sentence combined with hearing what Reed says in the video, one may say that her intention is to shed light on a dichotomous presentation of people in society today. What Reed may want to achieve with her YA novel, is for people to see everyone as a human, and to not judge them by the color of their skin. As an African American writer who grew up in the 90's and remembers the beating of Rodney King and has experienced the negative attitudes toward African Americans herself, her book is not only a story of what she has seen, but what many people like her has experienced, such as lack of acknowledgement and respect, and racism. She writes: "They don't see us even when they are looking right at us" (p.90).

In *The Black Kids* one can find topics like racism, police brutality, discrimination, family, friendship, politics, and historical references to Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr, and John F. Kennedy, to mention a few. The book embraces the cultural and systematic challenges that the US were facing in the 90's, as a continuation of several centuries of racism and a twisted perspective on humans. However, it is the topic of racism and the dichotomous representation of black and white people which is the theme of this YA novel. The author wants to convey how it is to be black in a white majority society, and she wants to convey to the younger generation, that being black is beautiful. At the same time, one may interpret the story as an encouragement for people to stand together and fight for justice. Moreover, to help and support people in need, whoever they are, is a message that is conveyed. Reed presents an attitude that encourages people to think about humans in general and not only be supportive toward people one hears about and see: "Rodney King is just the tip of the iceberg" (p.44). This quote emphasizes that Rodney King is just one in many who has experienced this kind discrimination and that there are numerous of people whose voices are not heard.

The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones is set in the 1950's and does discuss many of the same topics as *The Black Kids*. However, what distinguishes McQueen's YA novel from Reed's, is that the story is set in a time where segregation was legal, and racism was accepted. The story is filled with racism, fear, ignorance, and anger, in addition to the confederate flag (p. 16), comments about mixing races (p. 33), and the Ku Klux Klan (p. 228), being mentioned. At the same time, what makes this YA novel a story worth telling, is the relationship between the main character Ethan and his friend Juniper Jones. Ethan is not welcomed by anyone in the small-town Ellison, Alabama, which is a place where racist and hostile attitudes and laws toward black people were implemented. He gets looks and overhears comments from the local citizens that he is unwanted. However, one day he meets Juniper Jones who is instantly a warm person who talks to Ethan without mentioning or looking at his skin as something foreign. This meeting, that develops into a strong friendship, is the foundation of the story, and may be seen as a sign of reconciliation and compassion between people.

Despite many negative topics, the author conveys several positive values with her story, such as integrity, unity, and hope. Ethan, being the only black person in town, is seen as the representation of integrity, where he must be true to himself to both survive and pave a path for people that may end up in his situation later. The friendship between Ethan and Juniper is a symbol for unity between people from different backgrounds, and the hope is represented through the fight for social- and political changes: "It's important to know where we come from and what's been done to us, otherwise, how're are we supposed to fight what's happening to us now?" (p. 202). Moreover, it is a novel about

injustice and treating people the wrong way. To stand up for equity, acknowledgement, and respect for one another, is what this YA novel conveys, and can be seen in relation to the participants' goals when implementing multicultural literature. Furthermore, it gives an honest visualization of how African Americans were treated not long ago, and it emphasizes the harm such attitudes toward racial diversity still makes today.

4.2.3 The main characters' position

4.2.3.1 Ashley – in *The Black Kids*

Ashley, the main character in *The Black Kids* comes from a wealthy black family living in a "white" neighborhood. She has only white friends, but during the story one can see that Ashley starts to become curious about the people that looks like her, the black kids. The reason why Ashley has been sheltered from the reality of being a black person, is because her father and mother does not want her to be a victim of society's ignorance and injustice. Her parents want to give Ashley a life where her opportunities shall not be limited because of the color of her skin. Because Ashley's family has the resources to do so, they try to keep a distance from the discrimination and injustice that influences the reality around them. However, Ashley is a teenager who reflects much on what is happening. She knows much about what is going on in other places, at the same time she does not. Ashley says:

"My parents and grandparents have made it so that Jo and I know nothing. We know nothing of crack or gangs or poverty, we know nothing of welfare or Section 8 housing or food stamps or social workers. We know nothing of school with metal detectors and security but no books. We know nothing of homegoings or small coffins. We know nothing of hunger. We are, according to my father, spoiled rotten little brats" (p. 53).

Ashley understands that her sister Jo and herself are fortunate to grow up in a wealthy family with a nice house and the opportunity to attend a good school. However, being black does not give them a fair starting point in life because of the systematic racism and prejudice they are met with. When Ashley mentions gangs, poverty, schools with metal detectors, and hunger, she is mentioning the things in life that she is expected to experience due to the color of her skin. Even though Ashley is fortunate enough to not experience these things, she is still set back psychologically because she views the world with a different perspective than her friends. She is constantly thinking about her role in society, where she is part of the upper class, at the same time she is not. Indeed, her family is wealthy, but her surroundings are always reminding her of that she is coming from a *black* wealthy family.

Moreover, Ashley's sister Jo, may be seen as Ashley's inner voice. Jo is rebellious, joins the riots against police brutality, and ends up in jail. She is critical to the political system, and she is angry and tired of how black people are treated. Jo is more of an outspoken person than what Ashley is and because Jo is more aware of how black people are treated in the country, Jo is seen as Ashley's voice. Something that may be the most important thing for the author to convey to the reader, is said by Jo to Ashley:

"We have to walk around being perfect all the time just to be seen as human. Don't you ever get tires of being a symbol? Don't you ever just want to be human?" (p. 157 & 190).

This points out how Jo and Ashley experience what it is like to be mistreated because of their appearance. Because of their starting points as black people, they must do more to be seen as equal humans in relation to the majority whites. Moreover, Ashley is in a difficult position. She cannot do anything about the upbringing she has gotten, but at the same time she wants to break her "white chains" and start to do and learn more about her people. In some ways, she does not feel like she belongs with the white kids, which is the reason for her curiosity and focus on the black kids at school. Even though her father is very strict on keeping Ashley away from the reality, and rather wants her to hang around the white kids, he still has strong meanings on how Ashley should view her people: "My father gets mad when I refer to black people as 'they'" (p. 158). Ashley is here stuck between two worlds, where her biggest challenge is to determine who is "us" and who is "them". It is not easy for her to be stuck between two worlds: "I'm black but my black is different from that of rioters on TV" (p. 176). Ashley has learned to live the life she has been given. Unfortunately, in this life, she does not feel like she can be herself: "They don't fucking see us even when they're looking right at us" (p. 90). Moreover, Ashley states: "I've gotten good at being invisible" (p. 21)

Furthermore, even with her friends, Ashley is seen as stuck between two worlds of blackness. One scene that brings this to the surface is when Ashley says to her friend Kimberly that she listens to the album Maggot Brain by Funkadelic which addresses topics like segregation and injustice:

"Since when do you listen to so much black shit?"

"I'm black," I say.

"Yea, but you're not, like, blackity black," she says. (p. 152).

This short dialogue gives the reader an excellent description of where Ashley's position is. With her friends, she is only Ashley when she does things the rest of her friends do, but in moments Ashley does something that her friends normally do not to, she is momentarily seen as someone else. When Kimberly asks the first question, she is indicating that Ashley is part of "us", her group of people, the white people. However, when Ashley listens to music that is not acknowledged in Kimberly's eyes, Ashley is immediately considered as "them". Even though Ashley answers that she is black, it does not seem like Kimberly is even acknowledging her friend as the human she is. Kimberly seems to convey that there is a division between black people and white people by trying to emphasize that Ashley is not part of the black community. There is a clear misconception from Kimberly's point of view that there is an "us" and a "them". Ashley is trying to figure out who is who, and if the two "groups" even exists. Based on what Ashley is doing, she finds herself either in the one world or the other, or constantly in the middle.

4.2.3.2 Ethan – in *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones*

Despite Ethan and Ashley both being black in communities where white people are the majority, Ethan does have a different position due to the time his story is set. Ethan is in one of the southern states in the US, Alabama, in 1955 where the Jim Crow laws, which separated Americans by race (Tischauer, 2012, p. xi), are implemented. In addition, he is in the small-town Ellison, where he is the only black person amongst a hostile white population. This hostility comes to show early after Ethan's arrival in Ellison when he overhears his aunt and some other ladies talking about him in the local grocery store:

"-and it's just real tragic," a woman was saying.

"It really is," another woman agreed, her voice affected and nasal. "That boy shouldn't be in this town."

"If only he wasn't Cara's nephew," another woman inserted. "Then we could get him taken care of just like the last one." (p. 32).

The extreme alienation within Ellison's population is evident in this dialogue. There is a situation where acknowledgement is not present, in addition to hostility, and a feeling of dehumanization. The women are talking about Ethan as some pest that they do not want in their present, and the dehumanization comes to show when one of them says: "we could get him taken care of just like the last one." Behind this utterance lays an attitude toward Ethan that defends a potential harmful act toward him. As this dialogue is happening, Ethan is hiding behind some shelves in fear, which is the feeling represented for Ethan's position throughout the YA novel: "His heart was in his throat as he edged toward the door" (p. 33).

Ethan cannot move freely outside because of the risk it carries. Despite his aunt's contribution to the dialogue at the store, she and Ethan's uncle are trying to make Ethan understand the situation in this small-town. They know that they cannot change the town's attitudes, but they try to advise Ethan on what he should do to remain safe. They are not fans of Ethan's father's decision on sending him to Ellison, but they are trying to explain to Ethan how things unfortunately are: "Listen, I'm real sorry your dad decided to send you here. Not because I don't want you here, but because they don't." (p. 69). Later, when Ethan is at the house and his aunt gets home, Ethan asks:

"Do you hate me Aunt Cara? Does everyone here hate me?"

"I don't hate you, Ethan," she said. "Of course I don't. but this – this is a complicated place. These are complicated times. The people here don't know what to make of someone like you." (p. 35-36).

The words that stuck to Ethan the most are "someone like you". He starts reflecting on who he is, more specifically he starts thinking about how he looks, and he compares his appearance to his aunt: "It seemed impossible that Aunt Cara could be related to him in any way" (p. 36). This reflects Ethan's position in the society he currently is in. Half black, half white, but at the same time, neither. According to the white people, his whiteness is inadequate, and his blackness is intolerable. Ethan is stuck between two worlds without

knowing how the world in between looks like. All he wants is to make the best out of this summer, but everything around him seems to be pushing him down: "Here, he was a deviation from the norm – and that was a threat." (p. 68).

However, Ethan's position in the novel is not only influenced by negativity. A short time after his arrival in Ellison, he meets his new friend for the summer, Juniper Jones, who ends up being Ethan's savior. After a short dialogue she says:

"I want this summer to be – to be invincible. But obviously, you know, I need a little help. Everything is better with a friend. So far I haven't found anyone fit for the job, but you're perfect. You got a bike? No? well, we'll get you one, you'll definitely need it. my adventures are not for the weak or the bikeless." (p. 27).

Ethan is thankfully not unwanted by everyone in the town. Except his aunt and uncle, there is one additional person who wish him welcome: Juniper Jones. When they meet for the first time, Juniper does not care about Ethan's skin color. All Juniper sees, is a new friend. This is emphasized when she says: "you're perfect", which is a strong contradiction to the attitudes Ethan meets with the rest of Ellington's citizens. Juniper is interpreted as the new generation of attitudes and acknowledgement toward racial diversity. Instead of inheriting the hate that the previous generations possess and are practicing, Juniper is here seen as the new generation who wants to include rather than exclude. This comes to show in Juniper's respect toward Ethan, which are values that the participants want to convey to their pupils.

4.2.4 (Prejudice and) Discrimination in the two YA novels

In *The Black Kids*, one reads about discrimination on the first page of the YA novel. There is an infamous forest fire in the state of California, close to Ashley and her family's house. A fireman comes knocking on their door to inform them that there is a chance of evacuation if necessary. When Ashley's father opens the door, he is met with a condescending attitude from the fireman:

"You live here?" I heard him say to my father when he opened the door.

"Yes," my father said.

"You're the owner?" he said.

"I do believe that's what my deed says," my father said.

The mailman had said the exact same thing when we first moved in. (p. 3).

This small dialogue sets the mood for the story momentarily. A society filled with prejudice and skepticism toward people based on their appearance. Even though the reader gets the information that this is not the first time Ashley's father gets this question in his own house, one may already see in his answer that he has experienced this situation before. He is tired of the attitude that says being black is equivalent to being less

resourceful and one may also note anger in his answer. Furthermore, another encounter with discrimination in the book, takes place on page 27 when Ashley and her mother gets pulled over by a cop:

"She slowly and carefully reached into the glove compartment for the little folder with her new-card paperwork and insurance, announcing everything she was doing as she did it, and then she passed it over to him along with her license. He made a big show of radio-ing everything in, hand resting on his gun, which hung right by my mother's head. When the voice on the other end finally confirmed ownership, he looked disappointed" (p. 27).

With the police officer's hand resting on his gun and Ashley's mother announcing everything she is doing, is a symbol of fear and alienation. Ashley's mother knows how black people are treated by the police if only one movement is perceived as threatening. When announcing her actions, she wants to make sure that the police officer understands what she is doing with a sarcastic undertone. She knows that what she is doing would be unnecessary if she was a white woman, and at the same time she is afraid of what might go wrong. Because of the officer's alienation and ignorance toward black people, he has his hand resting on his gun when pulling over a mom and her daughter. He knows the power he possesses as a man of the law, and what he is doing will probably be defended in the court because he is only "doing his job". He gets disappointed when the ownership is confirmed because he had a chance to fill his day of work with some action and a reason to use the power he possesses. Moreover, to use more power toward black people was defended by the Los Angeles Police Departments' (LAPD) chief Daryl Gates who said: "We may be finding that in some blacks when it [the chokehold] is applied, the veins or arteries do not open as fast as they do in normal people" p. 129. However, it must be mentioned that this quote is referring to incorrect stereotypes about black people being medically different. It was stated by Gates with a racist intention.

The issue of discrimination is relevant throughout the YA novel. In addition to the two situations mentioned, the issue of systematic racism is present. The loudest voice when it comes to this topic is Ashley's sister Jo. She is not only curious on what goes on in society, but she is also educated on the matter. She says:

"It's not just about the cops, right? It's all of it. yes, the LAPD is racist as hell, and black and brown communities get policed different than white ones. That's a fact. But also, the schools suck. There's no jobs. You don't give people any opportunities to make something of themselves or to see a way out of the shit they're dealing with every day. There's no hope. And when kids turn to gangs or drugs, people act all surprised. Like, what the fuck did you think was gonna happen?" (p. 44).

Jo's statement about the LAPD being racist, is supported by their chief's argument, and that black people is policed different than white people come to show when Ashley and her mom are pulled over. However, these are not only things that happen once. These are attitudes that have been present for centuries. Jo is tired of politicians saying that things are good because white and black people have the same opportunities on paper. It does not matter if these opportunities are not acted out. She is criticizing the systematic racism because certain areas are being favored based on who lives there. In areas where the

majority are black people, the schools are bad, the jobs are non-existent, and the possibility to end up as a criminal should not be surprising. By watching her sister and how she fights for what she believes in, Ashley starts to criticize the system herself: "maybe the problem is with the whole system" (p. 325). Furthermore, through the music Ashley listens to, the input she gets from the lyrics becomes the foundation for reflection on how things really are. The music gives words to her feelings: "It's the lyric about hate multiplying that gets me most. It's like nothing ever changes" (p. 151). She is fed up.

The issue of discrimination in *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* is inevitable due to the story's setting in the 1950's United States of America. There are references to the Jim Crow (segregation) laws, in addition to historically important events, such as with Rosa Parks:

"Controversy has risen in the city of Montgomery, Alabama, after a fifteen-year-old Negro schoolgirl from Hope Hull was arrested this afternoon on the Q7 bus route. The Negro girl refused to give up her seat for a white woman, becoming hostile when asked by the driver." (p. 56).

Despite this scene is not about Rosa Parks, the reader can see parallels to the historically important action and may function as a starting point for discussion in the classroom. Given the fact that Rosa Parks did her action in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, which is the state and the year that the YA novel is set, does substantiate this interpretation. Furthermore, while living and experiencing the life in the southern states, Ethan does observe signs that are hanging on walls: "Colored passengers must sit at the back of the vehicle" p. 57. In addition:

"Above the drinking fountain to the right, which was large and clean, was a sign reading *White*. To the left, above a dinky, dirty fountain that seemed moments away from falling off the wall was a sign with the word *Colored*" p. 188.

There are clear differences with how the fountains look and what these adjectives convey to the reader. While the drinking fountain for "white" people is large and clean, the drinking fountain for "colored" people is dirty and in bad shape. This conveys a message of people's values where white people are valued higher than colored people. The white people's fountain seems to be taken care of, cleaned, and maintained, while the fountain for colored people is neither. These fountains can be interpreted as symbols of how society's perspective on white and black people were. White being clean, wealthy, and deserving of a bigger place in society, while being colored meant that one was tired, misfortunate, and doomed for an unlucky destiny.

The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones is more explicit when addressing discrimination because at the time the story is set, discrimination was defended by law. It was a part of society at that time and may therefore play a bigger part explicitly. Moreover, to be this concrete when addressing such topics is done to put forward a message to the reader that is easy to understand and triggers feelings. The segregation and attitudes Ethan experiences, like: "Anyone ever tell you we don't like your kind coming around here?" (p. 49), are scenes that aim to provoke and call for change, which are suitable for

Linda and Nepal's pedagogical approach with multicultural literature. Ethan reflects on the signs he sees and the stories he hears which makes him depressed. He starts to question and doubting himself: "As if to be distinguished in this way was a weakness." (p. 203). However, rather than being weak, Ethan is a symbol of strength in this YA novel. He gets bullied, he is psychologically terrorized, and he is victimized by society. Despite the environment Ethan finds himself in, he stands firmly in all situations, to show the strength, integrity, and the wish for change he possesses. This symbol of strength is something all readers of the story can draw inspiration from, to stand up for their friends and acknowledgement toward diversity in the real world.

4.2.5 The issue of power in the two YA novels – "us" vs. "them"

The discourse about who is the "us" and who is the "them" is present and ongoing throughout Ashley's story. Moreover, this discourse can be seen as an issue of power because there are scenes and dialogues in the story that convey injustice, fear, discrimination, and a crooked power relationship between the "us" and "them". However, the issue of power can also be seen as the power of unity between the black people. When Ashley observes the black kids together, she is curious to why they seem so confident and powerful in their solidarity: "I gaze over at the black kids, all twelve of them, mostly athletes. There's an easiness to the way they interact with one another, a familiarity" (p. 78). Since this is Ashley's story, an African American teenage girl, the interpretation is that the "us" are the African Americans, and the "them" is the white majority. Ashley's grandmother tells her: "you're all of us, your family, black folks" (p. 21). In addition, Jo says: "This country isn't taking care of all its people – just the ones with the right skin color" (p. 196). The "right" skin color is interpreted as white.

Ashely's friend Courtney is, according to Ashley, only attending their school because her parents in some ways have paid for her place. Being a rich white person, gives a certain amount of power, where both their resources and appearance become an advantage in society, which leads to an acceptance and room for action. In comparison to Ashley's family, even though they have money, they are still viewed as inferior because of the color of their skin. Later in the story, about hostile attitudes toward black people, Ashely's sister Jo, says:

"It's not just about Rodney. It's about all of us. About all our black and brown brothers and sisters struggling to make ends meet in a system set up for them to fail. We have to change the system. If there's no justice for one of us, there's no justice for any of us" (p. 119).

The issue of power in a political system that favors people who are white, is the foundation for discourse in the story. Jo is emphasizing that "us", the African Americans, are the inferiors in society. She conveys that she is tired of the discrimination that is accepted by a system influenced by issues of power and degrading attitudes toward black people. Jo is calling on all the "us" to fight for the justice they demand and is underlining that she and her people stick together until justice is set for everyone. However, the feeling of being heard and acknowledged in society as black people, is non-existent: "They act like we don't belong her" (p. 330).

While Ashley is talking with her sister and is listening to what Jo has to say, there is something she does not exactly understand: "Who's 'we'?" (p. 196). With comments from her grandmother, father, and sister, it seems like Ashley does not understand why there is such an issue when it comes to race. However, her standpoint does come to light:

"The idea that it's 1992 and we still have kings and queens and people born into being the heads of entire countries is weird to me" (p. 61).

This statement is interpreted as an analogy where Ashley is criticizing the white privilege she is witnessing in society. Historically, to be a king or a queen means that you are at the top of society, with the power to do whatever you want to do. However, in today's modern society, kings and queens does not have the power they used to possess in the past, but at the same time they maintain their position as head of state. To possess a position on top of society, with advantages and goods based on how one is born, is for Ashley irrational. In this quote, the kings and queens are the white people, who get handed their advantages in life because they are white. Ashley states that history has come too far for certain people to claim their position and power in society. She is talking from a racial point of view, where her analogy comes down to the fact that white people are born with white privilege, while black people must earn their respect and power with an unfair starting point. Furthermore, Ashley's wish is for everyone to acknowledge people as "we" rather than talking about "us" and "them": "Sometimes there is an us, sometimes there is a them, and sometimes it is okay to be a we" (p. 358). The issue of power should be based on trust and what people do, not based on who they are.

The topic of "us" vs. "them" in *The Invincible Summer of Juniper is Jones* is presented through the local citizens being "us", and Ethan being the "them". There is a constant focus on dividing humans by skin color throughout the YA novel, which this chapter has made references to already. Moreover, while Ethan does not understand why things must be like they are, Juniper is trying her best to explain the circumstances to him:

"In Ellison it's a little different 'cause the town's so small, but in the big cities like Montgomery and Birmingham? It's the law. A place for colored folks and a place for white folks. Even on the bus. Everything is separate." (p. 68).

Ethan, coming from the state of Washington in the north, is not familiar with the segregation laws in the south, and does not see the necessities these laws play. Ethan has grown up with the perspective of harmony between black and white people, but where he is now, is a place influenced by hate and ignorance toward his group of people. Moreover, Ethan's father has not talked to Ethan about this issue because his father is white and is not influenced by the discrimination and fear Ethan experiences. To suddenly be in a place where no one likes him, does hurt Ethan's feelings, and forces him to think about himself as "something else", the "them": "He looked down at his hands, several shades darker than Juniper's, and thought about that bus. 'Why?'" (p. 68).

However, Ethan's mom has always wanted to talk about racial issues with Ethan but has never done it due to them living in different states. Luckily, his mom does not live

far away from Ellington, and one day Ethan goes to visit her where they talk about the societal issues they are facing as African Americans:

“Your dad has never talked to you about race.” It wasn’t a question. Ethan shook his head. ‘That’s what all our fights always came back to. I wanted to talk about race with you and the twins, the way my parents did with me when they told me about my enslaved grandparents who were sold for auction at that big fountain in the center of Montgomery. It’s important for us to know where we come from and what’s been done to us, otherwise, how’re we supposed to fight what’s happening to us now? It’s all connected’.” (p. 203).

Ethan’s mom is indicating that ignorance does not benefit either side of a conflict. The ignorance from the white people is shown in the attitude where they alienate the black population and never ask critical questions toward their practice and attitudes. Moreover, Ethan’s lack of knowledge may come from a feeling of being trapped in a corner. First, he is not familiar with the segregation laws, secondly, he is not prepared to act accordingly, and he does not know why things are as they are. As his mom emphasizes, that it is important for Ethan to know where he comes from to know what he should be fighting for, may be interpreted as a message to all readers: without knowledge of the past, one cannot change the future. In addition, Ethan’s mom tries to convey to her son that he is not the weak human being that society is trying to make him feel. He must be strong both mentally and physically to be able to stand up for himself and love himself for who he is. Also in this YA novel, the message of not focusing on “us” or “them”, but rather a “we”, is essential.

4.2.6 The authors’ message

4.2.6.1 *The Black Kids*’ theme

The topics presented throughout *The Black Kids* are the discrimination toward a group of people, and the focus on segregation rather than inclusion. To convey these ideas in her writing, Reed does implement several quotes by the characters to emphasize this:

“If all the heroes in our stories are white, what does that make us?” (p. 100).

“Now we are going to play mermaids. Except Ashley. Because black people can’t be mermaids” (p. 145).

The famous, or infamous quote, depending on how one sees it; “history is written by victors”, can be argued to influence the characters’ point of views. It is not stated which heroes Ashley is referring to in her quote, but it can be interpreted as a critique to a western culture which is focusing too much on its white heroes. However, in this section, Ashley is talking about Black Santa. When white people think of Santa Claus, Jesus, Kings and Queens, many would probably think of a white figure. This intuitive thinking might be seen as a result of a culture, where white people tend to think about characters as white, by default, which is an example of internalized racism. This skewed distribution of acknowledgement toward people, is what Ashley thinks is unfair. “What does that make

us?“, refers to her people, black people, as inferior in history, where she does not experience adequate acknowledgement to what black people has accomplished in history.

Moreover, her friend tells Ashley that she cannot be a mermaid because black people can't be mermaids. This statement may be because many representations of mermaids are white and not black, like in the Disney movies. This scene is interpreted as a message from the author which states that one should not categorize people because of the color of their skin, but rather look at people's abilities and strengths. Because this skewed distribution of acknowledgement has been present for a long time, the author conveys that chaos and protests is a given: "You can't disenfranchise a huge portion of the population and not expect shit to go down" (p. 44).

Furthermore, continuing the author's message in *The Black Kids*, the lack of acknowledgement does take a big place in the story. On page 123, the story of Latasha Harlins is explained, who was an African American girl who went into a liquor store, grabbed a can of orange juice, got accused of stealing, and was shot in the back by the shop owner. According to the description in the YA novel, the killer got probation and a five hundred dollar fine. Extremely provocative. Ashley, who is the narrator of the story, says: "Five hundred dollars for a black girl. My mom got shoes more expensive than that" (p. 123). This emphasizes the feeling of being black in a society where systematic racism and negative prejudice toward black people is favored at the expense of justice. To convey the perspective of being less valued is a message to the reader that something must be changed.

What the author's message comes down to is the wish for approval, acknowledgement, and inclusion. She wants to convey to her readers the reality of her experience and the importance of coming together as one people to make life better for everyone. Her characters represent the wish for change, the need to be seen, and the will to make a change. In addition, the main character, Ashley, is the representation for strength and a constructive view on humans:

"Sometimes real assholes like to joke and say that in the dark the only thing you can see of a black person is eyes and teeth. It's meant to be an insult, but at the moment, with LaShawn smiling at me, I can think of no better thing to be distilled into. We're two smiles in the night, together" (p. 269).

The "assholes" referred to here is interpreted as people who neglect racial diversity and the thought of unity between people. To emphasize attitudes which are focusing on negative aspects toward a group of people is a choice one takes and is not suitable in a society or classroom where the diversity of people is increasing. This negativity is what Reed turns into something positive with this scene, by taking condescending aspects toward black people and turning them into something beautiful. To be "two smiles in the night" is here seen as an analogy to creating light when everything around oneself seems dark. If one chooses to focus on the positive, good things will happen.

4.2.6.2 The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones' theme

These two YA novels' topics are essentially alike, with discrimination and segregation being two main topics throughout both stories. However, what distinguishes

these two stories is how they are told. *The Black Kids* is told from a first perspective view, where the reader gets an insight into the main character's mind and their understanding on what goes on, while *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* is told from a third person perspective, which gives the reader an overview on the setting, story, and the characters. What distinguishes McQueen's story from Reed's story, is that McQueen is conveying a message about how alienation and ignorance can harm the diversity in society:

"The whole reason I made it through this summer. She showed me that people can be good and there can be hope, even when it hurts." (p. 281).

This is something Ethan says about Juniper later in the story. Ethan feels he has been dependent on Juniper's help and support. When looking at these sentences knowing the setting, it is a representation of two people coming from two different cultures and two different ethnicities that have stayed together and helped each other despite having all odds against them. No matter who one is, one should have the opportunity to experience friendship, equal starting points, and no discrimination. Knowing that these sentences are said by Ethan and come from an African American perspective, encourages the reader to see what inclusion and compassion, or the lack of it, can do to a person, and may lead to the reader adapting such attitudes themselves. Furthermore, another quote from the YA novel that emphasizes equal starting points, is said by Juniper Jones after she has helped Ethan to procure a bike.

"Well, what are you waiting for Ethan?" she asked. "We all know you can't beat me on foot, but maybe now that we've evened the playing field..." (p. 104)

Earlier in the story, Ethan did not have a bike, and could therefore not race Juniper on the same conditions. Now however, he can, because they have the same starting points. This is a clear message from the author that if one has the same starting point, one can achieve the same things. When Ethan first came to Ellington, nobody wanted him to be there, and he had no opportunities to do things he may have wanted to do. This changed when he met Juniper, who gave Ethan a feeling of equality. This led to the friendship between the two and this friendship is a symbol for acknowledging diversity. Moreover, the bike is the symbol of equality because when they both have the same tools, they can achieve the same things. The author is conveying an encouragement to everyone, that we must help each other, not matter out backgrounds, for everyone to see the positive sides of oneself and what oneself can contribute with. McQueen writes: "in time, he'd learn to look in the mirror and see his blackness as a precious gift" (p. 254).

5 Discussion

In this chapter, which is the last chapter of the main body of this thesis, there will be a discussion around the research questions:

- How is multicultural literature valued and implemented in the EFL classroom to teach pupils about racial diversity?
- How can *The Black Kids* and *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* be used as resources to teach about racial diversity in elementary school?

In chapter 2, the reader was presented for previous research on multicultural literature's importance for children and introduced to three pedagogical approaches in relation to multicultural literature: counter-narrative, pedagogy of discomfort, and norm-critical pedagogy. In addition, the term social conscience books was introduced. This chapter will use these four terms as starting points for discussion, in the light of analysis and findings from this thesis' data.

5.1 How the YA novels can be implemented in the EFL classroom to teach about racial diversity

There is consensus between previous research and this thesis' participants which state that multicultural literature possesses a positive value in the classroom. Although teachers today may have different approaches when implementing YA literature in elementary school, the pedagogical practices and the learning outcomes seems to be similar. Mongillo & Holland (2016) state that multicultural literature engages pupils to challenge and examine assumptions and illogical conclusions, which correlate to the classroom practice that the participants are accomplishing. The participants' focus when teaching in the classroom is to create a safe environment for pupils to discuss, communicate, and reflect on what they read. Moreover, Linda and Nepal state that pupils are often "provoked" and "shocked" from what they read if it is texts about racism and discrimination, which are topics in both YA novels. For example, the reference to Latasha Harlins in *The Black Kids* and what seems to be a reference to Rosa Parks in *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones*. This may lead to pupils examining assumptions and asking critical questions to illogical conclusions, if they are working on a text which includes social problems. Thus, using literature this way, can raise pupils' social consciousness and engage them in discussions about diversity, culture, and racism (Hughes-Hassel, Barkley & Koehler, 2009).

To implement the YA novels through the participants' pedagogical approaches would contribute to reach the curriculum goals which state that pupils are to read and convey content from authentic text, develop cultural understanding, and think critically about what makes people different as well as similar (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017c; Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017d; Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). The books analyzed are calling for acknowledgement toward black people who have been discriminated for

centuries and to implement these texts in the classroom contributes to presenting the pupils for an honest and trustworthy representation of black people's experiences and feelings. A result of this implementation, pupils in elementary school will develop empathy, understanding, and an including attitude toward racial diversity because YA novels give pupils a great starting point for in-depth learning and critical thinking.

The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones can be interpreted as what Sims (1982) calls a social conscience book, which is literature aimed to develop empathy, sympathy, and tolerance toward African Americans. The reason why McQueen's book is interpreted as a social conscience book, is because of her intention for writing the story where she hopes the reader will empathize with the characters who are victims of racism. Furthermore, *The Black Kids* is not necessarily interpreted as a social conscience book because Reed's intention for writing her story, was for the black community to possess a source to see oneself represented in literature. However, the writer of this thesis, do see both YA novels as important and beneficial pieces of literature which may contribute to discussions about racial diversity. Discussions and reflections are what all participants want to incorporate in their teaching in relation to multicultural literature, which supports the writer's perception.

5.1.1 Counter-narrative pedagogy

The first pedagogical approach which is viewed as beneficial when implementing the two YA novels in the classroom, is the counter-narrative pedagogy. This pedagogy aims to tell the stories of the oppressed and analyze and challenge the stories of those in power (Glenn, 2012). Olaf's approach when teaching multicultural literature is interpreted as a counter-narrative method. His attitude toward teaching about diversity is to "show the minority". Moreover, Olaf, Linda, and Vibeke are emphasizing that their implementation of multicultural literature in the classroom shall lead to reflections, analysis, and cultural understanding.

Both YA novels are great starting points for the counter-narrative pedagogy. Because both novels are written by and is about people of color, makes them, according to Mansour & Martin (2020), authentic. Moreover, Vibeke, who is in favor of in-depth learning, says that literature is beneficial because it contributes to "go deeper in the topics". From her experience, she has observed that her pupils are more engaged in the materials when using secondary sources, in addition to being able to retell what they have read in more detail. Moreover, the curriculum states that pupils are to read and convey content, and converse about what they have read (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b). If Vibeke's experience is relevant for a broader range of teachers in Norway, secondary sources should be prioritized. Furthermore, to build on the cultural understanding toward cultures and ethnicities that are different from oneself, can be done through reading fiction where these cultures and ethnicities are represented. The stories about Ashley and Ethan in the YA novels, who are considered outsiders in their communities, can develop pupils' cultural understanding where they acquire knowledge about how it is to not be accepted because of one's appearance. In addition, given the increased multicultural classroom we have today, there should always be room for constructive discourse about this topic.

Olaf, Linda, and Agathe experienced what it means to have a diverse representation of teachers during their education programs, and it will probably not be less beneficial to have a diverse group of pupils in the classroom either. An including classroom environment

where people are interested in each other, may help to develop acknowledgement, empathy, and inclusion, which can be done through the counter-narrative pedagogy when analyzing and challenging the unfair representations which are presented in the YA novels.

The discourse about who is 'us' and who is 'them' is present in both novels, due to the attitudes and values that the characters possess. Because the novels' main characters are African Americans, the 'us' is seen as the African Americans, while the 'them' is seen as the whites. Ashley, the main character in *The Black Kids*, gets reminded by her friends in several scenes that she is black and therefore different. Even though she is supposed to be part of her group of friends who are white, her friends are in some scenes emphasizing that Ashley after all is the inadequate 'other'. To implement this YA novel in the classroom with a counter-narrative pedagogy, is beneficial because it tells the story about Ashley who conveys how it is to be downgraded in society. To read, analyze, and discuss the themes and topics in this novel can be great starting points for pupils to challenge the representation of racial diversity in literature and society. Moreover, it is not only about reading and understanding Ashley's story, but to read the other side of the story as well. When Ashley's friends say: "She is not poor", "no, but she is black", conveys a dividing attitude where being black is one thing, and being white is something else. To look at people different from oneself is what Birkeland (2017) calls stereotypical group identities. This creates a representation of 'us' and 'them' in the novel and are point of views which should be, and can be, challenged in the classroom to discourse about racial diversity through the counter-narrative pedagogy.

5.1.2 Pedagogy of discomfort

To teach about topics like racism and to be honest with the pupils about how history has been, may be challenging for a teacher. It may be challenging because one doesn't think their knowledge is sufficient, or it may be challenging because one is insecure to which materials are necessary for the teaching to be adequate. In addition, given the fact that ≈71% of teachers in Norway are white women, it is difficult to present an inside perspective on topics like racism and racial diversity and convey the implications these topics can lead to in an authentic way, without using secondary materials in the classroom. When talking about difficult topics to elementary school pupils may put teachers in an uncomfortable situation. It is important to have good relations with one's pupils to know what is accepted to talk about and how the pupils will react. If teachers' challenges develop into fear (Gay & Howard, 2000), it may result in a misfortunate situation for the pupils. However, Mongillo & Holland (2016) emphasize teachers' responsibility to create discourse about uncomfortable topics to educate their pupils. In addition, when doing so, the curriculum stresses the importance of teachers' professional judgement (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2017a).

An approach to teaching about important topics, which will benefit from teachers' fear, is the pedagogy of discomfort. This pedagogy is based on working with topics about difference and racism to challenge one's comfort zones (as cited in Røthing, 2020, p. 60).

To go out of one's comfort zone is what the author of *The Invincible Summer*, Daven McQueen, wants for the reader: "sometimes, content like this is kept away from teens and younger readers because it might be hard to handle". The content McQueen is referring to, is content about racism. Vibeke says in her interview that she has experienced pupils being afraid of using the word "black" in a setting where pupils were to describe someone else's

clothes. To associate the word black with being racist, indicates the fear some people have when it comes to talking about uncomfortable topics. In addition, it may be an alarming factor because it can lead to reluctance when talking about racial diversity in society. To implement the pedagogy of discomfort, rely on creating a safe environment to talk about race, ethnicity, and culture, in an understandable and constructive way. If the teacher in these situations have adequate knowledge about the history of racism, the purpose of this pedagogical approach will result in challenging pupils' comfort zones and encourage critical reflection about their perspectives on racial diversity.

Ethan, the main character in *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* is an African American boy who experiences segregation: "Colored passengers must sit at the back of the vehicle" (p. 57). Linda emphasizes in her interview that when she is implementing literature about challenging topics, "they [the pupils] get shocked about what goes on". Moreover, Nepal's intention is to provoke her pupils: "I want them to be a little provoked". To implement the pedagogy of discomfort to shock and provoke the pupils when reading multicultural literature about racial diversity is beneficial because it challenges their emotional comfort zones when reading about the harsh reality that has been and is present today.

5.1.3 Norm-critical pedagogy

The last pedagogical approach is the norm-critical pedagogy. Røthing (2020) explains this type of pedagogy as something that makes pupils more critical toward norms in society that contribute to discrimination and reproduction of stereotypes (p. 53). *The Black Kids* includes many stereotypes toward African American people, such as when the fireman comes knocking on Ashley's family's home (p. 3), and when a police officer stops Ashley and her mom driving (p. 27). The fireman and the police officer seem to have assumptions and therefore draw illogical conclusions when encountering African American people. To read about, discuss, and challenge these assumptions and conclusions is what multicultural literature can contribute with (Mongillo & Holland, 2016) In addition, it correlates with the participants' goals for their pupils, to understand cultures and people, and acknowledge differences. To implement *The Black Kids* in the classroom through a norm-critical pedagogy, to discourse about racial diversity, is beneficial because the YA novel includes stereotypes, ignorance, and alienations.

Moreover, about Ethan, the author writes: "he was a deviation from the norm – and that was a threat." (p.68). The "norm" in Ethan's story can be seen as the maintenance of a white society. When Ethan shows up in the small town, he is immediately judged as an outsider who is not welcome. To be a threat to the norm in this setting has its roots in ignorance. The people of Ellington have no familiarities with black people and are therefore skeptic to Ethan's presence. If knowledge and enlightenment were exchanged with this ignorance, the alienation toward Ethan would not be as present. Due to racist attitudes from the white population, Ethan is seen as a "weakness" (p. 203). However, his courage and integrity in all situations he experiences, describes him as the opposite: strong. If one is critical to the norms represented in this book, the goal of the norm-critical pedagogy, which states that children's attitudes toward diversity shall be strengthen, will be accomplished. As Nepal states: "When everyone is different, we are all the same in at least one way: to be different", which is an acknowledging attitude toward racial diversity in society.

Moreover, to implement this pedagogical approach when discussing Ethan's and Ashley's positions in the YA novels, would be beneficial when talking about pupils' position in society. Ethan, being multiracial, is valued as less by the white majority, and Ashley is stuck between a white- and black community, which result in a feeling of being inadequate for both protagonists. The novels are emphasizing the power one possesses if being white, and the discrimination one experiences if being black. It is important to highlight that these power relations and experiences of discrimination should not be present in any people's lives. However, because it unfortunately is present today, it is important to welcome the discourse about racial diversity in today's classrooms for pupils to develop knowledge, empathy, and inclusive attitudes toward today's increasingly diverse classrooms.

5.2 Multicultural literature's important role in today's EFL classroom.

Because today's classrooms in Norwegian schools are represented by an increasingly diverse group of pupils (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020c), the implementation of multicultural literature is important for everyone to learn about themselves and other people, in addition to engage multiple worldviews (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001; Haddix & Price-Dennis (2013). Moreover, Iwai (2013) emphasizes that multicultural literature is more valued today because of the increased diversity in societies, which is viewed as a strong encouragement to implement these materials in the EFL classroom.

To implement multicultural literature in elementary school will benefit pupils because they will learn more in-depth which will result in better understanding about what they read about. According to the Norwegian curriculum (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2020b), pupils shall learn about values that unite people. Values that may lead to inclusion are acknowledgement, respect, and understanding. All participants in this thesis state that they want to implement more multicultural literature in the classroom. In addition, they emphasize the importance of cultural understanding when implementing multicultural literature. They stress a pedagogical approach that focus on dialogues and reflections. From these dialogues, the teachers' goals for their pupils are an acknowledging attitude and a deeper cultural understanding toward people who are different from oneself, which is what the implementation of multicultural literature will lead to. Moreover, Vibeke supports this explicitly in her interview where she says that due to today's multicultural society, multicultural literature should be prioritized and presented to pupils in the EFL classroom.

Furthermore, pupils must feel and experience that they are acknowledged, no matter their culture, or race. The reason why multicultural literature is beneficial in the EFL classroom is because it can include the representation of all people for pupils to feel included. Children who come from different cultures can experience this inclusion through multicultural literature because they can see themselves represented in the literature they read, in addition to acquire knowledge and understanding about where they come from and why we are all different. When pupils read stories about racial diversity, they may feel empathy with the characters which may lead to changing their attitudes and adapting their actions beyond literature. Hence, reading multicultural literature about African Americans will develop pupils' perspective on race.

Multicultural literature has an important role in the implementation of secondary sources. The participants in this research say that today's textbooks are inadequate,

disadvantageous, and boring. In addition, they state that multicultural literature creates engagement, widens pupils' horizon, and leads to the development of empathy and acquirement of knowledge. This indicates that today's teaching needs a shift in material priorities in the classrooms, where secondary sources should play a bigger role. Pupils should be taught more about the history of racial diversity than what happened after slavery was "over" and what happens today (Bade et al., 2021; Tudor Edwards et al., 2021). To start the discourse about racial diversity around these historical times is not sufficient due to the broad range of history racism and discrimination have. For example, if pupils possess some knowledge about how African- and European culture differed from each other before the Europeans colonized the African continent, and what the colonization led to, both in short terms and long terms, the understanding on where racism comes from may be more solid. Moreover, this knowledge and understanding may result in a more constructive dialogue about the two YA novels because pupils think critically about how things have been and how they are today. To maintain a critical view on history's influence on today's society, is what secondary sources contributes to in a better way than textbooks, because one can implement everything history has created and not be limited to what is written in a textbook. To focus on critical literacy in the classroom when implementing multicultural literature such as *The Black Kids* and *The Inincible Summer of Juniper Jones*, will challenge pupils to explore complicated themes such as racial diversity, multiculturalism, and racism, because the YA novels convey lived experiences of youth and communities of color (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013).

However, as teachers, we must be conscious on what we convey to the pupils and how we do it. Although all of us are different and we should acknowledge what makes us different, we must also emphasize similarities that lead to unity and equity. When one is talking about racial diversity in the classroom, it is important to be careful about how one addresses both side of the story. At the same time, when talking about race, ethnicity, and cultures which are different from the majority in a classroom, one must remember that oneself and one's own culture is as complex out in the world as the cultures and people who are discussed in the classroom.

Multicultural literature is both important and beneficial to implement in the EFL classroom. It is important to acquire a positive view on racial diversity, in addition to develop including values. Pupils in elementary school must learn to appreciate-, learn-, and take care of each other, for the increasingly diverse world to develop in a positive way. Because societies are still covered with [Jim Crow laws'] feathers (Francisco, 2017), we must work toward a society empty of racism and discrimination. All humans cannot be alike; thus, it is important to embrace that "sometimes there is an us, sometimes there is a them, and sometimes it is okay to be a we" (Reed, 2021, p. 358), and we must do this together.

6 Conclusion

The result of this thesis shows that the focus on multiculturalism and diversity in teacher education programs and teachers' pedagogical approaches has developed alongside with the increase of diversity represented in Norwegian classrooms. Multicultural literature is viewed as a substantial value to implement in the classroom for pupils to learn about cultures, humans, and values. Moreover, it contributes to build bridges between people through cultural understanding which leads to acknowledgement toward people who are different from oneself.

The two YA novels analyzed and discussed are beneficial to implement in the classroom as multicultural literature because they convey the story of a group of people who has been discriminated, and in some ways still are. These YA novels tell the story of how these people have experienced the world's complexity and injustice, and they portray a picture of how racism damage the relationships between humans and how it is hindering social development. To understand where such attitudes come from and what it leads to, can be taught through these novels to acquire knowledge about issues of power, and develop acknowledgement toward people who experience racism and hostile attitudes toward themselves as humans.

However, one thing to consider when talking about racial diversity, is the position teachers find themselves in when teaching with multicultural materials about multicultural topics. Norwegian teachers are a homogeneous group of people which may narrow the credibility and quality when implementing the discourse about black and white people in the classroom. Therefore, multicultural literature is highly important, and should be present in all EFL classrooms for pupils to fulfill their curiosity toward their own culture and people and educate children on human's differences and similarities. In addition to the call for adequate teaching with multicultural literature as the main source of material, multicultural personnel in Norwegian schools should also be prioritized. Thus, several pupils will see themselves represented in their everyday life and enhance their experience of affiliation.

This thesis has contributed to highlighting the beneficial factors of implementing multicultural literature. In addition, it has investigated a handful of teachers' perspectives and pedagogical approaches when using multicultural literature as teaching materials. For future research, or continuing work with this thesis as a starting point, it would be interesting to see how pupils react to- and experience multicultural literature in the classroom. If I would build on this thesis, the pupils' experiences, and motivation in relation to multicultural literature would be investigated to see how children's perspectives on topics such as racial diversity, multiculturalism, and racism are. To talk with children about these topics could give teachers an important look into what they should focus more on in the classroom, to reach the curriculum goals addressing the skills to think critically and acquire knowledge about different cultures.

As mentioned, the discourse about racism has never not been relevant, and may never not be either. YA novels, such as *The Black Kids* and *The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones* are great artefacts to be implemented in the classroom, to challenge pupils' knowledge, critical thinking skills, and values toward racial diversity. This matters because of the increased diverse classrooms during the last fifty years, and we still see the injustice

and discrimination black people are experiencing today. Moreover, when hearing about the racism black Ukrainians are encountering on borders when fleeing war, is unaccepting, and shows the relevance and important role the discourse about racial diversity has today. We cannot think racism and hostile attitudes toward group of people belong to the past. It is unfortunately still relevant and present. Although multicultural societies are the new normal, there are still people who does not support this development. As teachers, it is our job to convey what diversity can contributes with and keep the discourse about racial diversity forever relevant to fight for justice for all.

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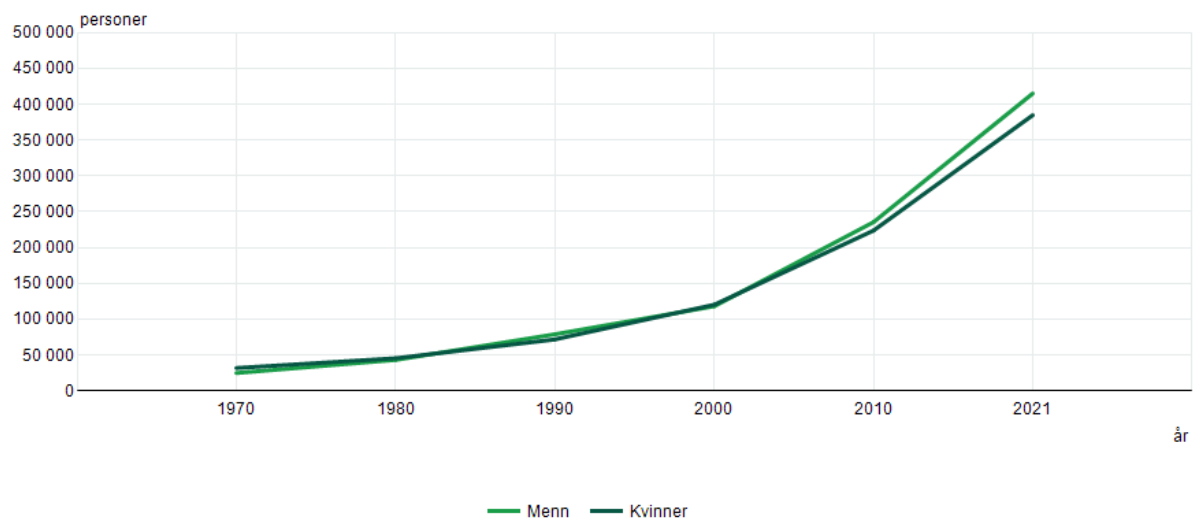
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Appendices

Appendix 1: immigrants and immigrants born in Norway since 1970

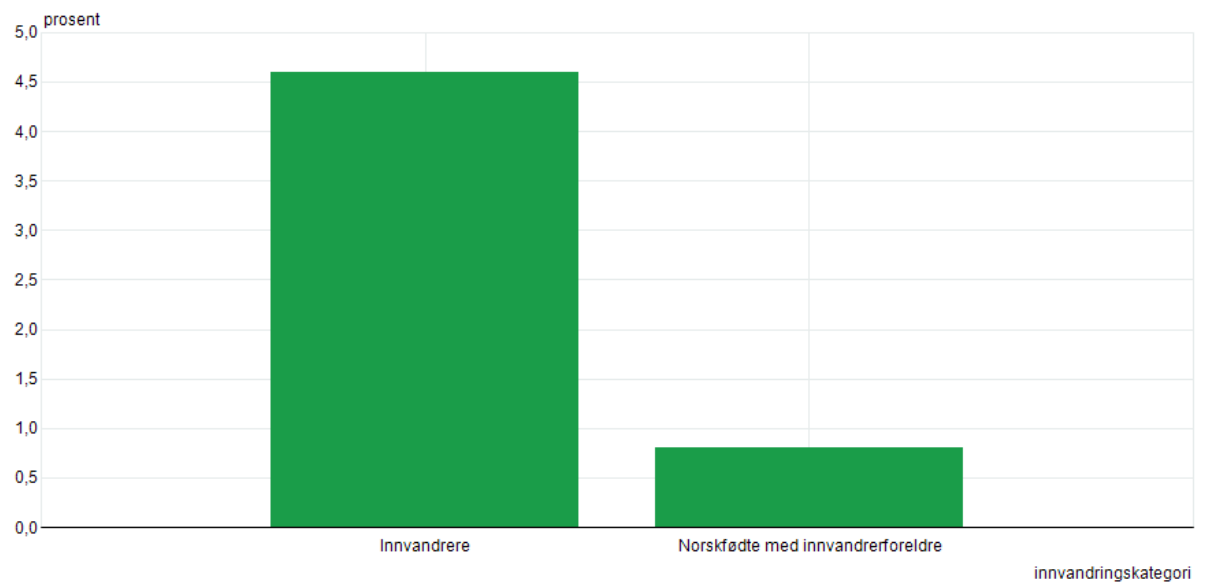
05184: Innvandrere, etter kjønn og år. Innvandrere.



Kilde: Statistisk sentralbyrå

Appendix 2: Female employees in elementary school who are immigrants or second-generation immigrants

12707: Ansatte i elevrettet arbeid i grunnskolen, etter innvandringskategori. Alle aldre, Lærere (prosent), Kvinner, 2020.



Kilde: Statistisk sentralbyrå

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Metadata

Grade teaching:

Gender:

How many study points do you have in English?

How long have you been teaching English?

Main questions

When you were in university, do you feel like you acquired adequate knowledge about multicultural literature and racial diversity in schools?

How would you briefly define the terms diversity and multicultural literature yourself?

Do you use multicultural literature when teaching about racial diversity?

How do you consider the books' relevance?

What are your didactic approaches when teaching about racial diversity in the classroom?

In what way(s) do you view MCL as a beneficial resource in the EFL classroom?

What is your perspective on multicultural literature? Pros/cons

Would you like to use more MCL in the English classroom?

Does the administration at this school support/encourages the use of multicultural literature?

Anything you are worried/scared of to bring into the classroom when teaching about race? *Or extra aware of?*

When teaching/using MCL, what is the number one thing you want your pupils to acquire/think about after class?

*MCL= Multicultural literature.

